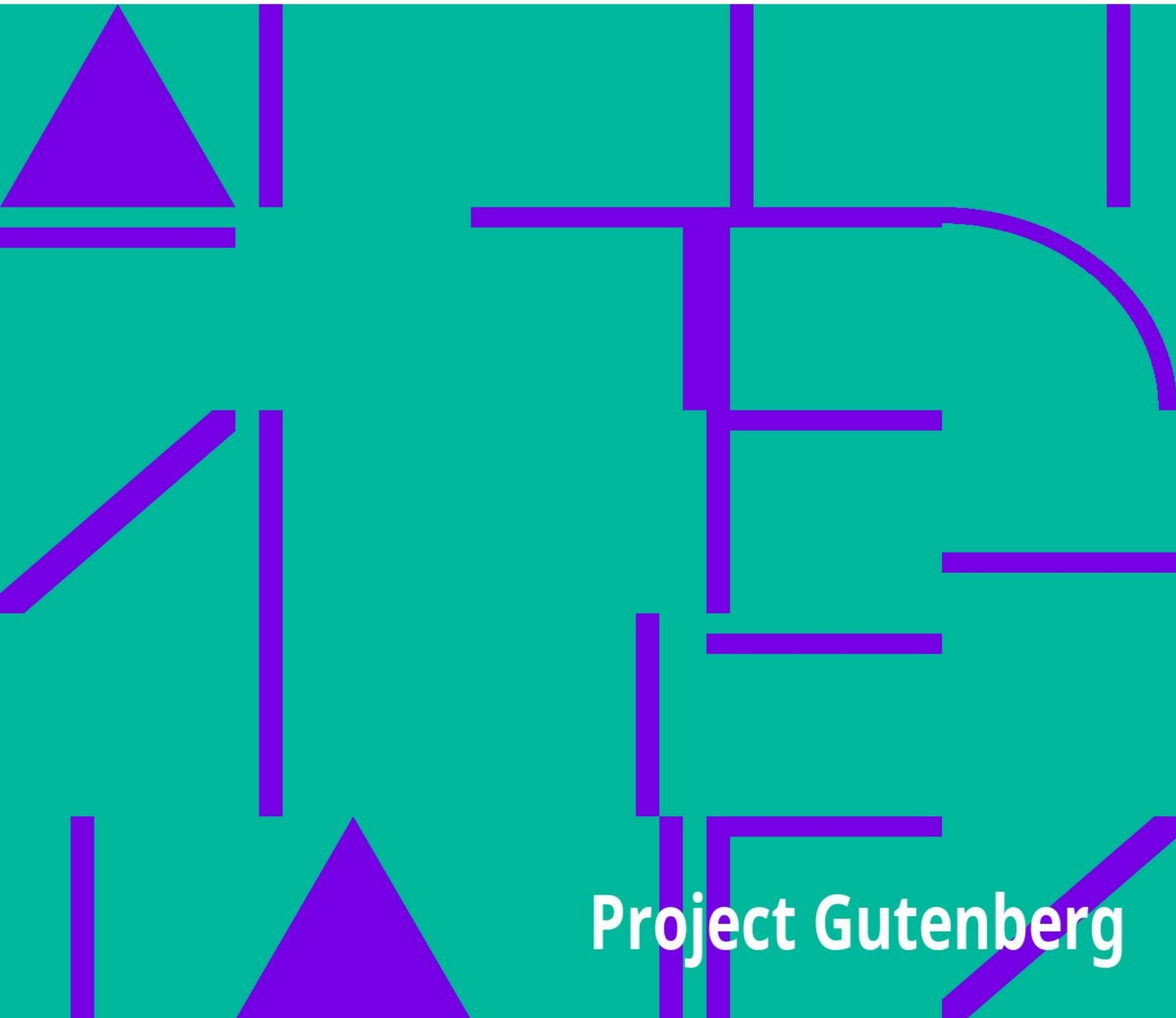
At the Point of the Bayonet

A Tale of the Mahratta War

G. A. Henty



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AT THE POINT OF THE BAYONET:

A Tale Of The Mahratta War

by G. A. Henty.

Illustrated by Wal Paget.

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For a year he worked with the shikaree.
Harry went up to him and salaamed.
Harry . . . saw a party of soldiers coming along the road.
There was a little haggling over the terms.
Harry ran up to the proclamation and tore it down.
As he rode through the streets he saw . . . how fierce a feeling of resentment had been excited by the news.
'Well, sir, I will now return to shore,' the governor said.
Without a cry the rajah fell back, shot through the head.
The rattle of musketry broke out again.
Plan of the Battle of Assaye.
Plan of the Battle of Laswaree.
Harry succeeded in crossing the river.
Abdool at once slipped down.
Harry drew out his handkerchief, and waved it.
View of the Rajah's Palace, Bhurtpoor.

Preface.

The story of the war in which the power of the great Mahratta confederacy was broken is one of the most stirring pages of the campaigns which, begun by Clive, ended in the firm establishment of our great empire in the Indian Peninsula. When the struggle began, the Mahrattas were masters of no small portion of India; their territory comprising the whole country between Bombay and Delhi, and stretching down from Rajputana to Allahabad; while in the south they were lords of the district of Cuttack, thereby separating Madras from Calcutta. The jealousies of the great Mahratta leaders, Holkar and Scindia, who were constantly at war with each other, or with the Peishwa at Poona, greatly facilitated our operations; and enabled us, although at the cost of much blood, to free a large portion of India from a race that was a scourge--faithless, intriguing and crafty; cruel, and reckless of life. The Mahrattas, conquering race as they were, yet failed in the one virtue of courage. They could sweep the land with hordes of wild horsemen, could harry peaceful districts and tyrannize over the towns they conquered; but they were unable to make an effective stand against British bayonets and British sabres. They were a race of freebooters; and even the most sentimental humanitarian can feel no regret at the overthrow of a power that possessed no single claim to our admiration, and weighed like an incubus upon the peoples it oppressed. The history of the Mahrattas, as written by Grant Duff, whose account I have, throughout, followed, is one long record of perfidy, murder, and crime of all sorts.

Chapter 1: A Faithful Nurse.

On a swell of ground, in the wild country extending from Bombay to the foot of the Ghauts, stood a small camp. In the centre was a large pavilion; the residence, for the time, of Major Lindsay, an officer whose charge was to keep the peace in the district. It was no easy matter. The inhabitants, wild and lawless, lived in small villages scattered about the rough country, for the most part covered with forest, and subject to depredations by the robber bands who had their strongholds among the hills. Major Lindsay had with him a party of twenty troopers, not for defence--there was little fear of attack by the natives of the Concan--but to add to his authority, to aid in the collection of the small tax paid by each community, and to deter the mountain robbers from descending on to the plain. He generally spent the cool season in going his rounds while, during the hot weather, his headquarters were at Bombay.

He had with him his wife and infant child. The child was some three months old, and was looked after by an ayah, who had been in Major Lindsay's service ten years; for three elder children had been born to him--all, however, dying from the effects of the climate before reaching the age of five. The ayah had nursed each, in succession, and had become greatly attached to the family, especially to her youngest charge. She had come to speak English well; but with the child she always talked in her native tongue, as the major saw the advantage it would prove to the boy, when he grew up, to be able to speak fluently one, at least, of the native languages.

The nurse was a Mahratta. She had been in the service of the British Resident at Poona and, when he was recalled, had entered that of Major Lindsay, at that time a captain who acted as secretary to the Resident.

A young officer from Bombay had just ridden out, to spend a day or two with the major, and was sitting with him at the entrance to the tent.

"The news from the army," he said, "is most unsatisfactory. As you know, to the astonishment of everyone Colonel Egerton was appointed to the command,

in spite of the fact that he was so infirm as to be altogether unfit for active service; and Mostyn, our late Resident at Poona, and Carnac accompanied him as deputies of the Council."

"That is altogether a bad arrangement," the major said. "It has always been a great disadvantage for a general to be accompanied by civilians, with power to thwart his combinations. Against Mostyn's appointment no one could raise any objection as, having been for some years at Poona, he understands the Mahrattas, and indeed is much liked by them, so that in any negotiations he would have far more chance of success than a stranger; but Carnac is hot headed and obstinate, with a very high idea of his own importance, and it is certain that there will be difficulties between him and Egerton."

"I am sorry to say, Major, that these anticipations were very speedily verified. As you know, the advance party landed at Aptee, on November 23rd, and seized the roads over the gorge; and on the 25th the main body disembarked at Panwell. No sooner had they got there than there was a quarrel between Egerton and Carnac. Most unfortunately Mostyn, who would have acted as mediator, was taken ill on the very day after landing, and was obliged to return to Bombay; and I hear there is hardly any chance of his recovery. The army did not reach the top of the Ghauts till the 23rd of December--instead of, at the latest, three days after landing--and actually spent eleven days before it arrived at Karlee, only eight miles in advance of the Bhore Ghauts. Of course this encouraged the enemy, and gave plenty of time for them to assemble and make all their arrangements and, when we last heard, they were harassing our march. For the past two days no news has arrived, and there seems to be little doubt that the Mahrattas have closed in round their rear, and cut off all communications."

"It is monstrous that they should march so slowly. The whole thing has been a hideous blunder, and the idea of encumbering a force of four thousand men with something like thirty thousand camp followers, and with a train of no less than nineteen thousand bullocks, to say nothing of other draught animals, is the most preposterous thing I ever heard of. In fact, the whole thing has been grossly mismanaged.

"I don't say that the conduct of the Mahrattas has not for some time been doubtful, if not threatening. It is well known that the Governor General and the Council at Calcutta have most strongly disapproved of the whole conduct of the

Council at Bombay. Indeed, no explanation has ever been given as to why they took up the cause of Rugoba, the scoundrel who grasped the crown; and who was privy to, if he did not instigate, the murder of his nephew, the young Peishwa.

"He was not unopposed, for Nana Furnuwees and Hurry Punt, two of the leading Mahratta ministers, formed a regency under Gunga Bye, the widow of the murdered Peishwa. While matters were undecided, the Bombay Council opened communications with Rugoba, who they thought was likely to be successful; and promised to assist him, if he would advance a considerable sum of money, and cede to the Company Salsette, the small islands contiguous to Bombay and Bassein, which had been captured from the Portuguese by the Mahrattas--an altogether inexcusable arrangement, as the Mahrattas were at peace with us, and Rugoba was not in a position to hand the islands over. That matter, however, was settled by sending an expedition, which captured Salsette and Tannah in 1775, four years ago. Since then Rugoba has become a fugitive and, without a shadow of reason, is making war against the whole force of the Mahratta confederacy; who, although divided amongst themselves and frequently engaged in the struggles for supremacy, have united against us--for they say that Scindia, Holkar, and Hurry Punt are in command of their army. To send four thousand men, of whom less than six hundred are Europeans, against the whole Mahratta power is a desperate step.

"I know we have fought and won against greater odds, many times in the history of India; but our forces have always been well led, marched with the smallest amount of baggage possible, and made up for inferiority in numbers by speed, activity, and dash. Here, on the contrary, we have a force hampered to an unheard-of degree by baggage and camp followers; with an invalid at its head, controlled by two civilians; and moving at a rate which, in itself, testifies to divided councils and utter incompetency on the part of its commander. It is almost impossible even to hope for success, under such conditions."

"The lookout is certainly bad," the younger officer agreed. "However, before now the fighting powers of the British soldier have made up for the blunders of his commanders; and we may hope that this will be the case, now."

"If a disaster happen," the major said, "we shall have the Mahrattas down at the gates of Bombay; and as soon as I hear a rumour of it--and news travels

wonderfully fast among the natives--I shall return to the city."

"Oh, I don't think you need fear anything of that sort, Major! Besides, this is not on the direct line between the Ghauts and the city. And even if they find they cannot push on, I should say our force would be able to secure their retreat. The Mahratta horse will never be able to break our squares; but of course, in that case we should have to abandon all our baggage and baggage animals."

"I agree with you that the Mahrattas would doubtless hang on the skirts of our force, and follow them down the Bhore Ghaut, and so would not come anywhere near us; but they might detach flying parties to burn and plunder, as is their custom. Brave as they are, the Mahrattas do not fight for the love of fighting, but simply from the hope of plunder and of enlarging their territories.

"Well, we may hope, in a day or two, to hear that a battle has been fought, and that a victory has been won. Not that one victory would settle the matter, for the Mahratta force consists almost entirely of cavalry and, as we have only a handful, they would, if beaten, simply ride off and be ready to fight again, another day. If we had pushed on and occupied Poona, directly we landed--which should have been easy enough, if the baggage train had been left behind, for it is but forty miles from Panwell to the Mahratta capital--the position would have been altogether different. The Mahrattas would not have had time to collect their forces, and we should probably have met with no opposition and, once in Poona, could have held it against the whole Mahratta force. Besides, it is certain that some of the chiefs, seeing that Rugoba was likely to be made Peishwa, would have come to the conclusion that it would be best for them to side with him.

"Of course, the baggage should all have been left at Panwell and, in that case, the force could have entered Poona three days after landing, instead of delaying from the 25th of November until today, the 7th of January; and even now, at their present rate of advance, they may be another fortnight before they arrive at Poona. I don't think there has been so disgraceful a business since we first put foot in India.

"At any rate, I shall send Mary and the child down to Bombay, tomorrow. It is all very well to have her with me, when everything is peaceable; but although I do not think there is any actual risk, it is as well that, in turbulent times like

these, with nothing but a force under such incompetent leading between us and a powerful and active enemy, she should be safe at Bombay."

Just before daybreak, next morning, there was a sudden shout from one of the sentries; who had for the first time been posted round the camp. The warning was followed by a fierce rush, and a large body of horse and foot charged into the camp. The escort were, for the most part, killed as they issued from their tents. The major and his friend were shot down as they sallied out, sword in hand. The same fate befell Mrs. Lindsay.

Then the Mahrattas proceeded to loot the camp. The ayah had thrust the child underneath the wall of the tent, at the first alarm. A Mahratta seized her, and would have cut her down, had she not recognized him by the light of the lamp which hung from the tent ridge.

"Why, cousin Sufder," she exclaimed, "do you not know me?"

He loosed his hold, and stood back and gazed at her.

"Why, Soyera," he exclaimed, "is it you? It is more than ten years since I saw you!

"It is my cousin," he said to some of his companions who were standing round, "my mother's sister's child."

"Don't be alarmed," he went on, to the woman, "no one will harm you. I am one of the captains of this party."

"I must speak to you alone, Sufder."

She went outside the tent with him.

"You have nothing to fear," he said. "You shall go back with us to Jooneer. I have a house there, and you can stay with my wife. Besides, there are many of your people still alive."

"But that is not all, Sufder. I was ayah to the major and his wife--whom your people have just killed, and whom I loved dearly--and in my charge is their child. He is but a few months old, and I must take him with me."

"It is impossible," Sufder replied. "No white man, woman, or child would be safe in the Deccan, at present."

"No one would see his face," the woman said. "I would wrap him up, and will give out that he is my own child. As soon as we get up the Ghauts I would stain his face and skin, and no one would know that he was white. If you will not let me do it, tell your men to cut me down. I should not care to live, if the child were gone as well as his father and mother. You cannot tell how kind they were to me. You would not have me ungrateful, would you, Sufder?"

"Well, well," the man said good naturedly, though somewhat impatiently, "do as you like; but if any harm comes of it, mind it is not my fault."

Thankful for the permission, Soyera hurried round to the back of the tent, picked up the child and wrapped it in her robe; and then when, after firing the place, the Mahrattas retired, she fell in behind them, and followed them in the toilsome climb up the mountains, keeping so far behind that none questioned her. Once or twice Sufder dropped back to speak to her.

"It is a foolish trick of yours," he said, "and I fear that trouble will come of it."

"I don't see why it should," she replied. "The child will come to speak Mahratta and, when he is stained, none will guess that he is English. In time, I may be able to restore him to his own people."

The other shook his head.

"That is not likely," he said, "for before many weeks, we shall have driven them into the sea."

"Then he must remain a Mahratta," she said, "until he is able to make his way to join the English in Madras or Calcutta."

"You are an obstinate woman, and always have been so; else you would not have left your people to go to be servant among the whites. However, I will do what I can for you, for the sake of my mother's sister and of our kinship."

On the way up the hills Soyera stopped, several times, to pick berries. When

they halted she went aside and pounded them, and then boiled them in some water in a lota--a copper vessel--Sufder lent her for the purpose, and dyed the child's head and body with it, producing a colour corresponding to her own.

The party, which was composed of men from several towns and villages, broke up the next morning.

"Have you money?" Sufder asked her, as she was about to start alone on her journey.

"Yes; my savings were all lodged for me, by Major Lindsay, with some merchants at Bombay; but I have twenty rupees sewn up in my garments."

"As to your savings, Soyera, you are not likely to see them again, for we shall make a clean sweep of Bombay. However, twenty rupees will be useful to you, and would keep you for three or four months, if you needed but, as you are going to my wife, you will not want them.

"Take this dagger. When you show it to her, she will know that you come from me; but mind, she is, like most women, given to gossip; therefore I warn you not to let her into the secret of this child's birth, for if you did so, half the town would know it in the course of a day or two.

"Now, I must go back with my men to join a party who are on their way to fight the English. I should have gone there direct, but met the others starting on this marauding expedition, which was so much to the taste of my men that I could not restrain them from joining. I shall see you at Jooneer, as soon as matters are finished with the English; then I shall, after staying a few days there, rejoin Scindia, in whose service I am."

Soyera started on her way. At the villages through which she passed, she was questioned as to where she came from; and replied that she had been living down near Bombay but, now that the English were going to fight the Mahrattas, she was coming home, having lost her husband a few months before.

As the road to Jooneer diverged widely from that to Poona, she was asked no questions about the war. All were confident that the defeat of the English was certain, now that Scindia and Holkar and the government of the Peishwa had laid

aside their mutual jealousies, and had joined for the purpose of crushing the whites.

On arriving, after two days' journey, at Jooneer, she went to the address that Sufder had given her; but was coldly received by his wife.

"As it is Sufder's order, of course I must take you in," she said, "but when he returns, I shall tell him that I do not want another woman and child in the house. Why do you not go to your own people? As you are Sufder's cousin, you must be the sister of Ramdass. Why should you not go to him?"

"I will gladly do so, if you will tell me where he lives."

"He has a small farm. You must have passed it, as you came along. It is about a mile from here."

"I will go to him at once," Soyera said.

"No, no," the woman exclaimed; "that will never do. You must stop a day or two here. Sufder would be angry, indeed, were he to find that you did not remain here; and would blame me for it. I should be willing enough for you to stay a week, or a month; that is a different thing from becoming an inmate of the house."

"I will wait till tomorrow, for I have made a long two days' journey from the top of the Ghauts and, as I am not accustomed to walking, my feet are sore. In the morning I will go and see my brother. I did not so much as know that he was alive. I feel sure he will take me in, willingly; for he is but two years older than myself, and was always kind to me."

Accordingly the next morning she retraced her steps, and had no difficulty in finding the farm of Ramdass. Choosing the time when he would be likely to be in for his dinner, Soyera walked up to the door of the house, which was standing open.

As she stood there, hesitating, Ramdass came out. He was a man of some forty years of age, with a pleasant and kindly face. He looked at her enquiringly.

"Do you not know me, Ramdass?" she asked.

"Why, 'tis Soyera!" he exclaimed. "And so you have come back, after all these years--thirteen, is it not, since you went away?

"Welcome back, little sister!" and he raised his voice, and called, "Anundee!"

A young woman, two or three and twenty years of age, came to the door.

"Wife," he said, "this is my sister Soyera, of whom you have often heard me speak.

"Soyera, this is my wife. We have been married six years; but come in, and let us talk things over.

"You have come home for good, I hope," he said. "So you too have married and, as you come alone with your child, have, I suppose, had the misfortune to lose your husband?"

"Yes, I was alone in the world, and came hither not knowing whether you were alive or dead; but feeling sure of a welcome, if I found you."

"And you were not mistaken," he said heartily.

"Anundee, you will, I am sure, join me in the welcome; and willingly give my sister and her child a place in our home?"

"Assuredly. It will be pleasant for me, when you are in the fields, to have some one to talk to, and perhaps to help me about the house."

Soyera saw that she was speaking sincerely.

"Thank you, Anundee; you may be sure that I shall not be idle. I have been accustomed to work, and can take much off your hands; and will look after your two children;" for two boys, three or four years old, were standing before her, staring at the newcomer.

"That will be pleasant, Soyera; indeed, sometimes they hinder me much in my work."

"I am accustomed to children, Anundee, as I was for years nurse to English

children, and know their ways."

"Well, now let us to dinner," Ramdass broke in. "I am hungry, and want to be off again. There is much to do in the fields."

The woman took a pot off the embers of a wood fire, and poured its contents into a dish. The meal consisted of a species of pulse boiled with ghee, with peppers and other condiments added.

"And how did you like being among the English, Soyera?"

"I liked it very well," the woman said. "They are very kind and considerate to nurses and, although they get angry when the gorrawallah or other men neglect their duty, they do not punish them as a Mahratta master would do. They are not double faced; when they say a thing they mean it, and their word can always be trusted. As a people, no doubt they are anxious to extend their dominion; but they do not wish to do so for personal gain. They are not like the princes here, who go to war to gain territory and revenue. It was reasonable that they should wish to increase their lands; for they are almost shut up in Bombay, with Salsette and the other islands occupied by us, who may, any day, be their enemies."

Her brother laughed.

"It seems to me, Soyera, that you have come to prefer these English people to your own countrymen."

"I say not that, Ramdass. You asked me how I liked them, and I have told you. You yourself know how the tax collectors grind down the people; how Scindia and Holkar and the Peishwa are always fighting each other. Do you know that, in Bombay, the meanest man could not be put to death, unless fairly tried; while among the Mahrattas men are executed on the merest excuse or, if not executed, are murdered?"

"That is true enough," Ramdass said; "none of the three princes would hesitate to put to death anyone who stood in his way, and it seems strange to me that even the Brahmins, who would not take the life even of a troublesome insect, yet support the men who have killed scores of other people. But it is no use grumbling; the thing has always been, and I suppose always will be. It is not

only so in the Deccan, but in the Nizam's dominions, in Mysore and, so far as I know, in Oude and Delhi. It seems so natural to us that the powerful should oppress the weak, and that one prince should go to war with another, that we hardly give the matter a thought; but though, as you say, the English in Bombay may rule wisely, and dislike taking life, they are doing now just as our princes do--they are making war with us."

"That is true but, from what I have heard when the English sahibs were speaking together, it is everything to them that a prince favourable to them should rule at Poonah for, were Holkar and Scindia to become all powerful, and place one of their people on the seat of the Peishwa, the next step might be that a great Mahratta force would descend the Ghauts, capture Bombay, and slay every white man in it."

"But they are a mere handful," Ramdass said. "How can they think of invading a nation like ours?"

"Because they know, at least they believe, that Scindia, Holkar, and the Peishwa are all so jealous of each other that they will never act together. Then you see what they have done round Madras and Bengal and, few as they are, they have won battles against the great princes; and lastly, my mistress has told me that, although there are but few here, there are many at home; and they could, if they chose, send out twenty soldiers for every one there is here.

"Besides, it is not these alone who fight. The natives enlist under them, and aid them in their conquests; and this shows, at least, that they are well treated, and have confidence in the good faith of the English."

"It is all very well, Soyera, to talk that way; but I would as willingly believe that the stars will fall from the sky as that these Englishmen, who simply live in Bombay because we suffer them to do so, should ever conquer the Mahrattas, as they have subdued other portions of India where, as everyone knows, the people are not warlike, and have always been conquered without difficulty.

"Look at our power! At Delhi the emperor is a puppet in our hands, and it is the same in all the districts on the plain of the great river. The Rajpoots fear us, and even the Pindaries would not dare carry their raids into our country. That a small body of merchants and soldiers should threaten us seems, to me, altogether

absurd."

"Well, brother, we will not argue about it. Time will show. As a woman of the Mahrattas, I trust that day will never come; but as one who knows the English, I have my fears. Of one thing I am sure, that were they masters here, the cultivators would be vastly better off than they are at present."

Ramdass laughed.

"What do you think of my sister's opinions, Anundee?"

"I do not know what to think," the young woman said; "but Soyera has seen much, and is a wise woman, and what she says are no idle words. To us it seems impossible, when we know that the Mahrattas can place a hundred thousand horsemen in the field; but I own that, from what we know of the English, it might be better for people like us to have such masters."

"And now, Soyera," Ramdass said, when he returned from his work in the evening, "tell us more about yourself. First, how did you learn where I was living?"

"I learned it from the wife of our cousin Sufder."

"How did you fall in with him?"

"Well, I must tell you something. I had meant to keep it entirely to myself, but I know that you and Anundee will keep my secret."

"Assuredly we will. I am not a man to talk of other people's affairs and, as to Anundee, you can trust her with your life."

"Well, in the first place, I deceived you; or rather you deceived yourself, when you said, 'I see that you have been married;' but the children were here, and so I could not explain. The infant is not mine. It is the son of my dear master and mistress, both of whom were killed, three days ago, by bands--of which Sufder commanded one--who attacked them suddenly, by night."

"What! Is the child white?" Ramdass asked, in a tone of alarm.

"It is not white, because I have stained the skin; but it is the child of English parents. I will tell you how it happened."

And she related the instances of the attack upon the little camp, the death of her master and mistress, another white officer, and all their escort; told how she had hidden the child under the cover of the tent, how Sufder had saved her life, and her subsequent conversation with him regarding the child.

"Now, what do you intend to do with him, Soyera?"

"I intend to bring him up as my own. I shall keep his skin stained, and no one can suspect that he is not mine."

"Then you do not think of restoring him to his people?"

"Not until he grows up. He has neither father nor mother, and to whom could I hand him, now? Moreover if, as you say, our people intend to drive the English from Bombay, his fate would be certain. When I am by myself with him, I shall talk to him in English, as soon as he is old enough to understand that he must not speak in that language to others; then, when he joins his own people, he will be able to converse with them. In the ten years I have spent in English service I have come to speak their language well. Though I cannot teach him the knowledge of the English, I can do much to fit him to take his place as an Englishman, when the time comes."

"It is a risky business," her brother said, "but I do not say that it cannot be carried out; at any rate, since you have so decided to keep him, I can see no better plan."

Two days later, Sufder came in.

"So you got here safely, Soyera?"

"Yes, I had no trouble. But I did not expect you back so soon."

"The matter is all settled, though I think we were wrong to grant any terms to the English. We had them in our power, and should have finished the matter, straight off."

Delay and inactivity, the natural consequences of utter incompetence and of divided councillors, had occurred. Colonel Egerton, in consequence of sickness, had resigned the command; and had been succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Cockburn. On the 9th of January they were within eighteen miles of Poona, and they had still three weeks' provisions with them. Two or three skirmishes had taken place, but without any result; yet Mr. Carnac, without having suffered any reverse, and now within a day's march of the capital, proposed that a retreat should be made, at once.

The proposal was combated by Captain Hartley, a gallant young officer, and Mr. Holmes of the Civil Service. Cockburn, being called upon for his opinion, said he had no doubt the army could penetrate to Poona; but that it would be impossible for it to protect its enormous baggage train. Mr. Carnac, however, persisted in his opinion, in spite of the prayers of Rugoba and, at eleven o'clock on the night of the 11th of January, the heavy guns were thrown into a large pool, a quantity of stores burnt, and the force began its retreat, in face of enemies estimated differently at from fifty to a hundred thousand men.

Against such vigilant foes there was but little hope, indeed, that the movement would be unnoticed and, at two o'clock in the morning, a party of horse attacked the advance guard. Cockburn sent forward two companies of Europeans to support them, but the Mahrattas had succeeded in plundering part of the baggage.

In a very short time the rear was also attacked. This was covered by some six companies of Sepoys, with two guns, commanded by Captain Hartley. These received the charge of the enemy's horse and foot with great steadiness and, several times, took the offensive and drove their assailants back.

When morning broke, the little force found themselves altogether surrounded by the whole army of the Mahrattas. Hartley's Sepoys were now sorely pressed, but still maintained their position, and were reinforced by five companies of Europeans and two more companies of Sepoys. With this support, Hartley beat off every attack. At ten o'clock he received orders from Colonel Cockburn to retreat, but the officer who carried the message returned, begging that he would allow Captain Hartley to await a more favourable opportunity. Cockburn agreed to this, but sent Major Frederick to take command of the rear, with orders to retire on the main body. This movement he effected without serious loss, and

joined the rest of the force at the village of Wurgaom.

It was already crowded with camp followers, and the wildest confusion reigned. The enemy's horse took advantage of this and charged through the baggage, and the troops were unable to act with effect, being mixed up with the crowd of fugitives. However, they soon extricated themselves, drove off the enemy, and placed the guns in commanding positions round the village. At four o'clock the enemy retired.

Early the next morning the Mahratta artillery opened fire on the village. Some of the Sepoy troops now became dispirited; but Hartley's men stood firm, and the Mahrattas did not venture to attack. The loss on the previous day was found to amount to three hundred and fifty-two killed, wounded, or missing; including many who had deserted during the night. Among the killed and wounded were fifteen European officers, whose loss was a great misfortune for, although the Sepoys fight well under their European officers, they lose heart altogether if not so led.

Mr. Palmer, the secretary of the committee, was now sent to negotiate with the enemy. The first demand made was the surrender of Rugoba; which the committee would have agreed to, but Rugoba had privately arranged to surrender to Scindia. The next demand was that the committee should enter on a treaty, for the surrender of the greater part of the territory of the Bombay Government, together with the revenue of Broach and Surat. These terms were so hard that even the craven committee, who were entirely responsible for the disaster, hesitated to accept them.

Cockburn was asked whether a retreat was wholly impracticable, and he declared that it was so. Captain Hartley protested against this opinion, and showed how a retreat could be managed. His opinion was altogether overruled, and Mr. Holmes was sent with powers to conclude the treaty--which, however, the committee never intended to observe.

Scindia took the principal part in arranging the details, superseding the authority of Nana Furnuwees, the Peishwa's minister. Scindia's favour was purchased by a private promise to bestow upon him the English share of Broach, besides a sum of forty-one thousand rupees as presents to his servants.

For their share in this miserable business Mr. Carnac, Colonel Egerton, and Colonel Cockburn were dismissed from the Company's service; and Captain Hartley was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. The Governor of Bombay refused to ratify the treaty, on the ground that the officials with the expedition had no power whatever to enter into any arrangement, without the matter being previously submitted to, and approved by, the Government. Fortunately, at this moment a force that had been despatched from Bengal, under Colonel Goddard, to support Rugoba was nearing the scene of action; and that officer, learning the danger to which Bombay was exposed, took the responsibility and, marching from Hoosingabad, avoided a body of twenty-two thousand horse, which had been despatched from Poona to cut him off, and reached Surat without encountering any opposition.

This welcome reinforcement materially altered the situation, and Bombay lay no longer at the mercy of the Mahrattas. There was now Goddard's force, and the army that had fallen back from Poona and, what was still more important, Scindia had by his secret convention deserted the confederacy; and it was morally certain that neither the Peishwa nor Holkar would send his forces against Bombay, leaving to Scindia the power of grasping the supreme authority in the Deccan during their absence.

In 1779 General Goddard, who was now in command at Bombay, entered into negotiations with Nana Furnuwees. These were carried on for some months; but were brought to a conclusion by Nana declaring that the surrender of Salsette, and the person of Rugoba, who was again a fugitive in Bombay, were preliminaries to any treaty. Bombay received a reinforcement of a European regiment, a battalion of Sepoys, and a hundred artillerymen, from Madras; but before they arrived Goddard's force had captured Dubhoy, and a treaty had been effected.

The town of Ahmedabad was to be handed over to our ally, Futteh Sing; but it declined to surrender, and was taken by assault, the storming party being commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hartley.

Scindia had as usual changed sides, and was now operating in conjunction with Nana; and he and Holkar, with twenty thousand horse, marched to Baroda. Goddard advanced to give battle; but Scindia, to gain time, opened negotiations.

Goddard, however, was not to be duped. The negotiations were broken off, and he advanced against the Mahrattas. Their horse, as usual, charged; but were driven back by the artillery fire, and routed by a regiment of Bengal cavalry. Scindia, however, encamped a short distance off but, when Goddard again advanced to the attack, retired.

Goddard, however, was not to be drawn into pursuit. He captured some small forts, and sent Colonel Hartley to relieve Kallan, which was being besieged by the Mahrattas. Hartley surprised their camp, pursued them for some miles, and killed a great number; while Lieutenant Welsh, who had been sent forward to relieve Surat--which was threatened by a large Mahratta force--defeated these, killed upwards of a hundred, and captured their guns; while one of Scindia's detachments, on the banks of the Nerbuddah, was routed by a detachment of Bengal Sepoys under Major Forbes.

On the other side of India, great successes had been gained by a Bengal force under the command of Captain Popham; who attacked and routed a body of plundering Mahrattas, captured by assault the strong fort of Lahar, and not only carried by surprise the fortress of Gwalior, regarded by the natives as impregnable, but took it without the loss of a single man.

In December, General Goddard laid siege to Bassein. He and Hartley, whose force was covering the siege, were attacked on the 11th of that month by twenty thousand cavalry and infantry. These, however, were defeated after making several desperate charges; and on the following day another battle took place, in which the Mahrattas were totally routed, and their general killed, after which Bassein surrendered.

Chapter 2: A Strange Bringing Up.

The war went on during the following year, but in 1782 peace was concluded. In 1784, the Mahrattas joined the Nizam and the British in an alliance, having for its object the overthrow of Mysore; which state, first under Hyder Ali, and afterwards under his son Tippoo, was a source of danger to all the allies.

In the meantime Harry Lindsay, who was now called Puntojee, had been living quietly on the farm of Ramdass; and no suspicion whatever had been excited in the minds of the neighbours, or of any of the people of Jooneer, that he was aught but what he seemed--the son of Soyera. Once a week he was re-stained; and even his playmates, the two sons of Ramdass, believed that he was, like themselves, a young Mahratta. They knew that, sometimes, their aunt talked to the child for hours in a strange language; but she led them to believe it was the dialect of Bombay, which she thought it might be useful for him to learn.

The child was shrewd and intelligent, and strictly obeyed Soyera's instructions never, on any account, to talk in that language with her except when they were alone; for she said that, if he did so, some great misfortune would happen to him.

Thus, at six, he was able to speak English and Mahratta with equal facility. As soon as his hair began to grow, it had also been dyed; for its colour was fair, and would at once have excited attention. He was a sturdy boy, and had never known a day's illness.

Four more years passed, and Soyera then revealed to him the fact that she was not, as he supposed, his mother, but that he was of English parents; and related to him the manner in which they had come by their death, and how she had saved him.

"The language which you are speaking," she said, "is English. I spoke truly, when I said it was the language in use in Bombay; for it is the tongue of the white men there. Now you will understand why I wanted you not to speak in it, to anyone but myself; and why I have stained your skin, once a week. At present

we are at peace with the English; but there may be war again, at any time, and in that case were it known that you are white, your life would not be safe for a moment; or you might be thrown into some dungeon, where you would perish miserably."

She then explained to him why she had not attempted to take him down to Bombay, and restore him to his countrymen. She had always hoped the time would come when she could do so but, until he grew up to manhood, it was necessary that he should stay with her; for, being without friends in Bombay he would, as a boy, be unable to earn his living.

The boy was greatly affected at the news. There were things that he had never been able to understand; especially why Soyera should consider it necessary to wash him with dye so often, when neither his cousins nor the other children of his acquaintance were so treated--as far as he knew, for as he had been strictly charged never to speak of the process, which he considered an infliction, he had never asked questions of others. He had never, therefore, for a moment suspected that he was not like those around him. He knew that he was stronger than other boys of his own age; more fond of exercise, and leader in all their games; but he had accepted this as a natural accident. The fact that he belonged to the race that were masters of southern India, and had conquered and slain the Nabob of Bengal, was a gratification to him but, at present, the thought that he might some day have to join them, and leave all those he loved behind, far overpowered this feeling.

"I shall never become English, if you do not go with me," he said. "You saved my life, and have been a mother to me. Why should I go away from your side, to people that I know nothing of, whose ways would be all strange to me?"

"It is right that you should do so, Puntojee--I will not call you by your proper name, Harry Lindsay, lest it should slip out before others. Your life should be spent among your own people; who, I think, will some day rule over all India. They are a great people, with learning of many things unknown here, from whom I always received the greatest kindness. They are not, like the Mahrattas, always quarrelling among themselves; they are not deceitful, and they are honourable. You should be proud to belong to them, and I have no doubt some day you will be so; though at present it is natural that, knowing no place but this, you should not like the thought of leaving."

Harry Lindsay, whose spirits had hitherto been almost inexhaustible, and who had never been happy when sitting quiet, was greatly impressed with what he had heard and, for some time, he withdrew himself almost entirely from the sports of his friends, hiding himself in the groves from their importunities, and thinking over the strange position in which he was placed.

Soyera at last remonstrated with him.

"If I had thought you would take this matter to heart, Puntojee, I should not have told you about it. I did so because I thought you could scarcely be stained, much longer, without demanding the reason for what must have seemed so strange a thing.

"I do not want you to withdraw yourself from your playmates, or to cease from your games. Your doing so will, if it continues, excite talk. Your friends will think that a spell has fallen upon you, and will shun you. I want you to grow up such as your father was--strong and brave, and skilful in arms--and to do this you must be alert and active. It may well be that you should not join your countrymen until you are able to play the part of a man, which will not be for ten years yet; but you know that my cousin Sufder has promised that, as soon as you are able to carry arms, he will procure a post for you under Scindia.

"There you will learn much, and see something of the world whereas, if you remain here, you would grow up like other cultivators, and would make but a bad impression among your countrymen, when you join them. Sufder himself has promised to teach you the use of arms and, as all say he is very skilful, you could have no better master.

"At any rate, I wish you to resume your former habits, to exercise your body in every way, so that you may grow up so strong and active that, when you join your countrymen, they will feel you are well worthy of them. They think much of such things, and it is by their love for exercise and sport that they so harden their frames that, in battle, our bravest peoples cannot stand against them."

"But the Mahrattas are strong, mother?"

"Yes, they can stand great fatigues; living, as they do, so constantly on horseback but, like all the people of India, they are not fond of exercise, save

when at war. That is the difference between us and the English. These will get up at daybreak, go for long rides, hunt the wild boar or the tigers in the jungles of the Concan, or the bears among the Ghauts. Exercise to them is a pleasure; and we in the service of the English have often wondered at the way in which they willingly endure fatigues, when they might pass their time sitting quietly in their verandahs. But I came to understand that it was to this love of theirs, for outdoor exercise, that they owed their strength and the firmness of their courage. None can say that the Mahrattas are not brave but, although they will charge gallantly, they soon disperse if the day goes against them.

"So also with the soldiers of Tippoo. They overran Arcot and threatened Madras; Tanjore and the Carnatic were all in their hands; and yet the English never lost their firmness and, little by little, drove Tippoo's troops from the lands they had conquered; and it may be that, ere long, Tippoo will be a fugitive, and his dominions divided among those whom he has provoked.

"Is it not wonderful that, while not very many years ago the Whites were merely a handful, living on sufferance in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, they are now masters of southern India and half of Bengal; and even venture to engage a great empire like that of the Mahrattas, stretching from the sea on the west to Delhi, and holding the mastery over all central India? There must be something extraordinary about these men. Why, you would scarce believe it, but I have seen often, and wondered always; when they have an entertainment, instead of sitting quietly 'and having dancing girls to posture for their amusement, they dance themselves with their women--not a mere movement of the body and hands, such as you see among our dancers, but violent dancing, exhausting themselves till the perspiration streams from their faces--and this both men and women regard as amusement; so, Puntojee, if you are to take your place among your countrymen again, you must accustom yourself to fatigues, and strengthen your body in every way; or you will be regarded with contempt as one who, although of their blood, has grown degenerate and unworthy of them."

"I will do so," the boy said. "You shall not complain of me, again. Hitherto I have played for amusement, and because I liked to exercise my limbs, and to show the others that I could run faster and was stronger than they were; but in future I shall have a motive in doing so, and will strive to be worthy of my father."

From that time, Harry Lindsay devoted himself to exercises. He learnt from Sufder, when he visited his native town, and from old soldiers, when he was away, to use a sword and dagger, to hurl a light spear accurately, to shoot straight with a musket, that Sufder had picked up on the field of battle at Karlee, and also with the pistol. He rose at daybreak, and walked for miles before coming in to his morning meal; and exercised the muscles of his arms, not only by the use of the sword, but by holding heavy stones at arm's length.

Soyera, although still retaining her own religion, had carefully instructed him in that of the English; with which she had, during her service, become fully acquainted.

"I am only a servant, an ignorant woman, and it is not for me to decide which religion is the best, and I have never thought of giving up that of my people; but the religion of the Christians is much simpler than ours. They believe in one God, only; and in his Son who, like Buddha, was a great saint, and went about doing good. I will tell you all I know of Him, for my mistress frequently spoke to me of Him; and hoped, I think, that in time I should accept Him, as she did. When you join your people, it is as necessary that you should be of their religion, as of their race;" and so, in time, Harry learned at least the elements of Christianity.

As usual he had been, at the age of six, marked, like Soyera, with three perpendicular lines on the forehead--the sign of the worshippers of Vishnu.

"You are twelve years old now, Harry," Soyera said to the boy, one day. "Now I must do what I have concluded, after a talk with Ramdass and Sufder, is the best thing for you. We have agreed that it will be better that you should not join your countrymen, and claim to be the son of Major Lindsay, until you are a man. I do not know what they would do with you. They might send you back to England, but I cannot say what would become of you there; but we have agreed that, when you do join them, you must be like other young English gentlemen, and not be looked down upon as one who, though he has a white skin, is but a Mahratta peasant.

"In the first place, you must learn to speak English."

"But I do speak English!" Harry said, in surprise.

"Yes, such English as I do; but that is not as the white sahibs speak it. We who have learned it speak the right word, but not in the right way. I have seen young white ladies, when they first came out here, and came to the house of your mother, sometimes smile and scarcely understand what I said to them. It is not like that that you must talk English--good enough for an ayah, not good enough for a sahib--so we have decided, Sufder, Ramdass and I, that you must go down to Bombay, and learn to talk proper English.

"We have thought much how this shall be done, and have settled that our thinking, here, is no good. I must wait till I get to Bombay, where I can get advice from people I know."

"Will you stay there with me, Soyera?"

"I cannot say what will be best," she answered, gravely; "I must wait till I get there. Ramdass will go down with me. It is a good time for him to go. The harvest work is done, he can be spared for a month. He would like to go. He has never seen Bombay. We shall go in the wagon."

The distance from Jooneer to Bombay was but about eighty miles, and the journey was performed in five days, and Ramdass took down a light load of maize, whose sale would pay the expenses of their journey. Soyera rode and slept on the maize, except in two villages, where she was able to procure a lodging for the night. Ramdass and Harry walked by the bullocks, and slept at night by the roadside, wrapped in their blankets.

On arriving at Bombay they put up at a khan, in the native town and, the next morning, leaving Ramdass and Harry to wander about and look at the wonders of the city, Soyera went to the shop of a Parsee merchant, who was in the habit of supplying the canteen of the troops, contracted for supplies of forage and other matters, and carried on the business of a native banker. She had often been to his place with Mrs. Lindsay; and had, from the time that she entered her service, deposited her savings with him. She had, in the first place, asked her master to keep them for her; but he had advised her to go to Jeemajee.

The Parsee was, himself, in his shop. She went up to him.

"You do not remember me, sahib?" she said. "I was the ayah of Major Lindsay. I was often here with the mem-sahib."

"I remember you, now," he said. "I do not often forget those I have known. Yes; your master and mistress were killed, at their little camp on the Concan. Nothing was heard of you, if I remember rightly. I have some money of yours in my hands. Have you the receipts?"

"I have them, sahib; but it is not for that that I come to see you. I wish to ask your advice on a private matter."

The Parsee looked a little surprised.

"Come in here with me," he said, leading the way to his private room, behind the shop.

"Now, what is it?" he asked, as he closed the door behind them.

"It was believed, sahib, that Major Lindsay's infant boy was killed, at that time, like all others in the camp. It was not so. I saved him. It is about him that I want to speak to you."

The Parsee thought for a moment.

"Yes, there was a child. Its body was not found, and was supposed to have been eaten by the jackals. Is it alive still?"

"Yes, sahib, I have brought him up as my own. His skin has been always stained; and none but my brother--with whom I live--his wife, and one other, know that he is English. I love him as my own child. I have taught him English, as I speak it; but I want him, in time, to be an English sahib, and for that he must learn proper English."

"But why have you not brought him down here?" the Parsee said.

"Who would have looked after him, and cared for him, sahib, as I, his nurse, have done? Who could have taken him? What would have become of him? I am a poor woman, and do not know how these things would be. I said to myself:

"'It will be better that he should live with me, till he is old enough to go down as a young man, and say to the Governor:

"'"I am the son of Major Lindsay. I can talk Mahratti like a native. I can ride and use my sword. I can speak English well. I can be useful."

"'Then, perhaps for his father's sake, the Governor will say:

"'"I will make you an officer. If there are troubles in the Deccan, you will be more useful than those sahibs who do not know the language."'

"I can do all that for him, but I cannot teach him to speak as English sahibs speak; and that is why I have come to you. You have twelve hundred rupees of mine, in your hands; for I laid out nothing while I was in the sahib's service, and my mistress was very kind, and often gave me presents. My brother, Ramdass, had five hundred rupees saved; and this he has given to me, for he, too, loves the boy. Thus there are seventeen hundred rupees, and this I would pay for him to be, for two years, with someone where he would learn to speak English as sahibs do, so that none can say this white boy is not English.

"Then he will go back, for two or three years, to Jooneer. He will learn to use his arms, and to ride, and to be a man, until he is of an age to come down and say:

"'I am the son of Major Lindsay.'"

"But if you were to tell this, at once," the Parsee said, "they would doubtless send him home, to England, to be educated."

"And what would he do there, sahib? He would have no friends, none to care for him; and while his Mahratti tongue would be of great service to him, here, it would be useless to him in his own country.

"Do not say that my plan cannot be carried out, sahib. For twelve years I have thought it over. I have taught him all that I could, so far; and convinced myself that it would be the best. The boy loves me, and is happy: he would be miserable among strangers, who would laugh at his English, and would make him unhappy."

Jeemajee sat for some time in thought.

"I am not sure that your plan is not the best," he said, "and after saving his life, and caring for him, at the risk of your own, for all these years, you have assuredly a better right than any other to say what shall be done now. I will think over what you have asked of me. It is not very easy to find just such a home as you want, but I should consider the sum you offer is sufficient to induce many Englishmen living here to take him; but it is not everyone from whom he would learn English, as you would wish him to do, or who could teach him the manners of white officers.

"Come to me tomorrow evening, but you must not expect that I shall be able to answer you then. I must think it over, and make enquiries."

It was three days, indeed, before anything came of Soyera's visits to the Parsee trader; then he said:

"I think that I have found out just the place of which you are in search. I spoke to a friend yesterday, and he at once mentioned one whom I wonder I had not thought of, at once. Some years ago a cadet, who came out here with a young wife, died shortly after his arrival. As he had only been four years in the service, the pension of his wife was but a small one. She did not go back to England, as widows generally do. I know not why, except that I once heard two officers speaking of her. They said that they believed her family had quarrelled with her, for her marriage, and that she was too proud to go back again. She had two girls, who must be about the age of this boy. Her pension was not sufficient for her to live upon comfortably, and she opened a little school for the children of officers here.

"There are not many, you know, for they are generally sent home to England, when they are quite young. But she has always had four or five, sometimes eight or ten. They come to her every morning, and go home in the middle of the day, and she sees no more of them.

"After I had heard this, I went to her. I supply her with many things, for she gets her books and other things from me. I said to her:

"'I have a white boy whose father and mother are dead. He is twelve years

old. There are reasons why I cannot tell you who they were, but I can say that the boy's father was an English officer. He has been brought up by natives, and speaks English in the way that natives speak it. Those who have brought him up desire that he should learn to talk English well, and learn to have good manners, so that some day, when he goes to England, people should not say of him:

"'"This is not an English gentleman, or he would not speak like that.'"

"I said that I had interested myself in the matter, and knew that it was right, and had come to her to ask her if she would take him into her house, which was very comfortable and well furnished, and everything as it should be.

"She asked questions. I told her enough to interest her; and said that, when the time came, it was hoped that he would be able to obtain employment under the Government--perhaps in the army, as his father had been. I said that those who brought him up were ready to make great sacrifices for his sake, but that they could not pay for him for more than two years; and that, as the boy knew so much English, they hoped this would be enough. I asked how much, if she agreed to take him, she would charge. She said that she would think it over; and would call here, tomorrow, and tell me whether she would take him.

"She will be here at three. I think you had better come at that hour. I am sure that she would like to speak to you. I do not see why you should not say that you had been his ayah, and had saved his life, and brought him up. Many officers have been killed and, indeed, I do not see why you should not tell her the whole story. It will interest her more in the boy. But of course, before you tell her, you must ask her to promise not to repeat it."

Soyera went on the following day. She found that Jeemajee was already, with a lady, in his private room. She waited until the door was opened, and the merchant beckoned her in.

"This is the woman who has brought the child up, Mrs. Sankey," he said. "As I have told you, she was his ayah, and has behaved most nobly."

Turning to Soyera, he said:

"Naturally Mrs. Sankey asked why you had not come forward before. I told

her your reasons, and she thinks that, perhaps, you have acted for the best for him. At any rate, she has consented to take the boy for two years; and I am to pay her, for you, the sum that you have named."

In reality, Mrs. Sankey asked a thousand rupees a year; but the Parsee, with the generosity for which his race is distinguished, had agreed to pay the extra three hundred rupees himself.

"Before it is quite settled," Mrs. Sankey said, "I should like to see the boy. As Mr. Jeemajee has told you, I have two daughters about the same age. I must, therefore, be guided in my decision by my impression of him."

"I will bring him to see you, in three or four days," Soyera said. "His stain is already faded a good deal, and I shall be able to get it off, by that time. I have to get English clothes for him.

"I am greatly obliged to you for saying that you will take him, if he pleases you. That I think he will do. I have taught him manners, as well as I could. He is as anxious as I am to improve himself; and will, I am sure, give you no more trouble than he can help."

"I will see that he is properly clothed, Mrs. Sankey," Jeemajee remarked. "I knew his father, and have a great interest in him."

Mrs. Sankey chatted for some little time to Soyera; gave her her card, with her address on Malabar Hill; and then left.

Soyera began to thank the Parsee for his introduction, but he said:

"It was a little thing to do and, as I knew his father, it was only right that I should help, as far as I could. Will you bring me, tomorrow morning, the measurement of the boy's height, size around his shoulders and waist, the lengths of his arms and legs? You need trouble yourself no further about it. I shall take that matter upon myself. Come, three days later, for his clothes.

"Goodbye! I have other matters to see about," and, without waiting for any thanks from Soyera, he at once went into his shop, and began to talk to his assistant.

Many were the scrubbings Harry had to undergo, during the next few days; and his hair and face were nearly restored to their proper colour when Soyera returned, one evening, with a coolie carrying a trunk of some size. It contained the whole outfit for a boy: one dark suit, and four of white nankeen; with a stock of shirts, underclothing, and shoes. Soyera showed Harry how these garments, with which he was wholly unacquainted, should be put on.

"They fit you capitally," she said, when she surveyed him. "And you look like a little English sahib."

"They feel very tight and uncomfortable," he said.

"They are sure to do so, at first; but you will soon get over that. Now, Ramdass will take you out for a walk for two or three hours, so that you can get accustomed to them. I should not like you to look awkward, when you go with me to Mrs. Sankey's, tomorrow."

The interview next day was altogether satisfactory. The carriage and bearing of the natives of India is easier, and more graceful, than that of Europeans; and the knowledge Harry had possessed, for some years, that he belonged to a conquering race, the injunctions of Soyera, his strength and activity, and his unquestioned leadership among the boys with whom he played, had given something of confidence to his manner. Mrs. Sankey was greatly taken with him, and he at once became an inmate of her house.

He remained there for two years, and became so great a favourite that Mrs. Sankey insisted on his staying with her, without charge, for three or four months after the time for which she had received payment for him. He had worked hard and earnestly, and now spoke English as well and accurately as any English boy of his own age. He had, after being there a year, made the acquaintance of several boys of his own age, the sons of officers or officials. They knew him only as the orphan son of an English gentleman, in Government employ; and he was often asked to the houses of their parents, and none suspected that he had been brought up among natives.

At the end of his term, Sufder came down for him. Jeemajee, who had remained his steady friend, arranged that he should go to his house, and there resume his native dress and stain. In this garb he felt even stranger and more

uncomfortable than he had done, when he first put on European clothes; but this was not long in wearing off and, by the time he reached Jooneer, he was again at home in it. He took with him, at Mrs. Sankey's suggestion, a number of English books, by authors she recommended; so that he could, by reading and learning some of them by heart, retain his knowledge of the language.

For the next three months he spent his whole time in practising with sword, pistol, and gun; under the tuition of an old soldier in Jooneer, who had been a noted swordsman in his time. He was already far stronger than the sons of Ramdass, although these were now young men. Anxious to, at once, exercise his muscles and gain in skill, he now attached himself to a famous shikaree who, seeing the boy's strength and courage, took him as an assistant when he went on excursions among the hills. Here Harry learned to dig pits for the capture of tigers; to smear leaves with a sticky substance, obtained from a plant resembling mistletoe, so that when a tiger or bear trod upon them and, finding them sticking to his feet, paused and rubbed these on his head, until he became blinded and bewildered with a mass of sticky foliage, a well-placed shot would stretch him dead.

Illustration: For a year he worked with the shikaree.

For a year he worked with the shikaree. Sometimes they hunted simply for the value of the skins; but more often they were sent for by villagers, who were suffering from the depredations of tigers or leopards, and who were willing to pay for having them killed. Harry Lindsay acquired quite a reputation in Jooneer and the surrounding country, for the shikaree spoke freely of his bravery, intelligence, and skill with his arms. His width of shoulders and the strength of his muscles caused him to be regarded as a prodigy; and it was generally considered that, when he grew up, he would become a great fighter, and attain wide renown as a leader of bands in the service of Holkar, or the Peishwa.

When he was sixteen, Sufder, who had watched his progress with great approval, said to him:

"You are scarce a man in years yet, Puntojee; but you are strong, skilful with your weapons, and far more of a man than many ten years older than yourself. It is time that you should see something of war. Since the death of Scindia, a few months back; and the succession of his nephew Doulut, who is about your own age; things have become even more unsettled than before. Scindia was a great man and, although at times worsted by his rivals, always managed to repair his fortunes and to add to his power; but whether the young Scindia will keep the wide territory that his uncle won is doubtful. Holkar, although at times he and Scindia united, as when the English marched against Poona, has been his rival

and enemy.

"The Peishwa has sometimes been in alliance with one of these great princes, sometimes with the other. His minister, Nana Furnuwees, is a man of commanding talent. Had it not been for him, it is probable that Scindia and Holkar would long since have become altogether independent; but he has always contrived to play one off against the other and, by securing the services of the secondary chiefs, such as the Rajah of Nagpore and the Rajah of Kolapoore, to hold the balance of power; but he is an old man, and at his death there is no saying how things will go.

"Matters are complicated, too, by the fact that Scindia has now in his service sixteen battalions of drilled infantry, commanded by French officers; and these have proved so valuable, in the various sieges he has undertaken, that Holkar has been obliged to imitate his example. There are many who think that the introduction of infantry will, in the end, prove disastrous to the power of the Mahrattas; whose strength has hitherto lain in their cavalry, which could perform long journeys, strike a blow and be off again, and so were more than a match for the infantry of other Indian princes. But with infantry all this will be altered, for the marches must be no longer or faster than they can journey. The order of battles, too, will be changed altogether; and we shall depend more upon foot, while our horse, until now almost invincible, will become of secondary importance.

"However, that is not the question, at present. The first thing to be considered is, to which of the three great leaders you are to attach yourself. As you know, I was for many years in Scindia's service; but at his death the position was changed. Scindia knew that I was active and capable; had he lived, I should soon have gained much promotion. However, his chief minister took a dislike to me; and I felt that, now the Maharajah was gone, Doulut would be easily swayed by the counsels of those around him; and that instead of promotion I should be more likely to lose my command, and perhaps be put out of the way. Therefore I left Doulut's service, and have entered that of the young Peishwa who, at the advice of Nana Furnuwees, has given me the command of a troop of a hundred men.

"Years ago I gained Nana's goodwill, by apprising him of the hostile intentions of the Rajah of Nagpore; when he promised me that, should I at any time leave Scindia's service, he would give me as good a position as I held there

in that of the Peishwa. The young prince is but twenty-one, and I will ask Nana to present you to him as one who, in time, will become a valuable officer; and it is likely that Mahdoo Rao will receive you well when he hears that, though so young, you have gained great credit as a slayer of wild beasts; and that, as he will see for himself, you promise to grow into a strong man, and a brave soldier.

"Nana Furnuwees is a man who, by his conciliating manner, gains the confidence of all who come under his influence; and it is wholly due to him that the authority of the Peishwa has not been entirely overthrown by Scindia and Holkar. He is a reader of men's minds, and has always surrounded himself with friends of discernment and courage; and I think you would be likely, if you remained in the Peishwa's service, to rise to a very much higher rank than I should ever do, being myself but a rough soldier with a heavy hand.

"Holkar, at present, is fast becoming altogether imbecile. He is worn out both in mind and body, and I should not advise anybody to join him. Therefore the choice rests between Doulut Rao Scindia and the Peishwa; as far as I can see, there is an equal chance of your seeing service with either."

"I can choose without hesitation," Harry said. "Had you still been in the army of Scindia, I would have joined it, too; but as you have now entered that of the Peishwa, who is the lawful ruler of the Mahrattas, though overshadowed by Scindia and Holkar, I should certainly choose his service.

"In any case, I would rather be with you. You have taught me the use of arms, and to you I owe it that I was not killed, when an infant; therefore I would assuredly rather fight under your orders, than take service with Holkar or Scindia.

"As to their quarrels, I know nothing. Ramdass has often told me as much as he knew of these matters, but it all seemed to me to be confusion; and the only thing I could understand was that they were always intriguing against each other, instead of putting all their forces in the field, and fighting it out fairly, and so deciding who was to be the chief lord of the Mahrattas."

"Although but a soldier, Puntojee, I cannot but see that this constant antagonism, between the three principal leaders of the Mahrattas, is unfortunate in the last degree. We are wasting the strength that, if properly employed, might

bring all India into subjection and, when trouble really comes, we shall be a divided people, instead of acting under one head and with one mind. However, it is not for us soldiers to meddle with these things; but to do our duty to the chief under whom we serve.

"Well, if such be your choice, I will present you to Nana Furnuwees. I am glad that you have chosen that service for, in the first place, being young, he may take a liking to you, and you may obtain rapid promotion; and still more, because I should prefer to have you with me."

Hitherto, Harry had worn only the scanty clothing in use by the peasantry, and the small cultivators; but Sufder now bought him clothes such as were worn by youths of a superior class. Soyera had offered no objection to his departure and, indeed, Sufder had spoken to her on the subject, before he had broached it to Harry.

"'Tis hard upon me to give you up," she said to the lad; "but I have always known that it must be so, and indeed, for the last year I have seen little of you. The change will be good for you. You will learn the manner of war, and take an interest in the intrigues and troubles that are constantly going on, and of which we hear little.

"When you rejoin your countrymen, a few years hence, I shall go with you. You need my testimony, to show that you are the son of Major Lindsay; and I can be useful to you, in managing your household. But at present it is best that I should stay here. A young soldier would not care to have his mother looking after him, and it is for your good that you should go your own way; and besides, you will have the counsels of Sufder to aid you. I should be out of place and, for the present, I am happy here with my good brother and sister-in-law, the latter of whom would miss me sorely. Moreover, Poona is but two days' ride from here, and you will no doubt be able sometimes to come over and see us.

"I have done what little I could for you. You are now old enough to make your own way. The bird that has taught its nestling to fly does not try to keep it in the nest, when it is once able to take care of itself."

"I can never be sufficiently grateful, for all that you have done for me," Harry said earnestly. "You have been more than a mother to me and, wherever I go, I

shall not be happy unless you are with me, though I see it is best, this time, that I should go alone; but assuredly, when I join my people, and have a home of my own, it would not seem like a home to me if you did not share it."

Two days later, Harry mounted a horse that Ramdass had given him, and started with Sufder for Poona. On arriving there they rode to the little camp, half a mile out of the town, where Sufder's troop was stationed.

"You don't carry your tents with you, when you are on service in the field?"

"Not when on an expedition where haste is needed; for we should make but poor progress, if we were hampered by luggage. When on a distant expedition, we take tents.

"This is a standing camp, and there are a score like it round the town. They always remain in the same position; sometimes one troop occupies them, sometimes another. When we go on an expedition, we leave them; when we come back, if they are still unoccupied, we again take possession. If they have been allotted to another troop, a vacant one is found for us.

"Only one regiment of horse and two of foot are in the city, where they have lines of huts. We differ from the rest of the army, being always on service; the others are only called out when there is occasion for them, each under its own chief and, in case of necessity, the Peishwa can put thirty thousand horsemen in the field, besides those of the rajahs in alliance with him."

The next morning Sufder, in his best attire, went with Harry into the city; the latter for the first time carrying a sword, dagger and pistols in his cummerbund, or sash. Without being questioned, they entered the chamber were Nana was giving audience to all who waited upon him on business.

Sufder took his place at the lower end of the chamber, moving forward as one after another applicant was disposed of until, at length, his turn arrived. The minister, who knew that he was a brave soldier, who had enjoyed the confidence of the late Scindia, acknowledged his deep salutation with a friendly nod.

"What can I do for you, Sufder?"

"I desire nothing, your excellency, save that I may be permitted to present to

you one of my family: the son of a relation of mine who, although still young, I may venture to recommend to you as one possessing great courage and intelligence. I have myself given him lessons in the use of his arms; and he has had other instructors, and done credit to them. For the past year he has been working with a famous shikaree, and has killed many tigers that were a scourge to the villages near the Ghauts, together with many bears and leopards; and his master reported that his fearlessness was great, and that as a marksman his skill was equal to his own. He was most unwilling that he should leave him, but I considered it was time for him to enter the army; in which, I believe, he will soon distinguish himself."

"How old is he?" the minister asked.

"He is as yet but sixteen but, as your highness may see, he is as strong as most men, having devoted himself to exercises of all sorts, since he was a child."

"He is indeed cast in a strong mould, and his face pleases me.

"And so, you would enter the service of His Highness, the Peishwa?"

"That is my desire, your excellency."

"You are young to serve as an officer and, for the present, you had best remain with Sufder's troop. In the meantime, I will see what suitable post can be found for you."

With an expression of thanks, Sufder and Harry left the audience hall.

"It is a good beginning, Puntojee," the soldier said, as they left the minister's palace. "Nana Furnuwees was evidently pleased with you, and I think he will give you special employment. At the same time, serving one master here is not without its danger--Nana especially, powerful as he is, has enemies as powerful; for he has always stood in the way of the ambition of Scindia."

That evening an officer brought, from Nana, an order conferring upon Harry the appointment of an assistant officer in Sufder's troop, with the usual pay and allowances and, three days later, an order came for him to attend the audience of the minister. On arrival, he was told by the officer of the chamber that he was not to present himself at public audience, but that Nana would speak to him

privately. He was therefore taken to an inner chamber where, an hour later, Nana joined him.

"I think by your face, Puntojee, that you can be trusted; and I have decided to place you in the service of His Highness, the Peishwa. What position you will hold there must depend upon yourself, and him. I shall simply recommend you as one of whom I have heard much good. It would be as well for you not to mention your age; but let him suppose that, as you look, you are about the same age as himself. He is amiable and kindly, and your position will be a pleasant one.

"I am anxious to prevent evil advisers from obtaining influence over him. He is young and unsuspicious, and much harm might thus come to the state. It is, then, for the general interest that he should be surrounded by those whom I can trust; so that, if any plotters are endeavouring to poison his mind, their plans may be thwarted. I have of course, officers about his person who are thoroughly trustworthy; but these are much older than himself, and he chafes somewhat at what he wrongly considers his tutelage. But indeed, as he is but twenty-one, and wholly unversed in matters of state, it is needful that the management of affairs should rest in the hands of those who have long controlled it.

"Scindia would be the first to take advantage of any imprudence. He is already, by far, the most powerful of the Mahratta princes. His possessions are of immense extent; he holds the emperor at Delhi in the palm of his hand; he can put one hundred thousand horse into the field, and has large numbers of infantry, including sixteen battalions drilled by French officers, and commanded by de Boigne; and although Doulut Rao is but twenty, and as yet we know but little of his disposition, he is of course surrounded by the advisers of his uncle, and may be expected to pursue the same policy. His uncle gained great ascendency over the Peishwa, and his death was a fortunate circumstance. Still, it is certain that the prince, until his powers are matured, will yield to the advice of those to whom the conduct of affairs is entrusted.

"Now, I am going to the palace, and have requested a private audience with Mahdoo Rao, and I will take you with me."

Followed by a train of officers, with whom Harry fell in, the minister proceeded to the palace. His train remained in the public hall, and Nana went

into the Peishwa's private apartment. In a few minutes, an official came in and called Puntojee; and Harry at once followed him to an inner room, where the Peishwa and his minister were alone. Harry bowed to the ground.

"This, Prince, is the young man of whom I have spoken to you. He bears an excellent character for his skill in arms, and has killed many tigers and other beasts. It was but the other day that you complained that you had no one of your own age to whom you could talk freely; and I have selected this young officer as one who, I thought, would be agreeable to you."

"I thank you heartily, Nana. In truth, I sometimes need a companion; and I think, by his face, that this officer will be an agreeable one. To what post, think you, had I best appoint him?"

"As he is a famous shikaree, I should say that it would be suitable were you to make him director of the chase."

"But I never go hunting."

"That is true; but in time, when your occupations of state lessen, you might do so," Nana said. "And indeed, even at present, there is nothing to prevent your hunting sometimes in the royal preserves, where there must be an abundance of game of all sorts."

"So let it be, then," the Peishwa said. "In truth, I care not for the killing of beasts, unless they do harm to the villagers. But it is right that there should be someone to direct the men who have charge of the preserves and, as an official, you will have the right of entry here at all times, and will be frequently about my person; and I will confer with you about other things, as well as the chase. You will, of course, have an apartment assigned to you.

"You will arrange about the emoluments, Nana."

"You had better go to my house, and wait for me there," Nana said; and Harry, bowing deeply to the prince and his minister, left the palace.

He did not deceive himself as to the reason for which Nana had thus placed him in a position in which he was likely to be frequently in the company of the young prince. He intended him to act as a spy. This he was firmly determined not

to do, in any matter save in thwarting any designs Scindia might have. That was a public duty.

By this time, he had learnt much of the events that were passing. Ramdass and the other ryots of his acquaintance regarded Nana Furnuwees as the guardian of the country. For many years, it was his wisdom and firmness alone that had thwarted the designs of Scindia, whose advent to supreme authority would have been regarded as a grave misfortune, by all the cultivators of the Deccan. Scindia's expenses in keeping up so great an army were enormous, and the exactions of his tax gatherers ground to the dust the cultivators and peasantry of his own wide dominions; and Harry was therefore ready to give Nana a faithful support in all public matters. He knew that the minister had many enemies, even among the rajahs in the Peishwa's dominion, and in those round it; for they regarded him, with reason, as a curb upon their private ambitions and, for years, intrigues had been going on for his overthrow.

On the other hand, Harry was much pleased with Mahdoo Rao, who was a most amiable and kindly young man. While determined, then, to do all that he could in support of Nana; he decided that he would, on no account, give him any report that would be unfavourable to the Peishwa. His interview with the minister, on the return of the latter, was a short one.

"Here," the latter said, "is a purse of five hundred rupees, with which to obtain garments suitable for one in attendance on the Peishwa. Your emolument will be two hundred rupees a month. I shall issue orders to the men employed in the forests and preserves to report to you; and have requested the chamberlain to allot an apartment to you in the palace, and to tell off two servants to be in attendance on you.

"You understand that your mission, as far as I am concerned, is to give me early warning, if any of those favourable to Scindia--you shall be furnished with a list of their names--are endeavouring to obtain an undue influence over the prince; who is of an altogether unsuspicious character, and would be likely to fall an easy victim to bad counsels."

"You can depend upon my doing so," Harry said. "I have been taught to regard Scindia as an enemy to the public peace, and shall use all diligence in carrying out your excellency's orders."

And, leaving the minister, Harry went to Sufder and told him what had happened.

"In truth, Puntojee, you were born under a lucky star. I never dreamt that Nana Furnuwees would have thus introduced you to the Peishwa. Now, lad, you have a fine career opened to you. It will need caution but, as Scindia's ancestor was but a slipper bearer, and rose to the highest rank and honour; so it is open to you to win a great position, if you steer clear of the dangers that attend all who play a part in public affairs. I foresee that you will become a favourite with the prince, but remember to put your trust in Nana. He is, at present, the greatest power in the land, and has been so for many years but, unlike most who have attained such authority, he is liked by the people, for he uses his power well, and for the good of the state.

"You see, even now the young Peishwa is by no means secure on the musnud. The adherents of Rugoba, who was undoubtedly the lawful ruler of the Deccan, still live; and may one day raise the flag of revolt, in favour of his sons Bajee Rao and Chimnajee Appa who, with Amrud Rao, his adopted son, are all in close custody in the hill fort of Sewneree, under two of Nana's officers.

"There is a general feeling of pity for these young men, even among those who regard their imprisonment as necessary--for, were they free, a civil war would assuredly break out again--and the feeling is increased by the fact that Bajee Rao is a youth of extraordinary accomplishments. He is graceful in person, with a handsome countenance and a charming manner and, although but nineteen, he is an excellent horseman, skilled in the use of the bow, and considered to be the finest swordsman in the country. He is deeply read in all our religious books and, in all the country, there is no one of his age so learned.

"All these things, however, only add to the necessity for his being kept in prison. A youth so gifted and, as many people consider, the lawful heir to the throne, would speedily be joined by all the enemies of Nana; and might not only drive the minister into exile, but dethrone Mahdoo Rao. Such being the case, no one can blame Nana for keeping them in confinement--at any rate, until Mahdoo Rao has been master for some years, and has proved that he is able to maintain his position.

"Now, lad, I will go into the town with you, and purchase dresses fit for an

official of the palace."

"I quite see that I have been most fortunate in obtaining such a position, Sufder; but I own I should have preferred to remain with you, and learn to do service as a soldier."

"That you may learn later on," Sufder said. "Having the confidence of the Peishwa, you may soon obtain military rank, as well as civil and, if war breaks out, may hold a position vastly better than you could hope to attain to as the mere chief of a troop."

"It seems very ridiculous, Sufder, that I should be thus put forward, without any merit of my own; while you, who have fought in many battles, are still only commander of your troop."

"I have no desire for more," Sufder replied. "I am a soldier, and can do my duty as ordered, but I have no head for intrigues; and I consider the risks of a battle are quite sufficient, without those of being put out of the way for mixing myself up in plots.

"Again, your rise is not altogether undeserved. You have, by your exercises, attained the strength of manhood early; and your experience as a tiger hunter has fitted you for the post for which you are appointed, just as your diligence in exercise in arms will be of good service to you, if you come to hold military command. But you must be circumspect and, above all things, do not forget to use the dye with which Soyera has furnished you. Hitherto your white skin has done you no harm but, were it discovered here that you are English, it would at once be imagined that you were a spy, and little time would be given you to explain how matters stand."

"I will certainly be careful as to that and, now that I am to have a private apartment, I shall be able to apply the dye without the fear of being interrupted, as might have been the case in camp."

On the following day, Harry, having obtained clothes suitable to his position, betook himself to the palace, where one of the officers of the chamberlain conducted him to his apartment, and assigned to him two men appointed to his service.

Chapter 3: A Change In Affairs.

Harry Lindsay's duties were little more than nominal. The reports sent in to him, by those in charge of the royal preserves, could scarcely be considered as satisfactory; as they stated that, owing to the fact that for years there had been no hunting there, the tigers had greatly increased in number, and had thinned down the stags and, indeed, in some cases had so destroyed other game that they were driven to escape from the enclosures, and to ravage the villages. But beyond receiving these reports, and riding over occasionally to the preserves, Harry had little to do save to take part in any court ceremonies and, when called upon to do so, to accompany the Peishwa in his walks in the palace garden. He therefore determined to learn to read and write in Mahratta and, for two or three hours a day, a man of the weynsh, or mercantile class, came in to teach him. So careful was Nana Furnuwees, in preventing Scindia's adherents from approaching the prince, that Harry had nothing whatever to report on this head.

One day, when Mahdoo Rao, who had taken a great liking to him, was walking in the garden, chatting familiarly to him of his life in the country, and his adventures with tigers and other wild beasts, he said:

"Have you seen my cousin, Bajee Rao?"

"No, Your Highness, I have never seen him."

"You have heard of him, of course, and nothing but good."

"That is so, Prince. It seems that, both in sports and learning, he is wonderfully well instructed."

"I should like to see him," the prince said. "I admire what I have heard of him, greatly, and it is hard that he should be shut up in prison; and yet he is scarcely more a prisoner than I am."

Harry was struck with dismay.

"But Your Highness is in no way a prisoner!"

"I am not shut up in a fortress," the young prince said, "but I am no more my own master than Bajee Rao is. Nana Furnuwees treats me as if I were a child. He is, I know, devoted to me; but that makes it no more pleasant. I can go where I like, but it is always with my retinue. I cannot choose my own friends."

"Your Highness will forgive me, if I say that it is for your own safety, and for the peace of the country that your minister watches over you so jealously; and doubtless he thinks that, having been the chief adviser to your family, for so many years, having guarded it so successfully from those who would have lessened your authority, for the present it is of the greatest importance that he should continue to guide the state."

"I am, at least, very glad that he allows me a companion of my own age, to whom I can talk freely."

"On all subjects, Your Highness, excepting state matters. Nana presented me because I was ignorant of the court, and knew nothing whatever of intrigues, and was not likely to take any part in them. Therefore, Your Highness, I pray you but to speak upon ordinary matters; be assured I am your devoted servant, but the courtiers would grow suspicious, were you to talk of state matters with me. These things speedily become known, and I should fall under Nana's displeasure."

"Perhaps you are right," the Peishwa admitted, in a tone of melancholy. "No doubt, whatever passes in this house is known to my minister; and indeed, it is his duty to make himself so acquainted. Still, I feel it hard that I should not have one friend to whom I can speak."

"The time will come, Prince, when you will be able to do so and, doubtless, there will be at hand those who will dare to have your confidence."

The prince was silent but, after this, he abstained from any remarks to Harry concerning the state. He had, indeed, for some time been in correspondence with Bajee Rao, who had gained the confidence of one of those appointed to look after him and, though there was nothing save expressions of friendship on the part of both princes, Nana was furious when he found out, from his spies, what

was going on.

The news came as a shock to the minister. Nana had been the greatest enemy of the house of Rugoba; and the discovery of this correspondence, and the friendship between the two young men, so threatened his authority that, after ordering that Bajee Rao and his brothers should be more strictly confined than before, he visited the Peishwa and upbraided him bitterly for having entered upon a friendship with the head of a party which had harassed his family, and had brought innumerable troubles on the state. Then he sent a message to Harry, bidding him to come, at once.

"How is it, Puntojee," he said sternly, "that you have altogether failed to justify the faith I put in you, and have already assisted Mahdoo Rao to enter into relations with my enemy, Bajee Rao?"

Harry was thunderstruck at this sudden attack.

"My lord, you must have been misinformed. I know nothing of any such correspondence and, if it really went on, I think the Peishwa would have taken me into his confidence."

"Do you mean to say that Mahdoo has not spoken to you about his cousin?"

"No, sir, I do not say so for, some four months ago, he spoke in terms of admiration for Bajee Rao; but he did not pursue the subject, and never afterwards alluded to it."

The minister looked at him fixedly.

"I believe you," he said. "You do not look like a double-faced man, but as one who would tell the truth, whatever were the consequences. Moreover, I felt that if you had known of Mahdoo Rao's intentions, and had not reported them to me, you would, on receiving my message, have endeavoured to make your escape. I have of course enquired, and found that you spent your afternoon, as usual, with your scribe; and that you afterwards rode out to Sufder's camp, and there talked for half an hour, sitting outside the tent and conversing on ordinary matters; and then you returned here to the palace. These proceedings go far to assure me that you were ignorant of the discovery that had been made, that a correspondence

had been going on between Mahdoo and Bajee. Still, I thought you might have known of the correspondence, though not of the discovery; but now I am quite convinced that you were altogether ignorant of what was going on."

The scene with Nana, and the knowledge that he had brought upon his cousins even stricter confinement than before, acted most painfully upon the mind of the young Peishwa, already embittered by the restraint in which he was being held. He now shut himself up in his room, and absolutely refused to leave it. His absence from the durbars was put down to illness. Nana paid no great attention to him, believing that the young prince would speedily recover himself.

This, however, was not the case, for settled melancholy took possession of him. On the 22nd of October he appeared at the Duddera, a high ceremonial, went among his troops and, in the evening, received his chiefs and the representatives from the great rajahs but, three days later, he threw himself from a terrace in front of his palace, broke two of his limbs, and so seriously injured himself that he died, two days afterwards; having, almost in his last breath, expressed to Nana his strong desire that Bajee Rao should succeed him on the musnud.

The consternation of the minister was unbounded. It seemed that, by this sudden and unexpected blow, the whole of his plans were overthrown; and that not only his position, but his very life, was in danger.

He sent for Harry, two hours after the Peishwa's death.

"Answer me frankly," he said. "Can I depend upon you, absolutely? And have you had no communication of any kind from my enemies?"

"You can depend upon me, my lord. Everyone knows that you have saved the state, a score of times; and will, I doubt not, do the same again."

"I have the will," the minister said, gravely, "but whether I have the power is another thing. I sent off a messenger to the general, Purseram Bhow, bidding him gather as many troops as possible and march hither; and I shall send letters to the Rajah of Nagpore, and Scindia. Holkar, being in Poona, I have already seen and, as he has always supported me against Rugoba, he is as anxious as I am as to the succession.

"I shall now send you with a duplicate letter to Purseram Bhow for, since the terrible accident to Mahdoo Rao, whom I loved dearly for his amiable character, it is probable that the adherents of Bajee Rao have been active; and that my every movement is watched, and attempts may be made to stop any messengers that I may send out. Take Sufder's troop with you. If you are stopped, fight your way through, whatever their force. It is a matter of supreme importance that this letter should reach the general."

"It shall reach him, my lord," Harry said, as he took it; "in five minutes I shall be on my way."

Going to his room he changed his attire, mounted his horse, and rode to Sufder's camp. The men were all ready, as Nana had sent an order to Sufder to prepare instantly for a journey.

"So it is you, Puntojee!" the captain said, as he rode up; "the orderly did not tell me whom I was to escort, nor our destination. In which direction do we ride?"

"I am bearer of a letter to Purseram Bhow."

"Then I know the direction;" and, giving orders to his men, he rode off at once by the side of Harry.

"This is a terrible business, Puntojee."

"I am greatly grieved, indeed, for no one could have been kinder to me than Mahdoo Rao."

"Yes, yes," Sufder said; "that is all very well, but the serious side of the matter is that, just as everything seemed settled, we may be entering upon another civil war, more terrible than the last. Of course, I am sorry for the young Peishwa; but I doubt whether he was in any way fit to rule over the Mahrattas. Kindness of heart goes for nothing with a people like ours; split up into many factions, led by many chiefs, and ever ready for war. It needs a strong, as well as an able man to hold in check all the parties in the state.

"Scindia was the sort of man to rule us. He was strong in every way, was troubled with no scruples, would strike down without mercy any who opposed

him. He took great care of his troops, and they were always ready to follow him. That is the man we want on the musnud; not a young prince, of whom we can only say that he was kindly.

"And why did Nana choose you?"

"I am a second string to his bow. He sent off a messenger as soon as he heard of Mahdoo Rao's accident but, fearing he might be intercepted on the way, he has chosen me as being a person no one would be likely to suspect of being his messenger, on so important a matter."

"It is important, indeed, Puntojee. There is no saying what may be the result of the Peishwa's death. There is no doubt that Scindia and Holkar will, for once, be in complete accord with Nana Furnuwees, and will combine in any plan to keep Rugoba's son from succeeding; still, there are many of the friends of Rugoba who will be ready to declare for his son and, moreover, there are the stories that have been so widely circulated as to Bajee's personal appearance, and his many accomplishments--these will gain for him a great number of partisans."

The journey was performed without interruption. At one time, a body of some fifty horsemen made their appearance on rising ground near the road, but drew off when they saw how strong was the party and, after a ride of sixty miles, they arrived at Purseram Bhow's camp. Harry dismounted in front of the general's tent and, entering, handed him the letter.

"What is your news?" the latter asked, before opening it.

"There is none, General, beyond what the letter, sent to you three hours before I left, will have prepared you to hear. I only bear a copy of that letter, in case the first should not have reached you."

"It is well that the precaution was taken for, in truth, the messenger has not arrived."

"It is possible that he may have been murdered on the way, sir; for we saw a party of fifty horsemen on the road, whose intentions seemed to be hostile, but as I had Sufder's troop of a hundred men with me, they drew off."

"But what is the news, then, that is so important that steps are taken to stop

messengers that bear it?"

Harry related what had taken place, the old officer giving many ejaculations of regret, and horror, at the news of Mahdoo Rao's death.

"'Tis a terrible misfortune, indeed," he said, "and is like to throw the whole country into disorder again."

He opened the despatch now, and glanced through it. He called some of his officers, who were gathered near the tent, and ordered them to cause the trumpets to be sounded for all the troops to be in readiness to march, at once; leaving only a small body of infantry to pack up the tents, and follow at a more leisurely pace with the baggage.

An hour later two regiments of cavalry started, infantry men being taken up behind the troopers and, late the next day, they arrived at Poona. Scindia and the Rajah of Berar had also been sent for, in haste and, as soon as they arrived, a council was held as to the choice that should be made of a successor.

All were opposed to the selection of Bajee Rao; for he would have been brought up by his mother, with the deepest enmity towards those who had successfully combined against his father. It was therefore proposed that the widow of Mahdoo Rao should adopt a son, in whose name the government should be carried on.

It was not until two months had been spent in negotiations that the matter was finally settled. One of Scindia's ministers, named Balloba, alone opposed the course decided upon; and Bajee Rao opened communications with him, and succeeded in winning him over to his cause. Having done this he addressed Scindia; offering him a very large addition to his territory, and payment of all his expenses, if he would assist him to gain his rightful position. As Balloba had great influence over the young Scindia, the offer was accepted.

The arrangement was made so secretly that Nana Furnuwees had received no intimation, whatever, of what was going on, until the agreement had been concluded. Purseram Bhow was again summoned to Poona and, with his usual energy, made a march of one hundred and twenty miles in forty-eight hours.

The position was a difficult one, indeed. At one blow, the plans that had been so carefully laid by Nana were shattered. Scindia, who had but a month or two before formed one of the confederacy, had now gone round to the side of Bajee Rao, who regarded the minister as his greatest enemy. Holkar was not to be depended upon and, in Poona, there were many adherents of the son of Rugoba. The council held by Nana, Purseram, and two or three other great officers was long and, at times, stormy; but it was finally agreed that the sole way out of the perilous position, caused by Scindia's desertion, was to anticipate him and to release Bajee Rao, and declare him Peishwa.

Purseram started, at once, to the fort where the brothers were confined. Harry, who was now deeply interested in the course of events, was one of Nana's officers who accompanied Purseram. On hearing the general's errand, the officer in command of the fort at once sent for Bajee, his brother Chimnajee, and Amrud--who was the adopted son of Rugoba, and who stood on an equal footing with regard to the succession. Bajee Rao listened calmly to the proposals made to him in Nana's name, asked several questions, and demanded guarantees; but was evidently disposed to accept the proposals, if assured that they were made in good faith.

Amrud strongly urged him to decline the offer; but Bajee, upon Purseram taking the most solemn oath known to the Hindoos, in proof of his sincerity, accepted the offer and, with his brother Chimnajee, rode with Purseram to Poona; Amrud being left behind in the fort, as Purseram considered that he would continue to exercise his influence over Bajee in a direction hostile to Nana's interest.

As soon as the party arrived at the capital, an interview took place between Bajee and Nana when, in the presence of many of the great officers, both swore to forget all enmities and injuries, and Bajee promised to retain Nana at the head of his administration.

That same evening, the minister sent for Harry.

"Puntojee," he said, "I have a commission for you. I know that you are loyal to me, and that I can depend upon you. I wish you to go at once to Scindia's camp, which is now on the bank of the Godavery, and ascertain how he takes the news. Doubtless Balloba, his prime minister, will be furious at finding that,

instead of Bajee becoming a mere creature of Scindia's, I have placed him on the musnud, and retain my place as his chief minister. I can employ you for this business better than most others, for the greater part of my officers are personally known to those of Scindia, while you have scarce been seen by them. I have also a high idea of your shrewdness; and I have no doubt that you will, in some way, be able to gain the information that I require--indeed, it will probably be the public talk of the camp. If you should find an opportunity of entering into negotiations, with any influential person in Scindia's court, I authorize you to do so in my name; and to agree to any reasonable demands that he may make, either for a payment in money or in estates. Scindia's character is wholly unformed and, though today he may be guided by Balloba, tomorrow he may lean on someone else.

"You can go in any guise you think fit, either as a trooper or as a camp follower. In either case, you had better take Sufder and twenty men with you; and leave them in concealment within a few miles of the camp so that, in case of necessity, you can join them; and his men can act as messengers, and bring your reports to me."

As it was now a year since Harry had first gone to Poona, and he had during that time worked diligently, he could now both read and write the Mahratta language, and was thus able to send in written reports; instead of being obliged to rely upon oral messages, which might be misdelivered by those who carried them, or possibly reported to others instead of to the minister; whereas reading and writing were known to but few of the Mahrattas, outside the Brahmin class.

Sufder expressed himself much pleased, when he heard that he was to accompany Harry.

"I am sick of this life of inactivity," he said. "Why, we have had no fighting for the past five years; and we shall forget how to use our arms, unless there is something doing. I would willingly accompany you into Scindia's camp, but I am far too well known there to hope to escape observation. However, I will pick out twenty of my best men so that, if there should be a skirmish, we shall be able to hold our own. Of course, I shall choose men who have good horses, for we may have to ride for it."

Harry himself was very well mounted, for Mahdoo Rao had given him two

excellent horses; and as he had, when out with Sufder's troop, tried them against the best of those of the sowars, he felt sure that he could trust to them, in case of having to ride for his life. The trooper who looked after them had become much attached to him, and he determined to take him with him into Scindia's camp, one of Sufder's other men looking after the horses.

After a consultation with Sufder, he decided on adopting the costume of a petty trader or pedlar carrying garments, scarfs, and other articles used by soldiers. Of these he laid in a store and, three hours after his interview with Nana, started with his escort; the trooper leading his spare horse, on which his packs were fastened, and his own man riding a country pony. The distance to Scindia's camp was under a hundred miles, and they took three days in accomplishing it. It was important that the horses should not be knocked up, as their lives might depend upon their speed.

When within ten miles of their destination, they halted in a grove near the Moola river. Here Harry changed his clothes, and assumed those of a small merchant. Then he mounted the pony; a portion of the packs was fastened behind him, and the rest carried by his servant.

Scindia's camp lay around Toka, a town on the Godavery at the foot of a range of hills. On arriving there he went to the field bazaar, where a large number of booths, occupied by traders and country peasants, were erected. The former principally sold arms, saddlery, and garments; the latter, the produce of their own villages. Choosing an unoccupied piece of ground, Harry erected a little shelter tent; composed of a dark blanket thrown over a ridge pole, supported by two others, giving a height of some four feet, in the centre. The pony was picketed just behind this. In front of it a portion of the wares was spread out, and Harry began the usual loud exhortations, to passers by, to inspect them.

Having thus established himself, he left Wasil in charge, explaining to him the prices that he was to ask for each of the articles sold, and then started on a tour through the camp. Here and there pausing to listen to the soldiers, he picked up scraps of news; and learned that there was a general expectation that the army would march, in a day or two, towards Poona--it being rumoured that Scindia and his minister, Balloba, had been outwitted by Nana Furnuwees; and that Balloba had made no secret of his anger, but vowed vengeance against the man

who had overthrown plans which, it had been surely believed, would have resulted in Scindia's obtaining supreme control over the Deccan.

Returning to his little tent, he wrote a letter to Nana, telling him what he had gathered, and giving approximately the strength of Scindia's force; adding that, from what he heard, the whole were animated with the desire to avenge what they considered an insult to their prince. This note he gave to Wasil, who at once started on foot to join Sufder; who would forward it, by four troopers, to Poona.

The next morning he returned and, after purchasing provisions from the countrymen, and lighting a fire for cooking them, he assisted Harry at his stall. The latter was standing up, exhibiting a garment to a soldier, who was haggling with him over the price, when a party of officers rode by. At their head was one whose dress showed him to be a person of importance; and whom Harry at once recognized as Balloba, having often noticed him during the negotiations at Poona. As his eye fell upon Harry he checked his horse for a moment, and beckoned to him to come to him.

"Come here, weynsh," he said, using the term generally applied to the commercial caste.

Illustration: Harry went up to him, and salaamed.

Harry went up to him, and salaamed.

"How comes it," the minister asked, "that so fine a young fellow as you are is content to be peddling goods through the country, when so well fitted by nature for better things? You should be a soldier, and a good one. For so young a man, I have never seen a greater promise of strength.

"It seems to me that your face is not unknown to me. Where do you come from?"

"From Jooneer, your excellency, where my people are cultivators but, having no liking for that life, I learned the trade of a shopkeeper, and obtained permission to travel to your camp, and to try my fortune in disposing of some of my master's goods."

As Jooneer was but some sixty miles from Toka, the explanation was natural enough and, as the former town lay near to the main road from Scindia's dominions in Candeish, it afforded an explanation of Balloba's partial recognition of his face.

"And as a merchant, you can read and write, I suppose?" the latter went on.

"Yes, your highness, sufficiently well for my business."

"Well, think it over. You can scarcely find your present life more suitable to your taste than that of a cultivator, and the army is the proper place for a young fellow with spirit, and with strength and muscles such as you have. If you like to enlist in my own bodyguard, and your conduct be good, I will see that you have such promotion as you deserve."

"Your excellency is kind, indeed," Harry said, humbly. "Before I accept your kind offer, will you permit me to return to Jooneer to account for my sales to my employer, and to obtain permission of my father to accept your offer; which would indeed be greatly more to my taste than the selling of goods."

"It is well," Balloba said, and then broke off:

"Ah! I know now why I remember your face. 'Tis the lightness of your eyes, which are of a colour rarely seen; but somehow or other, it appears to me that it was not at Jooneer, but at Poona, that I noticed your face."

"I was at Poona, with my master, when your highness was there," Harry said.

"That accounts for it."

The minister touched his horse's flanks with his heel and rode on, with a thoughtful look on his face. Harry at once joined Wasil.

"Quick, Wasil! There is no time to be lost. Throw the saddle on to the pony, and make your way out of the camp, at once. Pitch all the other things into the tent, and close it. If you leave them here, it will seem strange. Balloba has seen me at Poona, and it is likely enough that, as he thinks it over, he will remember that it was in a dress altogether different from this. Go at once to Sufder. If you get there before me, tell him to mount at once, and ride fast to meet me."

Two minutes later, everything was prepared; and Wasil, mounting the pony, rode off, while Harry moved away among the tents. In a quiet spot, behind one of these, he threw off his upper garments and stood in the ordinary undress of a Hindoo peasant, having nothing on but a scanty loincloth. He had scarcely accomplished this when he heard the trampling of horses; and saw, past the tent, four troopers ride up to the spot he had just left.

"Where is the trader who keeps this tent?" one of them shouted. "He is a spy, and we have orders to arrest him."

Harry waited to hear no more, but walked in the opposite direction; taking care to maintain a leisurely stride, and to avoid all appearance of haste. Then, going down to the road by the side of which the bazaar was encamped, he mingled with the crowd there. Presently, one of the troopers dashed up.

"Has anyone seen a man in the dress of a trader?" and he roughly described the attire of which Harry had rid himself.

There was a general chorus of denial, from those standing round, and the trooper again galloped on.

Harry continued his walk at a leisurely pace, stopping occasionally to look at articles exposed for sale, until he reached the end of the bazaar. Then he made across the country. Trumpets were blowing now in the camp, and he had no doubt that Balloba had ordered a thorough search to be made for him. He did not quicken his pace, however, until well out of sight; but then he broke into a swinging trot, for he guessed that, when he was not found in the camp, parties of cavalry would start to scour the country. He had gone some four miles when, looking behind him, he saw about twenty horsemen, far back along the road.

The country here was flat and open, with fields irrigated by canals running from the Moola, and affording no opportunity for concealment. Hitherto he had been running well within his powers; but he now quickened his pace, and ran at full speed. He calculated that Wasil would have at least half an hour's start of him; and that, as he would urge the pony to the top of his speed, he would by this time have joined Sufder; and he was sure that the latter would not lose an instant before starting to meet him. He had hesitated, for a moment, whether he should break into a quiet walk and allow the troopers to overtake him, relying upon the alteration of his costume; but he reflected that Balloba might have foreseen that he would change his disguise, and have ordered the arrest of a young man with curiously light eyes.

Harry had always attempted to conceal this feature, as far as possible, by staining his eyelashes a deep black; but when he looked up, the colour of his eyes could hardly fail to strike anyone specially noticing them.

His constant exercise as a boy had given him great swiftness of foot, and the year passed as a shikaree had added to his endurance and speed and, divested of clothing as he was, he felt sure that the horsemen, who were more than a mile in his rear when he first caught sight of them, would not overtake him for some time. He was running, as he knew, for life; for he was certain that, if caught, Balloba would have him at once put to death as a spy. Although hardy and of great endurance, the Mahratta horses, which were small in size, were not accustomed to being put to the top of their speed except for a short charge; and the five miles that they had galloped already must have, to some extent, fatigued them.

After running at the top of his speed for about a mile, he looked back. The party was still a long distance in his rear. Again he pressed forward, but his

exertions were telling upon him and, before he had gone another half mile, the Mahrattas had approached within little more than half that distance.

Far ahead he thought he could perceive a body of horsemen, but these were nearly two miles away, and he would be overtaken before they could reach him; therefore he turned suddenly off, and took to one of the little banks dividing one irrigated field from another. As soon as the horsemen reached the spot where he had left the road, they too turned off; but Harry, who was now husbanding his strength, saw a sudden confusion among them.

The little bank of earth on which he was running was but a foot wide, and was softened by the water which soaked in from both sides. It could bear his weight, well enough; but not that of a mounted man. Only one or two had attempted to follow it, the others had plunged into the field. Here their horses at once sank up to the knees. Some endeavoured to force the animals on, others to regain the road they had quitted. The two horsemen on the bank were making better progress, but their horses' hoofs sank deeply in the soft earth; and their pace, in spite of the exertions of the riders, was but a slow one.

Harry turned when he came to the end of the field, and followed another bank at right angles, and was therefore now running in the right direction. He was more than keeping his lead from the foremost of his pursuers Some of the others galloped along the road, parallel to him, but ahead.

The horsemen he had first seen were now within a mile. On they came, at the top of their speed; and the troopers on the road halted, not knowing whether this body were friends or foes, while those on the bank reined in their horses, and rode back to join their comrades. Harry continued to run till he came to another bank leading to the road and, following this, he arrived there just as Sufder galloped up with his party, one of the troopers leading his horse. They gave a shout of welcome, as he came up.

"I thought it must be you," Sufder said, "from the way you ran, rather than from your attire. Shall we charge those fellows?"

"I think not," Harry said. "In the first place Scindia has not, as yet, declared war against Nana and Bajee; in the second, there may be more men coming on behind; therefore it will be best to leave them alone though, if they attack us, we

shall, of course, defend ourselves."

"I think that is their intention, Puntojee. See, they have gathered together! I suppose they daren't go back, and say that you have escaped."

"Give me either your sword or spear."

The latter was part of the regular equipment of the Mahratta horsemen. Sufder handed him his sword and, as the pursuers advanced towards them at a canter which speedily became a gallop, he took his place by the side of Sufder and, the latter giving the word, the band dashed forward to meet their opponents.

The combat was a short one. Sufder's followers were all picked men, and were better mounted than Scindia's troopers. These made special efforts to get at Harry, but the latter's skill with the sword enabled him to free himself from his most pressing opponents. Sufder laid about him stoutly and, his men seconding him well, half their opponents were speedily struck to the ground; and the rest, turning their horses, fled at full speed. Sufder's men would have followed, but he shouted to them to draw rein.

"Enough has been done, and well done," he said. "If Scindia means war, nothing will be said about this fight; but if he does not, complaints will doubtless be laid against us, and it is better that we should be able to say that we fought only in self defence; and that, when the attack ceased, we allowed them to ride off unmolested, though we might easily enough have slain the whole of them."

On arriving at the grove where the troop had halted, Harry at once resumed his own clothes; for although in his early days he had been accustomed to be slightly clad, he felt ill at ease riding almost naked. Here, too, he found Wasil, who had ridden with such speed that his pony was too much exhausted for him to ride back with the rest. He received his master with the greatest joy, for he had feared he would be captured before leaving the camp.

They continued their journey to Jooneer, where they halted for the night. Sufder went to his house, and Harry rode out to the farm.

Chapter 4: A British Resident.

As Harry drew rein at the farm Soyera ran out, followed by her brother and Anundee, with cries of joy at his unexpected return. It was nearly fifteen months since she had last seen him; though he had, when opportunity offered, sent messages to her assuring her that he was well, and hoped ere long to be able to come over to see her.

"I should scarce have known you," she said, "in those fine clothes of yours. You sent word that you were an officer in the Peishwa's service; but I hardly thought that you could be so much changed. You have grown a great deal, and are now much taller than Ramdass's sons."

The worthy farmer and Anundee were also delighted to see him.

"How long are you going to stay?" the former asked.

"Only till tomorrow, at daybreak. I have to ride forward, with all haste, to Poona; for I have been on a mission for Nana Furnuwees."

"Surely it is not so important that you cannot stay a few hours, Puntojee?"

"It is of importance. You may have known that Nana has placed Bajee Rao on the musnud, and he has installed himself as his minister; thereby defeating the plans of Balloba and Scindia, who will probably come along here with their whole force, in a day or two."

Late that evening, when the others had retired to bed, Soyera and Harry had a long talk together.

"Have you thought, Harry," she asked, after speaking for some time about his doings and position at court, "of joining your people again? There is peace between the Peishwa's court and the English. There is a British Resident at Poona and, as you have now gained a certain rank there, you could go to him with a much better face than if you had come direct from here, as a peasant.

Then it would probably have been supposed that you were an impostor. That you were English, of course could be seen by your skin; but it might have been thought that I had adopted some English child, and was now trying to pass it off as the son of an officer."

"I think, mother, that I had best continue, for some time, as I am. You see I have, at present, nothing in common with the English except their blood. Were another war to break out between the Mahrattas and Bombay, I would at once declare myself to the Resident here, and go down to Bombay but, even then, my position would be a doubtful one and, unless I were to enlist in their army, I do not see how I should maintain myself.

"Moreover, you must remember that I have now a deep interest in matters here. Nana Furnuwees has treated me with much kindness, and placed his confidence in me. He has many enemies, as I have told you. Scindia is about to advance against Poona, and it is probable that he may succeed in driving Nana into exile, or imprisoning him for life; and establishing Balloba, or some other person devoted to his interest, as minister, in which case Scindia would be absolutely supreme. Nothing would persuade me to desert Nana; who has, for many years, alone withstood the ambition of Scindia's party. I do not say, for a moment, that my aid would be of the slightest use to him but, at any rate, he shall see that I am not ungrateful for his kindness; and will be faithful to him in his misfortunes, as he has been kind to me, when in power."

"That is right," Soyera said. "The cause of Nana is the cause of all in this part of the Deccan; for we should be infinitely worse off, were Scindia to lay hands on us. But there is an alternative, by which you could at once remain faithful to Nana, and prepare your way for joining the English, when you considered that the time for doing so had arrived."

"What is that, Soyera?"

"You might go to the English Resident, and tell him who you are, and how you have been brought up. Say that, at present, you wish to remain in the service of Nana; who has been a good friend to you, and with whom your sympathies, like those of nearly all the cultivators in the Peishwa's dominions, accord. Say that you hope, when the time comes, to return to your countrymen; and that, in the meantime, you will give him any information in your power as to what is

going on, subject only to your friendship for Nana. Thus, by making yourself useful to the Resident, you may prepare your way for joining your countrymen and, at the same time, be able to remain with Nana until either he is victorious over his enemies, or his cause is really lost."

"The plan is an excellent one," Harry said, "and I will certainly adopt it. Undoubtedly, the feeling among the English must be in favour of Bajee Rao and Nana. As Bajee is the son of Rugoba, he is their natural ally. Moreover, they would object most strongly to see Scindia become master of the whole Mahratta power; which he would probably use against them, at the first opportunity. It would, as you say, greatly facilitate my obtaining a fair position among the English; and I might also be able to do Nana a service. Of course, I have seen the English Resident many times, in the streets of Poona; and more than once, on special occasions, at Mahdoo Rao's court. As it is his business to know something of all connected with the palace, it is probable that he may have heard of me; at any rate, it would be easier to explain to him my position, than it would be to go down as a stranger to Bombay--where I should be ignorant as to whom I should first approach, and how to declare myself--a matter I have very often thought over."

The next morning the troop started at daybreak and, riding fast, reached Poona by noon. Harry went at once to report what he had seen to Nana.

"I received your letter yesterday," the minister said, "and the news was indeed bad. Purseram Bhow has offered to go out to give battle to Scindia, but my forces would have no chance: not only is Scindia's army much larger, but he has the infantry regiments commanded by foreign officers, and against these my infantry could not prevail. It would be madness to risk fighting, under such circumstances. The wheel may turn and, ere long, I may be in a position to thwart the schemes of Scindia and Balloba."

Nana had never been conspicuous for personal courage, though his moral courage, and his ability to meet any storm were unbounded. He was now an old man, and dreaded the shock of battle, when the chances appeared to be so much against him. He could not depend upon the support of Bajee, who had already shown himself willing to side with the strongest, and to make terms for himself, without the slightest regard for those who had befriended him.

"But if your excellency does not think of fighting, what course will you pursue?"

"I shall leave the country, at once," he said. "If I stop here, I know that Balloba, who is my personal enemy, will have me put to death. I only need time to recover from this sudden misfortune, and it would be madness for me to wait here, and to fall into the power of my enemies.

"Purseram Bhow is greatly offended, because I will not allow him to fight; but I, who have for so many years done my best to prevent civil war in this country--a war which, however it ended, would break up the Mahratta power--would not bring its horrors upon Poona. It is against me that Balloba is marching and, if I retire, bloodshed will be altogether averted.

"Will you accompany me, Puntojee?" he asked almost wistfully.

"Assuredly I will do so, sir; and I think that I can answer for Sufder, who has, I know, a great regard for your excellency. As to myself, I have little hope that I should escape unharmed, if Balloba arrive here before I leave. He detected me, even in my disguise in his camp; and I had a narrow escape, for a party of his cavalry pursued me, and would probably have caught me had not Sufder, with his band, met me, and defeated them with a loss of half their number. You may be sure that Balloba will learn who was in command, and Sufder's life would be no safer than my own.

"May I ask when your excellency is going to leave Poona?"

"Scouts were sent out yesterday, as soon as your letter was read and, directly Scindia's army gets in motion, I shall receive news. When I do, I shall leave. The horses will be saddled in readiness, and I shall be at the edge of the Ghauts by the time Scindia arrives here. You can tell Sufder to come, at once. He knows the disposition of the captains of the various troops, and will be able to tell me who can be depended upon."

Sufder was indeed outside the palace, having told Harry that he would wait, until he had learned the result of his interview with Nana. Harry briefly related to him his conversation with the minister.

"I think he is right," he said. "Purseram Bhow is a stout fighter, and is as brave as a lion; but Scindia's force would be double that which he could gather, at such a short notice, and Nana does right not to risk everything on the chance of a single fight. He is a wily old fox, and has got safely through dangers which would have crushed an ordinary man. You will see that, before long, he will be back again, and reinstated in power.

"At any rate, I will accompany him. After that thrashing we gave Balloba's horsemen, my head would not be safe here an hour, after his arrival."

On the road, Harry had informed him of the decision at which he had arrived, upon Soyera's advice; and Sufder agreed that it would certainly be a wise step. Accordingly, when the latter entered the palace, Harry went straight to the British Residency. He sent in his native name to Mr. Malet, and asked for an interview, and was at once shown in.

"You wish to speak to me, sir?" the Resident said, in the Mahratta language. "I think I have seen you at Mahdoo Rao's court."

"I have seen your excellency there," Harry replied, in the same language.

Then, seeing that the Resident spoke the language with difficulty, he went on, in English:

"It is a matter chiefly personal to myself."

The Resident looked at him in surprise, for it was the first time he had heard a Mahratta speaking English.

"I am the son of Major Lindsay who, with his wife and escort, was murdered by a party of Mahrattas, seventeen years ago, at the time when the English army was advancing against Poona. I was saved by the fidelity of an ayah, who had been in the family for ten years. A cousin of hers was, fortunately, one of the leaders of the party who attacked the camp and, with his connivance, she carried me off and made her way back to her family, near Jooneer. She stained my skin, as you see, and allowed it to be supposed that she had married in Bombay, and that I was her own child.

"She has brought me up with the intention of my rejoining my countrymen,

as soon as I became a man; for she did not see how, until then, I could earn my living among strangers. She taught me as much as she knew of the language and religion of the English and, when I was twelve, took me down to Bombay and left me, for some two years and a half, in the house of Mrs. Sankey, a lady who taught some of the children of officers there. When I left Bombay I was able to speak English as well as other English boys of my age.

"My nurse had, from the earliest time I can remember, encouraged me in taking part in all sports and games; and when I was but eight a soldier, a cousin of hers, began to teach me my first exercise in arms. I continued to work at this until I went down to Bombay and, on my return, spent all my time, for some months, in riding and shooting. After this I was, for a year, with a famous shikaree; and took part in the killing of many tigers, and other wild beasts. This was fortunate; for when, through this relation of my nurse, I was introduced to Nana Furnuwees, and by him to Mahdoo Rao, the latter was pleased to take a fancy for me, and appointed me to the charge of the game preserves.

"At the present moment I have just returned from a mission, in disguise, to Scindia's camp. Nana has shown me great kindness. My intention is to remain with him, until he has passed through his present difficulties, which are very serious. After that, I hope to be able to go to Bombay, and to obtain a commission in the Company's service."

"I remember well the circumstances of the murder of Major Lindsay, and his wife; for I was in Bombay at the time. It was a matter of deep regret to us all, for he was greatly liked but, at the time, everyone was excited over the infamous treaty of Wurgaum. I remember that when a party was sent out, on our receiving the news of the attack, the bodies of the major and his wife were found, as also those of his servants and sowars; but it was reported that no trace could be discovered of the infant, or of his ayah. It was thought possible that they had escaped, and hopes were entertained that the woman might have carried off her charge. I have no doubt as to the truth of your story.

"Is your nurse still alive?"

"She is, sir, as is also the man who assisted her. His name is Sufder, and he commands a troop of the Peishwa's cavalry. Both will testify, at the right time, to the truth of my statement."

"I can the more readily believe it," the Resident said, "inasmuch as, in spite of your colour, I can perceive a certain likeness to Major Lindsay, whom I knew intimately."

"My intention, in coming to see you now, sir, was to offer to furnish any information to you, concerning the movements and plans of Nana Furnuwees, so far as such information could do him no harm."

"I heard that there had been discussions between Nana and Purseram Bhow, the latter wishing to give battle to Scindia; but I think that Nana is right in refusing to sanction this for, from all I hear, Scindia's army is very much the stronger."

"It is, sir; and I should say that Purseram's army could hardly be depended upon to fight, under such circumstances."

"What is Nana going to do?"

"He is going to retire, as soon as Scindia's army is fairly in motion."

"He is in an awkward position," Mr. Malet said, "but he has reinstated himself, several times, when it seemed that everything was lost. I have great respect for his abilities, and he is the only man who can curb the ambition of Scindia and his ministers. Scindia's entire supremacy would be most unwelcome to us for, indeed, it is only owing to the mutual jealousy of the three great chiefs of the Mahratta nation, that we have gained successes. Were the whole power in one hand, we should certainly lose Surat, and probably Bassein and Salsette, and have to fight hard to hold Bombay.

"I shall be very glad to receive any reports you can supply me with, for it is next to impossible to obtain anything like trustworthy information here. We only hear what it is desired that we should know, and all these late changes have come as a complete surprise to me; for what news I do obtain is, more often than not, false. Unfortunately, truth is a virtue almost unknown among the Mahrattas. They have a perfect genius for intrigue, and consider it perfectly justifiable to deceive not only enemies, but friends.

"And when do you think of declaring yourself Mr. Lindsay?"

"I shall remain with Nana, so long as there is the slightest chance of his success; unless, indeed, the course of affairs should lead to the English intervening in these troubles; then, in case they declare against Nana, I should feel it my duty to leave him at once."

"I do not think there is any probability of that. Our policy has been to support him, as the Peishwa's minister, against either Scindia or Holkar. I shall, of course, report your appearance to the authorities at Bombay; and I am sure there will be a disposition to advance your views, for the sake of your father; and moreover, your knowledge of the language of the Mahrattas--which is, of course, perfect, or you could not have maintained your deception so long--will of itself be a strong recommendation in your favour."

After thanking Mr. Malet for his kindness, Harry returned to Sufder's camp, and gave him an account of his interview with the Resident.

"That is satisfactory, indeed, Puntojee. It shows the wisdom of the step you took. Now, as to our affairs here, I have mentioned the names of five captains of troops; all of whom can, I think, be relied upon. However, I am now going out to see them, and have only been waiting for your return. Six hundred men is but a small body; but it is a beginning, and I have no doubt that others will join Nana, later on. But I am not sufficiently sure of their sentiments to open the matter to them, and it is essential that no suspicion of Nana's intention to leave the town should get about. There might be a riot in the city and, possibly, some of the captains, who have not received the promotion which they regard as their due, might try to gain Scindia's favour by arresting him."

On the following day a messenger arrived from Nana, requesting Sufder to place himself with his troop, and such other captains as he could rely upon, on the road a mile west of Poona. He himself would leave the town quietly, with a small body of his friends, and join them there. Sufder at once sent off five of his men, with orders to the captains whom he had seen on the previous afternoon and, within an hour, six hundred men were gathered at the point indicated. Half an hour later a party of horsemen were seen coming along, and Furnuwees soon rode up, accompanied by several of his strongest adherents.

The officers were gathered at the head of their troops. Nana, drawing rein, said to them:

"Thanks for your fidelity. I shall not forget it; and hope, when the time comes, to reward it as it deserves."

He motioned to Harry to join him.

"Scindia's army was to march this morning," he said, "and his horsemen will be here by tomorrow evening, at latest."

They rode to Satara, where Nana had arranged to stop until he received news, from Purseram Bhow, as to the course of events at Poona; and two days later a messenger rode in, with news that Scindia had arrived near Poona, and had had a friendly interview with Bajee Rao. Balloba had seen Purseram, and had pretended great friendship for him; but the old soldier was by no means deceived by his protestations.

"If we had only to do with Scindia," Nana said, "matters could be easily arranged; but the young rajah is only a puppet in his minister's hands."

Several days passed, and then another letter came from Purseram. It said that Balloba had resolved to oppose Bajee Rao, and to have both a minister and a Peishwa of his own nomination; and that he proposed to him that Mahdoo Rao's widow should adopt Chimnajee as her son, that Bajee should be placed in confinement, and that he, Purseram Bhow, should be his minister. He asked Nana's advice as to what course he should take. He stated that Balloba had said he was greatly influenced, in the methods he proposed, by the hope of rendering them in some degree acceptable to Nana.

As the latter had only placed Bajee Rao on the musnud as a means of checkmating Scindia, he advised Purseram to accept the offer; but pointed out the absolute necessity for his retaining Bajee in his own custody. Purseram omitted to follow this portion of the advice, and a formal reconciliation took place, by letter, between Balloba and Nana. The latter was invited to proceed at once to Poona; but on finding that Purseram had allowed Balloba to retain Bajee in his hands, he suspected that the whole was a scheme to entice him into the power of his enemy, and he therefore made excuses for not going.

Bajee, ignorant of the plot that had been planned, went to Scindia's camp to remonstrate against a heavy demand for money, on account of the expenses to

which Scindia had been put; and to his astonishment he was, then and there, made a prisoner. Chimnajee positively refused to become a party to the usurpation of his brother's rights; but he was compelled, by threats, to ascend the musnud. On the day after his installation, Purseram Bhow wrote, proposing that Nana should come to Poona to meet Balloba, and to assume the civil administration of the new Peishwa's government; while the command of the troops, and all military arrangements, should remain as they stood.

In reply, Nana requested that Purseram should send his son, Hurry Punt, to settle the preliminaries; but instead of coming as an envoy, Hurry Punt left Poona with over five thousand chosen horse. This naturally excited Nana's suspicions, which were strengthened by a letter from Rao Phurkay, who was in command of the Peishwa's household troops, warning him to seek safety without a moment's delay.

Now that he saw that half measures were no longer possible, Nana ceased to be irresolute and, when his fortunes seemed to all men to be desperate, commenced a series of successful intrigues that astonished all India. He had quietly increased his force, during the weeks of waiting since he had left Poona. He had ample funds, having carried away with him an immense treasure, accumulated during his long years of government. There was no time to be lost and, as soon as he received the letter of warning, he left the town of Waee and made for the Concan.

As soon as he reached the Ghauts, he set the whole of his force to block the passes, by rolling great stones down into the roads. In addition, strong barricades were constructed, and a force of two hundred men left, at each point, to defend them. The infantry he had recruited he threw into the fort of Raygurh, and added strongly to its defences.

Balloba had proposed that Nana should be followed without delay, and offered some of Scindia's best troops for the purpose; but Purseram, acting in accordance with the advice of some of Nana's friends, raised an objection. He had now, however, resolved to break altogether with the minister, whose timidity at the critical moment was considered, by him, as a proof that he could never again be formidable; and he accordingly gave up Nana's estates to Scindia, and took possession of his houses and property in Poona, for his own use. After remaining for a few days, waiting events and sending off many messengers,

Nana sent for Harry.

"I have a mission for you," he said. "It is one that requires daring and great intelligence, and I know no one to whom it could be better committed than to you. You see that, owing to the turn events have taken, Bajee Rao and myself are natural allies. We have both suffered at the hands of Balloba. He is a prisoner in Scindia's camp; though, as I understand, free to move about in it. I privately received a hint that Bajee, himself, recognizes this; but doubtless he believes that I am powerless to help either myself or him.

"In this he is mistaken. I have been in communication with Holkar, who is alarmed at the ever-increasing power of Scindia; and he will throw his whole power into the scale, to aid me. The Rajahs of Berar and Kolapoore have engaged to aid me, for the same reason; and the Nizam will sign the treaty that was agreed upon between us, some time since. Rao Phurkay has engaged to bring the Peishwa's household troops over, when the signal is given.

"More than that I have, through Ryajee, a patal, who is an enemy of Balloba, opened negotiations with Scindia himself; offering him the estates of Purseram Bhow, and the fort of Surrenuggar, with territory yielding ten lakhs, on condition of his placing Balloba in confinement, re-establishing Bajee Rao on the musnud, and returning with his troops to his own territory.

"I have no doubt that, when Bajee Rao hears this, he will be glad enough to throw himself heartily into the cause. I may tell you that he is apparently a guest, rather than a prisoner; and that he has a camp of his own, in the centre of that of Scindia; and therefore, when you have once made your way into his encampment, you will have no difficulty in obtaining a private interview with him. It is necessary that he should have money, and silver would be too heavy for you to carry; but I will give you bags containing a thousand gold mohurs, which will enable him to begin the work of privately raising troops."

"I will undertake the business, sir. The only person I fear, in the smallest degree, is Balloba himself. I must disguise myself so that he will not recognize me."

Without delay, Harry mounted his horse, placed the two bags of money that had been handed to him in the wallets behind his saddle, exchanged his dress for

that of one of Sufder's troopers, and then started for Poona, which he reached the next day. He did not enter the town; but put up at a cultivator's, two miles distant from it.

"I want to hire a cart, with two bullocks," he said to the man. "Can you furnish one?"

"As I do not know you, I should require some money paid down, as a guarantee that they will be returned."

"That I can give you; but I shall leave my horse here, and that is fully worth your waggon and oxen. However, I will leave with you a hundred rupees. I may not keep your waggon many days."

After it was dark, Harry went to the town and purchased some paints, and other things, that he required for disguise. Having used these, he went to the house of the British Resident and, on stating who he was, he was shown in. Mr. Malet did not recognize, in the roughly-dressed countryman, the young officer who had called upon him before.

"I am Harry Lindsay and, being in Poona, called upon you to give you some information."

"I recognize you by your voice," the Resident said; "but I fear that there is nothing of importance that you can tell me; now that Nana Furnuwees is homeless, and Bajee Rao is no longer Peishwa."

"Nana is not done with, yet, sir."

"Why, he is a fugitive, with a handful of troops under him."

"But he has his brains, sir, which are worth more than an army and, believe me, if all goes well, it will not be long before he is back in Poona, as minister to the Peishwa."

"Minister to Chimnajee?"

"No, sir, minister to Bajee Rao."

"I would that it were so," Mr. Malet said, "but since one is a fugitive and the other a prisoner, I see no chance, whatever, of such a transformation."

"I will briefly tell you, sir, what is preparing. Bajee, feeling certain that he will, ere long, be sent to a fortress, has communicated with Nana, imploring him to aid him."

"If he has turned to Nana for support, he is either mad, or acting as Balloba's tool."

"On the contrary, sir, I think that his doing so shows that he recognizes Nana's ability; and feels that, ere long, he may become a useful ally. Already Nana has been at work. Holkar, who naturally views with intense jealousy Scindia's entire control of the territory of the Peishwa, has already agreed to put his whole army in the field; Rao Phurkay will rebel, with the household troops and, what is vastly more important, Scindia has embraced Nana's offer of a large sum of money, and a grant of territory, to arrest Balloba, and to replace Bajee on the musnud. In addition to this, he has won over the Rajah of Berar, has incited the Rajah of Kolapoore to attack the district of Purseram Bhow; and has obtained the Nizam's approbation of a treaty, that had already been settled between Nana and the Nizam's general, the basis of which is that Bajee is to be re-established, with Nana himself as minister and, on the other hand, the territory formerly seized by the Peishwa to be restored.

"My mission here is to inform Bajee Rao of the plans that have been prepared, and to obtain from him a solemn engagement that Nana shall be reappointed as his minister, on the success of his plans."

Mr. Malet listened to Harry with increasing astonishment.

"This is important news, indeed," he said; "marvellous, and of the highest importance to me. Already I have been asked, by the Council of Bombay, to give my opinion as to whether it is expedient to render any assistance to Nana Furnuwees. It is, to them, almost as important as to Nana that Scindia should not obtain supreme power. I have replied that I could not recommend any such step, for that Nana's cause seemed altogether lost; and that any aid to him would be absolutely useless, and would only serve Scindia with a pretext for declaring war against us. Of course, what you have told me entirely alters the situation. It will

not be necessary for the Council to assist Nana, but they can give him fair words and, even if Balloba should win the day, he will have no ground for accusing us of having aided Nana.

"It is impossible to overlook the value of your communication, Mr. Lindsay; and I can promise you that you will not find the Government of Bombay ungrateful, for it will relieve them of the anxiety which the progress of events here has caused them."

On leaving the Residency, Harry returned to the farm where he had left his horse and, early next morning, put on his disguise again, painted lines round his eyes, touched some of the hairs of his eyebrows with white paint, mixed some white horsehair with the tuft on the top of his head, and dropped a little juice of a plant resembling belladonna--used at times, by ladies in the east, to dilate the pupils of their eyes and make them dark and brilliant--in his eyes.

Soyera had told him of this herb, when he related to her how Balloba had detected him by the lightness of his eyes. He was greatly surprised at the alteration it effected in his appearance, and felt assured that even Balloba himself would not again recognize him.

He bought a dozen sacks of grain from the farmer and, placing these in the bullock cart, started for Scindia's camp. He had, during the night, buried the gold; for he thought that, until he knew his ground, and could feel certain of entering Bajee Rao's camp unquestioned, it would be better that there should be nothing in the cart, were he searched, to betray him. He carried in his hand the long staff universally used by bullock drivers and, passing through Poona, arrived an hour later at the camp, which was pitched some three miles from the city.

As large numbers of carts, with forage and provisions, arrived daily in the camp for the use of the troops, no attention whatever was paid to him and, on enquiring for the encampment of Bajee Rao--one of whose officers had, he said, purchased the grain, for his horses and those of his officers and escort--he soon found the spot, which was on somewhat rising ground in the centre of the camp. It was much larger than he had expected to find it as, beyond being prevented from leaving, Bajee had full liberty, and was even permitted to have some of his friends round him, and two or three dozen troopers of his household regiment.

In charge of these was a young officer, who was well known to Harry during the time of Mahdoo Rao. Seeing him standing in front of a tent, Harry stopped the cart opposite to him and, leaving it, went up to him.

"Where shall I unload the cart?" he asked.

"I know nothing about it," the officer said. "Who has ordered it? The supply will be welcome enough, for we are very short of forage."

Then, changing his tone, Harry said:

"You do not know me, Nujeef. I am your friend, Puntojee."

"Impossible!" the other said, incredulously.

"It is so. I am not here for amusement, as you may guess; but am on a private mission to Bajee Rao. Will you inform him that I am here? I dare not say whom I come from, even to you; but can explain myself fully to him."

"I will let him know, certainly, Puntojee; but there is little doubt that Balloba has his spies here, and it will be necessary to arrange that your meeting shall not be noticed. Do you sit down here by your cart, as if waiting for orders where to unload it. I will go across to Bajee's tent, and see him."

Nujeef accordingly went over to the rajah's tent, and returned in a quarter of an hour.

"Bajee will see you," he said. "First unload your grain in the lines of our cavalry, place some in front of your bullocks, and leave them there; then cross to the tent next to Bajee's. It is occupied by one of his officers, who carries the purse and makes payments. Should you be watched, it would seem that you are only going there to receive the price of the grain. Bajee himself will slip out of the rear of his tent, and enter the next in the same way. The officer is, at present, absent; so that you can talk without anyone having an idea that you and Bajee are together."

Harry carried out the arrangement and, after leaving his bullocks, made his way to the spot indicated. He found the young rajah had gone there.

"And you are Puntojee!" the latter said. "I saw you but a few times, but Rao Phurkay has often mentioned your name, to me, as being one who stood high in the confidence of my cousin Mahdoo. Nujeef tells me that you have a private communication to make to me; and indeed, I can well believe that. You would not thus disguise yourself, unless the business was important."

"It is, Your Highness. Nana Furnuwees has received your message. He reciprocates your expressions of friendship, and has sent me here to let you know that the time is approaching when your deliverance from Balloba can be achieved."

He then delivered the message with which he had been entrusted. Bajee's face became radiant, as he went on.

"This is news, indeed," he said. "That Phurkay was faithful to me, I knew; but I thought that he was the only friend I had left. Truly Nana Furnuwees is a great man, and I will gladly give the undertaking he asks for; that, in the event of his succeeding in placing me on the musnud, he shall be my minister, with the same authority and power that he had under Mahdoo."

"I have, at the farmhouse where I am stopping, a thousand gold mohurs, which Nana has sent to enable you to begin your preparations; but he urges that you should be extremely careful for, as you see by what I have told you, he has ample power to carry out the plan without any assistance from yourself, and it is most important that nothing shall be done that can arouse the suspicions of Balloba, until all is ready for the final stroke. I have not brought it with me, today, as I knew not how vigilant they might be in camp, and it was possible that my sacks of grain might be examined. As, however, I passed in without question, I will bring it when I next come, which will be in two days."

"I suppose there is no objection to my telling Phurkay what is being done?"

"None at all, Your Highness. He has not yet been informed, though communications have passed between him and Nana. But, although the latter was well convinced of his devotion, he thought it safer that no one should know the extent of the plot, until all was in readiness."

Two days later, Harry made another journey to the camp, and this time with

the bags of money hidden among the grain, in one of the sacks. He saw Bajee Rao, as before, and received from him a paper, with the undertaking required by Nana. The sack containing the money was put down where Bajee's horses were picketed, and was there opened by a confidential servant, who carried the bags into the tent which was close by.

As he was leaving the camp, Harry had reason to congratulate himself on the precautions that he had taken; for he met Balloba, riding along with a number of officers. Harry had, with his change of costume, assumed the appearance of age. He walked by the side of the bullocks, stooping greatly and leaning on his staff; and the minister passed without even glancing at him.

Harry, on his return, paid the farmer for the hire of his cart. The latter was well pleased for, in addition to the money so earned, he had charged a good price for the two waggon loads of grain. Harry then put off the peasant's dress, and resumed that of a trooper, and rode back to Raygurh, where he reported to Nana the success of his mission.

Chapter 5: Down To Bombay.

Harry's stay with Nana was a short one as, in three days, he was again sent to Poona. This time he was to take up his abode at a large house, occupied by two of the leaders of Bajee's party; the rajah having told him that he would request them to entertain him, if he should again come to Poona. He was the bearer of fifty thousand rupees, principally in gold, which he was to give to them for the use of Bajee. He had no message this time for the prince, personally, Nana having said to him:

"I want you to let me know how matters are going on. The young man may do something rash and, if Balloba's suspicions are in any way excited, he may send him to some distant fortress; which would seriously upset my plans, for I should have to retain Chimnajee in power, as representative of his brother.

"We know that he was placed on the musnud greatly in opposition to his wishes; and he certainly hailed, with pleasure, the prospect of Bajee's release. Still, it would not be the same thing for me. A minister of the Peishwa can rule without question by the people but, acting only as minister to a representative of the Peishwa, he would be far more severely criticised; and it is certain that, to raise money for paying Scindia the sum that has been agreed upon, extra taxation must be put on, the odium resulting from which would fall upon me."

The two officers received Harry cordially. He had personally known them both and, as Nana's representative, they would have treated him with much honour, had it not been pointed out to them that this might be fatal to their plans for, did Balloba hear that some strange officer was being so treated by them, he would be sure to set at once about finding out who he was, and what he was doing there.

"Matters are going on well," they said. "The old general, Manajee Phurkay, who was one of Rugoba's devoted adherents, is now staying in Bajee's camp, and is enlisting men for his service."

"Where are they being assembled?"

"In Bajee's camp. He is not interfered with, there."

"It appears to be a very rash proceeding," Harry said. "It is true that Bajee has apparent liberty, and can have with him in his camp many of his friends; but a gathering of armed men can scarcely escape the eye of so keen an observer as Balloba."

Illustration: Harry . . . saw a party of soldiers coming along the road.

A few days later, Harry, being out one evening, saw a party of soldiers coming along the road from the direction of Scindia's camp. This was unusual for, in order to prevent plundering, the orders were stringent that none of Scindia's troops should enter Poona. He hurried back to the house, and acquainted the two leaders with what he had seen. They were inclined to laugh at his apprehension but, when a body of horsemen were seen coming down the street, they issued orders for the doors to be closed and barricaded. There were some twenty men in the house, and when the officer who commanded the detachment summoned them to open the door, and to deliver the two nobles to him, he was met by a decided refusal, from the chiefs themselves, from an upper window.

The officer then ordered his men to dismount and break open the door but, when they attempted to do so, they were met by a fire of musketry from every window. Many fell; and the officer, seeing that the house could not be taken, except by a force much larger than that at his command, rode off at full speed, with the survivors, to Scindia's camp.

No sooner had they gone than the horses were brought out from the stables, and the two officers, with ten of their troopers, rode off at full speed. Harry refused to accompany them, as he wished to see what had really happened, in order to carry the news to Nana. He therefore rode out to the farmhouse where he had before stayed, left his horse there, and returned to Poona.

Here he heard that Rao Phurkay had been seized, and that Bajee Rao's encampment was surrounded by troops, who suffered none to enter or leave it. The next morning he went over there and found that, as the supply of water had been cut off, the garrison had surrendered; all being allowed to depart, with the exception of Bajee, over whom a strong guard had been placed.

Before they left, Manajee Phurkay gave them all directions to gather in the neighbourhood of Waee. They did so, and were joined at once by the two chiefs. Nana promptly sent them a supply of money, telling them to take up their position at the Salpee Ghaut; where they were speedily joined by ten thousand men, and openly declared for Bajee Rao.

In the meantime Balloba, believing that the whole plot was the work of Bajee Rao, determined to despatch him, as a prisoner, to a fortress in the heart of Scindia's dominions. He sent him off with a strong escort, under the charge of an officer named Sukaram Ghatgay who, although having command only of a troop of one hundred horse, belonged to an ancient and honourable family.

Balloba could hardly have made a worse choice. Ghatgay had a daughter who was reported to be of exceptional beauty, and the young Scindia had asked her father for her hand. Ghatgay, an ambitious and enterprising man, had given no decided answer; not from any real hesitation, for he saw how enormous would be the advantage, to himself, of such an alliance; but in order to increase Scindia's ardour by pretended opposition, and so to secure the best terms possible for himself. The reason he gave would appear natural to any Mahratta of good blood, as none of these would have given a daughter of their house to one who, however high in rank, had ancestors belonging to a low caste.

Upon the way, Bajee, who was aware of Scindia's wishes, and was most anxious to obtain his goodwill, urged Ghatgay to give him his daughter in marriage and, after much pretended hesitation, the latter agreed to do so--on condition that Bajee would authorize him to promise Scindia a large sum of money, as soon as he again ascended the musnud; and that he would get the prince to appoint him his prime minister, which post would be vacant at the overthrow of Balloba. This being arranged, Bajee Rao pretended that he was seriously ill; and Ghatgay therefore halted, with his escort, on the banks of the Paira.

Taking with him his disguise as a countryman, Harry, as soon as he learned that Ghatgay had started with Bajee, mounted and followed him; and travelled, at some little distance in rear of the party, until they halted. Then he went to the house of a cultivator, left his horse there, and exchanged his dress as fighting man for that of a countryman.

There was no occasion for him, now, to disguise his age or darken his eyes and, as before, he hired a cart, bought some grain for forage, some sacks of rice and other things, and boldly entered Ghatgay's camp. As the prices he asked were low, Ghatgay purchased the whole contents of his cart. When this was cleared, Harry left his cattle and wandered about, saying that he and the animals needed an hour's rest.

Presently he passed Bajee Rao, who was standing listlessly at the door of a tent.

"I am Puntojee," Harry said, as he passed. "I followed you with the horse, that I might help you to escape."

"Stay and talk to me here," the young prince said. "It will seem that I am only passing my time in asking you questions about the country."

"I wanted to ascertain the road by which you will travel, after crossing the river. I have money with me, and will endeavour to raise a force of forty or fifty men; with which to make a sudden attack upon your camp, after nightfall. I will bring a good horse with me. If you will run out when you hear the uproar, I will ride up with the spare horse. You will leap on to its back, and we can gallop off."

"You are a brave fellow, Puntojee, and I thank you heartily for your offer; but, happily, I stand in no need of it. I have gained Ghatgay over, and he will linger here until we hear that Balloba has been arrested, and that Nana Furnuwees is approaching Poona. Believe me, I shall never forget your offer, or the fidelity that has prompted it; and when I am established as Peishwa you shall, if it pleases you, have any post at court you may desire."

"I thank you much, Prince; but I am an officer of Nana, and know that, in acting as I have done, I am acting in his interest, as well as yours. I am glad that the necessity for making an attack upon the camp is obviated. I might have had considerable trouble in raising a sufficient force for such a purpose, for even the most reckless would hesitate to fall on one of Scindia's officers; and in the next place, although I doubt not that I should have been able to carry you off, Ghatgay would, as soon as he had beaten off the attacking party, have set out in pursuit, and raised the whole country, and the difficulty of reaching the Western Ghauts would have been immense.

"I hope to see Your Highness at Poona."

So saying, he strolled carelessly back to the bullock cart, waited till the animals had finished their feed, and then drove off again; returned the cart to its owner, and started again for Poona.

On his arrival there, he went to the Residency and informed Mr. Malet that Bajee had gained over the officer who was escorting him, and was ready to come back to Poona, as soon as the blow was struck.

"It will be struck soon," Mr. Malet said. "All is in readiness. I sent your report on to the Council, urging that, as it seemed likely that Bajee Rao would soon be on the musnud, they should express their readiness to recognize him. I received a despatch only yesterday, saying that they perfectly agreed with me, and had already sent off a messenger to Nana stating their willingness to recognize Bajee as lawful heir to the late Peishwa.

"Things are working well. The Nizam's general has been ordered to watch Purseram Bhow, who is raising troops for the purpose of aiding in crushing Bajee's supporters. Holkar and Scindia's troops also are in readiness to move and, after the fete of the Dussera, the regular battalions in the Peishwa's service, commanded by Mr. Boyd, will march to the Neera bridge, and a brigade of Scindia's regulars will move against Raygurh.

"It is evident that neither Balloba nor Purseram has the slightest suspicion of what is going on, or they would never have despatched troops from here. I certainly have felt very uneasy, since Bajee was carried away; for he is a necessary figure, and should be here as soon as Nana arrives, otherwise there would be no recognized head. It would have been hopeless to try to deliver him, once imprisoned in one of the strong fortresses in Scindia's dominions; and the latter could have made any terms for himself that he chose to dictate.

"Your news has relieved me of this anxiety, and I think it probable that everything will now be managed without bloodshed; and that we may, for a time, have peace here."

The next morning, Harry rode off and rejoined Nana, who thanked him warmly for the manner in which he had carried out his mission, and especially for his offer to attempt to rescue Bajee from his captors.

"It would have been the greatest misfortune," he said, "had he been carried far away. I should have been obliged to recognize his brother Chimnajee; and Scindia, having Bajee in his hands, would have kept up a constant pressure, and might probably have marched to Poona to restore him; which he would certainly

have succeeded in doing, for the feeling of the population would have been all in favour of the lawful heir.

"As a token of my satisfaction, here is an order upon my treasurer for fifty thousand rupees."

All being ready, Scindia, on the 27th of October, suddenly arrested Balloba; and sent a body of his troops, with those of the Nizam's general, for the purpose of seizing Purseram Bhow. The latter, receiving news of what had happened in good time, and taking with him Chimnajee, fled to a fortress; but was quickly pursued, and obliged to surrender. Bajee Rao was brought back to Beema, eighteen miles from Poona. His brother Amrud, and Rao Phurkay, were also released.

Nana joined his army at the Salpee Ghaut, and Scindia's infantry, under Mr. Boyd, marched for the capital; which Nana refused to enter, however, until he had received a formal declaration, from Bajee, that he intended no treachery against him. This pledge was given; and a treaty was, at the same time, entered into by the Nizam and Scindia, both agreeing to establish Bajee Rao on the musnud, and reinstate Nana as his prime minister. These matters being settled, Nana returned to Poona, from which he had been absent for nearly a year, and resumed the duties of prime minister.

A fortnight later, Bajee Rao was solemnly invested as Peishwa. One of his first acts was to send for Harry, to whom he gave a robe of honour, and thirty thousand rupees in money, in token of his gratitude for the risk he had run in communicating with him, and for his daring proposal to rescue him from the hands of his escort.

On the day after Nana's re-entry into the capital, Harry received a note from Mr. Malet, asking him to call.

"I expect Colonel Palmer to relieve me of my duties here, in the course of a day or two. I need scarcely say I shall be glad to be released from a work which is surrounded with infinite difficulty, and which constantly upsets all human calculations. Nana is in power again; but another turn of the wheel may take place, at any moment, and he may again be an exile, or possibly a prisoner.

"It seems to me that it would be well for you to accompany me to Bombay. The remembrance of your services will be fresh, and they cannot but be recognized by the Council. That body is frequently changed and, in two or three years' time, there will be fresh men, who will know nothing of what has happened now, and be indisposed to rake up old reports and letters, or to reward past services; especially as the whole position here may have altered, half a dozen times, before that."

"I will gladly do so, sir, and thank you very heartily for your kindness. I will ride over to Jooneer, tomorrow, and bring my old nurse down with me; and I have no doubt Sufder will be willing to accompany us. He has rendered good services to Nana; and the latter will, I am sure, grant him leave of absence for as long as may be necessary."

"I think it would certainly be best to take them both down, if possible. They could make affidavits, in Bombay, that would place it beyond doubt that you are Major Lindsay's son. It is morally certain that there are relatives of your father and mother still living, in England. I do not say that you require any assistance from them; but when you return home, as everyone does, two or three times, in the course of his Indian service, it would be pleasant to find friends there; and it would be well that your position should be established beyond all question."

"I will gladly go down with you," Soyera said, when Harry laid the matter before her. "I am happy and contented here, but should be glad to see Bombay again. It was my home for ten years. I am very glad you have made up your mind to go, for it is time that you should take your place among your countrymen; and the recommendation of the Resident at the court of Poona is as good a one as you could wish for.

"I should say that you had better give up, at once, staining your skin. I can see that you have not used the dye for some days, and it would be as well to recover your proper colour, before Mr. Malet introduces you to the Council at Bombay."

"I will ride down to the town," Harry said, "and engage a gharry [a native carriage] to carry you to Poona. When we get there, I shall learn what route Mr. Malet will take, and how fast he will travel; and shall then see which will be the best for you--to go down in a gharry, or to be carried in a dhoolie [a palanquin]."

"But all this will cost money, Harry."

"I am well provided with funds," Harry said, "for the Nana and Bajee Rao have both made me handsome presents for the services I rendered them. There is, therefore, no reason why we should not travel in comfort."

They arrived at Poona two days later; and Harry--having ascertained that the new Resident would not arrive until the next day, and that he would probably wish Mr. Malet to defer his departure for at least two days, in order to give him his experience of the factions and intrigues there, and of the character of all those who were likely to influence events--rode to see Nana, who had not yet returned to Poona.

"I have come, your excellency," he said, "to tell you that it is my wish to retire from the public service."

The minister looked greatly surprised.

"Why, Puntojee," he said, "this sounds like madness. Young as you are, you have secured powerful protectors, both in the Peishwa and myself; and you may hope to reach a high office in the state, as you grow older.

"I do not know, though," he went on, speaking to himself rather than to the lad, "that high office is a thing to be desired. It means being mixed up in intrigues of all kinds, being the object of jealousy and hatred, and running a terrible risk of ruin at every change in the government here."

Then he turned again to Harry.

"And what are you thinking of doing?"

"I will speak frankly to your highness. I am not a Mahratta, as you and everyone else suppose. I am the son of English parents."

And he then went on to give an account of the killing of his father and mother, and of how he was saved by Soyera, and brought up as her son; until such times as he might, with advantage, go down to Bombay. Nana listened with great interest.

"It is a strange tale," he said, when Harry brought the story to a conclusion, "and explains things which have, at times, surprised me. In the first place, the colour of your eyes always struck me as peculiar. Then your figure is not that of my countrymen. There are many as tall as you; but they have not your width of shoulders, and strong build. Lastly, I have wondered how a young Mahratta should be endowed with so much energy and readiness, be willing to take heavy responsibilities on his shoulders, and to be so full of resource.

"Now that you have told me your story, I think you are right to go down and join your own people. Everything is disturbed, and nothing is certain from day to day here. I was a fugitive but a short time ago and, ere long, I may again be an exile.

"Moreover, no one can tell what may happen to him. Your people are quarrelling with Tippoo, as they quarrelled with his father, Hyder; and I think that, before long, it is possible they will overthrow him, and take possession of his territory.

"Were the various powers of India united, this could not be so; but the English will always find some ready to enter into an alliance with them, and will so enlarge their dominions. The Mahrattas may laugh at the idea of their being overthrown, by such small armies as those the English generals command; but our constant dissensions, and the mutual jealousy between Holkar, Scindia, the Peishwa, the Rajah of Berar, and others, will prevent our ever acting together. It may be that we shall be conquered piecemeal.

"I have watched, very closely, all that has taken place in southern India and in Bengal. I have seen a handful of traders gradually swallowing up the native powers, and it seems to me that it may well be that, in time, they may become the masters of all India. Were I to say as much to any of our princes, they would scoff at my prediction; but it has been my business to learn what was passing elsewhere, and I have agents at Madras and Calcutta, and their reports are ever that the power of the English is increasing. A few years ago, it seemed that the French were going to carry all before them; but they, like our native princes, have gone down before the English; who seem, moreover, to get on better than the French with the natives, and to win their respect and liking.

"Well, young sir, I shall be sorry to lose you; because while I, and with good

reason, was seldom able to trust, and to give my absolute confidence to any of those around me, I have always felt that I could wholly rely on you. During the past year I have seen much of you, and have freely told my plans to you, as I have done to no others; and have chosen you for missions that I could not, with safety, have entrusted to any of my own followers, knowing that Scindia or Holkar would be ready to pay great sums for these secrets. None except Bajee, to whom I sent you with particulars, were aware of the extent of my plans, or that I was in communication with more than one of the rajahs.

"You have played your part marvellously well, for I should not have deemed it possible that one of your race could live so long among us, without exciting any suspicion. While you remain in Bombay, I hope that you will act as my confidential agent. I do not ask you to divulge any secrets you may learn, relating to projects connected with the Deccan; but I should like to be informed as to the course of affairs, generally. Of course, my dealings with the Council there must be carried on through the English Resident; but there is much information respecting the views of the Council with regard to Tippoo, the Nizam, and Bengal, that will be valuable for me to know."

"I could not so act, your excellency, without permission from the Council; but I should imagine that they would not be averse to such an arrangement, especially as, perhaps, you would give me private information as to the state of parties, here, such as you would not care to tell their Resident."

"Certainly I would do so. They change their Residents so frequently that it would be impossible for new men to really understand the situation; which you, with your intimate knowledge of Poona, could readily grasp. Of course the arrangement could only be temporary, as my own position is so uncertain and, in any case, my life cannot now be a long one.

"I should propose that your salary, as my private agent, be a thousand rupees a month."

"I thank you much, sir; and if I stay at Bombay, and obtain the permission of the Council to correspond with you, I will readily undertake the part. They can have little objection to the arrangement, as doubtless you have agents in Bombay, already."

"Certainly I have, but these are natives, and necessarily can only send me the rumours current in the bazaars, or known generally to the public; and their news is, for the most part, worthless."

"I have another favour to request," Harry said; "namely, that you will give leave of absence to Sufder, in order that he may accompany me to Bombay. He and my old nurse could, alone, substantiate my birth and identity; and it would be necessary for them to give their evidence before some legal authority."

"That I will readily do. Sufder is honest and faithful, and I can rely upon him, absolutely, for anything in his sphere of duty; and have, only today, appointed him to the command of two hundred men; but although he has a hand ready to strike, he has no brain capable of planning. Had it not been so, I should before this have raised him to a higher position. When he returns from Bombay, I will grant him the revenues of a village, of which he shall be the patal [a mayor]; so that, in his old age, he will be able to live in comfort."

On leaving the minister, Harry went to Sufder's camp.

"'So you are back again, Puntojee?"

"Yes, and have brought Soyera down with me."

"I have great news to tell you," the soldier went on.

"It will not be news to me, Sufder. I know that your command has been doubled, and that you will now be the captain of two hundred men; but I can tell you much more than that. You are to accompany me down to Bombay, the day after tomorrow, so as to give evidence about my birth; and furthermore, Nana will, on your return, bestow upon you the jagheer [revenue] of a village district; so that, as he says, when you grow too old for service, you will be able to live comfortably."

"That is good news indeed--better even than that I am to have the command of two hundred men, for in truth I am beginning to be weary of service. I am now nearly fifty, and I feel myself growing stiff. Nothing would please me more than to be the patal of a village community, of which I hold the jagheer. However, so long as Nana lives and retains power I shall remain a soldier; but at

his death I shall serve no other master, and shall take to country life again.

"Does Nana know that you are English?"

"Yes, I have told him my story. I was obliged to give my reasons for resigning and, as Nana has the support of the Government of Bombay, there was no risk in my doing so.

"How long will it be before I get quite rid of this colour, Sufder?"

"That I cannot say. I should think that in a fortnight the greater part of it will have faded out, but maybe Soyera knows of something that will remove it more rapidly."

Soyera, when asked, said that she knew of nothing that would remove the dye at once; but that if he washed his hands and face, two or three times a day, with a strong lye made from the ashes of a plant that grows everywhere on the plain, it would help to get rid of it.

"I will go out, tomorrow morning, and fetch some in."

When she had made the lye, and mixed it with oil, it made a very strong soap.

"How do you mean to dress, to go down, Harry?"

"I have no choice; but even if I had, I should ride out of here in my best court suit, and change it for English clothes when we got down the Ghauts. I may have to come up here again, for aught I know; and it is better, therefore, that no one should know that I am English."

Mr. Malet, however, solved the difficulty; for when, in the evening, Harry went to enquire about the time that they would start, he said:

"I had been thinking of offering you a suit to ride down in but, unfortunately, my clothes would be a great deal too small for you. However, I think that, after all, it is best you should go down as you are. In the first place, you would not show to advantage in English clothes, in which you would feel tight and uncomfortable, at first; and in the second place, I think that it is perhaps as well that the Council should see you as you are, then they would the better understand

how you have been able to pass as a Mahratta, all these years.

"I will introduce you, now, to Colonel Palmer. It is important that he should know you, for possibly you may be sent up here on some mission or other--for which, having the favour of Nana, you would be specially fitted."

Accordingly, the next morning they started early. Soyera had prepared the liquid soap, but as it was decided that he should go in native dress, Harry thought it as well not to use it, especially as the dye was gradually wearing off. The party consisted of Mr. Malet, Sufder, and Harry; with an escort of ten cavalrymen, belonging to one of the native regiments. The mission clerk had been transferred to Colonel Palmer, as his knowledge of affairs would be useful to the newcomer. Soyera was carried in a dhoolie, and followed close behind the troopers.

That evening they descended the Ghauts into the Concan and encamped there and, on the following day, rode into Bombay; where Mr. Malet took them to an hotel, principally used by natives of rank visiting Bombay.

"You had best stay here, till I send for you," he said, to Harry. "I shall see some of the Council tonight. No doubt there will be a formal meeting, tomorrow, to ask my opinion about the probability of the present state of things continuing at Poona. I shall, of course, tell them your story; and they will likely request you to go, at once, to see them; therefore, do not leave the hotel until you hear from me."

Sufder had not previously visited Bombay, and the next morning early he went out, with Soyera as his guide, to inspect the European part of the town. He was much struck with the appearance of neatness and order in the fort, and the solidity of the buildings.

"It is a strong place, assuredly," he said to Harry, on his return. "In the first place, it would be necessary for a force attacking it to cross over the narrow isthmus, and causeway, uniting the island with the land; and that would be impossible, in face of a force provided with artillery guarding it. Then, if they succeeded in winning that, they would have to make their way through the native town to get on to the maidan; and this would be defended by the guns from all the batteries and, in addition to the artillery on land, it might be swept by guns

on board ship. Truly, those who talked about driving the English into the sea cannot have known anything of the strength of the position.

"As to carrying it by assault, it could not be done; nor could the garrison be starved out, since they could always obtain supplies of all sorts by sea. And yet, except at the causeway, the place has no natural strength. The Mahrattas acted unwisely, indeed, when they allowed the English to settle here."

"They could not foresee the future, Sufder. Now, doubtless, they are sorry; but if in the future the British become masters of India, the Mahrattas will have no reason to regret having given them a foothold. Wherever their powers extend, the natives are far better off than they were under the rule of their own princes. Were the British masters, there would be no more wars, no more jealousies, and no more intrigues; the peasants would till their fields in peace, and the men who now take to soldiering would find more peaceful modes of earning a living."

"But you do not think, surely, Harry,"--for after leaving Poona, he had been told to call him so--"that the English can ever become masters of India? They conquered the Carnatic, but even there they were not safe from the forays of Hyder Ali. Mysore bars their way farther north. Then there is the Nizam to be dealt with, and then Berar and the Mahrattas; then comes Rajputana, and beyond are the Sikhs, and the fierce chiefs of Scinde. It is true that the English have beaten the peoples of lower Bengal, but these have always been looked down upon, and despised as cowardly and effeminate, by the fighting men of all India.

"Besides, how few are the white soldiers! They say, too, that the French have promised Tippoo to send a big army, to help to drive the English into the sea."

"The French have quite work enough, at home," Harry said. "It is true that they have got into Egypt, but they are shut up there by our fleets. Moreover, even were they to cross over into Arabia, how could they march across a dry and almost waterless country, for a thousand or two of miles? When they arrived in Scinde they would find all the fighting men of the province, and the Sikhs, opposed to them; and they would never be able to fight their way down to Mysore. The thing is absurd."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger, from the Government House, with a request that Mr. Lindsay should at once attend there.

Harry's horse, which had been saddled in readiness, was brought round; for it would have seemed strange for a Mahratta, whose dress showed that he held a good position, to go on foot. Sufder rode by his side, Soyera following on foot.

Dismounting at the Government House, he threw the reins to one of the lads, who were waiting in readiness to hold the horses of officers coming to see the Governor. On Harry mentioning his name, the native doorkeeper said:

"I have orders for you to be taken, at once, to the Council chamber, sahib, on your arrival here."

The Governor, with four members of the Council and Mr. Malet, were seated at a long table. Mr. Malet rose and said:

"This is Mr. Lindsay, gentlemen."

"Truly, sir, it would be difficult to recognize you as a fellow countryman, in that garb," the Governor said; "though your colour is somewhat less dark than that of a Mahratta."

"Since I left Poona I have ceased to dye, sir; as to my dress, this will be the last time I shall wear it, unless I should be called upon to go to Poona again."

"Your story is a most singular one," the Governor said, "but Mr. Malet assures us that you are the son of Major Lindsay, and has been telling us how you escaped the massacre at the camp, and how your ayah has brought you up."

"She has come down with me, sir. I thought that her testimony would be necessary; and I have also brought down her cousin, who was present at the foray in which my father and mother were killed. My account will be confirmed by their statements."

"You do credit to Mahratta food and training, Mr. Lindsay; but Mr. Malet has mentioned to me that, at one time, you were employed as a shikaree, to keep down the tigers which were doing havoc among the villagers near the top of the Ghauts. He has also informed us of the very valuable service you rendered, by informing him of Nana Furnuwees' measures for regaining power, and replacing Bajee Rao on the musnud--intelligence which saved us a great expenditure of money in preparing to support him; with the certainty that, by doing so, we

might excite the enmity of Scindia. He tells us, also, why you continued so long in the Deccan, instead of coming down here; and I think you acted very wisely.

"We have mentioned your services, in that matter, in our reports to the Board of Directors; and have said that, partly as a recognition of this, and partly because you are the son of an English officer, who was killed in their service, we should at once give you an appointment, subject to their approval.

"Now, sir, which would you prefer, the civil or military branch?"

"I should much prefer the military," Harry answered, without hesitation; "unless indeed, sir, you think my services would be more useful in the civil."

"If we were at Calcutta or Madras, there would be more scope for you in the civil service; but as we hold, at present, little territory beyond this island, there are therefore but few appointments affording an opportunity for the display of the intelligence which you certainly possess; but, should circumstances alter, you might, owing to your knowledge of the country and its language, be told off for civil work, in which the emoluments are very much higher than in the military branch of the service.

"You will at once be gazetted to the 3rd Native Cavalry, and do duty with the regiment, until your services are required elsewhere. Fresh disturbances may break out at Poona and, in that case, you might be attached as assistant to Colonel Palmer.

"Do you think you would be known again?"

"I think it would be very unlikely, sir. When my skin has recovered its proper colour, and I am dressed in uniform, I feel sure no one would recognize me as having been an officer in the Peishwa's court."

"Very well, sir. Then you will see your name in the gazette, tomorrow. You will, within a day or so, report yourself to the officer commanding the regiment.

"I may say that it would be well if your nurse, and the man who came down with you, were to draw up statements concerning your birth, and swear to them at the High Court. These might be valuable to you, in the future."

After expressing his thanks to the Governor and Council, Harry went out, and rode back to the hotel with Sufder.

Chapter 6: In The Company's Service.

There was no conversation between Harry and Sufder on the way back to the hotel; Harry saying that he would tell the news when Soyera joined them, otherwise he would have to go through it twice. They rode slowly through the streets, and Soyera arrived a few minutes after them.

"Now," Harry said, "we will go up to my room and talk the matter over.

"Mr. Malet has been kind enough to give such a favourable report of me that I am appointed lieutenant to the 3rd Regiment of Native Cavalry, and shall be employed as assistant to the resident at Poona, should there be fresh disturbances there."

"That is good fortune, indeed," Sufder said.

"Wonderfully good fortune! and I owe it all, in the first place to Soyera, and in the next to yourself. You see, I have gained greatly by taking your advice, and remaining in the Deccan until fit for military service. Had she declared who I was when she took me down to Bombay, before, there is no saying what might have become of me.

"And now, the first thing to do is for me to go out and order a uniform. When I return I will draw up, in Mahratti and English, a full account of the manner in which I was saved, by Soyera and you, from being murdered; and how I have been brought up."

Harry had learned, at the Governor's, the name and address of an official at the Judge's Court who would get his statements copied out, in proper form and writing; and when he had taken them down from the lips of Sufder and Soyera, he saw this gentleman, who promised that the documents should be ready by the next day.

Having thus put his business in train, Harry went to call upon Mrs. Sankey. She did not recognize him at once but, as soon as he made himself known, she

received him most warmly.

"You looked as if you would grow into a big fellow, but I hardly expected that you would have done it so soon."

"It is more than four years since I left you. I don't think that I am likely to grow any taller than I am; though of course, I shall get broader."

He then told her what had happened since he left her, and how he had just been appointed an officer in a native cavalry regiment.

"I am very glad you have come now. My daughters have both married, and I am going to sail for England in a few days. Whether I shall stay there permanently, or come back, I cannot say but, at any rate, I shall be away at least two years."

"I should have been very sorry to have missed you, Mrs. Sankey. I have always looked back, with the greatest pleasure, at the time I spent here."

"You have kept up your English well," she said.

"I have followed your advice, and hardly ever missed reading aloud for an hour, so as to keep my tongue accustomed to it; and I know many of Shakespeare's plays by heart, and could recite a great many passages from the writings of Dean Swift, Mr. Addison, Mr. Savage, and others."

His next visit was to Jeemajee, who received him with real pleasure, when he told him who he was. Harry had not learned--nor did he ever learn--that the kindly Parsee had contributed a hundred pounds towards the expenses of his education; but he did know that he had presented him with his outfit of clothes, and had been the means of his being placed with Mrs. Sankey; and during the months he remained at Bombay, he paid frequent visits to the man who had so befriended him.

The next day he went with Sufder and Soyera, who swore to their statements before the judge of the High Court.

As soon as his uniform was ready, Harry went to his regiment--which was encamped on the maidan, between the fort and the native town--and was

introduced to the colonel.

"I have come to report myself, sir," he said to the colonel. "My name is Lindsay."

"I was expecting you," the colonel said, "for Mr. Malet came in this morning and told me about you; saying that you would most likely come either today or tomorrow. I will have a tent pitched for you, this afternoon; and a soldier told off as your servant. Of course, at first you will have to go through the somewhat unpleasant task of learning your drill.

"From what Mr. Malet told me, I think you are not likely to be much with us as, from your perfect knowledge of Mahratti, and of the country, you can do better service in a staff appointment than with the regiment.

"You are much fairer than they had given me to expect."

"I have been hard at work, for the last two days, in getting rid of the dyes with which I have been coloured, ever since I was an infant."

"Ah! You are not very noticeably darker, now, than other officers in the regiment.

"Now, I will hand you over to the adjutant. You will, of course, mess with us today; and I can then introduce you to your brother officers."

The adjutant was sent for, and soon entered.

"Mr. Lewis," the colonel said, "this is Mr. Lindsay, who was gazetted to us two days ago. He will be very useful to us, if we go up to Poona again--of which there is always a possibility--for he speaks Mahratti like a native, having lived among the people since he was an infant. He is the son of Major Lindsay, who was killed here at the time of the advance on Poona."

"You will be a great acquisition to us," the adjutant said, as he left the tent with Harry. "Most of us speak a little Mahratti; but it will be very useful to have one of us who is perfect, in that way. Of course, you have not got your full kit yet; but you will want a mess jacket and waistcoat. These I can lend you, till you get your own made."

"They are ordered already, and I am to get them in a couple of days. It was so much more important that I should get the undress uniform, to enable me to begin work, that I did not press the tailor quite so much as to the other clothes."

"Are you ready to begin work, at once?"

"The sooner the better," Harry replied.

"Then I shall hand you over to the native officer, who has charge of the drilling of recruits. There is a small yard, behind the barracks, where Europeans are instructed in the first stages. To see them doing the goose step would not add to the respect the soldiers have for their white officers. They are therefore taught such matters in private so that, when they come out for company drill, they are not quite at sea."

Half an hour later, Harry was at work under the instructions of a native officer. By the time he had finished, a tent had been erected for him; and he was glad to find a bath ready, for it was much warmer down in Bombay than above the Ghauts, and it had been hot work drilling. The adjutant had chosen a Mahratta servant, and the man's surprise, when the newly-joined officer addressed him in his own language, was great.

As Mr. Malet had told him that, except when on duty, the officers generally wore civilian clothes, he had purchased several white suits, consisting of jacket and trousers, as these were kept in stock by a Parsee tailor; and he put on one of these, with a white shirt, after he had finished his bath. He had scarcely done so when a bugle sounded.

"That is the call for tiffin, sahib," Abdool said.

"Do the officers go in uniform?"

"No, sahib, not to this meal."

Just at this moment, the adjutant came in.

"Come along, Lindsay," he said. "I thought I would come round for you. It is rather trying going into a room full of strangers."

There were some twelve officers gathered in the mess tent, and the adjutant introduced Harry to them, singly. They were all curious to see him, having heard from the colonel--who had summoned them to the tent, a quarter of an hour before the bugle sounded--some particulars of his life; and how he had been at once appointed to be lieutenant, without going through the usual term as a cadet, as a reward for important services.

Their first impression of him was a favourable one. He was now nearly six feet in height, with a powerful and well-knit frame. His face was pleasant and good tempered and, although the features were still boyish, there was an expression of restraint and determination that had been acquired from the circumstances in which he had been placed.

He had seen the barbarous splendour of the entertainments at the Peishwa's court, but nothing like the well-ordered table now before him; with its snow-white cloth, its bright silver, and perfect appointments.

When the meal was over, the colonel said:

"As duty is over for the day, I think it would be most interesting if Mr. Lindsay would give us an account of his life, and adventures. As you are all here, it would save him the trouble of going over his story, again and again; for you are all, I am sure, like myself, anxious to know how it was that he has been able, all these years, to pass as a Mahratta among Mahrattas."

There was a general expression of agreement. Cheroots were lighted, and Harry told his story, with some detail. When he had finished, the colonel said:

"I am sure we are all obliged to you, Lindsay. You have had a remarkable experience; and few of us have, in the course of our lives, gone through anything like the same amount of adventures. To have been, at your age, a peasant boy, an English school boy, a shikaree, an officer in the Peishwa's court, a confidential agent of Nana Furnuwees, and now a British officer, is indeed wonderful. It speaks volumes for your intelligence and discretion."

"I cannot take the whole credit to myself, sir. I had two good friends. My nurse, not content with saving my life, taught me English, instructed me in the ways of our people, and even in their religion, and continually urged me to

exercise myself in every way; so that when, some day, I left her, I should in bodily strength and activity not be inferior to others; and, aided by her brother, expended all her savings, of years, in having me educated here. Next to her I owe much to Sufder, who first taught me the use of arms, and then presented me to Nana. Without such an introduction I must, had I entered the Mahratta service at all, have gone as a private soldier, instead of obtaining at once a post at court.

"To Mrs. Sankey I owe very much for the kindness she showed me, and the pains she took with me; and I owe much, too, to Mr. Jeemajee, the Parsee merchant."

"Yes, you owe much to both of them," the colonel said; "but their teaching and advice would not have gone for much, had it not been for your own energy, and for the confidence you inspired in the Peishwa's minister.

"What are you going to do about your nurse?"

"We have not quite arranged, as yet, sir; but she will, at any rate, remain here for a time. She loves me as a mother; and I think that, so long as I am quartered here, she will remain. She has already found a lodging, at the house of a woman of the same caste as herself; and tells me that she is sure she will be comfortable with her. If we move, and all goes on quietly in the Deccan, she will return to her brother's, where she is thoroughly at home and happy."

"And Sufder?"

"He will return, in the course of a week or so. He is greatly interested in what he sees here, especially in the shipping, never having seen the sea before. I think that, probably, he will remain for two or three years with his troop of two hundred men; and will then settle in the village, of which and the surrounding country he has received the jagheer. This, although not large, will suffice for him to live in comfort. It is but a few miles from Jooneer, and he will therefore be able to be near his friends, and pay frequent visits to his cousin Ramdass."

In a short time Harry became a general favourite, and made the acquaintance of the officers of all the regiments in the garrison; for his romantic story speedily circulated and, before he had been a fortnight in the city, he had received invitations to dine at all their messes.

After the exciting life he had led, for two years, he felt, on being released from drill, that life in a garrison town was dull and monotonous. The simple habits, in which he had been brought up, did not help him to enjoy heavy meals at regimental mess. Occasionally he and two or three other officers crossed to the mainland, and had some shooting in the wild district of the Concan. But he was pleased when he received an order, from the Governor, to call upon him.

"Colonel Palmer," he said, "has written, requesting me to send him an assistant; as matters do not seem to be going on well at Poona. He suggested that you, from your acquaintance with the people and their intrigues, should be selected for the post but, even had he not done so, I should have chosen you, as being better fitted for it than any other officer here.

"Your instructions are simple. You will watch, and endeavour to penetrate the schemes of the various factions, and assist Colonel Palmer generally."

"Am I to go up in my uniform, sir; or to wear a disguise, similar to that in which I came down here?"

"That is a matter over which I have been thinking. I have come to the conclusion that you will be more likely to obtain intelligence in native garb. All parties look with jealousy upon us, and would be chary of giving any information to an officer of the Residency; and therefore, if you have no objection, we think that it will be an advantage to you to assume native dress. Of course, you could not go in the attire that you came down in for, although you would not be recognized in uniform, you would, if dressed as before.

"I would rather leave that matter entirely to you, and also the manner in which you can proceed. You must also decide, for yourself, whether to renew your connection with Nana Furnuwees. It appears to me that he is the only honest man in the Deccan, and the only man who takes the patriotic view that there should be peace and rest throughout the country. He is, however, no more willing than others that we should, in any way, interfere in the affairs of the Deccan."

"That certainly is so, sir; but I know that it is his most earnest desire to possess the friendship of the authorities of Bombay. He has frequently told me that he is a great admirer of the English, of their methods of government, and of

the straightforwardness and sincerity with which they conduct their business. But he is afraid of them. He sees that, where they once make an advance, they never retire; and is convinced that, if they obtained a footing above the Ghauts, there would be no turning them out, and that their influence would be supreme."

"Very well, Mr. Lindsay; you showed such discretion and judgment, during your residence at Poona, that I am well content to leave the matter in your hands. The appointment as assistant to Colonel Palmer will carry with it a civil allowance of three hundred rupees a month. Of course, all necessary expenses will be paid and, should you find it expedient to use a certain amount of bribery, to obtain the news we require in other quarters besides that of the minister, you will refer the matter to the Resident.

"You will, of course, give your reports to Colonel Palmer, and will be under his orders, generally. He will be requested to further your special mission in every way in his power."

"When shall I start, sir?"

"As soon as you like, Mr. Lindsay."

"I shall be ready, sir, as soon as the clothes are made for me. I must have one or two disguises, of various kinds, to use as most desirable. Some of these I can, no doubt, buy ready made--perhaps all of them. If so, I will start at daylight, tomorrow."

"Very well, Mr. Lindsay. I shall be sending up a despatch to Colonel Palmer, and it will be left at your tent, this evening."

On leaving the Government House, Harry went to see Soyera. Scarcely a day had passed, since he came to Bombay, without his paying her a visit.

"I am off again to Poona," he said. "I do not know how long I shall be away. It must depend upon what is going on up there. Of course, I should be glad to have you with me; but that would hamper my movements. I shall, naturally, see Sufder as soon as I get there."

"But what are you going for? Will you travel as an officer?"

"No, I shall be in disguise. It seems that things are unsettled; and I am, if possible, to find out the intentions of the various leaders, and communicate them privately to our Resident. I shall have to take to dyeing my skin again, which is a nuisance, but it cannot be helped. I shall take with me three or four different disguises, and get you to do the shopping for me. I wish to have them by this evening, as I shall start in the morning, early.

"I shall get leave to take my soldier servant, Abdool, with me. He is a sharp fellow, and may be useful. I shall have to buy a pony for him."

"What sort of disguises do you want?"

"One is that of a native soldier."

"That is easy enough, as it differs but little from the ordinary Mahratta's dress."

"One would certainly be the attire of a trader, in good circumstances. I can't think, at present, of any other."

"I should say the dress of a Brahmin might be useful," Soyera suggested.

"Yes, that would give me an entry, unquestioned, to Nana, or to any other person of importance."

By nightfall, Soyera had bought the three disguises, and obtained from a native dyer a supply of stain sufficient for a long time; and Harry had purchased two useful ponies, for himself and his servant.

At mess, that evening, the colonel said:

"So you are going to leave us, for a time, Mr. Lindsay. I have received a letter, from the Governor, requesting me to put you in orders, tomorrow, as seconded from the regiment for civil employment. I won't ask you where you are going. That is no business of ours. But I am sure I can say, in the name of my officers as well as myself, that we shall all miss you, very much."

A murmur of acquiescence passed round the table and, seeing that Harry, in thanking the colonel, made no allusion to what he was going to do, they

followed the example of their superior officer, and abstained from asking any questions.

"I should like to take my man, Abdool, with me, Colonel," Harry said, later on. "He is a sharp fellow, and I might find him very useful."

"By all means. I will tell the adjutant that I have allowed him to go with you."

"I am not going in uniform, nor are you to do so," Harry said to Abdool, when he returned to his tent. "I am going in Mahratta dress, and I shall take a lodging in the town, and pass as a native. I know, Abdool, that you are a sharp fellow, and feel certain that I can depend upon you."

"You can certainly depend upon me, sahib. You have been a kind master, and I would do anything for you."

"What part of the country do you come from, Abdool?"

"From Rajapoor, in the Concan, sahib. I had no fancy for working in the fields, so I left and took service with the Company. I have never regretted it. I have been a great deal better off than if I had enlisted in the army of one of the great chiefs. The pay is higher, and we are very much better treated."

"Well, Abdool, when this business which I am now starting on is over, I shall recommend you for promotion and, in any case, will make you a present of three months' pay."

The next morning they started at daybreak. When a few miles out of town, they took off their uniforms; and Harry put on the dress of a trader. There was no occasion for any disguise for Abdool who, like all the native troops, was accustomed, after drill was over for the day, to put on native garments. The uniforms were then folded up, and stowed in the wallets behind the saddles.

They had brought with them a good supply of grain for their horses, and provisions for themselves; so that they might not have to stop at any village. They rode at a steady pace, and mounted the Ghauts by eleven o'clock. Then they waited three hours, to feed and rest the animals and, just as the sun was setting, entered Poona, having accomplished a journey of fifty miles. Knowing the place so well, Harry rode to a quiet street near the bazaar and, seeing an old

man at one of the doors, asked him if he knew of anyone who could afford accommodation for him and his servant.

"I can do that, myself," the man said. "I am alone in the house. Two merchants who have been staying here left me, yesterday; and I can let you have all the house, except one room for myself."

"You have no stables, I suppose?"

"No, sahib, but there is an outhouse which would hold the two horses."

Illustration: There was a little haggling over the terms.

There was a little haggling over the terms; for it would have been altogether contrary, to Indian usages, to have agreed to any price without demur. Finally the matter was arranged, at a price halfway between that which the man demanded, and that offered by Harry and, in a short time, they were settled in the two rooms of the second floor. Harry then went out and bought two thick quilted cushions, used as mattresses, and two native blankets.

They had still provisions enough for the evening. The furniture was scanty, consisting of a raised bed place, or divan; two tables, raised about a foot from the ground; brass basins, and large earthenware jars of water. Harry, however, was too well accustomed to it to consider such accommodation insufficient.

"Tomorrow," he said, "I will get a carpet for sitting upon, and you will have to get copper vessels, for cooking."

Abdool presently went out, and returned with two large bundles of forage for the horses. Soon afterwards they lay down, feeling stiff and tired from their unaccustomed exertions.

The next morning Harry went to the Residency. He had again painted caste marks on his face, which completely changed his appearance. Telling the guard that he had come from Bombay, and had a message for Colonel Palmer, he was shown in.

"You bring a message for me?" the colonel said, shortly; for he was, at the time, writing a despatch.

"Yes, sir," Harry answered, in Mahratti. "I have come to be your assistant."

"Then you are Mr. Lindsay!" the Resident exclaimed, dropping his pen and rising to his feet. "I received a despatch, yesterday, saying that you were coming. Of course, I remember you now, having seen you on the day I came up here; but your dress is altogether different, and the expression of your face seems so changed."

"That is the result of my having adopted different caste marks, larger than they were before, with lines that almost cover my forehead."

"I did not expect you to come in disguise."

"The Governor thought, Colonel, that I might be of greater service, in finding out what was passing in the town, and in going elsewhere, were I to come up as a native. To an officer of the Residency, all parties would keep their lips sealed."

"I thoroughly agree with you," the Resident said. "Your disguise differs so much, from your former appearance, that I do not think any of your acquaintances, of those days, would be likely to recognize you."

"At present I am supposed to be a trader; but I have with me the dress of a peasant, or small cultivator, which I used when I went into Scindia's camp. I have also the dress of a Brahmin--one of the better class--which I thought, if necessary, would enable me to enter the house of Nana, or other leaders, without exciting surprise. I also have my uniform with me.

"I am staying, at present, in the street that faces the market, at the house of a man named Naroo. I myself am Bhaskur. I have a soldier servant with me, on whom I can confidently rely; and I will send him, with a chit, when I have any news to give you, and you can send me word at what hour I had better call.

"Now, Colonel, I am at your orders and, if you will indicate to me the nature of the news which you wish to gain, or the person whom you want watched, I will do the best I can. At present, I know nothing of any changes that have taken place, since I left here."

"The only event that is publicly known is that, while the Peishwa has carried out his engagement with Scindia and with the Rajah of Berar, he refused to ratify any treaty with the Nizam; and the consequence is that the latter's general quitted Poona, without taking leave of Bajee Rao, and returned in great indignation to Hyderabad. This matter might have been smoothed over, if Scindia had intervened, or if the Peishwa had made suitable advances to the Nizam; but he has not done so. There is no doubt that he thoroughly dislikes Nana Furnuwees and, instead of being grateful to him for having placed him on the throne, he would gladly weaken his power. At any rate, it was Nana who formed the confederacy; and I know that his greatest wish is to keep it intact, and to secure peace to the country.

"Moreover, matters have been further complicated by the death of Holkar. He left two sons behind him, Khassee and Mulhar. Unfortunately, Khassee is next door to an imbecile; while Mulhar was a bold and able prince. The brothers quarrelled: two half brothers took the part of Mulhar, who left his brother's camp, with a small body of troops, and took up his abode at a village just outside the city--and was, I believe, favoured by Nana, whose interest naturally was to have an active and able prince, as ruler of Holkar's dominions. Scindia--who was, I suspect, delighted at this quarrel in Holkar's camp--supported Khassee, and sent a body of troops to arrest Mulhar, who, refusing to surrender, maintained a desperate defence, until he was killed. Jeswunt went to Nagpore and Wittoojee fled to Kolapoore, but they were almost the only adherents of Mulhar who effected their escape.

"So matters stand, at present. The fact that the imbecile Khassee owes his elevation to Scindia will, naturally, give the latter a predominating influence over him. Thus, you see, the confederacy has gone completely to pieces. The Nizam is estranged; the Rajah of Berar has gone home to Nagpore; Holkar's power is, for the time, subservient to Scindia; and Nana Furnuwees is, therefore, deprived of all those who aided to bring him back to power.

"You are well known to Nana, are you not?"

"Yes, Colonel, he was kind enough to place a good deal of confidence in me."

"Then I think you cannot do better than see him, to begin with, and gather his views on the matter. I myself have heard nothing from him, for some time. He knows that the Company are well disposed towards him; but he also knows that they can give him no assistance, in a sudden crisis."

"But surely, Colonel, Bajee Rao, who owes everything to him, will not desert him?"

"My opinion of the Peishwa is that he is a man without a spark of good feeling; that he has neither conscience nor gratitude, and would betray his own brother, if he thought that he would obtain any advantage by so doing. He is a born schemer, and his sole idea of politics is to play off one faction against another. I would rather take the word of a man of the lowest class, than the oath of Bajee Rao."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir. He seemed to me to be a fine fellow, with many accomplishments. His handsome face and figure, and winning manner--"

"His manner is part of his stock in trade," the colonel said, angrily. "He is a born actor; and can deceive, for a time, even those who are perfectly aware of his unscrupulous character.

"Remember one thing, Mr. Lindsay: that if you are in any difficulty, or if a tumult breaks out in the city, you had best make your way here, at once. A trooper of my escort was thrown from his horse, and killed, the other day; and if you attire yourself in his uniform, you will pass for one of them. Whatever happens, they are not likely to be touched. Both parties wish to stand well with me and, even were it found out that you are an Englishman, you would be safely sheltered here; for I should claim you as my assistant, and an officer in our army, and declare truthfully that you had only assumed this guise in order to ascertain, for me, the feelings of the populace."

"Thank you, sir. I will certainly come here, as soon as any serious trouble begins."

That evening, after rubbing off the caste marks and assuming those of a Brahmin, and putting on the dress suitable for it--padding it largely, to give him the appearance of a stout and bulky man--he went to Nana's house.

"Will you tell the minister," he said to the doorkeeper, "that Kawerseen, a Brahmin of the Kshittree caste, desires to speak to him?"

The man gave the message to one of the attendants who, in two or three minutes, returned and asked Harry to follow him. The minister was alone.

"What have you to say to me, holy man?" he enquired; and then, looking more fixedly at his visitor, he exclaimed:

"Why, it is Puntojee!"

"You are right, Nana. I am sent here to ascertain, if possible, what is going on, and how things are likely to tend. But first, I must tell you that I am now here as Colonel Palmer's assistant."

"I will take you entirely into my confidence," Nana said. "Until you told me that you were an Englishman, when you took leave of me two years ago, I could not quite understand why it was that I felt I could confide in you, more than in the older men around me. I esteem the English highly, and especially admire them for their honesty and truthfulness. You at once impressed me as one possessing such qualities and, now that I know you are English, I can understand the feeling that you inspired.

"I am glad you have come. No doubt your Government are well informed, as to the state of affairs here. I feel the power slipping from my hands, without seeing any way by which I can recover my lost ground. Scindia is solely under the domination of Ghatgay, whose daughter he will shortly marry. I have, of course, made it my business to enquire as to the antecedents of this man. I find that he has the reputation of being a brutal ruffian, remarkable alike for his greed and his cruelty--a worse adviser Scindia could not have. Holkar was but a poor reed to lean upon, for he was as weak in mind, as in body. But at any rate, he was a true friend of mine and, now that he has been succeeded by one even more imbecile than himself--and who is but a puppet in the hands of Scindia, to whose troops he owes his accession--his power and his dominions are practically Scindia's.

"There can be no doubt, whatever, that Bajee Rao is acting secretly with Scindia; that is to say, he is pretending so to act, for he is a master of duplicity and, even where his own interests are concerned, seems to be unable to carry out, honestly, any agreement that he has made.

"I am an old man, Mr. Lindsay, and can no longer struggle as I did, two years ago, against fate; nor indeed do I see any means of contending against such powerful enemies. The Rajah of Berar, although well disposed towards me, could not venture, alone, to support me against the united power of Scindia and Holkar, backed by that of the Peishwa.

"There is but one direction in which I could seek for help--namely, from the Government of Bombay--but even this, were it given, would scarcely avail much against the power of my enemies. And even were I sure that it could do so, I would not call it in. My aim, through life, has been to uphold the power of the Peishwa, and to lessen that of Scindia and Holkar and, by playing one against the other, to avert the horrors of civil war. Were I to call in the aid of the English, I

should be acting in contradiction to the principles that I have ever held.

"The arrival of a force of English, here, would at once unite the whole of the Mahrattas against them, as it did when last they ascended the Ghauts; and believing as I do in their great valour and discipline, which has been amply shown by the conduct of Scindia's infantry, which are mainly officered by Europeans, it is beyond belief that they can withstand the whole power of the Mahratta empire. But granting that they might do so, what would be the result? I should see my country shaken to the centre, the capital in the hands of strangers, and to what end? Simply that I, an old and worn-out man should, for a very few years, remain in power here. It would be necessary for those who placed me there to remain as my guardians, and I should be a mere cypher in their hands. Nothing, therefore, would persuade me to seek English aid to retain me in power."

"But the English would doubtless act in alliance with the Nizam, and probably with the Rajahs of Berar and Kolapoore."

"Possibly they might do so, but what would be the result? Each of these leaders would, in return for his aid, bargain for increased territory, at the expense of the Peishwa; and I, who believe that I am trusted by the great mass of the people here, should become an object of execration at having brought the invaders into our country.

"No, Mr. Lindsay; my enemies can, and I believe will, capture me and throw me into prison. They will scarcely take my life, for to do so would excite a storm of indignation; but I always carry poison about with me and, if they applied torture as a preliminary to death, I have the power of releasing myself from their hands.

"Are you established at the Residency?"

"No, sir; I am living in disguises, of which I have several, in the town. In that way, I can better discover what is going on than if I were in uniform, as assistant to Colonel Palmer. Should there be a tumult in the city, or if I find that my disguise has been detected, I can make for the Residency; and either put on my uniform and declare my true character, or attire myself as one of the Resident's escort."

"Come here as often as you can," Nana said. "I shall always be glad to see you. It is a relief to speak to one of whose friendship I feel secure. As a Brahmin, you can pass in and out without suspicion; and I will always tell you how matters stand."

"I have not yet spoken, Nana, of my work as your agent in Bombay. I have sent you reports, from time to time; but there was nothing in them that could be of any value to you. At present, the attentions of the authorities of Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta are centred upon the probability of war with Mysore. Tippoo has continually broken the conditions under which he made peace with us, six years ago; and it is known that he is preparing for war. He has received with honour many Frenchmen, and is in communication with the French Government; and believes that he will be supported by an army, under General Bonaparte and, as it is certain that, when the war breaks out again, it will need the fighting strength of the three towns to make head against the army of Mysore, as far as I have been able to learn they have given but little attention to the state of affairs in the Deccan. I have therefore been able to furnish you with no useful information, beyond telling you that the sympathies of the Governor and Council are wholly with you, and that they consider that the fact of your being in power here secures them from any trouble with the Mahrattas.

"Therefore, sir, I have put aside the allowance you have given me, considering that I have in no way earned it; and have written this order upon the bankers with whom I have placed it, authorizing them to pay the money to anyone you may depute to receive it;" and he handed the letter to the Nana.

The latter took it and, without opening it, tore it up.

"Your offer does you honour, Mr. Lindsay, but it is impossible for me to accept it. Your information has not been without advantages. I have foreseen that the Nizam would probably enter into an alliance with your people; and that the very large increase that he has made in his battalions, under foreign officers, was intended to make his alliance more valuable. I, however, have not deemed it necessary to imitate his example, and that of Scindia, by raising a similar force. Your communications, therefore, have been of real value, and have saved a large outlay here; but even had it not been so, there can be no question of your returning your pay. You undertook certain work, and you have to the best of your powers carried it out; and it is not because you consider that the information you

sent me is not sufficiently valuable that you have, in any way, failed to carry out your part of the contract.

"I consider it of very great value. In the first place because, as I have said, it relieved me from anxiety as to the Nizam's intentions of increasing his army; and in the second place, it eased my mind by showing that neither Scindia nor Holkar was intriguing with Bombay, which knowledge is worth a crore of rupees to me.

"It is the first time, sir, since I have taken part in politics, that anyone has offered to return money he has received on the ground that he had not sufficiently earned it; or indeed, upon any other ground, whatever. Your doing so has confirmed my opinion of the honesty of your people, and I would that such a feeling were common among my countrymen, here. No negotiations can be carried on, no alliance can be formed, without a demand for a large sum of money, or for an addition of territory. All our petty wars are waged, not on a question of principle, but entirely from greed.

"Let us say no more about it. I am, as of course you have heard, a very wealthy man; and have so distributed my money among the shroffs of all India that, whatever may happen here, I shall lose comparatively little; and I am glad to know that some very small portion of it goes to one whom I regard as a genuine friend, and who does not draw a tenth part of what many of those around me accept, without any consideration given for it."

"Thank you, sir, but--at any rate while I am stationed here, as Assistant Resident--I cannot continue to receive pay from you. I should regard it as a disgraceful action, and absolutely incompatible with my duty."

"Well, so far I will humour you, Mr. Lindsay; though from what I hear, in the Carnatic and Bengal the British officers, civil and military, do not hesitate to accept large sums from native princes."

Harry was well aware that this was so, and that many British officials had amassed considerable fortunes, by gifts from native sources. He only replied:

"That is a matter for their own consciences, sir. They may be rewards for services rendered, just as I did not hesitate to accept the sum that you so

generously bestowed upon me. It is not for me to judge other men, but I cannot but think that the custom of officials accepting presents is a bad one."

"Where can I find you," Nana said, changing the subject, "if I should need to communicate with you, before you call again?"

Harry gave his address.

"Your messenger must enquire for Bhaskur, a trader from Ahmedabad, who is lodging there."

He chatted for some time longer with Nana, and then took his leave and returned to his lodging.

Chapter 7: An Act Of Treachery.

Some months passed quietly. Scindia more openly assumed supreme power, imprisoned several leading men, and transferred their jagheers to his own relations. Colonel Palmer had gone down to Bombay on leave, his place being filled temporarily by Mr. Uhtoff.

Bajee was, as usual, playing a deep game. He desired to become independent both of Scindia and Nana Furnuwees. The former, he believed, must sooner or later return to his own dominions, and he desired his aid to get rid of Nana; therefore it was against the latter that his intrigues were, at present, directed. The minister was still an object of affection to his people; who believed, as before, in his goodness of character, and who put down every act of oppression as being the work of Scindia.

Harry saw Nana frequently. There being no change in the position, there was little talk of politics; and the minister generally turned the conversation upon England, its power relatively to that of France, the extent of its resources, the modes of life among the population, and its methods of government.

"It all differs widely from ours," Nana said, after one of these conversations, "and in most respects is better. The changes there are made not by force, but by the will of the representatives of the people, in their assembly. A minister defeated there retires at once, and his chief opponent succeeds him. The army has no determining voice in the conduct of affairs, but is wholly under the orders of the minister who may happen to be in power. All this seems strange to us but, undoubtedly, the system is far better for the population. There is no bloodshed, no burning of villages, no plundering, no confiscation of estates. It is a change in the personnel of the government, but no change in the general course of affairs.

"It is strange that your soldiers fight so well when, as you tell me, they never carry arms until they enter the army; while ours are trained from childhood in the use of weapons. And your enemies, the French, is it the same with them?"

"It is the same, Nana, so far as their civil life is concerned; for none carry

weapons or are trained in their use. There is one wide point of difference. The French have to go as soldiers when they reach a certain age, however much they may dislike it; while with us there is no compulsion, whatever, and men enlist in the army just as they might take up any other trade. There is, however, a body called the militia. This, like the army, consists of volunteers; but is not liable for service abroad, and only goes out for a short period of training, annually. However, by law, should the supply of volunteers fall short, battalions can be kept at their full strength by men chosen by ballot from the population. But this is practically a dead letter, and I am told that the ballot is never resorted to; though doubtless it would be, in the case of a national emergency."

"Ah! It is pleasant to be a minister in your country, with no fear of plots, of treachery, or assassination. Were I a younger man, I should like to visit England and stay there for a time so that, on my return, I could model some of our institutions upon yours.

"But no; I fear that that would be too much for the most powerful minister to effect. The people are wedded to their old customs, and would not change them for others, however much these might be for their benefit. An order that none, save those in the army, should carry arms would unite the whole people against those who issued it."

It was on the last day of 1797 that Nana Furnuwees made a formal visit to Scindia, in return for one the latter had paid him, a few days before. Michel Filoze, a Neapolitan who commanded eight battalions in Scindia's army, had given his word of honour as a guarantee for the minister's safe return to his home. The European officers in the service of the Indian princes bore a high character, not only for their fidelity to those they served, but also for their honour in all their dealings and, though Nana would not have confided in an oath sworn by Scindia, he accepted that of Filoze without hesitation.

On his arrival near Scindia's camp the traitor seized him and, with his battalions, attacked his retinue, amounting to about a thousand persons, among whom were many of his principal adherents. Some of these were killed, all of them stripped of their robes and ornaments. Parties of soldiers were immediately sent, by Ghatgay, to plunder the house of Nana and those of all his adherents.

Harry was in his room when he heard a sudden outburst of firing and, a

minute or two later, Abdool ran in.

"Scindia's men are in the town, sahib! They are attacking the houses of Nana's adherents. These are defending themselves as best they can. There is a general panic, for it is believed that the whole town will be looted."

"Get your things together, Abdool. I will change my dress for that of a native soldier, and we will make for the Residency."

"Shall we ride, sahib?"

"No, we will leave the horses here. If we were to go on horseback, we might be taken for Nana's adherents trying to make their escape, and be shot down without any further question.

"I felt misgivings when I saw Nana going out; but it would have come to the same thing, in the end, for if Scindia's whole army, villainous as is the treachery, had advanced against the town, Nana could have gathered no force to oppose them."

Three or four minutes later they started, Abdool carrying a bundle containing Harry's disguises. They made their way through lanes, where the people were all standing at their doors, talking excitedly. Continuous firing was heard in the direction of the better quarters, mingled with shouts and cries. No one questioned them, all being too anxious as to their own safety to think of anything else.

The Residency was half a mile from the town. There Mr. Uhtoff was standing at his door, and the men of his escort were all under arms. Harry had been in frequent communication with him, from the time that he had taken Colonel Palmer's place. The Resident did not, for the moment, recognize him in his new disguise but, when he did so, he asked anxiously what was going on in the town.

"A strong body of Scindia's troops are there, attacking Nana's adherents. I fear that the minister himself is a prisoner in their camp."

"That is bad news, indeed. Nana told me, yesterday, that he intended to visit Scindia, and had received a guarantee for his safe return, from Filoze. I advised him not to go; but he said that he could confide, implicitly, in the honour of a

European officer. I told him that the various European nations differed widely from each other; and that, although I would accept the word of honour of a British officer in Scindia's service, I would not take that of a Neapolitan. However, he said, and said truly, that it was incumbent on him to return Scindia's visit; and that if he did not do so it would be treated as a slight and insult, and would serve as a pretext for open war against him; and that, as he could but muster three or four thousand men, the city must yield without resistance.

"I believe that this is the work of Bajee Rao, and of Ghatgay--two scoundrels, of whom I prefer Ghatgay who, although a ruffian, is at least a fearless one, while Bajee Rao is a monster of deceit. I know that there have, of late, been several interviews between him and Ghatgay; and I have not the least doubt that the whole affair has been arranged between them with the hope, on Bajee's part, of getting rid of Nana; and on Ghatgay's, of removing a sturdy opponent of his future son-in-law, and of acquiring a large quantity of loot by the plunder of Nana's adherents.

"You did well to come here for, if the work of plunder is once begun, there is no saying how far it will spread. I shall ride, at once, to see the Peishwa, and request an explanation of what has occurred. There is that trooper's dress still lying ready for you, if you would like to put it on. There is a spare horse in my stable."

"Thank you, sir; I should like it very much;" and, rapidly changing his dress, he was ready by the time the horses were brought round.

He then took his place among the troopers of the escort, and rode to Bajee Rao's country palace, which was some three miles from the town.

After seeing everything in train, the Peishwa had left Scindia's camp before Nana's arrival there; and had summoned a dozen of the latter's adherents, under the pretence that he desired to see them on a matter of business. Wholly unsuspicious of treachery, they rode out at once; and each, on his arrival, was seized and thrown into a place of confinement.

The Resident learned this from a retainer of one of these nobles. He had made his escape when his master was seized, and was riding to carry the news to the British official; whose influence, he thought, might suffice to save the captives'

lives.

On arriving at the palace four of the troopers were ordered to dismount--Harry being one of those selected--and, on demanding to see the Peishwa the Resident was, after some little delay, ushered into the audience chamber, where Bajee Rao was seated, with several of his officers standing behind him. He received Mr. Uhtoff with a show of great courtesy.

The latter, however, stood stiffly, and said:

"I have come, Your Highness, to request an explanation of what is going on. The city of Poona is being treated like a town taken by siege. The houses of a number of persons of distinction are being attacked by Scindia's soldiery. Fighting is going on in the streets, and the whole of the inhabitants are in a state of wild alarm.

"But this is not all. Nana Furnuwees has, owing to his reliance upon a solemn guarantee given for his safe return, been seized when making a ceremonial visit to Scindia."

"You must surely be misinformed," the Peishwa said. "You will readily believe that I am in perfect ignorance of such a proceeding."

"I might believe it, Prince," Mr. Uhtoff said, coldly, "had I not been aware that you and your officers have decoyed a number of Nana's friends to this palace and, on their arrival, had them suddenly arrested."

Bajee Rao, practised dissimulator as he was, flushed at this unexpected accusation.

"I learned, sir," he said, after a pause, "that there was a plot against my person, by Nana Furnuwees and his adherents; and I have therefore taken what I considered the necessary step of placing these in temporary confinement."

"It is a little strange, Your Highness, that the man who placed you on the musnud should be conspiring to turn you from it. However, what has been done has been done; and I cannot hope that any words of mine will avail to persuade you to undo an act which will be considered, throughout India, as one of the grossest treachery and ingratitude. My duty is a simple one: namely, merely to

report to my Government the circumstances of the case."

The officers behind the Peishwa fingered the hilts of their swords, and the four troopers involuntarily made a step forward, to support the Resident. Bajee, however, made a sign to those behind him to remain quiet; and the Resident, turning abruptly, and without salutation to the Peishwa, left the hall, followed by his men.

They mounted as soon as they had left the palace, and rode back to the Residency; Mr. Uhtoff keeping his place at their head, and speaking no word until he dismounted, when he asked Harry to accompany him to his room.

"This is a bad business, indeed, Mr. Lindsay. I cannot say that I am surprised because, having studied Bajee Rao's character, I have for some time been expecting that he would strike a blow at Nana. Still, I acknowledge that it has come suddenly, and the whole position of affairs has changed. Bajee has freed himself from Nana; but he has only riveted Scindia's yoke more firmly on his shoulders. Like most intriguers, he has overreached himself. He has kept one object in view, and been blind to all else.

"His course should have been to support Nana against Scindia, and thus to keep the balance of power in his own hands. He has only succeeded in ridding himself of the one man who had the good of his country at heart, and who was the only obstacle to Scindia's ambition. The fool has ruined both himself and his country.

"I think, Mr. Lindsay, that the best plan will be for you to mount at once, and ride down to Bombay. Your presence here, just now, can be of no special utility; and it is most desirable that the Government should have a full statement of the matter laid before them, by one who has been present, and who has made himself fully acquainted with the whole politics of the Deccan.

"It is better that you should not go into the town again. I will send in for your horses, as soon as the tumult has subsided. We have several spare animals here, and you and your servant can take two of them. I will write to the Governor a report of my interview with Bajee, and say that I have sent you down to give him all the details of what has taken place; which will save the time that it would take me to write a long report, and will be far more convenient, inasmuch as you can

answer any point that he is desirous of ascertaining. I do not think that you can do better than go in the disguise that you now have on; for a soldier to be galloping fast is a common sight, but people would be astonished at seeing either a Brahmin or a trader riding at full speed. I will give orders for the horses to be saddled at once and, in the meantime, you had best take a meal. You will have no chance of getting one on the road, and I have no doubt that dinner is ready for serving. I will tell the butler to give some food to your man, at once."

Twenty minutes later, Harry and Abdool were on their way. Skirting round Poona, they heard the rattle of musketry still being maintained; and indeed, the fighting in the streets of the city continued for twenty-four hours. By two in the morning, they halted at the top of the Ghauts; partly to give the horses a rest, and partly because it would have been very dangerous to attempt to make the descent in the dark.

At daybreak they continued their journey, arriving at Bombay six hours later. They rode straight for the Government House, where Harry dismounted and, throwing the reins of his horse to Abdool, told the attendant to inform the Governor that a messenger, from the Resident at Poona, desired to see him. He was at once shown in.

"Why, it is Mr. Lindsay!" the Governor said, "though I should scarce know you, in your paint and disguise. The matter on which you come must be something urgent, or Mr. Uhtoff would not have sent you down with it."

Harry handed over the despatch of which he was bearer and, as the Governor ran his eye over it, his face became more and more grave, as he gathered the news.

"This is serious, indeed," he said, "most serious. Now be pleased to sit down, Mr. Lindsay, and furnish me with all the particulars of the affair."

When Harry had finished, the Governor said:

"I imagine that you can have eaten nothing today, Mr. Lindsay. I am about to take tiffin, and bid you do so with me. I shall at once send to members of the Council and, by the time we have finished our meal, they will no doubt be here."

"I shall be very glad to do so, sir, if you will allow me to go into the dressing room, and put on my uniform. I should hardly like to sit down to table in my present dress."

"Do so by all means, if you wish it; but you must remember that your colour will not agree well with your dress."

"I will remove these caste marks, sir, and then I shall look only as if I were somewhat severely tanned."

In ten minutes a servant knocked at the door, and said that luncheon was ready. Harry was already dressed in his uniform, and had removed the marks on his forehead; the dye, however, was as dark as ever. He had, on leaving the Governor's room, sent a servant down to fetch his wallet, and to tell Abdool that he was to take the horses to the barracks.

The meal was an informal one. The Governor asked many questions, and was pleased at the knowledge that Harry showed of all the principal persons in Poona, and their character and ability.

"At the present moment," he said, "the information that you have given me cannot be utilized; but it would be most valuable, were we to get mixed up in the confusion of parties at Poona. I gather that you consider Nana Furnuwees to be a great man."

"My opinion is not worth much, on that point, sir. I think that he has, over and over again, shown great courage in extricating himself from difficulties which appeared to be overwhelming. I believe him to be a sincere patriot, and that he only desires to be at the head of the administration of affairs that he may prevent civil war from breaking out, and to thwart the ambition of the great princes. His tastes are simple, his house is furnished plainly, he cares nothing for the pleasures of the table; but he is honest and, I believe, absolutely truthful--qualities which certainly are possessed by very few men in the Deccan.

"I grant that he is not disposed to enter into any alliance with the British. He has frequently told me that he admires them greatly for their straightforwardness and truthfulness, as well as for their bravery and their methods of government, both in the great towns and in the districts in which they are masters; but he fears

that, were they to send an army to Poona on his behalf, or on that of any of the other parties, it might end by their acquiring control over the affairs of the country, and make them arbitrators in all disputes."

"No doubt he is right, there," the Governor said, with a smile. "However, at present we are certainly not likely to interfere in the quarrels and intrigues beyond the Ghauts; nor do I see why we should be brought into collision with the Mahrattas--at any rate, until they have ceased to quarrel among themselves, and unite under one master. In that case, they might make another effort to turn us out.

"And now we will go into the room where the Council must be, by this time, assembled."

This proved to be the case, and the Governor read to them the note that he had received from Mr. Uhtoff; and then requested Harry to repeat the details, as fully as he had already done. There was a consensus of opinion as to the importance of the news.

"Come round again tomorrow morning, Mr. Lindsay," the Governor said; "by that time I shall have fully thought the matter out."

"So you have been masquerading as a native again, Mr. Lindsay?" the colonel said, when Harry called upon him.

"I can hardly consider it masquerading, as I merely resumed the dress I wore for many years; and I certainly speak Mahratti vastly better than I speak English for, although I improved a good deal while I was here, I am conscious that, though my grammar may be correct, my pronunciation differs a good deal from that of my comrades."

"You speak English wonderfully well, considering that you learned it from the natives," the colonel said. "At first, you spoke as a native that had learned English; but a casual observer would not, now, detect any accent that would lead him to suppose that you had not been brought up in England.

"You will, of course, be at mess this evening?"

"I think it would be better that I should not do so, sir. In the first place, I

should have innumerable questions to answer; and in the second, which is more important, anything that I said might be heard by mess waiters. It is quite possible that some of these are in the pay of Scindia, or Holkar, who keep themselves well informed of all that goes on here; and were it known that an English officer had come down in disguise, it would greatly increase the danger when I return there."

"I have no doubt that you are right, Mr. Lindsay. Is there anything new at Poona?"

"Yes, Colonel; and as it will be generally known in two or three days, there can be no harm in my telling you. Scindia has made Nana Furnuwees a prisoner, by an act of the grossest treachery. He has killed almost all his principal adherents and, when I got away, his troops were engaged in looting the town."

"That is grave news," the colonel said. "So long as Nana was in power, it was certain that Scindia could not venture to take his army, out of his own country for the purpose of attacking us; but now that Nana is overthrown, and Scindia will be minister to the Peishwa, we may expect troubles."

"Not at present. Scindia's army has, for months, been without pay. He has no means of settling with them and, until he does so, they certainly will not move."

"I do not think that would detain him long, Mr. Lindsay. He has only to march them into other territories, with permission to plunder, and they would be quite satisfied. He certainly can have no liking for the Rajahs of Berar or Kolapoore, for both of them assisted Nana to regain his power; and an attack upon them would, at once, satisfy vengeance and put his troops in a good temper."

"But there is no doubt that the Peishwa will find it much more irksome to be under Scindia's control than that of Nana. And were Scindia to march away, he would at once organize an army, and buy Holkar's aid, to render himself independent of Scindia."

"They are treacherous beggars, these Mahrattas," the colonel said. "They are absolutely faithless, and would sell their fathers if they could make anything by the transaction.

"Then you do not know yet whether you are to return?"

"No; I shall see the Governor again, tomorrow morning; and shall then receive orders."

"I will have some dinner sent over to your quarters, from the mess. Do not have too much light in the room, or your colour may be noticed by the servant. I will let the officers know that you have returned. No doubt many of them will come in for a chat with you. As no one can overhear you, I do not think that any harm can be done by it."

"I think not, Colonel."

"I will tell them," the colonel went on, "that you are on secret service; that you will tell them as much as you can safely do, but they must abstain from pressing you with questions. We all know that you have been acting as assistant to Mr. Uhtoff, because it was mentioned in orders that you had been detailed for that duty; but they know no more than that, and will doubtless be surprised at your colour. But you can very well say that, as you had an important message to carry down, you thought it best to disguise yourself."

"That will do excellently, Colonel; and I shall be very glad to have a talk with my friends again."

After leaving the colonel, Harry went to his own room; where he found Soyera, who had been fetched by Abdool.

"I am sorry to say that I am going away, almost directly, mother," he said; "but it cannot be helped."

"I do not expect you always to stay here, Harry. Now that you are in the Company's service, you must, of course, do what you are ordered. I am glad, indeed, to find that, although you have been with them only a year, you are chosen for a post in which you can gain credit, and attract the attention of the authorities here."

"It is all thanks to the pains that you took to prepare me for such work.

"I don't expect to be away so long, this time. And indeed, now that Nana

Furnuwees is a prisoner, it does not seem to me that there can be anything special to do, until some change takes place in the situation, and Scindia either openly assumes supreme power, or marches away with his army."

That evening, Harry's room was crowded with visitors. The news of the treacherous arrest of Nana Furnuwees excited the liveliest interest; and was received with very much regret, as Nana was considered the only honest man of all the ministers of the native princes, and to be friendly disposed towards the British; and all saw that his fall might be followed by an important change in the attitude of the Mahrattas.

Two days later, Harry returned to Poona. The next eighteen months passed without any very prominent incidents. In order to furnish Scindia with money to pay his troops, and to be in a position to march away, Bajee Rao agreed that Ghatgay should, as Scindia's minister, raise contributions in Poona. Accordingly, a rule of the direst brutality and cruelty took place. The respectable inhabitants--the merchants, traders, and men of good family--were driven from their houses, tortured often to death, scourged, and blown away from the mouths of cannon. No person was safe from his persecution, and the poorest were forced to deliver up all their little savings. The rich were stripped of everything, and atrocities of all kinds were committed upon the hapless population.

Bajee Rao countenanced these things, and was now included in the hatred felt for Ghatgay and Scindia. Troubles occurred between the Peishwa and the Rajah of Satara, who refused to deliver up an agent of Nana whom he had, at Bajee's request, seized. As Scindia's troops refused to move, Purseram Bhow was released from captivity and, raising an army, captured the city of Satara, and compelled the fort to surrender; but when ordered by Bajee Rao to disband the force that he had collected, he excused himself from doing so, on the plea that he had no money to pay them, or to carry out the promises that he had given them.

Scindia himself was not without troubles. In addition to the mutiny of his troops, the three widows of his father who, instead of receiving the treatment proper to their rank, had been neglected and were living in poverty, sought an interview with him; and were seized by Ghatgay, flogged, and barbarously treated. Their cause was taken up by the Brahmins, who had held the principal offices under Scindia's father; and it was at last settled that they should take up their residence at Burrampoor, with a suitable establishment. Their escort,

however, had received private orders to carry them to the fortress of Ahmednuggur.

The news of this treachery spread, soon after they had left the camp; and an officer in the interest of the Brahmins started, with a troop of horse which he commanded, dispersed the escort, and rescued the ladies. These he carried to the camp of Amrud Rao, Bajee Rao's foster brother; who instantly afforded them protection and, sallying out, attacked and defeated a party of their pursuers, led by Ghatgay himself.

Five battalions of infantry were then sent by Scindia, but Amrud attacked them boldly, and compelled them to retreat. Negotiations were then opened, and Amrud, believing Scindia's promises, moved his camp to the neighbourhood of Poona. But, during a Mahommedan festival, he and his troops were suddenly attacked by a few brigades of infantry; which dispersed them, slew great numbers, and pillaged their camp.

Holkar now joined Amrud Rao, who had escaped from the massacre. The Peishwa negotiated an alliance with the Nizam. Scindia sent envoys to Tippoo, to ask for his assistance. Bajee Rao did the same, and it looked as if a desperate war was about to break out.

All this time, Harry had been living quietly in the Residency, performing his duties as assistant to Colonel Palmer, who had again taken charge there. There was no occasion for him to resume his disguises. The atrocities committed by Ghatgay, in Poona, were apparent to all; and at present there seemed no possible combination that could check the power of Scindia.

Colonel Palmer, however, had several interviews with Bajee Rao, and entreated him to put a stop to the doings of Ghatgay; but the latter declared that he was powerless to interfere, and treated with contempt the warnings, of the colonel, that he was uniting the whole population in hatred of him.

The rebellion under Amrud, and the adhesion of Holkar to it, seemed to afford some hope that an end would come to the terrible state of things prevailing; and Colonel Palmer became convinced that Scindia was really anxious to return to his own dominions, where his troops, so long deprived of their natural leaders, were in a state of insubordination. If the Nana were but

released from his prison at Ahmednuggur, something might be done, he said. He might be able to supply sufficient money to enable Scindia to leave; and the alarm Nana's liberation would give, to Bajee, would compel him to change his conduct, lest Nana should join Amrud and, with the assent of the whole population, place him on the musnud.

"Nana is the only man who can restore peace to this unhappy country," he said to Harry, "but I see no chance of Scindia releasing a prisoner whom he could always use to terrify Bajee, should the latter dare to defy his authority."

Harry thought the matter over that night and, at last, determined to make an attempt to bring about his old friend's release. In the morning he said to the Resident:

"I have been thinking over what you said last night, Colonel, and with your permission I am resolved to make an attempt to bring about Nana's release."

"But how on earth do you mean to proceed, Mr. Lindsay?"

"My plans are not quite made up yet, sir. In the first place, I shall ask you to give me three weeks' leave so that, if I fail, you can make it evident that you are not responsible for my undertaking. In the next place, I shall endeavour to see Nana in his prison, and ascertain from him whether he can pay a considerable sum to Scindia for his release. If I find that he is in a position to do so, I shall then--always, of course, in disguise--endeavour to have a private interview with Scindia, and to convince him that it is in every way to his interest to allow Nana to ransom himself. He is, of course, perfectly well aware that, in spite of Bajee's assurances of friendship, he is at heart bitterly opposed to him; and that the return of Nana, with the powers he before possessed, would neutralize the Peishwa's power."

"It would be an excellent thing, if that could be done," the colonel said; "but it appears to me to be an absolute impossibility."

"I would rather not tell you how I intend to act, sir; so that, in case of failure, you can disavow all knowledge of my proceedings."

"Well, since you are willing to undertake the risk, and unquestionably the

Bombay Government would see, with great pleasure, Nana's return to power, I will throw no obstacle in your way. You had better, to begin with, write me a formal request for a month's leave to go down to Bombay. Is there anything else that I can do, to aid your project?"

"Nothing, whatever; and I am much obliged to you for acceding to my request. If for no other reason than that my success should have the effect of releasing the inhabitants of Poona, from the horrible tyranny to which they are exposed, I shall be willing to risk a great deal to gain it.

"I shall not leave for a day or two, as I wish to think over all the details of my plan, before I set about carrying it out."

Going into the city, Harry went to the spot where the proclamations of Scindia were always affixed. These were of various kinds; such as forbidding anyone carrying arms to be in the streets after nightfall; and that every inhabitant should furnish an account of his income, in order that taxation should be carefully distributed. To these Scindia's seal was affixed.

One such order had been placed there that morning. A sentry marched up and down in front of it, lest any insult should be offered to the paper. Satisfied that this would suit his purpose, he called Abdool to him, and explained what he wanted.

"It will not be till this evening, for I want, before that step is taken, to collect a party of ten horsemen to ride with me to Ahmednuggur and back. By this time you know a great many people in the town and, if I were to pay them well, you should have no difficulty in getting that number."

"I could do that in half an hour, sahib. There are a great number of the disbanded soldiers of the Peishwa's army who are without employment, and who would willingly undertake anything that would bring them in a little money."

"Well, you can arrange with them, today. They must not attract attention by going out together, but must meet at the village of Wittulwarree."

The next morning, Harry went to the shop of a trader who was, he knew, formerly employed by Nana, and purchased from him a suit such as would be

worn by an officer in Scindia's service. Then he wrote out a document in Mahratti, giving an order to the governor of Ahmednuggur to permit the bearer, Musawood Khan, to have a private interview with Nana Furnuwees. This done, he told the resident that he intended to leave that night.

Colonel Palmer asked no questions, but only said:

"Be careful, Mr. Lindsay, be careful; it is a desperate enterprise that you are undertaking, and I should be sorry, indeed, if so promising an officer should be lost to our service."

"I will be careful, I assure you. I have no wish to throw away my life."

When evening came on, he went to his room, stained his skin from head to foot, put on the caste marks, then dressed himself in the clothes that he had that morning purchased and, at nine o'clock, left the house quietly with Abdool. At that hour Poona would be quiet, for the terror was so great that few people ventured into the street after nightfall.

When they approached the house on which the proclamation was fixed, they separated. Harry went quietly to the corner of the street, a few yards from the spot where the soldier was marching up and down, and listened intently, peeping out from behind the wall whenever the sentry was walking in the other direction. Presently he heard a smothered sound, and the dull thud of a falling body.

He ran out. Abdool had crawled up to the other end of the sentry's beat, and taken his place in a doorway. The sentry came up to within a couple of yards of him, and then turned. Abdool sprang out and, with a bound, leapt upon the sentry's back and, with one hand, grasped his musket.

Taken wholly by surprise, the sentry fell forward on his face, Abdool still clinging to him. He pressed his knife against the soldier's neck and said that, at the slightest cry, he would drive it home. Half stunned by the fall, the soldier lay without moving.

Illustration: Harry ran up to the proclamation and tore it down.

Without the loss of a moment, Harry ran up to the proclamation and tore it down, and then darted off again. Abdool, springing to his feet, brought the butt end of the soldier's musket down on his head; and then, satisfied that a minute or two must elapse before the man would be recovered sufficiently to give the alarm, he too ran off, and joined Harry at the point where they had separated.

"That was well managed, Abdool. Now we will walk quietly until we are outside the town as, if we met some of Scindia's men, they would question were we hurrying."

In a few minutes they were outside the city; and then, running at a brisk pace, they reached the Residency. They were challenged by the sentry but, on Harry giving his name, he was of course allowed to pass.

He went quietly into his room and lighted a candle. Putting his knife in the flame he heated it, and then carefully cut the seal from the paper on which it was fixed, placed it on the order that he had written and, again heating his knife, passed it along under the paper, until the under part of the seal was sufficiently warmed to adhere to it. He placed the order in an inner pocket, put a brace of pistols into his sash, and buckled on a native sword that he had bought that morning; then he went out again, and found that Abdool had the horses in readiness, with two native saddles, with embroidered housings such as was used by native officers; which he had, by Harry's orders, purchased that morning in the bazaar.

They at once mounted, and started at a gallop for Wittulwarree.

Chapter 8: Nana's Release.

At the entrance to the village Harry found the ten troopers, whom Abdool had engaged, standing by their horses. He gave the order for them to march and, at a brisk canter, they started for Ahmednuggur. It was a ride of some forty miles and, when they approached the town, they halted until the sun rose and the gates of the city were opened.

They then rode in. The men were left at a khan, Abdool remaining with them. They had been told, if questioned, to say that their leader, Musawood Khan, was an officer high in the service of Scindia.

Harry took two of the troopers with him, and rode to the governor's house. Dismounting, and leaving the horse in their charge, he told one of the attendants to inform the governor that he was the bearer of an order from Scindia, and was at once shown up.

The governor received him with all honour, glanced at the order that Harry presented to him, placed the seal against his forehead in token of submission; and then, after a few words as to affairs at Poona, called an officer and ordered him to accompany Musawood Khan to Nana Furnuwees' apartment. This was a large room, at an angle of the fortress, with a balcony outside affording a view of the country round it; for the governor, knowing how rapidly and often the position changed, and having no orders save to maintain a careful watch over the prisoner, had endeavoured to ingratiate himself with him, by lodging him comfortably and treating him well.

The officer opened the door and, when Harry had entered, locked it behind him. Nana Furnuwees was seated at the window, enjoying the fresh morning air. He looked listlessly round, and then rose suddenly to his feet, as he recognized his visitor.

"What wonder is this," he said, "that you should be here, Mr. Lindsay, except as a prisoner?"

"I am here as one of Scindia's officers," Harry replied, with a smile, "although he himself is not aware of it, in hopes of obtaining your freedom."

"That is too good even to hope for," Nana said, sadly.

"In the first place, sir, are you aware of the state of things in Poona?"

"I have heard nothing since I came here," Nana said. "They make me comfortable, as you see but, except for the daily visit from the governor, I have no visitors; and from him I learn nothing, as he has strict orders, from Scindia, not to give me any information of what happens outside these walls; fearing, no doubt, that I might take advantage of any change, to endeavour to open communication with one or other of the leaders.

"Before you tell me anything else, please explain how you managed to enter here."

"That was easy enough, sir. I simply wrote out an order, to the governor, to permit me to have a private interview with you. I tore down one of Scindia's proclamations, and transferred his seal from it to the order that I had written; dressed myself, as you see, as one of his officers; got together ten mounted men, to ride as my escort, and here I am."

"You will be a great man, some day," Nana said, looking at the tall, powerful figure of his visitor, with its soldierly carriage.

"Now, tell me about affairs. I shall then understand better why you have run this risk."

Harry gave him a sketch of everything that had happened, since his confinement.

"You see, sir," he said, as he concluded, "how the situation has changed. Amrud is nominally acting with his brother's approval, but there is no question that Bajee fears him. Amrud is in alliance with Holkar. Purseram Bhow is at liberty, at the head of an army, and a nominal conciliation has taken place between him and Bajee. The latter has incurred the detestation and hatred of the people of Poona and, most important of all, Scindia is really anxious to get back home, but is unable to do so owing to his inability to pay his troops and, willing

as Bajee might be to furnish the money to get rid of him, he is without resources, owing to the fact that the taxation wrung from the people has all gone into the pockets of Scindia, Ghatgay, and his other favourites.

"The question is, sir, whether you would be willing to purchase your liberty, at a heavy price. I think that, if you could pay sufficient to enable Scindia to satisfy his soldiers, he might be induced to release you."

"How much do you think he would want?"

"Of that I can have no idea, sir. Of course, he would at first ask a great deal more than he would afterwards accept."

"Yes, I should be ready to pay," Nana said, after considering for a minute. "As a prisoner here, my money is of no use to me, nor ever would be; but I could pay a large sum, and still be wealthy."

"That is what I wanted to know, sir."

"But why do you run this risk?" Nana asked.

"For several reasons, sir. In the first place, because you have honoured me with your friendship; in the second, because I would fain save the people of Poona from the horrible barbarity with which they are now treated; and lastly, because the Government of Bombay would, I am sure, be glad to hear of your reinstatement, as the only means of restoring peace and tranquillity to the Deccan."

"How will you open this matter to Scindia?"

"I have not fully thought that out, sir; but I have no doubt that I shall, in some way, be able to manage it, and intend to act upon his fears as well as upon his avarice."

"But you say that Ghatgay is all powerful, and he would never permit an interview to take place between a stranger and Scindia."

"From what I hear, sir, Scindia is becoming jealous of Ghatgay's power, and disgusted both by his imperious manner and by his atrocities in Poona--against

which he has several times protested, but in vain. If I am to obtain an audience with Scindia, it must be a secret one."

"But there will surely be great danger in such a step?"

"Doubtless it will not be without danger," Harry said, "but that I must risk. I have not yet determined upon my plan, as it would have been useless to think of that, until I had seen you but, as that has been managed so easily, I fancy that I shall have no great difficulty in getting at him. Once I do so, I feel certain that I shall be able to convince him that his best policy is to free you, and place you in your old position as the Peishwa's minister as, in that case, you would be a check upon Bajee Rao, and would be able to prevent him from entering into alliances hostile to Scindia."

"Well, Mr. Lindsay, you have given me such proofs, both of your intelligence and courage, that I feel sure that, if anyone can carry this through, you will be able to do so; and I need hardly say how deeply grateful I shall be, to you, for rescuing me from an imprisonment which seemed likely to terminate only with my life."

"And now I had better go, sir," Harry said. "It is as well that our conference should not be too long a one."

"Well, goodbye, Mr. Lindsay! Even if nothing comes of all this, it will be pleasant for me to know that, at least, I have one faithful friend who was true to me, in my deepest adversity."

Harry went to the door, and knocked. It was immediately opened by the officer who had conducted him there, and who had taken up his post a short distance from the door. He led Harry back to the governor, who pressed him to stay with him; but he replied that his orders were to return to Poona, instantly.

After this interview, he went direct to the tavern where the soldiers had put up, ate a hasty meal, and then mounted and rode out of the town. When ten miles away, he halted in a grove for some hours, and then rode on to Poona. Arrived within a mile of the town, he paid each of the men the amount promised, and told them to re-enter the town separately. Then he secured a room for himself in a small khan, just outside the city and, sitting there alone, worked out the plan of

obtaining an interview with Scindia.

He then told Abdool to go quietly to the Residency, and to bring out the Brahmin's dress he had before worn. In the morning, Abdool went out to Scindia's camp with a letter which, when Scindia came out of his marquee, he handed to him. There was nothing unusual in this, for petitions were frequently presented in this way to rulers in India.

As he did so, he said in a low voice, "It is private and important, Your Highness;" and instead of handing it to one of his officers, Scindia went back to his tent to read it.

It stated that the writer, Kawerseen, an unworthy member of the Kshittree Brahmins, prayed for a private interview with His Highness, on matters of the most urgent import. Scindia thought for a moment and then, tearing up the piece of paper, went out and, as he passed Abdool, who was waiting at the entrance, said:

"Tell your master to be here at half-past ten, tonight. The sentry will have orders to admit him."

Abdool returned at once to Harry, and delivered his message.

"That is good," the latter said.

"You will take me with you, sahib?"

"Certainly, Abdool, if you are willing to go. There is some danger in it and, should Scindia give the alarm, you may be of great assistance, by cutting down the sentry before he can run in. Take your pistols and tulwar, and bring another sword for me. If I can once get out of the tent we shall be fairly safe for, in the darkness and confusion which will arise, we shall be able to make off quietly. We will ride there, and fasten our horses in that grove that lies about a quarter of a mile from the camp."

At half-past nine they started, and reached Scindia's tent at the time appointed. Harry's belief that he would succeed was largely founded on the knowledge that Scindia was a weak young man, who had never been engaged in warfare, and was wanting in physical courage. An attendant was at the door, and

led him to the prince's private tent, which stood in the middle of an encampment composed of large tents; for the purpose of receptions and entertainments, for the abodes of the ladies of the zenana, and for the officers in whom Scindia reposed most confidence. The retinue of servants, attendants, and minor officials were lodged in tents fifty yards behind the royal encampment.

Scindia was sitting on a divan. Two lamps hung from the ceiling. He himself was smoking.

"You have something of importance to say to me?" he said, as Harry entered, and bowed deeply.

"I have, Your Highness. You are doubtless well aware that the Kshittree Brahmins, who formerly held the principal offices under your father, are greatly offended by the elevation of Ghatgay; and still more so by his atrocious deeds in the town of Poona. There has been a private meeting, and twelve of them, myself among the number, have sworn by the feet of Brahma to take your life, either by poison, dagger, or musket ball."

"And you have the insolence to avow that you took such an oath!"

He sprang to his feet, and would have touched the bell on the table but, in an instant, Harry sprung forward with a loaded pistol, pointed at Scindia's head.

"Stop, sir, I beg of you; for assuredly, if you raise a voice or touch a bell, that moment will be your last."

Scindia sank down into his seat again. He had not the least doubt that the man before him would execute his threat.

"Your Highness," he said, "I have not come here for the purpose of assassinating you. I was first on the list, but obtained from the others permission to endeavour to put an end to the present state of things, before carrying out our vow. We know that, in spite of the enormous sums that Ghatgay has raised in Poona, you yourself have not been enriched; and that you have been unable to persuade your troops to march, owing to your want of money to pay up their arrears. We have thought the matter over, and can see but one way by which you can obtain the necessary funds."

"And that is?" Scindia asked.

"That is, Your Highness, to liberate Nana Furnuwees--setting his liberty, of course, at a high price. In this way you will not only be able to move your army, but you will cripple the power of the Peishwa--who would, if possible, overthrow you, now you have done his work and freed him from Nana.

"You are well aware, Prince, that Nana Furnuwees always exercised his authority on the side of peace, and there is no fear that he will permit Bajee Rao to engage in war against you. He is an old man, and useless to you as a prisoner. If you exacted a heavy sum from him it would, in all ways, aid your views."

"But how do you know that Nana could raise such a sum as would satisfy the troops?"

"We have assured ourselves on that score, and I know that it matters not how much Nana Furnuwees will have to give. What I would suggest is that you shall seize Ghatgay, and rid yourself of his domination. He cannot but be as odious to you as he is to Bajee Rao, and to the people."

Scindia sat for some time, in silence.

"Do I understand," he said, "that if I carry out these suggestions, your comrades will be satisfied?"

"That I swear solemnly. I do not threaten Your Highness, for my visit today is one of conciliation. You might, as soon as I leave this tent, order me to be arrested. In that case I should use this pistol against myself, and you would seek in vain for the names of my eleven brethren; but your life would be forfeited--whether in the midst of your guards or in your tent, whether you ride or walk. You would be watched, and your servants would be bribed, and your food poisoned. If the first man fails, he will blow out his brains, and so will they all; but be assured that the vow will be kept and that, whether by night or by day, you will never be safe."

"You are a bold man to speak so," Scindia said.

"I speak so, Your Highness, because I am perfectly ready to die for the good of the country, and to secure for it peace and contentment."

Scindia rose, and took two or three turns up and down the tent; Harry keeping his pistol in his hand, in readiness to fire should he attempt to slip away. At last, Scindia stopped before him.

"I agree to your conditions," he said, "and the more readily because I shall, as you say, at once free myself from difficulties, and avenge myself on Bajee Rao; who is, I know, in spite of his professions of friendship, constantly plotting against me. Tomorrow at daybreak an officer shall ride, with a troop of cavalry, and shall bring Nana here."

"You have chosen wisely, Prince. It is, believe me, your only way of escaping from your present difficulties. I know that, already, your soldiery are becoming mutinous at being thus kept, for months, away from their country, and receiving no pay. That feeling will grow rapidly, unless their demands are conceded. As to Ghatgay, the soldiers hold him in abhorrence, and his arrest and downfall would cause the most lively satisfaction among them. Your men are soldiers and not assassins, and the tortures and executions that daily take place fill them with horror; so that your order for his arrest will be executed with joy.

"Now, Your Highness, I will leave you. I believe that you will keep your promise, as indeed it is to your interest to do so; in which case you will never hear of myself, or my eleven companions."

"Do not fear," Scindia said, "tomorrow my messenger shall certainly start for Ahmednuggur."

Harry, bowing deeply, turned, passed through the curtain, and made his way out of the tent. Abdool, who was squatting near the entrance, at once rose and followed him.

"Is all well, sahib?"

"I think so. I have so frightened Scindia that I have little doubt he will carry out the promise he has given me. I will tell you about it, when we get back."

They passed through the sleeping camp, and mounted their horses in the grove, and rode to the Residency. Colonel Palmer was still up, engaged in writing a report for the Government. It was a dark night, and the sentry on duty,

knowing Harry's voice, let him pass without question, not even observing the change in his attire.

"What! Back again, Mr. Lindsay?" the colonel exclaimed, in surprise, when Harry entered. "I thought that it would be a month before you returned--that is, if you ever returned at all, and of this I had but little hope. As I expected, you have, of course, found it impossible to carry out your design."

"On the contrary, sir, I have been, I hope, perfectly successful. I have seen Nana Furnuwees, and ascertained that he is ready to pay a large sum to obtain his freedom, and his former position as the Peishwa's minister. I have seen Scindia. Tomorrow a troop of horse will start, to fetch Nana to his camp; and Ghatgay will be arrested as soon as possible, after he arrives."

"How in the name of fortune have you managed all these things?" the colonel asked.

"I will tell you, sir, now that I am back here. I shall tomorrow reassume my uniform, and there is no danger of my being recognized, or of trouble arising from what I have done."

He then related the various steps he had taken, and his conversations with Nana and Scindia.

"Upon my word, Mr. Lindsay, I do not know whether to admire most your daring, in bearding Scindia in the heart of his camp; or the intelligence with which you have carried out what seemed, to me, an absolutely impossible undertaking.

"Light your cheroot. I need not trouble about this report that I was engaged on, when you entered, but will put it by until the day after tomorrow, when we shall see whether Nana is brought to Scindia's camp.

"You speak Hindustani as well as Mahratti, do you not?"

"Not so well, sir; but as you know I have, during the six months that I was at Bombay, and since I have been here, used most of my spare time working up Hindustani, with a moonshee."

"I am glad to hear it, for I received a letter from the Governor, this morning, saying that Lord Mornington has requested him to send an officer, thoroughly acquainted with Mahratti and with some knowledge of the people; and that he has selected you for the service, as being by far better fitted than anyone he knows for the appointment. A knowledge of Hindustani will, of course, be very useful to you; but Mahratti is the principal thing, as he is intending to open negotiations with the Mahrattas, as well as with the Nizam, to induce them to join in concerted action against Tippoo.

"He says that no vessel will be sailing for Calcutta for less than a month, so you can stay here for a few days, and see how your scheme works out. It will be a great step for you, and ensure you rapid promotion."

"I am indeed obliged to the Governor for selecting me," Harry said, "and will do my best to justify his confidence."

Two days later, Nana Furnuwees was brought to Scindia's camp--news which caused Bajee Rao intense consternation. He at once sent off, to open negotiations with the Nizam for common action, offering a considerable amount of territory for his assistance.

Colonel Palmer rode over the next morning to Scindia's camp, and found that Scindia had demanded three millions of rupees as the price of Nana's release, and appointment as minister to the Peishwa. Nana had protested his absolute inability to raise anything like that sum, but had offered five hundred thousand rupees.

"I can quite believe that he could not pay the sum Scindia demands," the colonel said, on his return; "and when Scindia sees that he would rather return to prison than attempt impossibilities, he will come down in his demands, and Nana will go up in his offer. It is a mere question of bargaining."

When Scindia heard of the step that Bajee Rao had taken, he was greatly alarmed; for he could hardly hope to withstand the Nizam's army, and that which Bajee himself could raise; and he therefore materially lowered his demands, and finally accepted Nana's offer of nine hundred thousand rupees. This arrangement being made, he permitted Nana to leave the camp in order to raise the money; receiving his solemn oath that, if he failed to do so, he would return and render

himself a prisoner again.

However, in a few days Nana sent in the money. Scindia fulfilled the other part of his promise, and insisted upon the Peishwa's receiving Nana as his minister. A few days later he had Ghatgay arrested, by the sons of two of his European officers.

Scindia was, indeed, most anxious to be off. He did not know that the Nizam had refused Bajee Rao's offer. He had received news of widespread disaffection among his troops at home, and felt that he could not rely upon those with him. As soon, therefore, as he received the money from Nana, he partially paid the arrears due to the soldiers. The sum, however, was altogether insufficient to satisfy the troops and, as Nana Furnuwees found that Bajee was still intriguing with Scindia for his overthrow, and that no rest could be hoped for until the latter's army marched away, he advanced Scindia fifteen lakhs of rupees from his own private funds. The latter was then able to satisfy his troops.

Scindia accepted the money, but still remained in the neighbourhood of Poona.

These matters were not concluded until months after Harry left for Bombay. On arriving there he called upon the Governor, to report the release of Nana Furnuwees.

"I received Colonel Palmer's last report, four days ago. He has given me full details of the manner in which you, on your own initiative, brought about Nana's release, and the approaching departure of Scindia; and I of course brought them before the Council, and they quite agreed with me as to the remarkable daring and ability with which you had carried out what Colonel Palmer believed to be an impossible scheme.

"I have pleasure in handing you your commission of captain, and only regret that we cannot break the rules of the service, by nominating you major. Tomorrow your name will be removed from the list of officers of the 3rd Regiment, and you will be appointed to the staff. You will have a week before you, to obtain the proper uniform. I shall not require you to perform any duties, and you will therefore have your time to yourself, till you sail. I shall, of course, forward my reasons for sending you to Lord Mornington, and shall give an

account of the services that you have rendered; which will doubtless excite as much admiration in Calcutta as in Bombay.

"I shall be glad if you will dine with me, the day after tomorrow, when I shall ask the members of the Council to meet you."

On leaving the Governor, Harry at once went to the shop of the Parsee merchant from whom he had obtained his regimentals, and ordered the various uniforms required for the staff. He then went to Soyera and, to his great satisfaction, found Sufder there. The latter's troop was one of those which had been disbanded when, on the arrival of Scindia, Bajee Rao deemed it necessary to reduce his force; and Sufder, after staying for some time at Jooneer, had now come down to see his cousin.

"I am glad, indeed, to find you here, Sufder; in the first place, because it is always a pleasure to meet a good friend; and in the second, because you can take Soyera back with you, and place her with Ramdass."

"But why should I leave here, Harry?"

"Because, mother, I am to start for Madras in three weeks; and may be, for aught I know, away for a year or more. Of course you can remain here if you prefer it, but it seems to me that the other would be the better plan."

"I should certainly prefer to go with Sufder to my home," Soyera said. "I have numbers of acquaintances here, but no real friends; and Ramdass and Anundee will, I know, joyfully receive me."

"At any rate, you shall be no burden to them, Soyera. I will give you a thousand rupees, with which you can pay your share of the expenses of the house or land; and I will give you a similar sum to hand to Ramdass, as a token of my gratitude for his protection and kindness. This will enable him to add to his holding, and to the comforts of his house. I would willingly give much more, but it might cause suspicion and enquiry, were he to extend his holding largely; and the authorities of Jooneer might demand from him how he became possessed of such means. As I told you, I have received much money in presents, and could afford to give you very much more, if it were of any advantage to you.

"I shall give a thousand rupees also to you, Sufder. They will be useful to you, when you settle down on the revenues of your district; and enable you to cut a good figure among the people when you arrive there."

The day before he was to sail, a Hindu entered Harry's apartment and, bowing deeply, handed him a letter. It was from Nana.

"My good English friend,

"I send the enclosed bill, upon my agent, as a small token of acknowledgment for the inestimable service you have rendered me. During my long life I have had many friends; but these, in supporting me, acted in their own interest. You alone have shown me absolutely disinterested friendship. I have always been opposed to your people interfering in the affairs of the Deccan; but I see now that nothing save their intervention can save the country from absolute ruin, owing to the constant struggles for supremacy among the great rajahs; and I see that it were far better we should enjoy peace and protection, under a foreign power, than be exposed to ruin and misery at the hands of warring factions.

"I grieve that I have not seen you again. Colonel Palmer tells me that you are about to start for either Calcutta or Madras, to join the army that is about to act against Tippoo. It is unlikely that I shall ever see you again; but I shall never forget that, had it not been for you, I should have ended my life a prisoner at Ahmednuggur.

"Nana."

The bill enclosed was an order for a hundred thousand rupees, upon Nana's agent in Bombay.

When Harry went to say goodbye to the Governor, the latter said:

"It is likely that you will see your old regiment before long, Captain Lindsay. This morning a ship arrived, with orders from Lord Mornington for us to send as many troops as could possibly be spared, to ascend the southern Ghauts and join him near Seringapatam. Lord Mornington is now at Madras, making arrangements for an advance; when his brother, Colonel Wellesley, will move forward with the Nizam's troops. There is still a doubt what part the Mahrattas

will take--probably they will hold aloof, altogether, until they see how matters go. We know that Tippoo has sent thirteen lakhs of rupees to Bajee Rao, and that the latter and Scindia are in constant communication with him. However, at present we shall take no notice of these proceedings; but allow the Peishwa to believe that we are deceived by the constant assurances that he gives us of his friendship, although he has declined to enter into a treaty with us, similar to that which the Nizam has made.

"It is enough to have one formidable foe on our hands at a time, and our experience of Bajee assures us that he will not commit himself, by openly declaring for Tippoo, until he sees how matters are going."

The winds were unfavourable, and it was not until six weeks after leaving Bombay that Harry arrived at Madras. It was now November, 1798 and, on landing, he learned that General Harris was in command of the army that was assembling at Vellore, and that the Governor General had returned to Calcutta. He therefore at once went back to the ship, which next day sailed for that town.

On arriving there he presented himself at the Government House and, on sending in his name, was in a short time shown in to Lord Mornington's private room.

"I am glad that you have come, Captain Lindsay," the latter said. "I wish that you had been here sooner."

"I came by the first ship, sir, after the Governor of Bombay received your letter but, owing to contrary winds, we have been nearly two months on the voyage. I landed for an hour at Madras and, hearing that you had returned here, I hesitated whether to come to you for orders, or to join General Harris at Vellore; but I thought it better to come on, and so again embarked on the ship, which has only just anchored."

"You were quite right, sir, for it was an agent rather than a soldier that I required. I own that I thought the Governor would have sent an older man."

"I am the bearer of this letter from him. I believe that in it he gives his reasons for the honour he did me, in selecting me for the post."

"I will look through it, presently," Lord Mornington said; "and if you will dine with me here, I shall then have read it, and shall be able to decide where you can be employed to the best advantage."

The dinner was a quiet one, only the officers of the Governor General's suite being present. The Governor received Harry with much more cordiality than he had evinced at their first interview, and introduced him to his officers, with the expression that Captain Lindsay had done very valuable service in the Deccan. Little allusion was made to business, until the other officers had left, when Lord Mornington said:

"I have read the Governor of Bombay's letter, and am convinced that he could have made no better choice than he has done. He speaks of you in the highest terms, and has given me a slight sketch of your story, and a fuller one of the manner in which you obtained the release of Nana Furnuwees. I learn that Nana has always been considered our friend; although we have not been able to give him the support that we could wish, as this would have entailed war with the Mahrattas, which Bombay is in no position to undertake. Nevertheless, his release will doubtless, to some extent, counterbalance the duplicity of the Peishwa who, while lavish in his promises to us, is receiving money from Tippoo; and will undoubtedly, unless restrained by Nana, openly espouse his cause, should he gain any successes over us. You showed such intelligence in the matter that he says I can place every confidence in you.

"Although the Nizam has been obliged to dismiss the French troops in his service, and to send a portion of his army to act in connection with our own against Mysore, he is in no way to be trusted; being as slippery as the rest of these Indian princes and, like the Mahrattas, would assuredly join Tippoo if he saw his way to doing so. This is so certain that nothing would be gained by sending another agent to Hyderabad. I therefore propose to open communications with the Rajah of Berar.

"None of my officers is able to talk Mahratti; though many of them are, of course, familiar with the southern dialects. The rajah is already practically at war with the Mahrattas as, for a long time, his troops have been ravaging the territory of Purseram Bhow; which he was invited to do by the Peishwa, when Purseram took sides against him. He is doubtless in some apprehension of an attack by the Mahrattas and, upon our promising to guarantee his dominions, and to give him

support if attacked, he may be willing to venture into an alliance with us; and his doing so would, alike, help us in keeping the Nizam to his engagements, and deter the Mahrattas from moving.

"This is the mission that I intend to confide to you. I believe that it could not be in better hands. If you will call, tomorrow afternoon, your written instructions and powers to act for me, and to enter into engagements in my name, will be ready for you; and I should wish you to start the next morning. You will have an escort of twenty troopers. These Indian princes have little respect for persons who travel unattended.

"You will understand that the instructions recite the maximum that you are authorized to offer to the rajah. If he will be satisfied with less you will, of course, grant as little as you can; if he demands more, you must refer the matter to me. At any rate, so long as you are negotiating, he will take no active steps against us; though I have learned that Bajee Rao has already been at work, trying to persuade him to join himself and Tippoo against us. Were such a treaty concluded, we could no longer hope to retain the Nizam; and indeed, should find it difficult to contend against so powerful a confederacy. At any rate, if the rajah will not join us, you must endeavour at least to secure his neutrality.

"The day after tomorrow you will start. I will have a route map prepared for you. The distance to Nagpore is about eight hundred miles, and you will get there in four weeks, travelling thirty miles a day. I have given orders, today, for one of the Company's ships of war to take you and your escort to the mouth of the Ganjam; and express messengers have already started, with orders to the commandant to provide waggons to carry your tent, equipage and stores. You should, if the winds are favourable, reach there in four or five days' time."

"The carts will delay us, sir, and without them we might make forty miles a day, after we have landed; for the horses of this country have great endurance."

"A few days will make no great difference. There are no towns of any importance on the road to Nagpore, and you would have to put up at wretched khans, and would be considered as worthy of little consideration; whereas I wish you to travel in a style suitable for my agent, and to impress the native mind with your importance.

"Have you horses?"

"I have but one, sir, and a pony for my servant."

"You must purchase another, and a good one, with showy equipments. You will, of course, charge that and all other expenses, and your appointment will be a thousand rupees a month. I have no doubt the rajah will lodge you handsomely. Should he not do so, you had best encamp outside the town. Do not put up with any inferior lodging."

"Very well, sir; I shall endeavour to carry out your orders, to the letter."

Harry was fortunate in being able to purchase an excellent horse and, in the afternoon, received his letters of instruction. On the following day he embarked in a twelve-gun sloop, with twenty troopers under the command of a native officer. The wind was favourable and, in four days, they arrived at the mouth of the Ganjam.

A large native barge came out to meet them. The horses and the stores which Harry had purchased, together with some boxes with presents for the rajah, were transferred to her; and two of the ship's boats took the barge in tow to the shore. The commandant of the small garrison there informed Harry that the bullock carts had already gone on to a village, thirty miles away; and that he would find all in readiness for him, on his arrival.

Without waiting an hour he started with his escort and, half a mile from the village, found the camp already pitched. It consisted of one large and handsome tent, such as those used by high officials, and two smaller ones for the escort. He had engaged at Calcutta a good cook, and this man at once began to light fires, and prepare a meal from the stores Harry had brought with him.

The tent was handsomely furnished. A large carpet covered the ground. There was a bed, four large chairs, and a table; while between the outer and inner walls of the tent was a bath. As soon as they halted, one of the troopers rode into the village and purchased fowls, rice, ghee, and condiments for the use of the escort, who were all Mahommedans.

Harry found, to his satisfaction, that another set of waggons had started that

morning for the next halting place; and that he would find everything ready for him there. This was a great satisfaction, for he had feared that the work of taking down and packing the tents would delay his start in the morning, and that at the end of the day's ride he would have to wait some hours before the tents came up; whereas by the system of double carriage, he would not be delayed.

The head man told him that his party would start in the morning, as soon as the cart could be packed; that fresh bullocks would be hired at the village where he would halt, and would travel all night, so as to be in readiness for him when he had accomplished another stage; and that this process would be continued until they reached Nagpore.

Chapter 9: A Popular Tumult.

The journey was performed without incident. Harry enjoyed it much, for this luxurious method of travelling was quite new to him and, three weeks after leaving the coast, they arrived at Nagpore. On the previous day the native officer had been sent on, beforehand, to inform the rajah of the arrival of a high officer of the Governor General's; and had taken on a letter from Lord Mornington, accrediting Harry to act in his name. Accordingly, when the party arrived within a mile of the town, they were met by two officers of the rajah; who welcomed him in his name, and said that a residence had been prepared for his use and that of the escort. They were surprised at Harry's perfect knowledge of their language for, hitherto, British agents who had come to Nagpore had had but very slight acquaintance with it, and had had to carry on their conversation by means of an interpreter.

The town was large and straggling and composed, for the most part, of native huts built of mud. There were, however, a few brick houses, the property of flourishing traders. The palace was a large square edifice, without any architectural adornments. Trees grew everywhere in the streets and, in the distance, the town had the appearance of a forest.

Harry was conducted to one of the largest brick houses in the town. A host of sweepers had been at work, carpets were laid down, and furniture placed in the principal rooms. He had no doubt that it had been requisitioned from its owner by the rajah for him, and the furniture supplied from the palace. The principal rooms were on the upper floor, and there was ample accommodation for the escort below.

Harry requested the officers to ascertain when the rajah would be ready to receive a visit from him, and they returned with word that he would receive him, in private audience, at eight o'clock that evening. Accordingly at that hour, followed by four of his troopers, he rode to the palace. A guard of honour was drawn up at the entrance, and saluted as he passed in. The entrance hall and staircase were lined by attendants, and all bowed profoundly as he passed. He

was conducted to a large audience chamber, where the rajah, attended by his principal officers, was seated.

The conversation was of the usual ceremonial kind, the prince expressing his satisfaction that the Governor General should have sent one of his officers to confer with him, and assuring Harry of his goodwill and friendship towards the English; while Harry, on his part, expressed the strong desire of Lord Mornington that the relations between him and the rajah should be continued unbroken, and that nothing should ever occur to disturb their amity. The presents sent by the Governor General were then brought in and displayed, and appeared to give much satisfaction to the chief.

After the durbar was over, the latter told Harry that he would receive him, privately, at ten o'clock next morning. On arriving at that time, he was shown into the prince's private apartment, and there explained to him the Governor General's desire that he should join the confederacy between the Nizam and the English.

"I have no quarrel with Tippoo," the rajah said. "At present, none can say how the affair will end. All say that the Peishwa has agreed to assist Tippoo. He is a match, and more, for the Nizam; while we know not whether the English company, or Tippoo, is the strongest. Should I remain neutral, the Peishwa and Tippoo might eat me up."

"That is true, Rajah; but you must remember that, in the last war, the English showed that they were much stronger than Tippoo; and he was glad to make peace with them, by giving up nearly half his territories. We are much stronger now. Ships arrive each day with more and more troops and, believe me, Tippoo will assuredly be unable to stand against the English power, even if he were backed up by the whole strength of Poona.

"Of course, we know that messages have been sent to you by Tippoo, and that he has promised you a large slice of the Nizam's dominions, if you will invade them, and so prevent him from aiding the English."

Harry saw, by the change in the prince's countenance, that he was surprised to find that his negotiations with Tippoo were known to the English Government. He replied, however:

"It is true that Tippoo has sent to me, but I have given him no answer. The matter is too important to be settled in a hurry. Certainly, Tippoo's offers were very advantageous."

"I can understand that they were tempting, Rajah; yet they entailed a war against the English and the Nizam, when they had finished with Tippoo. Instead of gaining territory, you would find that much of yours would be lost.

"But undoubtedly, were you to join us, the Governor General would show that he was not unthankful for the service, and your assistance would be handsomely recompensed."

"What does the Governor General offer?"

"He is desirous of knowing what your own views are, Rajah; and he will assuredly meet them, if possible."

"I have not thought of it, yet," the prince said. "I must talk the matter over with my councillors. We are good friends with the Peishwa, also with the Nizam, and with Tippoo. We know that the English are a great people; but we have had nothing to do with them, save that complimentary messages have been exchanged. Therefore it is not a matter upon which one can come to any hasty decision."

"The Governor General would wish you to think the matter over well, before deciding, Rajah; and indeed, there is no occasion for undue haste, seeing that the English army is still lying near Madras, and is not yet ready to advance. Therefore I will leave the matter for the present; believing that, in your wisdom, you will be able to see how matters are likely to go; and whether the English Company, or Tippoo, are likely to be your best friends."

It was nearly a fortnight before Harry heard again from the rajah. The latter had returned his visit, and sent over presents of sweetmeats and food to his guests. At the end of that time he came in, one evening, with only two attendants.

"I have come to speak to you on this matter, privately," he said. "My ministers are altogether divided in opinion. Some say we should fight against

Tippoo, who is a cruel and implacable foe, and who has slaughtered all the Hindus in his territory who refused to embrace his religion. Others say it is better to be friends with him, for it seems that these white men intend to eat up all India. Already they have taken the Carnatic and Bengal, now they want to take Mysore. What will they take next?

"For myself, I wish well to the English. Though there are few of them, they are brave and strong; but my council know of the offer that Tippoo has made us and, unless I can show them that the English are also ready to give us material advantages, I shall not be able to persuade my chiefs that our interest must lie in an alliance with them."

"That is so, Rajah, and if you will inform me what are your expectations, I will see how far they tally with those which the Governor General has authorized me to offer."

"I am not greedy," the prince said. "I wish only to have what is fair and just. I think that our aid is worth two crores of rupees (200,000 pounds) and that the Company should put me in possession of the lands of Purseram Bhow, together with the land that lies between us and Malwan, including the territories of the Rajah of Bhopal."

"Your demand," Harry said gravely, "is so far beyond what I was authorized to offer you, that I fear it is altogether useless for me to submit it to the Governor General. He would, I am sure, consider that, in naming such terms, you had resolved to make acceptance impossible."

"That is by no means my intention," the Rajah said. "Nothing could be further from my thoughts; and in order to secure an alliance that, I believe, would be advantageous, I might be able to make some slight concession."

"I will send off a messenger, then, submitting your offer and asking for instructions, and requesting that I may be allowed to meet you, by further concessions on my part; but I fear that, strained as the English treasury is by the preparations for the war against Tippoo, it would be impossible for the Company to pay the sum you name; nor do I think that they would be disposed to guarantee you the territory of Bhopal, seeing that we have no quarrel with the rajah of that country.

"No doubt, they might be willing to grant you a portion of the territories of Mysore, lying on the other side of the Godavery, which would be as valuable as Bhopal."

As the rajah, himself, was still uncertain as to which side it would be most advantageous to take; and as he thought that the campaign against Tippoo would last for many months; he offered no objection to Harry's proposal. The latter sent off two troopers, the next day, with a letter to Lord Mornington saying that as the rajah's demands were, he knew, altogether out of the question, he had sent them to him simply to gain time; hoping that, before the answer arrived, the army would have gained such successes over Tippoo as would induce the prince to greatly modify his terms. The troopers were charged not to use undue haste, but to travel quietly, at a rate not exceeding twenty miles a day.

Two months passed. The rajah was in no hurry, for the two parties among his councillors were so evenly divided that he was by no means sure that, even if he wished it, he could put his army in motion, in support of either the English or Tippoo; and in the next place, he believed that the latter would win, and was reluctant in the extreme to take any step that would draw down upon him the vengeance of the Lord of Mysore. He occasionally saw Harry and, although he expressed his anxiety for the return of the messengers, Harry could see that this feeling was only feigned, and that at heart he was not sorry that he was not yet called upon to decide.

At the end of a month, Harry had received a letter from the Governor General, brought by a messenger in the disguise of a peasant. It only said:

"March 6th, 1799.

"The army has left Vellore. On the 11th the Nizam's contingent also marched, as has that from Bombay. By the 1st of this month all should have reached the plateau--the Bombay army at Sedaseer, forty-five miles west of Seringapatam; and the main army about eighty miles east of that town. By the end of the month, both should be before Tippoo's capital. Siege will probably occupy a month.

"Even if Berar decides against us, its army cannot arrive in time to aid Tippoo. Therefore, if you can extend the negotiations for a month after you receive this, your mission will have been fulfilled."

This messenger had, of course, been sent off before the arrival of the troopers in Calcutta and, if Lord Mornington's calculations were correct, Seringapatam would be invested before they could return. Three days later, indeed, a report reached Nagpore that Tippoo had fallen upon the advance guard of the Bombay army, and had been repulsed; and on the 27th he had attacked General Harris, and had again been defeated; and that on the 28th the main army had forded the Cauvery, and had marched to Sosilly.

This news caused great excitement in the town, although Seringapatam was generally supposed to be impregnable and, as the English had failed to take it during the last war, it was believed that, after another futile siege, they would be forced to fall back again from want of food, as they did upon the previous occasion.

The rajah, like the majority, believed that Seringapatam could defy any assault; and that, surrounded as the British army would be by the Mysore cavalry, they would very speedily be forced to retire; and that, although Tippoo might have yielded to the wishes of his general, and attempted to check the advance, it could have been with only a portion of his army.

Including the contingent furnished by the Nizam, the Bombay army amounted to forty-three thousand men. Tippoo was credited with having at least twice that force, and his uniform successes against his neighbours had created a belief that he was invincible. The rajah, therefore, was well content to let matters rest, until more decisive news reached him.

It was on the 7th of April that the messengers returned, with a letter:

"We no longer want active assistance from Berar. The army is within striking distance of Seringapatam, and a few thousand native horse, one way or another, will make but little difference. You have done very well in gaining two months, by referring the matter to me. The rajah's demands are, of course, ridiculous. He is evidently playing a double part and, if we were defeated tomorrow, would join Tippoo and attack the Nizam. You can still, however, offer him five lakhs of rupees; but do not guarantee him any additional territory.

"The Peishwa is acting in precisely the same way. The army that was to come to our assistance has not yet moved; and he, like Berar, is simply awaiting events

at Seringapatam."

The rajah came in that evening.

"I hear that your messengers have returned, sir."

"Yes; I am sorry to say that the Governor General considers your demands are altogether excessive. The treasury is almost empty and, were he to guarantee you an extension of your dominions, it would bring on a war with the Peishwa and the Rajah of Bhopal; but he is willing to pay five lakhs of rupees, to cover the maintenance of your troops while in the field."

The rajah flushed with anger.

"It is altogether insufficient," he said.

"I do not say that is the final offer, Rajah; that is the offer I am authorized to make, in the first place. Possibly, if you are willing to make concessions of a reasonable kind, I may be able to meet you--and you must remember that the friendship of the Company is of no slight advantage, and would assuredly be of infinite value to you, were your territory invaded by Scindia and the Peishwa. These may, at any moment, make up their differences. Purseram Bhow may again become the commander of the Peishwa's army and, after the manner in which your troops have, for the last two or three years, raided his jagheer, he would be your bitterest enemy."

Harry saw that this consideration made a powerful impression upon the rajah, and the latter said:

"I must think these matters over. The sum that you offer is altogether insufficient, and cannot be entertained for a moment. However, there is time for reflection."

During the next four weeks, Harry saw the rajah occasionally; but the latter made no attempt to talk business. He was evidently undecided, in his mind, as to the best course he should take. He feared Tippoo more than he feared the English, and he still believed that the latter would assuredly fail in capturing Seringapatam. Tippoo's offers, too, had been considerably higher than those of Calcutta, as he had promised him a large slice of the Nizam's dominions for his

assistance. He had therefore determined to reject the English offer, and to march into the Nizam's country, as soon as he heard that the besieging army had fallen back.

Harry's suspicions that this was the case were, to a certain extent, confirmed by the fact that bodies of armed men began to arrive, in considerable numbers. He felt that his own position was beginning to be precarious, and the native officer commanding his escort brought in almost hourly reports of what was passing in the city. The population was a mixed one, and nearly divided between Hindus and Mahommedans. The latter naturally sympathized altogether with Tippoo, while the former were in favour of taking no part on either side.

So matters continued until the 10th of May, when a horseman rode into the town, with the news that Seringapatam had been captured by the British, and that Tippoo himself was killed. A feeling akin to stupefaction was excited by the news; and it seemed, at first, that it must be false, for it was incredible that Tippoo, with so strong an army, should have been unable to defend the fortress that, as was believed, could withstand any attack, however formidable, for four months.

Illustration: As he rode through the streets he saw . . . how fierce a feeling of resentment had been excited by the news.

The rajah sent at once, to ask Harry to visit him. As he rode through the streets he saw, by the scowling faces of the Mahommedan soldiers, how fierce a feeling of resentment had been excited by the news that the native officer had brought in, a few minutes before. The rajah was deeply agitated.

"Have you heard the news, sahib?"

"I have, Rajah."

"And do you think it possible?"

"Perfectly; indeed, I have been expecting it for some days, but I supposed the English general needed time to bring in provisions from the country round, to form his plans, and construct his batteries."

"To me it is astounding!" the rajah said, walking up and down the room.

"Of course," Harry said, "the proposal that I made to you cannot now be carried out; and I do not feel myself justified, under the changed position of things, in continuing the negotiations."

"I always intended to help the English," the rajah went on.

"No doubt, Rajah. I have noticed, for some time, that you have been gathering a large force here; but you have given me no indication for what purpose it was intended."

"It was intended, of course, for service with the English," the rajah said, "and it would have been set in motion, as soon as the negotiations were completed."

"At any rate, Rajah, in spite of the temptations offered you by Tippoo, you have remained neutral. This will be considered in your favour, and I can assure you that there will be no breach in the friendship between yourself and the English; matters will merely remain as they were, before this war commenced."

"Except that the Nizam will become more powerful than before," the rajah

said.

"That will no doubt be so, for he will certainly take a considerable share of Tippoo's dominions. But that need not trouble you. I know the desire of the Governor General has always been for peace. He was driven into this war, by the failure of Tippoo to carry out his undertaking to release all European prisoners in his hands, and also by the great preparations he was making to regain territory that he had lost. But it cannot be to the interest of the Company that the Nizam should use his increased power to be a scourge to his neighbours; and I can promise you that any wanton aggression, on his part, will be regarded with displeasure, and probably lead to their interference in your behalf.

"Now, Rajah, I must remind you that I am here as your guest, and I rely upon you to protect me. As I came through the streets, the attitude of the Mahommedan soldiers was very threatening; and I should not be surprised if they attempted to attack the house. I need not say that any outrage upon the escort of a British agent would be tremendously avenged; and that you would be more easily forgiven, had you taken the part of Tippoo, than if you allow me and my escort to be massacred."

"I will take immediate steps for your safety and, should any attempt be made, I shall come with my household guards to your assistance. A squadron of them shall ride back with you, now, to prevent any insult being offered to you in the streets."

"I will relieve you of my presence, tonight," Harry said. "I do not wish to be an object of strife between you and your people, and will therefore take my farewell of you, at once. I shall have pleasure in informing the Governor General of the steps that you have taken to provide for my safety."

"And give him the assurance that my disposition is wholly friendly, and that I rely on nothing so much as to secure his friendship, and to remain on the most amicable terms with him."

Harry had no doubt that the assurance was given in earnest. The fall of Seringapatam, and the death of Tippoo, had been a terrible shock to the rajah; and even the fact that he had missed his opportunity of allying himself with the English, was as nothing to the thought of what would have happened had he

declared for Tippoo.

The rajah at once gave orders for a squadron of his horse to mount, and continued his conversation with Harry until they were ready in the courtyard. Then, bidding adieu to the prince, the latter mounted, and was escorted through the streets by the cavalry guard.

But although their presence prevented any attack being made on him, the lower class groaned and yelled, and he had no doubt that, had it not been for his escort, he would have been murdered on his way back.

Directly he arrived he called the troopers to arms, and told them to barricade the gates, and to be ready to take post at the windows, in case of assault. Looking out, he saw that the rajah's men had taken up their position in front of the house.

A great crowd soon began to gather there. Most of the men were evidently soldiers, and had arms in their hands. Loud shouts were raised, and it was not long before a musket was discharged, quickly followed by others. The native officer in charge of the guard ordered the soldiers to seize those who fired but, as his men pressed their horses forward, the crowd closed in upon them, breaking their ranks and rendering them powerless.

While this had been going on, the men of Harry's escort were hard at work in getting up the paving stones of the yard, and piling them against the gate. The lower windows were all barred and, as there was no entrance except by the front gate, it was felt that they could hold the house for some time.

As soon as the guard were swept away, a portion of the crowd attacked the gate with showers of stones, while a heavy musketry fire was opened at every window. So heavy was this that Harry would not allow the troopers to show themselves there, but posted them behind the barricades of stone against the gates so that, when these yielded, they might be able to open fire whilst showing only their heads over the top line of stones.

Harry regretted, now, that he had not, when he returned from the rajah, at once ordered his men to mount and cut their way through the mob. A few at least might have escaped though, doubtless, they would have been pursued by the

irregular cavalry. As it was he felt that, although they might sell their lives dearly, they must be destroyed to a man, unless the rajah sent assistance to them. That he would endeavour to do so he felt sure, for the massacre of a British envoy, and his escort, was certain to bring the English troops to Nagpore, sooner or later; and no assurances that the rajah had done all in his power to save them would be accepted as sufficient.

The house stood in a garden, which extended some distance behind it; and it was here that the horses were picketed. The front gate was a very strong one, and was certain to resist all attacks, for some time.

Harry called off half his men, and set them to work at the wall at the end of the garden, which was only constructed of dry mud; directing them to make a hole large enough for a horse to pass through. At this side all was quiet, the people in the native houses there having gone round to the front, to watch what was doing. Harry stood there for a few minutes, watching the men at work, and saw with satisfaction their heavy tulwars rapidly cutting through the soft wall. He told them that, when they had finished, four of them were to remain to guard the hole, in case any might try to force their way in; and the rest were to return, to aid their comrades at the gate.

He had no great fear that the attempt would be made to enter in that direction, for the windows in the back of the house were, like those in front, large; and anyone attempting to climb the walls and enter the garden would be liable to be shot down from the windows, as they could not be covered, as were those on the other side, by a fire kept up from the houses outside. The entrance into the garden from the house was made by a small door, at the bottom of a staircase leading from what had been the zenana, for the gardens were always considered the special domain of the ladies. There was another small door for the servants' offices, used by the men who, early in the morning, went in to keep the garden in order.

When Harry rejoined the party in front, he found that the gates were yielding. The lower portion had been almost chopped away; but here the wall of stones prevented an entrance, and the men with their axes could scarcely reach to touch the upper half. Presently, however, the hinges of the upper end of one of the half doors yielded to the weight. A great shout arose from the mob; and the musketry, hitherto directed against the windows, was now concentrated on the opening.

But it was no longer one sided. The troopers, glad that the time for inaction had passed, returned the fire with vigour. They had shifted the upper line of stones, so that there was room between each for a musket barrel and, lying in shelter, they were enabled to take deliberate aim at their assailants. At every shot a man dropped, and the crowd opened speedily, and cleared away from the line of fire.

There was a pause of some minutes, and then a strong party of soldiers rushed forward, and began to try to pull down the barrier; a number of others opening fire over their heads, so as to prevent the defenders from standing up to fire down into them. It was evident that, ere long, a slope would be formed outside by which an assault could be made.

That his men would for some time repel any attack, Harry thought certain; but sooner or later it would succeed, and there would then be no time to retire. He therefore sent a man back, to see if the hole in the wall was large enough; and he returned directly, saying that the men there had just concluded their work, and that six of them were coming back.

Harry now gave orders, to the native officer who was standing beside him, to order these men to lead the horses through the opening. When he had been gone a minute or two, he sent all the men, except four, to follow the example of their comrades; while those left with him redoubled their fire, so that their assailants should not know that any of the defenders had been withdrawn.

It was not long before a trooper ran back, with the word that all the horses had been taken through. The news came just in time, for so much of the barricade had been pulled down that it could now be climbed. Harry therefore gave the word and, with the last of the defenders, went off at a run.

The troop was gathered in the deserted lane at the bottom of the garden and, on Harry's arrival, the men sprung into the saddles and galloped off. The rattle of musketry was now very heavy, but it suddenly stopped and, a moment later, shouts and yells told that the breach had been carried, and the yard found to be deserted.

"They will search the house, first," Harry said to the native officer, "and they will be cautious about it, as they will think that at any moment they may come

upon us, and will be sure that they would meet with a desperate resistance. I expect that it will be ten minutes before they discover how we have slipped through their hands."

They made a long detour, and then approached the palace from the other side; Harry having determined to place himself under the protection of the rajah, for he did not think it possible that they could escape by hard riding, as they might be pursued by the whole of the cavalry. Just as they were approaching it, they heard a fresh outbreak of firing, the musketry being mingled with the crack of field guns.

"The rajah has gone out to our rescue," Harry said. "He would have been too late, if we had stopped there; however, we can rely upon him now."

Five minutes later, they rode into the courtyard of the palace. It was almost deserted, but one of the officials came out and, bowing deeply to Harry, said:

"The rajah himself has gone out, with the household troops and a battery of artillery, to put down the tumult. He is furious that his guests should have been attacked."

The firing presently ceased and, a quarter of an hour later, the rajah rode in. A messenger had been despatched, at once, to inform him that the British officer, with his escort, had arrived at the palace. Harry and his men had dismounted, and were still standing by their horses.

The rajah sprang from his saddle as he rode up.

"The gods be thanked that I see you safely here, my friend!" he said. "When I arrived at your house, I feared that all was over, for these rebels had gained possession. You must not blame me for not arriving sooner. When the firing was heard, I feared that the rabble of the town, aided perhaps by many of my soldiers, were attacking you; although, until the officer who commanded the guard I had placed there returned, I did not dream how serious the business was. Then I got my soldiers together; but this occupied some time, as many of them were in the town. However, as soon as a squadron of horse was collected, and a couple of hundred infantry, together with four guns of a battery, I headed them myself and, on arriving, opened fire upon the mob; who speedily scattered, some

fifty or sixty of them being killed.

"Then I entered the house, expecting to find only your dead bodies, but there were no signs of strife. I questioned some prisoners we had taken inside; and these said that, just before I came up, a hole had been discovered in the garden wall, and it was believed that you had all escaped through that. I was about to ride, with all speed, to prevent any pursuit being taken up; when a messenger arrived with the welcome news that you had just entered the palace."

"I thank you heartily, Rajah, for having so promptly come to my aid; though assuredly you would have arrived too late to save us, had we not, as soon as the fighting began, set to work to prepare a means of escape. Once we got out, we were sure that you would protect us, and therefore rode here and awaited your return."

"'Tis well, indeed, that you thought of that plan, sahib; for I would not, for half my dominions, that a hair of your head should have been hurt, while you were here as my guest."

"It has all ended fortunately, Rajah; and now, what would you recommend me to do?"

"You had best stay here, until nightfall. I will ride, now, to the camps of my men, to reproach them for their conduct; and to ask if they want to bring the army that has just captured Seringapatam down upon us. When it is dark, I will myself accompany you, with my household cavalry, until you are miles away.

"I pray you to report to the Governor General how grieved I am that evil-disposed persons should have raised a riot, with the intention of killing you; and assure him that I did all in my power to save you, and shall, if they can be discovered, punish those concerned in the matter."

"I shall assuredly report very favourably of your conduct, Rajah--which will, I have no doubt, be warmly appreciated--and shall let the Governor General know that, from the time of my arrival here, I always have been treated with the greatest courtesy and attention by you."

Leaving the infantry and artillery, with their guns, in front of the palace, lest

any attack should be made upon it; the rajah rode off with his cavalry and returned, two hours later, with the news that all was quiet, and that the troops had returned to their duty.

As soon as it was dark, the party started. The rajah rode at the head of his cavalry; Harry, at his request, taking his place with his own escort in the centre of it, so that his presence among them should not be suspected.

"It is as well," the rajah said, "that the news that you have left should not be known till tomorrow morning; for although the troops would, I have no doubt, be obedient to my orders, in a town like this there are many budmashes; who might, if they knew that you had started, ride in pursuit, with the intention of attacking you after I had left you."

Once out of the town they proceeded at a rapid pace, which they maintained until twenty miles away from Nagpore. The rajah then returned, with the main body of his cavalry; ordering a native officer and thirty men to escort Harry, until he arrived at the frontier.

There was, however, little occasion for this addition to Harry's force. The news of the fall of Seringapatam had spread like wildfire, and at each village through which they passed, and at those in which they halted for the night, the inhabitants saluted Harry with the deepest respect; and would willingly have supplied him and his escort with provisions, without payment, had he not insisted upon their receiving fair value for them.

At the frontier the rajah's troop turned back, and Harry continued his journey, reaching Calcutta early in June.

When he arrived there, he was well received by the Governor General, who told him that he had rendered a great service, by so delaying the negotiations that the Rajah of Berar had remained neutral during the war with Tippoo; and that he would probably soon require his services again.

A descendant of the Rajah of Mysore, whose government Hyder Ali had usurped, was released from captivity and raised to the musnud. Nearly half the revenue of the country was assigned to him. A large sum was set aside for the maintenance of the families of Hyder and Tippoo, and the remaining territory

was divided between the Company and the Nizam.

A portion was set aside as the share of the Peishwa, although he had not fulfilled his engagement in any way; but it was to be given only on the condition that he signed a treaty of alliance with the English, similar to that entered into by the Nizam. The Peishwa, however, would not consent to do this; and the territory set aside for him was, consequently, divided between the Company and the Nizam.

Civil war was raging in the Deccan. The widows of Mahdoo Rao had been joined by a large force, and were plundering Scindia's villages; while Jeswunt Holkar was also ravaging the country. Scindia found that it was necessary to appoint Balloba, who had been for some years in captivity, to the post of his chief minister and, through him, a treaty was made with the widows of Mahdoo, and the trouble in that direction ceased.

The Rajah of Kolapoore was at war with the Peishwa; and the troops of Purseram Bhow, and those of Rastia, were both defeated. Scindia and the Peishwa now sent an army of thirty thousand horse and six thousand infantry against Kolapoore; but Purseram, who was in command, was defeated and fell, mortally wounded. Another army joined the defeated force, and invested Kolapoore.

On the 13th of March, 1800, Nana Furnuwees died; and affairs in the Mahratta country, that had been to some extent kept in order by his wisdom and moderation, now became worse than ever. A dispute at once took place between the Peishwa and Scindia, each being desirous of obtaining the treasures Nana was supposed to possess. Scindia seized his jagheer. Ghatgay was released, and obtained his former influence over Scindia; who seized Balloba and threw him into prison, where he died.

The Peishwa, on his part, was determined to destroy all the friends of Nana and, inviting most of the principal men to the palace, he seized and sent them all, prisoners, to hill forts. He now, with Scindia, determined to destroy the family and adherents of Purseram Bhow. Appa Sahib, Purseram's son, had succeeded him in the command of the army besieging Kolapoore and, receiving intelligence of the conspiracy against him, raised the siege and retired to the Carnatic, and Scindia plundered the whole of Purseram's villages.

A fierce chief in Dhoondia invaded the newly-acquired territories of the British, and Major General Wellesley was sent against him, and totally routed his party.

Jeswunt Holkar was now becoming extremely dangerous; and Scindia was at last obliged to march away, with his army, to defend his own dominions. He left behind him five battalions of regular infantry, and ten thousand horse and, before he set out, compelled the Peishwa to give him gold to the amount of forty-seven lakhs of rupees.

On his way through Malwan, he sent seven of his regular battalions to protect his capital. One column, under Captain Mackintyre, was intercepted on the way, and all killed or made prisoners. Holkar then fell upon the other party, which he also overpowered and defeated. He next attacked Scindia's artillery on the march; but Major Brownrigg, an officer in the latter's service, with four battalions, repulsed his assailants.

The Peishwa, while this was going on, was mercilessly murdering or imprisoning those whom he considered his enemies; and ordered Wittoojee Holkar, the brother of Jeswunt, to be trampled to death by an elephant.

Scindia having sent for Ghatgay to rejoin him, Jeswunt advanced to meet him, and was signally defeated. He speedily gathered a fresh force, and wasted not only Scindia's country but that of the Peishwa; and finally a great battle was fought, near Poona, in which Holkar, thanks to his fourteen regular battalions, officered by Englishmen, won a complete victory over the Peishwa's force and that left behind by Scindia. The Peishwa was forced to fly, and take refuge at Bassein, where he entered into negotiations for British support.

Chapter 10: A Mission By Sea.

A Fortnight after Harry's return, he was again sent for by Lord Mornington.

"Captain Lindsay, I am about to employ you on a mission of a somewhat delicate character. There have been many complaints that ships trading among the islands have been attacked and, in some cases, captured and the crews massacred, by Malays. We recently received a communication from a native chief, or rajah, who owns the southern point of the Malay Peninsula. He says that the Dutch, in Java, greatly interfere with his trade; as all vessels trading in the East are bound to touch at Batavia, on their way to Europe, and consequently very few of them visit the Peninsula, as to do so would greatly lengthen their voyage to Batavia. He asks that we should make a settlement at the end of the Peninsula, so that our ships may trade with him; and would be willing to place us in possession of an island, two or three miles from the extreme southern portion of his dominions.

"There can be no doubt that the position would be an extremely valuable one; lying, as it does, on our trade route to the East. But it is also certain that a settlement of that kind would be viewed with extreme jealousy by the Dutch; whose possessions, in Java and other islands, render them practically masters of the whole Malay Archipelago.

"Certainly, at present, our hands are much too full here to permit of our engaging in any enterprise of this kind but, at the same time, it is desirable that we should obtain some reliable information as to the situation there, the power of this rajah, and the advantages that the island offers in the way of ports, the salubrity of its climate, and other similar particulars. Its possession would certainly be desirable, not only as a centre for future trade with Bankok and the East, but as a port from which our vessels of war might suppress the piracy that prevails all along the Malay coast, and in the neighbouring island of Sumatra. Such information may be extremely useful in the future, and when our power in this country is consolidated.

"But this is not the sole object of your mission. You will proceed, either before or after your visit to this rajah, as we will determine, to Batavia; bearing a despatch from me to the Dutch governor, narrating a number of acts of piracy that have taken place among the islands, and requesting that, as they are the paramount power in that district, they will take steps, both for their own sake and ours, to suppress piracy; and offering, on our part, that two or three of our ships of war shall, if they think it desirable, aid them in the punishment of the Malays. You will be accompanied by an interpreter.

"There are several Malay traders established here; and some of them, no doubt, speak Hindustani fluently. I will have enquiries made among them, and will also procure you a Dutch interpreter.

"I do not propose that you shall go in a trading vessel to Java. The appearance of such a vessel, off Batavia, would be resented by the Dutch. Of course, traders do go from here down to the islands, but only to those not under Dutch power. They used generally to trade, on their way down, with Burma and Siam; but the Burmese have shown such hostility to us that it is no longer safe to enter their rivers, and they have wrested the maritime provinces of Siam, on this side of the Peninsula, from that power; so that trade there is, for the present, at an end. I shall therefore send you down in one of our small sloops. A larger vessel might irritate the Dutch, and a small one would be sufficient to furnish you with an escort to this Rajah of Johore--not only for protection, but because the native potentates have no respect for persons who do not arrive with some sort of appearance of state.

"You will, of course, go as high commissioner, with full powers to represent me. I do not anticipate that you will be able to conclude any formal treaty with the Rajah of Johore. He will, of course, ask for an equivalent, either in money or in protection against some neighbouring rajah. We have no money to spare at present, and certainly no troops. Your commission therefore will be to acknowledge his communication, to assure him of our friendship, to ascertain the suitability of the island that he offers, and to tell him that, at present, being so fully occupied with wars here, we are scarcely in a position to extend our responsibility; but that, when matters are more settled, we shall be prepared to enter into a treaty with him, to open a trade with his dominions, to pay a fair sum for the possession of the island, if suitable, and to enter into a treaty of alliance with him.

"Of the value of such a settlement there can be no doubt, whatever; for we may take it that, before very long, some of the Chinese ports will be open to European traders."

A week later, Harry embarked on a brig mounting eight guns, and usually employed in police work along the coast. He was accompanied by a Dutch interpreter, a Malay trader, Abdool, and four troopers of the Governor General's bodyguard, in the handsome uniform worn by that corps. The lieutenant in command of the brig received Harry, with the usual ceremony, as a Government commissioner. He himself was at the gangway to meet him, and twelve of the sailors, with drawn cutlasses, saluted as Harry stepped on to the deck.

The lieutenant, a young man of about four or five and twenty, looked surprised when he found that the official, whom he was to carry down to Java, was apparently younger than himself.

"I suppose, Captain Fairclough," Harry said with a smile, when they entered the cabin, "that you expected to see a middle-aged man."

"Hardly that, Captain Lindsay. I heard that you were a young officer, who had rendered distinguished services on the Bombay side, and had just returned from an important mission in the Deccan; but I own that I had not at all expected to see an officer younger than myself."

"I can quite understand that. I have been exceptionally fortunate, owing to the fact that I speak Mahratti as well as English. Well, I hope that after your reception we have done with ceremony; and that you will forget that I am, at present, a civil official with the temporary rank of commissioner, and regard and treat me as you might any young officer who had been given a passage in your brig. I have led a pretty rough life, and hate anything like ceremony. We may be some weeks on board together, and should have a pleasant time of it, especially as the whole country is new to me."

"And to me also," the lieutenant said. "I generally cruise from the mouth of the Hooghly to Chittagong; and a dreary coast it is, with its low muddy shores and scores of creeks and streams. In the sunderbunds there is little to look after, the people are quiet and very scattered; but farther east they are piratically

inclined, and prey upon the native traders, and we occasionally catch them at it, and give them a lesson.

"Well, I shall be very glad to adopt your suggestion, and to drop all ceremony. I have not often had to carry civil officials in this craft, she is too small for any such dignified people; but when I was in the Tigris, we often carried civil and military officials from Madras, and some of them were unmitigated nuisances--not the military men, but the civilians. The absurd airs they gave themselves, as if heaven and earth belonged to them, were sickening; and they seemed to regard us as dust under their feet. Whenever we heard that we were to take a member of the Council from Calcutta to Madras, or the other way, it was regarded as an infliction of a serious kind."

"Well, I propose to begin with that, when we are down here together, we drop titles; you call me Lindsay, and I will call you Fairclough."

"With all my heart," the other said.

"What officers have you?"

"A junior lieutenant, and two midshipmen. The lieutenant, when I am alone, always messes with me. We are not so strict, among our small craft in the Company's service, as they are in the royal navy; and I think, myself, that it would be ridiculous for me to dine here by myself; Mr. Hardy, by himself; and the two midshipmen in a separate mess of their own. That of course they do, for they would not enjoy their meals with Hardy and myself."

"I quite agree with you."

"This is your stateroom."

"But it is your private cabin, Fairclough, is it not?"

"Well, yes; but I am accustomed to turn out, whenever there are passengers."

"Well, at any rate, I shall feel very much disgusted if you do so for me. I should be most uncomfortable, so I must insist on you having your things moved back here. When I tell you that, for sixteen years, I lived in the house of a small Mahratta cultivator, you may well imagine that I can make myself perfectly

comfortable, anywhere."

"It will be quite contrary to the rules of our service," the other began, hesitatingly.

"I can't help that," Harry replied. "There are no rules without exceptions, and mine is an altogether peculiar case. You will really oblige me, very much, if you will have the change made.

"I see that you are surprised at what I told you about myself; it is too long a story to tell you now, but I will, after dinner today, repeat to you and Hardy some of my experiences; which you will see have been curious, and account for my having the rank of captain, and being employed in a responsible position, at my age.

"I suppose you will soon be getting up anchor?"

"Yes; the tide will be favourable now, and everything is ready for a start."

A few minutes later, the clank of the capstan was heard and, going on deck, Harry found Lieutenant Hardy preparing to sail. As soon as the vessel was under way he came aft, and was introduced to Harry.

The latter had enquired, of the chief of the Governor's staff, what was customary on these occasions, and whether he was to take on board a stock of provisions.

"Not at all," was the reply; "Government makes an allowance for messing and wine. Sometimes an official will take a dozen or so of champagne with him, as the allowance, though liberal, would scarcely cover this; but it is quite sufficient to enable a captain to keep a good table, and provide port and sherry."

Harry, seeing that the voyage might be much longer than usual, had sent on board four dozen of champagne; some of which he thought might be useful at the table, if the Rajah of Johore came on board with a number of his chiefs, or if the ship was visited by Dutch officials.

The Dutch interpreter was to mess with the petty officers. The Malay preferred to prepare his victuals for himself.

The wind was light, and the brig drifted quietly down the river and, when evening came on, anchored as, on account of the sandbanks and the lightness of the wind, Fairclough had thought it unadvisable to continue his voyage at night. As soon as the sails had been taken in, the two officers went down to the cabin, where dinner was ready for them.

It was a pleasant one, for the two naval men were in high spirits over this change from their ordinary routine, and the prospect of sailing on a strange voyage. Abdool, as usual, had placed himself behind his master's chair, but Harry said:

"I sha'n't want you to wait on me during the voyage, Abdool; the captain's steward will do that."

After the meal was over, cheroots lighted, and a decanter of port placed on the table, Fairclough asked Harry for the story he had promised him; and the latter accordingly gave them a sketch of his life and adventures.

"I no longer wonder, Lindsay, at your having attained the rank of captain so young. That old nurse of yours must have been a trump, indeed; but certainly it is wonderful that you should have lived, first as a peasant and then at the Peishwa's court, so long without anyone having had a suspicion that you were an Englishman. Fancy your meddling in politics, being regarded as a friend of the Peishwa and this minister of his, and being the means of getting the latter out of prison, and so perhaps averting a war between the Mahrattas and Bombay! That was a ticklish business, too, at Nagpore; and you were lucky in coming so well out of it.

"But after all, I think the most wonderful part is that a boy of sixteen should have been a shikaree, and killed no end of tigers, leopards, and bears and, after that, have risen so soon to the rank of captain in the Company's service. Why, you have seen and done more than most men double your age!"

"Yes, I have had great luck, and it is all owing to my old nurse having taken such pains; first to enable me to pass as a Mahratta, and in the next place to teach me the English language and English ways.

"Well, the story has been an unconscionably long one. I think I will go on

deck and smoke a last cheroot, and then turn in."

"If you were a new hand from England, I should say that you had better smoke it here," Fairclough said; "for the mists from the water and swamps are apt to give fresh hands a touch of fever."

The time passed pleasantly, as they made direct for the mouth of the straits between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. There was a light but steady breeze and, on the morning of the eighth day after sailing, Harry, on going on deck, saw land on the port side. As the lieutenant, on the evening before, said that they should next day sight the Great Andaman, he was not surprised.

On looking at the chart, he said to Fairclough:

"I should have thought that it would have been shorter to go on the other side of the islands."

"It would have been rather shorter; but there are four or five islands to the north of the Andaman, and another very small one halfway between it and Negrais, so I preferred going outside. When we get south of the Little Andaman Island, we shall pass between it and the Nicobar Islands. I fancy that they, and perhaps the Andamans, once formed a part of Sumatra. They are scattered almost in a line from its northern point. The land has probably sunk; and these islands were, no doubt, the summits of mountains forming part of the chain that runs through Sumatra.

"Once through the passage south of Little Andaman, we shall sail due east for a day or two; and then lay her course nearly southeast, which will take us right up the straits between Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula."

"Are there any islands scattered about there?"

"There is one nasty little group, called the Arroa Islands, nearly in mid-channel. I shall take care to pass them in daylight. Farther down there are several largish islands near the Sumatra coast but, as the passage is some sixty miles wide, there is little fear of our running foul of them."

"Have the Dutch any settlements at Sumatra?"

"Two or three. Palembang is the principal. It is on a river that runs down into the Banca Straits. I believe that they have trading stations at Jambi and Siak."

A fortnight later the brig anchored off the coast of Singapore. During the voyage, Harry had had many conversations with the Malayan interpreter. The latter told him that the chief who had written might not be in a position to carry out his offer. Not only were the small Malay states frequently engaged in wars with each other, but there were constant internal insurrections and struggles, the various petty chiefs frequently endeavouring to set up as independent powers. At the present time the tumangong, or chief justice, had obtained possession of the island of Singapore, and the adjacent district of the mainland; while other chiefs had also thrown off their allegiance to the Rajah of Johore, who himself had usurped the power from the former reigning family.

"If," he said, "you want only to obtain a place for trade, the tumangong is no doubt the person from whom you must obtain it; but if you wanted the whole island, you would have to treat not only with him but with the rajah as, in case the latter should defeat and overthrow the tumangong, he certainly would not recognize the cession of the island to you."

"Is there a good port?"

"No; but it is not needed. They do not have hurricanes, here, as they do in the Bay of Bengal and in the China Seas, and indeed among the islands; so vessels can anchor off the coast, in safety, at all times of the year."

"What is the island like?"

"It is covered with forest and jungle," the Malay replied. "There are but few inhabitants, a hundred and fifty or so. Most of these are my people, but there are a few Chinese and Bugis. The Malays are not cultivators. They live by piracy, attacking small native vessels passing through the narrow passages between Singapore and the mainland. The Chinese cultivate patches of land."

"Is it fertile?"

"Very. Rain falls there more than half the days in the year. If the Chinese had it, they would make a garden of it. It is better, even, than the land on that part of

Sumatra where they produce spices and grains of all sorts. The Malay Peninsula would be very wealthy, were it not split up into several kingdoms, that are always at war with each other.

"Singapore was a great place, once. Seven hundred years ago it was the capital of the whole Malay kingdom; but it was taken, a hundred years afterwards, by the King of Java, and Malacca then became the Malay capital."

"The affair does not seem very promising," Harry said, after repeating to Fairclough what he had heard from the Malay. "From my experience of the Indian princes, there is very little trust to be placed in any agreement made with them. They keep it just as long as it suits them, and then break it; without the slightest sense of having done anything dishonourable. It seems to me that the position here is very much like that in the Deccan. Scindia, Holkar, and the Rajahs of Berar and Kolapoore are practically independent of the Peishwa, who maintains only a semblance of authority. From what the interpreter tells me, there seems to be only a puppet rajah who, today, possesses no authority whatever; but who, tomorrow, may excite a quarrel among the other chiefs, and again become their master.

"I think that, in the first place, I shall have to see this semi-independent chief, whose possessions Singapore forms part of; and afterwards the Rajah of Johore, his nominal master.

"The latter may view the matter in one of two ways. In the first place, he may consider the island of no importance, whatever; seeing that, even were he again its master, no revenue could be obtained from the handful of people living there; and would therefore be glad to ratify the cession to us, for a small sum. On the other hand, he may consider that the elevation of the island, into the position of a great European trading port, would add greatly to the power and importance of the tumangong, and might enable him to make himself master of the whole of Johore."

"It seems a complicated business, certainly," the sailor replied. "You see, though this rebel chap, having written to Calcutta, may be trusted to receive you hospitably; there is no saying what the rajah may think of it."

"Nor is it clear how I am to get at the rajah," Harry remarked. "The

tumangong would, no doubt, object to my going beyond what he considers as his territory; as it might seem that, did he let me do so, he would be recognizing the power of the rajah to interfere in his business. However, it is certain that I must carry home a clear report on the situation; and to do that I must, at any rate, attempt to see the rajah.

"Of course we must endeavour to learn, from the Malays on the island, whether Johore still holds any territory running down to the sea, or whether the coast chiefs have also revolted against him. In the first case, I will send up a native, to say that I have a mission from the Governor General of India to visit his court; but if he is cut off from the sea, I must endeavour to make my way through, somehow. It would never do to return with only half a story. I do not suppose the Governor General is at all aware of the state of things here, or that the chief who communicated with him is not the acknowledged Rajah of Johore.

"There can be no doubt that the possession of this island would be of great value to us, as it would become a centre of trade, not only with the East, but with all the islands round; except, of course, those belonging to Holland. Therefore, the first essential point is to ascertain whether the old rajah is likely to regain his former authority; and whether, if so, he will recognize, and on what terms, the cession of the island to us."

"Well, I am glad, Lindsay, that it is your business and not mine; for it seems a very difficult affair, and a somewhat dangerous one."

Three weeks after leaving Calcutta the brig reached the island and, at Harry's request, sailed round it, taking soundings very frequently, in order to obtain knowledge of the depth of the water and the nature of the sea bottom. Finally they anchored in the straits between it and the mainland. This varied, in width, from two miles to a quarter of a mile; and the depth of water, at the eastern extremity of the straits, was found to be insufficient for vessels of a large tonnage, though navigable for ordinary native craft.

The island itself was some twenty-five miles long and fifteen miles wide; being, as Fairclough calculated, about a third larger than the Isle of Wight. No high hills were seen; but the whole island was undulating, and everywhere covered with forest and jungle.

Several small Malay canoes had put off to them with fruit; and as, from what the interpreter had told them of the smallness of the population, there was clearly no chance of any attack being made on the brig, they were allowed to come alongside. The supply of fruit was very welcome, and the interpreter learned something from the natives as to the state of things on the mainland.

As to this, however, they appeared to take but little interest. They admitted that the tumangong was their lord but, as they were too poor for him to levy any contributions from them, his mastership was merely a nominal one, and they did not trouble themselves about him. If he should at any time send an officer and troops, to exact tribute money, they would simply retire into the interior, where they could defy pursuit. They had heard reports that there were wars on the mainland but, beyond the fact that the rajah possessed very little authority, they were unable to give any information. They had vaguely heard that some of the chiefs supported the family of the former rajah.

On the day after their anchoring, a large canoe put off from the mainland. In the stern sat two men, whose gay dresses showed them to be minor chiefs or officials. Harry, who had throughout the voyage worn only civilian costume of white drill, now put on his full uniform; as did the sowars of his escort. The ladder was lowered for the accommodation of the visitors; and these, on reaching the deck, were received by Fairclough, his officers, and a guard of honour. The Malay interpreter stood by the captain's side.

"Why do you come here?" was their first question.

"We bring a high officer of the Governor General at Calcutta, to confer with the lord of Singapore," Fairclough answered, through the interpreter.

"Our lord thought that it might be so," one of the officials said, "and therefore sent us off to enquire."

Fairclough led the Malays to the quarterdeck, where Harry was standing, with his four troopers as a bodyguard behind him.

"This is the official whom the Governor General has sent to you."

The Malays, struck with Harry's uniform, and still more with that of his

guard--all of which were new to them, and impressed them deeply--salaamed profoundly to him.

"I have arrived," Harry said, "as the agent of our great governor; and in answer to a request of your lord, the tumangong, that he should send an officer of rank here, to treat with him."

"Seeing this vessel of war," the Malay said, when Harry's speech had been translated to him, "our lord hoped that it might be so; and directed us, should this prove correct, to inform you that he will himself come off to see you, in three days' time. He has heard of the might of your lord in India, that he has conquered great kingdoms, that the rule is a wise one, and that the people are well contented. We love not the Dutch, who are hard masters, and make the people labour for them; and he desires to be on terms of friendship with the power which, as he understands, has taken their strong places in India, so that they have no longer any importance there."

"He has done wisely," Harry said, "and I shall be glad to see your lord, and to tell him what is in the mind of our governor."

The envoys were then invited to the cabin, where they were offered refreshments. They ate sparingly, but greatly appreciated the champagne; and asked, through the interpreter, if they could be instructed how to make this liquor; and were much disappointed on learning it could only be made from the juice of the grape, that grew in a certain land in Europe, and could not be manufactured elsewhere, though other wines which were equally good could be made--that as the fruits grown in a hot country like theirs could not be grown in Europe, where the climate was much colder, so the grape could not flourish in their hot country.

Three days later the tumangong came off, in a canoe gaily decorated by flags, attended by several smaller craft. As he set foot on the deck, a salute was fired. He appeared much disturbed when the first gun went off; but the interpreter explained to him that it was a mark of honour, always granted to native princes of importance. Seeing that no harm was done by the fire, the Malay approached Harry, whose escort had been rendered more imposing by a line of blue jackets, with musket and cutlass, drawn up behind them.

Harry advanced to meet him, and friendly greetings were exchanged. He then invited him down into the cabin, where he was accompanied by one of his chief officers. Harry, the captain, and the interpreter went down with them. The Malay commenced the conversation.

"I hope that you bring a favourable answer to my letter?"

"The Governor bids me say that he willingly accepts your offer of friendship, and would readily establish a trading station on the island of Singapore; but that, being now engaged in a serious war in India, it is not in his power, at present, to engage in an alliance that might involve him in war here, since he might be unable to fulfil his obligations. With us, obligations under a treaty are regarded as sacred, and to be upheld at all sacrifices. Later on, when affairs are more settled in India, he will gladly form an alliance with you.

"Here is a despatch, in your language, stating his reasons more fully but, in order to show his friendship, he has sent me down in this ship of war to explain matters to you, and to assure you that he appreciates your offer, and will later on accept it; but that he cannot enter into such a treaty now as, being engaged in war, he might not be able to protect you from all enemies, should you call upon him to do so. I am the bearer of several presents from him, which he has sent as a proof of his friendship towards you."

He touched a bell and, at the signal, some sailors brought in the presents; consisting of a handsome double-barrelled gun, a brace of pistols, some embroidered robes, and some bales of English cloth and other manufactures; also a dinner service of pottery, an ormulu clock, and other articles. The rajah, whose face had at first expressed disappointment, was evidently much pleased with these presents and, after perusing the letter, expressed himself as well contented with its terms.

"I value them all the more," he said, "because they are a proof that the English do not make treaties, unless able to fulfil the conditions. This is far better than accepting treaties, and then withdrawing from them. You can assure the great lord of Calcutta, although I regret much that he cannot at present form an alliance with me, that I shall be ready to renew the negotiations with him, whenever he notifies me that he can do so."

The champagne was then produced. The tumangong had evidently heard, from his officers, how delicious was the strange drink, which bubbled as if it was boiling and was yet quite cold. Two bottles were put upon the table; and the Malays, after tasting it cautiously at first, consumed the greater portion--the two officers only sipping theirs occasionally, and filling up their glasses, so as to keep the others in countenance. Accustomed to more fiery beverages, obtained from traders in the Dutch possessions, the Malays were in no way affected by their potations; although these evidently impressed them with the superiority of the English over their Dutch rivals, for the tumangong remarked:

"Truly the English must be a great people, to make such liquors. The Dutch sell us fiery drinks, but their flavour is not to be compared with these. I hope that your lord, when he again sends a ship down to me, will forward me some of this drink."

"I have, fortunately, a case of it with me," Harry said. "It contains two dozen bottles. I will give orders for it to be placed in your boat."

He could see, by the Malay's face, that he was greatly gratified, and he added:

"I have no doubt, Tumangong, that when I inform the Governor General that you were pleased with this drink, he will order some of it to be sent down, when there is an opportunity; so that the friendship between you and him can be maintained, until the time comes when he can arrange with you for the concession of a trading station on the island of Singapore."

"The offer shall be always open to him; there is no occasion for haste."

The conversation continued for some time longer, and then the Malay and his officers took their places in their canoe and rowed off, under a salute similar to that which had greeted their arrival.

"That is quite satisfactory," Harry said to the commander.

"Yes; there is no doubt that he thought more of your present of champagne, than of the gifts sent him by the Governor; and your promise to let him have a consignment, occasionally, will keep him in good temper.

"Now, what is your next move?"

"I think it would be best to finish with the Dutch, first. If there were any delay in the other matter, they might get news, from Malacca or some of their trading stations in Sumatra, that the ship has been here and, in that case, they would guess that we are thinking of establishing a trading station, and might send and make their own terms with the tumangong. There can be no doubt that, if we open a free port here, it will do great damage to them, and divert a large portion of the eastern trade here; being so much more handy for all the country craft trading with Siam and China, besides having the advantage of avoiding the heavy dues demanded by the Dutch."

"No doubt that will be the best way," Fairclough said. "We will get up anchor, tomorrow morning."

In the course of the afternoon a large canoe came off, loaded with presents of fresh meat, fruit, and vegetable; sent by the tumangong, together with some handsomely-mounted krises for Harry and the officers of the ship.

They continued their voyage, without incident, to Batavia. Arriving there, they dropped anchor and saluted the Dutch flag. The salute was returned from the shore; and, shortly afterwards a large boat, flying the flag of Holland and carrying several persons, rowed out to them.

It was apparent, at once, when they ascended to the deck, that the visit of the British ship of war was not a welcome one. The jealousy of the Dutch of any attempt, on our part, to obtain a footing among the islands was intense; and the opinion on shore, on seeing the brig, would be that she had come to announce that possession had been taken of some unoccupied island. Their manner, therefore, was cold when Harry informed them, through his Dutch interpreter, that he was the bearer of a despatch to the Dutch Governor from the Governor General.

"I may say that it refers," he said, "to the numerous outrages, committed by the Malays, upon vessels owned by British subjects trading among the islands; and that he suggests that the Dutch authorities should join in an attempt to punish these marauders, from whom they suffer equally with the British."

"The Governor will receive you, at three o'clock this afternoon. You will, of

course, wish to deliver your despatch personally to him and, as we shall acquaint him with its import, he will no doubt be prepared to give you an answer, forthwith."

Without further words, the officials returned to their boats.

"They are a surly set of beggars," Fairclough said, as they rowed off. "I don't think there is much chance of cooperation in that quarter. Indeed, I am by no means sure that, at heart, they do not approve of these Malay attacks. At present, they monopolize the trade in spice. The native craft from all the islands bring their productions here; and there can be no doubt that the piracies of the Malays act as a great deterrent, both to the native traders, and our own from Calcutta and Madras."

"I think that, very likely, that is so," Harry agreed. "I do not think that the Governor had any belief that they would cooperate in the matter, and really only invited them to do so because it would explain the presence of a ship of war in these waters; so I shall be in no way concerned, if this part of my business turns out a failure."

At the appointed time, the captain's gig was lowered, and Harry and Fairclough took their places in it. Another boat carried the Dutch interpreter and the four troopers. They were received, on landing, by an official and a guard of honour; and were conducted to the Governor's residence. Another guard of honour was drawn up at the entrance. They were shown into a large room, where the Governor was seated, surrounded by the members of his council.

He rose and advanced a few paces, shook hands with the two officers, and begged them to be seated, on two chairs next to him. Harry handed the despatch to him.

"It is very short, sir," he said, "and perhaps, as you are aware of its import, you will just glance through it."

The Governor did so and, afterwards, handed it to one of the members of the council, and it was passed from hand to hand.

"I am quite in accord," the Governor said, "with Lord Mornington, that the

attacks of the Malays which we, as well as yourselves, suffer from are deplorable; and it is greatly to be wished that they could be suppressed. But I think that Lord Mornington could hardly have been informed as to the great number of islands inhabited by the Malays, and the great naval force that would be required to overawe and punish these freebooters; who are so bold that they do not hesitate to attack our traders, even when large ships, and carrying guns for their protection. Nothing short of a great fleet of cruisers would suffice.

"In the next place, did we undertake any operations on a large scale against the Malays throughout the islands, they would unite against us; and might, in revenge, assail many of our ports, and do us enormous damage. Even if your fleet performed half the work, it is we, only, who would be the sufferers. Certainly we have not sufficient vessels of war to attempt such an operation and, even were the Governor General of India to send down as many vessels as we have at our disposal, the force would be altogether inadequate for such extensive operations. These islands are counted by hundreds and, on the approach of ships of war, the people would desert their villages by the seashore and take to the interior--where it would, in most cases, be impossible to follow them--and all the damage we could inflict would be to burn their villages, which could be rebuilt after the ships had sailed away. To exterminate piracy would be the work, not of months, but of many years. However, I shall consult my council, and will draft a reply to the despatch, tomorrow.

"You have had a pleasant voyage down, I hope?"

"Very much so," Harry replied. "We have had fine weather, and light breezes."

The conversation was continued for a few minutes, and then the little party returned to their boats.

"There is not much doubt what the reply will be," Fairclough said.

"No; and on the whole, I don't see that the Governor is to be blamed; though of course, he has not given us the principal reason, which is his objection to our flag being seen flying beside the Dutch among the islands. Still, there is a good deal in what he says."

"I think so, too. You see, they are going to send their answer tomorrow, which may be taken as a proof that they are anxious to get rid of us, as soon as possible."

Chapter 11: A Prisoner.

The next day the Governor himself came off to the brig, and was received with the usual honours.

"The council are quite of my opinion," he said to Harry, "as to the extreme difficulty and cost that an effort to put down piracy among the islands would involve. Our ships on the station would not be at all sufficient for such work and, at any rate, it is a step that we should not venture to engage in, without the assent of the home government. We shall, of course, write home fully upon the matter, and shall leave the final decision to them; at the same time expressing our own views, and giving some idea as to the force that would have to be employed, the expenditure involved, and the time required for the operation.

"This letter contains a reply, as far as we can give it, to the Governor General's proposals."

"His lordship will, I am sure, be sorry to hear your views, sir; but I imagine that he will not hesitate to undertake the work of punishing, at least, the people of some of the islands where outrages have taken place, as soon as affairs are sufficiently settled in India for him to dispense, for a time, with the services of some of the Company's ships of war."

As Harry expected, the face of the Dutch Governor showed that this statement, when translated, was evidently most unpalatable to him. After a moment's hesitation, however, he said:

"If Lord Mornington waits until everything is quiet in India, it will probably be a very long time before he will be able to carry out the operation you speak of."

"That may be, sir. I do not know whether you have heard that Seringapatam has been captured, and that Tippoo, himself, fell in its defence?"

A look of amazement, and even of consternation, on the part of the Dutch

officials showed that the news was as unwelcome as it was unexpected. The loss of their hold in India, by the wonderful spread of the British power, was an extremely sore point with them. Nothing would have pleased them better than to have heard that the power of the latter had been shattered.

"It is certainly news to us," the Governor said, shortly. "But there are still other powers in India, that are likely to give at least as much trouble as Mysore has done."

"I quite admit that," Harry said, "but have no doubt that we shall be able to deal with them, as satisfactorily as we have done with Tippoo; and possibly as quickly."

"That remains to be seen," the Governor said.

"Quite so, sir. I have a considerable knowledge of India, and of its native armies; and I doubt whether any of them are as good fighters as Tippoo's men were."

"Was Mysore taken by storm, or by famine?"

"By storm, after our batteries had opened fire, for a few days."

Illustration: 'Well, sir, I will now return to shore,' the Governor said.

"Well, sir, I will now return to shore," the Governor said, abruptly. "You will please to give the assurances of my high esteem to Lord Mornington."

Harry bowed and, without another word, the Dutch officials descended the accommodation ladder, and returned to shore. When they were out of hearing, Fairclough burst into a hearty laugh.

"That was a severe broadside you poured into him, Lindsay. I could see that they were absolutely flabbergasted, when you told them about Mysore. Their manner, before that, had been almost insolent. But you cut their comb finely."

"I knew that it would be a heavy blow for them. Of course, they view with intense disgust the spread of our power in India. Not only has it destroyed their dream of empire there but, in case of war with them, their islands here will be absolutely at our mercy. If we are strong enough to win kingdom after kingdom in India, there should be no difficulty in turning out the small bodies of troops they have, in their various possessions."

"Yes, I see that; and the time may come very shortly, for the French are likely to lay hands on Holland, before long and, as soon as they do so, we shall be ready to pop down upon them, here. The days of Van Tromp are long passed, and the Dutch navy has become absolutely insignificant.

"Well, I am glad that this is over. The sooner we are off, the better."

Half an hour after the Dutch Governor had left, orders were given to get up the anchor and loosen the sails, and the brig was shortly on her way north.

"Now, what is your next move?" Fairclough asked, as the bustle of getting under way subsided.

"The Malay tells me that there is a small town on the east coast, and that this would be the most handy for landing, as from there to Johore's town is not more than some twenty miles. Whether the road is open, he cannot say. The news he learned, from the tumangong's people, was that there was a great deal of fighting going on between Johore and some of the petty rajahs. What the position is, at the present, moment he could not discover.

"I should propose that we drop anchor off the place; and that, if we find the natives well disposed, the interpreter should make an arrangement, with a couple of natives, to carry up a letter from me to the rajah, saying that I have come on a matter of business from the Governor of India; and asking if he is willing to receive me, and to guarantee my safety. If he says no, there is an end to it. If he says yes, I shall start as soon as the answer comes."

"Would you take some blue jackets with you?"

"No. If we were attacked by a force of Malays, we should probably be annihilated even if I took half your ship's company. Therefore, the smaller the escort I travel with, the better. I shall, of course, take the Malay, my man Abdool, and the four men of the escort. That is quite enough, if we get up without trouble; whereas if there is trouble, the fewer the better."

"Well, I hope no harm will come of it, Lindsay. Of course, if you consider it your duty to go, go you must."

"Yes, I think it my duty. I consider the cession of this island to be of extreme importance. If we only obtain it from the tumangong, some day the Rajah of Johore might get the upper hand, and repudiate the treaty made without his approval and, narrow as the strait is, he might cross with forty or fifty canoes, make his way through the woods, and annihilate the settlement at one blow."

"No doubt that is so," the other agreed. "Well, if you get detained you will, of course, try and make your way down to the coast. I will remain at anchor off the town for a month, after you start. If there is no news of you, then, I shall conclude that it is hopeless to wait longer, and shall sail for Calcutta with your despatches. As I was present at both your interviews, I shall be able to report, from my own knowledge, as to the disposition shown both by the tumangong and the Dutch."

Ten days later, they cast anchor off the village. Some canoes soon came off to them with fruit and other products and, shortly afterwards, a war canoe came out with the chief man of the town. At first he was very reticent; but a bottle of champagne opened his lips, and he and the interpreter conversed for some time together.

"What does he say?" Harry asked, when there was a pause in the conversation.

"He says, sir, that the country is very unsettled, and that it is unsafe to travel. The town acknowledges the rajah as its master, and the territory through which the road runs is nominally his; but it is infested by bands owing allegiance to a neighbouring rajah, who is at war with him."

"Have you asked him if it is possible to send a messenger through?"

"He said that there are plenty of men who would venture to go through, if well paid. He thinks that two men would be better than ten, for they could hide themselves more easily in the forest."

"Well, ask him what he would send two messengers through for."

The Malay answered that he could not say, until he had spoken to some of them; but he thought that for ten dollars they would be willing to undertake it.

"Tell him that I would pay that, and will give them as much more if, on their return, they will guide me and my party to the residence of the rajah."

The Malay shook his head.

"They would want more for that," he said. "Two natives could pass without much danger for, if they were caught, they could say that they belonged to one of the other bands, but had lost their party. It would be quite different if they were to have Europeans with them.

"How many would go?"

"Seven of us, altogether."

"I will see about it," the chief said; "but if I succeed, you will give me three bottles of that drink."

"I have very little of it," Harry said, "but I will agree to give him the three bottles, if he finds messengers to take up my letters; and arranges with them, or others, to guide us up."

The Malay nodded, when the answer was translated to him; drank half a tumbler of ship's rum, with great satisfaction; and then went off.

"This is going to be a more dangerous business than our expedition to Nagpore," Harry said to Abdool, when he told him what the Malay had said about the dangers, and the state of affairs on shore.

"My lord will manage it, somehow," Abdool said; "he was born under a fortunate star, and will assuredly do what is best."

"I shall do what I hope is best, Abdool; but one cannot answer how it will turn out. One thing is certain: that if we fall into the hands of the Malays, we shall meet with little mercy."

"We should have had no mercy, if we had fallen into the hands of the people of Nagpore, master," Abdool said.

"That is true enough, Abdool; and I don't think we should have been much better off, if Scindia had laid hands on us after we had bearded him in his tent. I cannot say that this expedition is one that I should have chosen, were I not convinced that it is my duty. However, we must hope that all will go well with us, as it has done before."

The next day the Malay came off again.

"I have arranged with two men," he said, "to take your message, for ten dollars; but if they go back with you, they will require twenty, because the rajah might detain them."

"That I will pay," Harry said.

"But supposing you should not come back," the Malay said, "they might lose their reward. Will you pay them in advance?"

"No. I will leave the money in Captain Fairclough's hands, and whether I return or not he will, before he leaves, pay it to the men themselves, if they come back, or to their families."

"That is a fair proposal," the Malay said. "When do you wish the messengers

to start?"

"The letter will be ready for them, in an hour's time. I will come on shore with it, see the men, and give it to them, with instructions. Will they travel by night, or day?"

"They will start at daybreak," the chief said. "The road is but a track, and could not be followed at night; for a forest extends almost the whole distance, and they would find it too dark to keep to the road. I told them that it would be safer to travel at night, but they said it could not be done. They would not be likely to be surprised in the day, as they would travel noiselessly, and would be sure to hear any movement of a party of men coming along the road, and could hide in the forest until they had passed. Moreover, our people do not like travelling in the dark. Evil creatures are about, and even the bravest fear them."

"Very well, chief; then I will come ashore in an hour, and give them this letter."

As soon as they had left, Harry went down to the interpreter, and gave him the exact purport of the message to the rajah; leaving it to him to put it in the usual form in which communications were addressed to persons in authority, but saying that it was necessary that he should impress him with his importance, as the commissioner of the great Governor of India. When this was transcribed, on some parchment which had been brought for the purpose, Harry went ashore with Lieutenant Hardy and a strong party of seamen for, although the local chief had apparently been most friendly, the treacherous nature of the Malays was well known, and Fairclough thought it as well to order them to take their cutlasses with them, and each man to carry a brace of pistols hidden beneath his jacket.

A number of natives assembled on the shore as the boat approached, but they seemed to be attracted by curiosity, only. Just as the boat touched the beach, the chief came down to meet them, attended by a dozen armed followers. He invited Harry to follow him to his own house, where the two messengers were awaiting him. They were both men in the prime of life--strong, active-looking fellows. Harry, through his interpreter, explained exactly what he wished done.

"If you carry out your mission well, and quickly," he said, "I shall make you a present, in addition to what has been agreed upon. You will notice the rajah's

manner, when he reads the letter; and tell me, when you return, whether he appeared to be pleased or not, whether he hesitates as to giving me a guarantee, and whether, in your opinion, he means to observe it. I shall rely much upon your report."

Three days passed, and then a boat brought the messengers off to the ship.

"So you have made your journey safely?" Harry said, through the interpreter.

"We met with no trouble by the way. This is the answer that the rajah has sent."

The letter was a satisfactory one. The rajah expressed willingness to receive the officer whom the English lord had sent to him, and to guarantee his safety while at his town; but said that, owing to the troubled state of the country, he could not guarantee his safety on the road, but would send down an escort of twenty men to guard him on his way up, and the same on his return to the coast.

"And now," Harry said, when the interpreter had read the document, "tell me what passed."

"When we said that we were messengers from an English lord, on board a ship with great guns, we were taken to the rajah's house. He took the letter from us, and read it. Then he asked some of those with him what they thought of the matter. They answered that they could see no harm in it, and perhaps you might bring presents. He then asked us how many would come up with you; and we told him four soldiers, as escort, and an interpreter. He nodded, and then talked in a low voice to those around him, and told us to come again, that afternoon, when a letter would be given us to take to you."

"Do you think that he means treachery?" Harry asked.

"That we cannot say, my lord. We have talked as we came down. It seems to us that he could have nothing to gain by hindering you; but that perhaps he might detain you, in order to obtain a ransom for you from the lord of India."

Harry had already enquired, from the chief of the town, as to the character of the rajah.

"He is feared, but not liked," the chief said. "He knows that there are those who would prefer that the old family should reign again, and he has put many to death whom he has suspected as being favourable to this. This is the reason why the tumangong, and other chiefs, have revolted against him. The loss of so much territory has not improved him and, in his fits of passion, he spares none."

"What has become of the family of the former rajah?" Harry asked.

"His wife and child are prisoners in the palace," he said. "Their friends are surprised that their lives should have been spared; but the rajah is crafty, and it is thought that he holds them so that he could, if his position became desperate, place the young prince on the throne and declare for him; in which case some, who are now his enemies, might come over to his side. I am told that, except that they are kept prisoners, the late rajah's wife and boy are well treated."

The account was not satisfactory, but it did not shake Harry's determination. Questioning the Malays further, he found that they had heard, at Johore, rumours that one of the chiefs on the border of Pahang was collecting a large force, with the intention of attacking the rajah; that the people of Johore were erecting strong palisades round the town; and that the fighting men of the villages round had all been called in for its defence.

"When is this escort to come down?" he asked.

"They started at the same time as we did, my lord, and will be here by this evening."

"Very well. In that case I will land, tomorrow morning at daybreak, and start at once; so that we shall reach Johore tomorrow. Will you hire four men, to act as carriers for us?"

At the time appointed, Harry went on shore with the Malay, Abdool, and four troopers. They had put on full uniform, and Harry had brought with him, to shore, an assortment of presents similar to those he had given to the tumangong. The two messengers and the four natives, as carriers, were awaiting him and, as he went up the beach, he was joined by twenty Malays with an officer of the rajah, who saluted him profoundly. The chief of the village was also there, and accompanied the party until beyond its boundary.

After passing a few plantations, they entered a dense forest. The road was a mere footway, apparently but little used. The ground ascended rapidly and, when they had gone a short distance, some of the Malay soldiers went scouting ahead; the rest following in absolute silence, stopping frequently to listen.

"It is quite evident, Abdool," Harry said, in a whisper, "that what they said at the village is true, and these people from Johore consider the journey to be a very dangerous one. They are evidently expecting a surprise; and I am afraid that, if we are attacked, we shall not be able to place much reliance on them."

Abdool shook his head.

"What are we to do, sahib, if we are attacked?"

"It depends on what these Malays do. If they make a good fight for it, we will fight, too; if not, and we see that resistance is useless, we will remain quiet. It would be of no use for six men to fight fifty, on such ground as this. They would creep up and hurl their spears at us and, though we might kill some of them, they would very soon overpower us.

"Drop back, and tell the four troopers that on no account are they to fire, unless I give them the order."

Presently the Malays came to a stop, and the officer hurried back to Harry.

"We have heard the sound of footsteps in the wood, and one of my men says he saw a man running among the trees."

"It may have been some wild beast," Harry said. "There are plenty of them in the wood, I hear, and your man may have been mistaken in thinking that he saw a human figure. And even if it was so, it might be some villager who, on hearing us, has left the path, thinking us to be enemies."

"It may be that," the officer said, when the words were translated to him. "But it is more likely that he was posted there to watch the path, and that he has gone to tell his band that a party is approaching."

"Even if it were so," Harry said, "the band may be only a small one."

The officer moved forward, and joined his men. Half an hour later, without the slightest warning, a shower of spears flew from among the trees; followed immediately afterwards by a rush of dark figures. Several of the Malay escort were at once cut down. The rest fled, at full speed.

Harry saw that resistance would be hopeless, and would only ensure their destruction. He therefore called to his followers to remain quiet. The four bearers, however, threw down their burdens, and fled at full speed down the path, just as a number of Malays poured out on either side.

They were evidently struck with the appearance of Harry and his followers; but were about to rush upon them, when a chief ran forward and shouted, to them, to abstain from attacking the strangers. Then he walked up to Harry, who was evidently the chief of the party.

"Who are you, white man?" he asked, "and where are you going?"

The interpreter replied that they were going on a visit of ceremony to the Rajah of Johore.

"We are his enemies," the chief said, "and now you must come with us."

"This lord--" the interpreter began, but the chief waved his hand for him to be silent.

He waited for a quarter of an hour, by which time he was joined by that portion of his followers which had pursued the Malays. Many of them carried human heads in their hands and, by the number of these, Harry saw that very few of his native escort could have escaped. The chief ordered his men to pick up the packages that had been thrown down by the bearers, and then turned off into the forest.

After a quarter of an hour's walk, they arrived at the spot where a still-smoking fire showed that the band had halted. No pause was made, however, and the party kept on their way and, in two hours' time, reached the foot of a high range of mountains that had been visible from the coast. The climb was a severe one but, in another hour, they came out upon a flat plateau. Here, in a small village, a considerable body of men were gathered; who hailed the arrival of

their comrades, with their ghastly triumphs of victory, with loud shouts.

The chief of the band led his captives to a hut, somewhat superior in appearance to the others, in front of which stood a man whose bright attire and ornaments showed him to be a chief of importance.

"Who is this white man," he asked, "and these soldiers who are with him?"

The officer repeated the description that he had received from the interpreter, whom he pointed out.

"Why was this white man going to Johore?" he asked.

"He was sent by the white lord of India, my lord."

"Ask him why he was sent?"

"I was sent to Johore to ask the rajah if he would grant a trading station to the English."

"We want no English on our coast," the chief said. "There are the Dutch, at Malacca--some day we will turn them out.

"So he was bringing presents to Johore, was he?"

"Yes, my lord; these are the parcels," and he beckoned up the men who carried them.

These approached, and humbly laid them at the rajah's feet.

"I have to report, my lord, that there were twenty of Johore's men with him. These we killed."

"Did the white man and his soldiers aid them?"

"No, my lord. They stood quiet, and offered no resistance, therefore I brought them to you."

"You did well. You are sure that none of the Johore men escaped, to carry off the news that we were here?"

"Quite certain. We have the heads of twenty men, and their officer."

"Good! I will examine these things. Put the white man and this Malay into a hut, and the four soldiers into another.

"Who is this other man, who is dressed differently?"

"He is the white officer's servant," the interpreter said.

"Well, he can go with his master, then."

The four troopers were led off in one direction, and Harry and the others in another. It was a hut roughly constructed of bamboos, thatched with broad leaves, while the entrance had no door. The interpreter did not carry arms; those of Harry and Abdool had been removed.

"Things have turned out badly, Abdool," Harry said.

"Very badly, sahib. I do not like the look of that rajah."

"Nor do I, Abdool. I am convinced that he means mischief, and we must get away as soon as we can.

"Have you got your knife with you? So have I. We must make a way out of the back of this hut."

A group of half a dozen Malays had taken their seats on the ground, at a distance of some fifteen yards from the entrance; but had posted no sentries. Behind it, as they were taken in, Harry noticed that there was a patch of grain, and beyond that rose the forest.

"These knives are no good against bamboo, sahib."

"No, I know that; but we might cut these rattans which bind them together. In the first place, dig down with your knife, and see if the bamboos are sound underneath. They may have rotted there.

"You and I will stand at the entrance," he went on to the interpreter, "then

they cannot see in."

"Bamboos are quite sound, sahib."

"Then we must try another way. First cut the rattans--but not in a line with the entrance, a few feet on one side."

The wood was extremely tough, and it was half an hour before Abdool could cut through them, and free three or four of the bamboo poles. While he was doing this, Harry and the interpreter stood talking together, apparently watching the movements of the Malays.

"We are going to try and escape," Harry said. "Will you go with us, or remain here? They will certainly kill us, if they overtake us; there is just a chance that they will not kill us, if we stay."

"They will kill us," the man said, confidently. "It may not be today, because the rajah will be looking over his presents, and will be in a good temper; but tomorrow they will come in and kris us. Assuredly I will go with you."

When Abdool announced that he had cut through the rattans, Harry joined him, telling the interpreter to wait at the entrance till he called him.

"What next, master?" Abdool asked.

"The next thing will be to pull up the bamboos. If you have cut all their lashings, this ought not to be very difficult; but it will make it easier if we cut the ground away, as deep as we can, on this side of them."

Kneeling down, they set to work with their knives and, after half an hour's work, they had laid bare the bottoms of four of the bamboos, which were sunk two feet into the ground.

"Now, Abdool, we ought to get them up easily enough."

With their united strength they pulled up a bamboo, replaced it in its position and, one by one, got the other three up, put them in again, and lightly filled in the earth.

"Now we can go, at a minute's notice," Harry said. "At any rate, we had better wait till it is dark."

The sun had just set, when they saw the rajah come out of his hut. He gave an order, and the four troopers were brought out, and placed in a line. Four natives took their places behind them, kris in hand.

"They are going to murder them!" Harry exclaimed, in horror.

"Now, Abdool, there is not a moment to be lost; it will be our turn, next."

Their guards had all risen to their feet, watching what was going on. Three of the bamboos were plucked up in a moment. This afforded an opening sufficiently large for them to pass through and, keeping the hut between them and the guard, they made their way through the plantation, and dashed into the forest. They heard yells of satisfaction in the village, and Harry had no doubt that the four troopers had been murdered.

They ran at full speed through the forest and, ten minutes later, heard loud shouts of dismay; and had no doubt that a party had been sent to take them out to execution, and had discovered their escape. It was already almost dark, under the thick shade of the trees; but for half an hour they ran on, the Malay in advance, for he could see any obstacles better than they could, the habits and training of his youth having given him experience in such work.

For a time they had heard loud shouts behind them. These had been useful, in enabling them to keep a straight course. The Malay now turned, and struck off at right angles to the line that they had been pursuing.

"We must keep on, for a time," he said. "When they do not overtake us, they will scatter through the forest in all directions."

For hours they toiled on, sometimes at an easy walk, sometimes breaking into a run. At last the Malay admitted that, for the time, they were safe; and they threw themselves down upon the ground.

"Tomorrow," he said, "they will take up the search in earnest, and will track our footsteps. We had better take to a tree, now. It will not be safe to stay here."

The others cordially agreed as, for some time, they had heard the roars of wild beasts, which abounded in these forests; and Harry and Abdool had run with their open knives in their hands, prepared for a sudden attack.

"The others will have gone back to the village, long ago," the Malay said, when they had made themselves as comfortable as they could, in the forks of the tree, "except the men who were guarding us. They will not dare venture into the village, for they would fear the rajah's anger, even more than death from a tiger. They will be first in the search, tomorrow morning.

"Which way do you wish to go, my lord?"

"I have been thinking it over, as we came. I think that our best plan will be to go on to Johore. Doubtless the road down the coast will be watched. How far from Johore do you think we are?"

"Not very far," the Malay said. "We have been going in that direction, ever since we first turned--not very straight, perhaps, but certainly in that direction. I think that we cannot be more than five or six miles from the town. It lies between the hills we crossed, and the higher ones beyond. We have been descending a little, all the time."

"I am afraid that Johore will not be very pleased to see us arriving empty handed, and to learn that the escort he sent us have all been killed. Still, the news that we bring him, that his enemies are not far off, will be useful to him; and we will offer to aid him in the defence of his town, if he is attacked. At any rate, it is a satisfaction to know that we have not very far to go, and have got so good a start of the fellows behind us that they are not likely to overtake us, before we get there."

More than once, during the night, they heard angry growling at the foot of the tree. Towards morning there was a scraping sound.

"That is a leopard, sahib," the Malay said, in alarm; "he is climbing the tree to get at us."

Abdool was sitting immediately below Harry, and the latter called to him to come up beside him.

"Mount as high as you can, my lord," the Malay said. "The trunk is not so rough, when you get higher; and the beast will find it harder to climb."

"We shall do better, here," Harry said. "These two arms, nearly opposite to each other, are just the thing for us.

"You go out to the end of one, Abdool, and I will go out to the end of the other. We will climb out as far as we can, and then he will have to follow us very slowly, whichever way he chooses. If he goes for you, I will follow him. If he comes my way, you follow him. When the bough gets thin he won't be able to turn round, and the one behind can give him a sudden stab, which will make him leave go his hold."

By the time he had finished speaking, they were each far out on their respective branches, and the leopard was close to the fork. It paused a moment, looked at the two men and, after a moment's hesitation, began to crawl out towards Abdool. Harry at once made his way back to the trunk, and then followed the animal.

Abdool had gone out as far as he dared and, holding on tightly, swayed the end of the branch up and down. The leopard, as it approached him, was evidently disconcerted; and clung to the bough, which was scarcely six inches in diameter at the point it had reached. It snarled angrily, as it became conscious that it was being followed.

Harry, feeling convinced that it could not turn, came fearlessly up to it, and then struck his knife into its loin. As the blade was but some four inches long, he had no hope of striking a vital point.

The leopard uttered a roar, and tried to turn and strike at him with one of its forepaws; but the blade again penetrated to its full depth, this time on the other side and, with a start, it lost its footing, clung for a moment to the branch with its forepaws, and strove to regain its hold; but Harry brought his knife down, again and again, on one of its paws.

Abdool, crawling in, quickly struck it under the shoulder and, a moment later, it released its hold and fell heavily through the foliage to the ground. For a time it was heard roaring, and then the sound came only at intervals, and at an

increasing distance.

"That was a good business, Abdool," Harry said, as they returned to their former post, where the Malay rejoined them.

"It was well done, indeed, sahib. When I heard the beast climbing the tree, it seemed to me that, as we had no weapons except these little knives, he would surely make an end of one of us."

The interpreter did not understand Mahratti, in which Abdool and Harry always conversed; but he said in Hindustani:

"I have seen fights with leopards, my lord, but even with krises, two of my people would hesitate to attack one--they fear them more than tigers--but little did I think that two men, with small knives, could save their lives from one. My blood turned to water, as I saw the beast climbing out on that bough, and you going out after it."

"I have done a good deal of tiger and leopard hunting, in my time," Harry said, "and know that a leopard cannot spring from a bough, unless it is a fairly stout one--stout enough for it to stand with all its paws upon it.

"Well, the day is beginning to break. In half an hour's time the sun will be up, and the wild beasts will have all retired to their lairs. I hope we shall see no more of them. It is all very well to fight under such advantages; but on foot, were a tiger hiding near a path, he would be sure to have one of us as we went along. Our knives would not do more than tickle him."

Chapter 12: The Defence Of Johore.

Half an hour later, the little party were on their way. They were stiff, at first, from passing the night in a sitting attitude; but it was not long before they were able to break into a trot. This they kept up for an hour then, to their great satisfaction, the forest abruptly ceased, and they saw, at a distance of about a mile and a half, the little town of Johore, lying in cultivated fields that extended to the edge of the forest.

They broke into a walk, for a short distance; and then continued at their former pace, for they could not tell how close their pursuers might be behind them. It was not long before they saw men at work in the fields. The interpreter shouted to them that a party of the enemy were not far behind and, throwing down their tools, they also made for the town, spreading the alarm as they went. Fresh and fleet footed, they arrived some minutes before Harry's party and, as these entered the place, they found the whole population in the street, the men armed with spears and krises.

Asking the way, they soon reached the rajah's palace, which consisted of a central house, round which a number of huts were built; the whole surrounded by a stone wall, some eight feet high. The rajah, when they arrived, was questioning some of his people as to the cause of this sudden alarm. He was greatly surprised at the sight of Harry, in his full uniform, attended only by one soldier and a native.

"How comes it that you arrive like this?" he asked, angrily.

"Explain what has happened," Harry said, to the interpreter.

The rajah's brow darkened, as he heard how the escort he had sent down had been slain, to a man, on the previous day. But his excitement increased, when told that a strong force of his enemy was gathered within a few miles of the town; and that an assault might be immediately expected.

"Will you tell the rajah that I am used to warfare, and shall be glad to assist

him, to the best of my power, in the defence of his town?"

"How many men were there?" the rajah asked.

"I should think there were a couple of thousand," Harry replied. "Some of them had matchlocks, but the greater part of them only spear and kris."

"And we have not more than five hundred," the rajah said. "We cannot hope to resist them. What think you?"

"I will at once go round the town, and see," Harry said. "It may be that, being accustomed to war, I can suggest some means of so strengthening the defences that we may hold them against the enemy."

The rajah, having heard many tales of the fighting powers of the whites, said:

"I will go with you. I would defend the place if I could for, if Johore were lost, I should be but a fugitive. All within it would be killed, and I should have to beg an asylum from those over whom I was once master."

Calling a party of his men to follow him, the rajah accompanied Harry to the edge of the town. It was already surrounded by a palisade; but this was of no great strength, and its circumference was fully a mile and a half.

"Tell the rajah that we could make a first defence, here, but his fighting men are not numerous enough to hold so large a circuit against four times their number. I should suggest that the whole population should be set to work to build another palisade, much nearer to the palace. All the women and children should be sent inside this, all the provisions in the town be taken into the palace enclosure, and a large supply of water stored there.

"As soon as the new palisade is finished, all who can be spared from its defence should set to work to throw up a bank of earth against the wall; and upon this the fighting men can take their places, and should be able to defend the palace against any assault."

The rajah listened attentively to the interpreter.

"The English officer's words are good," he said, "but we have no timber for

the palisades that he speaks of."

"Tell the rajah," Harry said, when this was interpreted to him, "that there is plenty of wood and bamboos in the huts that stand outside the line of the new palisade; and that if we pull these down, we can use the materials. Moreover, in any case it would be well to level these houses for, if the enemy fired them, it would be almost certain to fire the houses inside the palisade."

The rajah's face brightened. The tone of assurance in which Harry spoke reassured him, and he said to the interpreter:

"Tell the officer that my people shall do just as he tells them, if he will point out where the defence must be erected."

Harry was not long in fixing upon the line for the entrenchments. It was some two hundred yards in diameter and, at the rajah's orders, the whole of the men and women of the town set to work, to pull down the huts standing within fifty or sixty yards of this. This was the work of a couple of hours, and the materials were carried up to the line. The stronger timbers were first planted, in holes dug for them; and the intervals between these were filled with bamboo poles. On the inside face other bamboos were lashed, with rattans across them. As fast as these were used, more houses were pulled down, until the defence was completed, the crossbars being some nine inches apart.

This work performed, the men, women and children brought up what provisions they had, and their most precious belongings. These were carried inside the wall of the palace. It was two o'clock before the work was finished, and there was then a rest for half an hour.

Then all were set to work to dig a trench, three feet deep with perpendicular sides, at a distance of two feet from the palisade. A large store of bamboos that had been too slender for use in the palisade were sharpened, and cut into lengths of two feet; and these were planted, thickly, in the bottom of the trench. Others, five feet long, were sharpened and then thrust through the interstices between the upright bamboos; the ends being fixed firmly in the ground inside, while the sharpened points projected like a row of bayonets, at a height of some two feet above the edge of the ditch.

It was nightfall before the work was finished. The rajah had, himself, been all the time upon the spot; and was delighted when he saw how formidable was the obstacle that had been raised. One small entrance, alone, had been left; and through this all the women and children now passed, and lay down in the space between the new palisade and the wall of the palace.

The men were ordered to take post behind the stockade, and a number of boys were sent out, to act as scouts and give notice if an enemy approached. The rajah, however, was of opinion that, as the enemy would know that the alarm would have been given by the fugitives, on their arrival, and that the inhabitants would be on their guard, they would not attack till daylight.

Harry had, at his invitation, gone up at midnight to his house, and partaken of food; which was also sent out to Abdool and the interpreter. The rajah would have continued the work all through the night, had not Harry dissuaded him; saying that, after six hours' sleep, everyone would work better.

At one o'clock a horn was sounded and, with the exception of a few men left at the outer palisade, all set to work again. The men were employed in digging a trench, a foot in depth, inside the inner palisade; throwing up the earth in front of them, so as to lie protected from arrows and spears, until it was time for them to rise to their feet to repel an actual assault. The women and children filled baskets with the earth thrown from the outer trench, on the previous day, and carried it inside the wall where, by five o'clock, a bank two feet high had been raised; and on this a platform of bamboos, three feet high and eighteen inches wide was erected.

The work had scarcely been finished when a horn was sounded, outside the town; and the boys came running in, while the men ran down to the outer palisade. As day broke, great numbers of dark figures were seen, making their way through the fields on three sides of the town.

"The band we saw must have been joined by another. There are certainly more than two thousand men there. They will undoubtedly carry the outer palisade. Many of our men will be killed, and many others will be unable to join us here. I think that it will be much better to rely on this defence, alone."

Having now great confidence in Harry's judgment, the rajah at once ordered a

horn to be sounded and, in a short time, the whole of the men were assembled in their stronghold; and the entrance closed by bamboos, for which holes had been already dug, close together. Then short lengths were lashed across them, and they were further strengthened by a bank of earth piled against them.

Before this was quite finished, yells of triumph were heard as the enemy, finding the palisade unguarded, poured in; expecting to find that the inhabitants had fled at the news of their approach. They paused, however, in surprise, at seeing another line of defence outside the palace. Quickly the numbers increased, until a thick line of dark figures was gathered at the edge of the cleared space.

Inside the defence, all was quiet. Not a man showed himself. Doubtful whether the town had not been entirely evacuated, the Malays paused for some little time, while some of the chiefs gathered together in consultation. Then a few of the men advanced, with the evident intention of examining the defences.

They were allowed to approach within ten yards of the ditch, when a shower of arrows flew from the openings in the palisade; and two, only, of the Malays fled back to their companions. The fall of the others provoked wild yells of anger. A horn sounded, and the assailants rushed upon them from all sides. When within a few yards of the ditch they hurled their spears, and shot a cloud of arrows. A large proportion were stopped by the bamboos, but such as passed through flew harmlessly over the heads of the defenders; who replied with a far more deadly shower of arrows.

Leaping over those who had fallen, the enemy dashed forward. Those in front endeavoured to check their course, on arriving at the edge of the ditch; but they were forced in by the pressure of those behind, and the long spears of the defenders gleamed out through the openings of the bamboos, inflicting terrible damage.

In vain the assailants endeavoured to climb out of the ditch. The bayonet-like line of bamboos checked them; and the arrows of the concealed defenders told, with terrible effect, on the struggling mass. At last, at many points, the ditch was literally filled with dead; and the assailants were enabled to leap upon the line of bamboos which had so long checked their passage.

The advantage was but slight. The slippery poles were some six inches apart and, slanting as they did, afforded so poor a foothold that the Malays were forced to stand between them, on the narrow ledge between the palisading and the ditch. Here they thrust their spears between the palisade; but these were wrenched from their hands, and scores fell from the blows of kris, spear, and arrow; until at last their leaders and chiefs, seeing how terrible was the slaughter, and how impossible it was to climb the bamboo fence, called their men off; and they fell back, pursued by exulting cries from the women, who were standing on the platform behind the wall of the palace, watching the conflict, and by the yells of the defenders of the stockade.

Of these but few had fallen, while some five hundred of the assailants had perished. The rajah was almost beside himself with joy, at this crushing defeat of his enemy.

"I do not suppose it is over yet, Rajah," Harry said, through his interpreter. "There are still some five times our number, and they will surely not retire without endeavouring to avenge their defeat. But I hardly think they will attack the stockade again. Possibly they will try fire, next time; and it will be harder to fight that than to keep men at bay."

The rajah looked serious.

"Yes," he said, "they cannot return to their homes, and say that they have left five hundred dead behind them. What do you advise?"

"They will hardly attack again today, Rajah; therefore I shall have time to think it over. But at present, it seems to me that our only course is to shoot down as many of those who bring up firebrands as possible. We have still a number of long bamboos left, and with these we might thrust away any burning faggots that might be cast against the palisade."

The rajah nodded.

"That might be done," he said, "and with success, no doubt."

"With success at many points, Rajah; but if they succeed, at only one point, in establishing a big fire against the stockade; we must retire within the wall. They

cannot burn us out there, except at the gate; and against that we must pile up earth and stones. But I should certainly recommend that the roofs of all the buildings inside should be taken off unless, indeed, you have sufficient hides to cover them. Still, we need not do that until we are driven inside the wall. It takes but a short time to take off the broad leaves with which the roofs are covered."

During the fight, Harry had taken no active part in the conflict. He had divided the circle into three, and had taken charge of one division, Abdool taking another, and the rajah a third. They had each encouraged the men under them, and had gone where the pressure of the attack was most severe.

On leaving the rajah, Harry joined Abdool.

"They will try again, Abdool; but I don't think they will try to carry the stockade by assault again."

"They will try fire, sahib."

"That is just what I am afraid of. The archers will shoot down a good many of them, but in such numbers as they are, this will make little difference; and we must calculate that, at at least a dozen spots, they will place blazing faggots against the palisade."

Abdool nodded.

"I have been telling the rajah," Harry went on, "that the men must provide themselves with long bamboos, which they can thrust through the openings in the stockade, and push the faggots away. But even if we do so, we must calculate upon the enemy succeeding, in some places, in setting the palisades on fire."

"That would be very serious; but of course we should go in behind the wall."

"I do not want to do that, as long as we can possibly stay here. I think that, when night comes, we ought to make a sortie."

"But are we not too few, sahib?"

"Too few to defeat them, Abdool, but not too few to beat them up. You see, the wind always blows, in the evening, up from the sea. I noticed it last night. It

was quite strong. What I should propose would be to pull up enough bamboos for four men to go out, together, on the side facing the wind. Two hundred men should first sally out; remaining, as they do so, close to the ditch. When all are ready, they should crawl across the cleared ground and then, at a signal, attack the enemy who, taken by surprise, would be sure to give way, at first.

"As they attack, fifty men with torches should rush out and follow them, and set fire to as many huts as they can. As soon as they had done their work, all should run back, when the signal is given.

"There will be two advantages: in the first place, the sudden attack will disconcert the enemy, and render them less willing to expose their lives, by storming a place so desperately held; in the second place, the wind will carry the flame over the whole town, and I hope the burning fragrants will carry the flames over all the fields where the crops are dry; thus causing them much more difficulty in obtaining dry wood for faggots, and they will be exposed to our arrows, much longer, before they throw them against the stockade."

"It would be excellent, sahib; but do you think the men would go?"

"Just at the present moment, they would do anything; they are half wild with excitement and triumph."

Harry presently went with the interpreter to the rajah's house.

"I have a plan to propose to you," he said, "that will render it much more difficult for the enemy to set fire to the stockade;" and he then explained his scheme.

The rajah's eyes glistened with excitement.

"Nothing could be better," he said; "and there is but one fear, and that is, that the enemy will follow us so hotly, that they will enter through the breach before we can close it."

"I have thought of that," Harry said, "and the order must be that, when the signal is given, the men must throw down their torches; and then each man must run, not for the hole in the stockade, but to the nearest point, and keep along outside the ditch, and enter by it. In that way the point at which they entered

would not be known and, moreover, they would be able to enter more rapidly, and with much less confusion, than if they all arrived together in a crowd. A party would, of course, be left at the breach when they sally out and, the moment the last man entered, would replace and lash the bamboos in their position.

"If, however, we are hotly pursued, you and I, with your own guards, should remain outside, and keep them at bay until all the bamboos but one are replaced. This will leave an opening sufficient for one man, and we must fall back fighting. They certainly would not venture to follow us through so narrow a passage."

Two hundred and fifty of the men were brought inside the wall, and the rajah explained to them the duty upon which they would be employed. He told off fifty of them as torch bearers; explained to all, carefully, the plan Harry had devised; gave strict orders that no sound, whatever, must be made until they reached the houses and, at Harry's request, impressed upon them the absolute necessity for not allowing their ardour to carry them too far; but that torches must be thrown down, and everyone run back, as soon as the horn sounded.

There was no doubt that the order was a satisfactory one. The men raised their krises and spears, and shouted with joy. In their present mood, nothing could please them more than the thought of an attack upon their assailants.

All remained quiet, on both sides, until darkness fell; then the crash of falling huts showed that the enemy intended to use fire, and were about to begin the work of making faggots.

"They will attack an hour before daybreak," the rajah said; "or may, perhaps, wait till the sun is up for, in the daylight, those who carried the torches would not be so conspicuous, but would advance in the midst of their whole force."

"At what time are they likely to sleep?"

"Many will sleep early," he said, "in readiness for the fight. Others will sit up and talk, all night; but those who intend to sleep will probably do so, in a couple of hours."

"Do you think that they are likely to place guards?"

"No; they will not dream that we should have the boldness to attack them."

"Let us give them three hours," Harry said, "the sea wind will be blowing strongly, then."

The greater portion of the men who were to remain behind were to be stationed on the side on which the sortie was to be made, so as to cover the retreat of the others, by showers of arrows. The rajah's principal officer was placed in command here. His orders were that, if the enemy came on too strongly, he was to issue out with a hundred men, and aid the party to beat back their assailants. However, Harry did not think it likely that this would be the case. The Malays would be scattered all over the town--some, perhaps, even beyond the outer palisades--and before they could assemble in force, the party ought to be safe within the palisade again.

Just before ten, the two hundred men who were to make the attack sallied out. They were led by the rajah, while Harry was to lead the firing party. He chose this part, because he would not be able to crawl across the open space as noiselessly as the Malays could do.

During the day, a number of hides had been hung on the palisades, so that the enemy should not notice that a gathering of men, with torches, was assembled there; and in order that the light might not be conspicuous at this spot, fires had been lighted at other points, in order to give the impression that the defenders were holding themselves in readiness to repel another attack. The bamboos had been removed, ten minutes before the party issued out. So noiseless was their tread that Harry, though close to the entrance, could not hear it; and when he looked out, as soon as the last man had passed, he could neither see nor hear anything. The men had all thrown themselves on the ground, as soon as they had passed out, and were crawling forward without a sound being audible.

Harry and Abdool had both armed themselves with a kris and spear. Behind them were the torch bearers, arranged four abreast.

It seemed an age before the sound of a horn rose in the air. Instantly they dashed through the opening, followed by the men and, at full speed, crossed the cleared ground. Already the sound of shouts, violent yells, and the clashing of blades showed that the rajah's men were at work.

Scattering as they reached the houses, the torch bearers ran from hut to hut; pausing for a few seconds, at each, till the flame had gained a fair hold. In less than a minute, sixty or seventy houses were in flames. Harry had the man with the horn with him and, as soon as he saw that the work was fairly done, he ordered the signal to be blown. The torches were thrown down, and their bearers ran back at full speed and, half a minute later, the rajah's men poured out from the town. There was no pursuit, and the whole band re-entered the stockade before, with yells of fury, numbers of the enemy ran forward.

As soon as they did so, arrows began to fly fast from the stockade and, knowing that they could effect nothing, without means of breaking through, the Malays retired as rapidly as they had advanced.

Short as was the interval that had elapsed since the first signal was given, the town was, at the point where the attack was made, a sheet of flame, which was spreading rapidly on either hand. The hubbub among the enemy was tremendous. Upwards of a hundred had been killed, by the rajah's party--for the most part before they could offer any resistance--and not more than five or six of their assailants had received severe wounds.

Loud rose the shouts of exultation from the defenders, as the fire spread with ever-increasing rapidity; flakes of fire, driven by a strong wind, started the flames in a score of places, far ahead of the main conflagration and, in half an hour, only red embers and flickering timbers showed where Johore had stood. Beyond, however, there were sheets of flame, where the crops had been dry and ready for cutting; and the garrison felt that their assailants would have to go a long distance, to gather materials for endeavouring to burn them out.

While the position had been surrounded by a zone of fire, the rajah had, at Harry's suggestion, sent the whole of the men and women to cast earth over the dead; piled, at four or five points, so thickly in the ditch.

"If the matter is delayed another day," he said, "the air will be so poisoned that it will be well-nigh impossible to exist here."

The rajah admitted this; but urged that his men would want to cut off the heads of their fallen enemies, this being the general custom among the Malays.

"It may be so, Rajah, but it could not be carried out, here, without great danger. Our own lives depend upon getting them quickly buried. We have no such custom of cutting off heads, in our country, but that is no affair of mine. But the bodies now lie in what is, in fact, a grave; and a few hours' labour would be the means of saving the town from a pestilence, later on.

"When the enemy depart, I should advise you to build a great mound of earth over the trench. It will be a record of your grand defence and, by placing a strong stockade along the top, you would strengthen your position greatly. I should recommend you, in that case, to clear the space within it, as far as the wall, of all houses; and to build the town entirely outside it."

There was great dissatisfaction, among the natives, at being prevented from taking what seemed to them their natural trophies. But when the rajah informed them that the order was given in consequence of the white officer's advice, they set about the work readily and, before morning, the dead were all hidden from sight by a deep layer of earth.

The next day passed without incident. At nightfall a sharp lookout was kept, not only on the palisade but from the top of the rajah's house. It was thought that the enemy, of whom considerable numbers had been seen going into the forest, would bring up the faggots as closely as possible, before lighting them. Still, it would be necessary to carry brands for that purpose and, now that the ground was cleared of huts, some at least of these brands could be seen, even if carefully hidden.

With the exception of the guards, all slept during the day; as it was necessary that they should be vigilant at night, for the enemy might, on this occasion, approach at an earlier hour, hoping to find the garrison unprepared. Harry and Abdool paced round and round on the platform of the wall but, although a few fires burned among the fields, no glimmer of light could be seen where the town had stood.

"I wish I knew what they were up to, Abdool," Harry said, about midnight. "I don't like this silence."

"Perhaps they have gone away, sahib."

"No, I can hardly think that. I believe we shall have another attack, before morning. They may bring ladders with them, for climbing the palisade; they may try fire; but I am convinced that they will do something.

"The position is not so strong as it was. If we had had more bamboos, I should have set our men to dig another ditch, and defend it like the first; but they are all used up, now. I wish we had some rockets; so that we could send up one, from time to time, and see what they are doing."

Another hour passed, and some of the Malays declared that they could hear a sound as of many men moving. Harry listened in vain, but he knew that the Malays' senses were much keener than his own.

He went at once to the rajah. The chief had been up till midnight, and then retired; leaving orders that he was to be called, directly an alarm of any sort was given. He was seated with two or three of his councillors, talking, when Harry, with the interpreter, entered.

"Your people say they hear sounds, Rajah. I can hear nothing, myself, but I know their hearing is keener than mine. I am uneasy, for even they cannot see the faintest glow that would tell that a fire is being brought up. In my opinion, we had better leave only two hundred men at the palisade, and bring the rest in here. We can lead them out, at once, if any point is hotly attacked; and it would prevent confusion, if the stockade were suddenly forced. The enemy may be bringing up hundreds of ladders and, in the darkness, may get up close before they are noticed."

"Do as you think best," the rajah said and, at once, went out and sent officers to bring in three hundred of the men; and also, at Harry's suggestion, to tell the others that, when the rajah's horn sounded, all were to leave the stockade and make at once for the entrance through the wall.

Another half hour passed. Even Harry was conscious, now, that there was a low dull sound in the air.

"I cannot think what they are doing," the rajah, who was now standing on the wall, close to the gate, said to Harry. "However numerous they may be, they should have moved as noiselessly as we did, when we went out to attack them."

"I don't think that it will be long before we know, now, Rajah."

He had scarcely spoken, when there was a loud shout from the palisade in front of them. It was on this side that the men had been posted so thickly, as it was of all things necessary to defend this to the last, in order to enable those at other points to make their way to the gate. The shout of alarm was followed, almost instantly, by the sound of a horn and, immediately, a tremendous yell resounded on all sides.

It was answered by the shouts of the garrison and, a moment later, a score of balls composed of matting, dipped in oil or resinous gum, were thrown flaming over the palisades. These had been prepared the previous day, and the men charged with throwing them had each an earthenware pot, containing glowing charcoal, beside them. Their light showed groups of men, twenty or thirty strong, advancing within twenty yards of the palisade.

"They are carrying trees, to batter down the stockade, Rajah!" said Harry.

Behind the carrying parties was a dense crowd of Malays, who rushed forward as soon as the fireballs fell, hurling their spears and shooting their arrows, to which the defenders replied vigorously.

"The stockade will not stand a moment against those trees," he continued. '"Tis best to call the men in, at once."

The rajah ordered the native beside him to sound his horn and, in two or three minutes, the men poured in at the entrance. As soon as the last had come in, the bamboos were put in the holes prepared for them, with some rattans twined between them. Scores of men then set to work, bringing up the earth and stones that had been piled close at hand.

In the meantime, the three hundred men on the walls kept up a shower of arrows on the enemy. The battering rams, which consisted of trees stripped of their branches, and some forty feet long and ten inches thick, did their work and, by the time the entrance was secure, the Malays poured in with exultant shouts.

A large supply of the fireballs had been placed on the platforms and, as these were lighted and thrown down, the assailants were exposed to a deadly shower

of arrows as they rushed forward. At this moment the rajah's servant brought up four double-barrelled guns.

"They are loaded," the chief said, as he handed one of these to Harry.

"How long is it since they were fired?" the latter asked.

"It is three months since I last went out shooting," the rajah replied.

Harry at once proceeded to draw the charges.

"I should advise you to do the same, Rajah. A gun that has not been fired for three months is not likely to carry straight, and is more dangerous to its owner than to an enemy."

The rajah called up two of his men, and one of these at once drew the charges of the guns, and reloaded them from the powder horn and bag of bullets the servants had brought.

The enemy did not press their attack, but retired behind the palisades and, from this shelter, began to shoot their arrows fast, while a few matchlock men also replied.

"It would be as well, Rajah, to order all your men to sit down. There is no use in their exposing themselves to the arrows, and they are only wasting their own. We must wait, now, to see what their next move will be. Fire will be of no use to them, now; and the wall will take some battering before it gives way and, brave as the men may be, they could not work the battering rams under the shower of spears and arrows that would be poured upon them.

"I should send the greater part of your men down to get off the roofs of the huts. Those up here must place a man or two on watch, at each side, and throw a fireball occasionally."

In a few moments the enemy ceased shooting their arrows, for the light of the fireballs showed them that the garrison was in shelter.

"There is no occasion for you to stay here, any longer, Rajah. I will look after matters until morning, and will send to you, as soon as there is any stir outside."

In half an hour, the huts were stripped of their most combustible material. This was heaped up under the platforms, where it would be safe from falling arrows. The women drew pots of water from the well, and a hundred men were then left in the courtyard, with orders to pull up or stamp out any flaming arrows that might fall. But as the time went on, it was evident that the assailants had not thought of providing themselves with the materials requisite, and the greater part of the garrison lay down quietly and slept.

Harry had waited until he saw the work in the courtyard completed; and then, with the interpreter, entered the rajah's house. The room he generally used was empty. Some lamps were burning there, and he laid himself down on a divan, while the Malay curled himself up on the floor.

Harry had slept but a short time when he was awakened by a light touch on his shoulder and, springing up, saw a woman, with a boy some six years old, standing beside him. The woman placed her finger on her lips, imploringly. Harry at once roused the interpreter. Through him, the woman explained that she was the widow of the late rajah, and that her son was the lawful heir to the throne.

"I have come to you, brave white lord," she said, "to ask you if your people will grant us protection."

"That would be impossible," Harry replied; "my people are busy with their own wars in India and, even were they not so occupied, they could not interfere in a domestic quarrel between the Malay chiefs."

"Why are you fighting here, then?"

"I am fighting in my own quarrel. I was attacked, and my followers killed, by the rajah now assailing this place. I, myself, should have been murdered, had I not made my escape; and should certainly be killed by him, if he were victorious.

"I think it likely that, before very long, there may be an English trading station at Singapore and, if you and your son were to go there, you would certainly be well received. I shall, of course, relate your story, which I have already heard, on my return to Calcutta; and on my explaining that your son is

entitled to the throne of Johore, it may be that some sum would be granted for your maintenance; for it may well be that, in time, the throne may again become vacant, and that the people, tired of these constant wars, will unite to accept your son as rajah. I may tell you that I am sure the tumangong will grant us a trading station, and possibly the whole island; but as he is not the Rajah of Johore, although at present independent of him, we should like to have his assent to the cession. It is for this purpose I have come here although, up to the present time, I have not said anything about it to the rajah, as we have both been much too busy to talk of such matters.

"It may be years before the English come to Singapore; but my report will certainly be noted and, assuredly, an asylum would be granted you, and you would be kindly received. I can say no more than that."

"Thanks, my lord, I could have hoped for no more. Forgive me for having thus disturbed you but, as all in the house save ourselves are asleep, I thought that it was an opportunity that would not occur again. I will teach my son that the English are his friends and, should aught happen to me, and should he ever become rajah here, he will act as their friend, also."

When this had been interpreted to Harry, she and the boy left the room, as noiselessly as they had entered. Harry was well pleased with the interview. Probably the present man would, when the result of this struggle became known, regain much of the power he had lost. Assuredly, as long as he remained rajah, he would now be ready to grant anything asked for and, as Singapore was virtually lost to him, his assent would be given without hesitation. If, on the other hand, he were dethroned, or died, it was likely that this boy would in time become rajah and, in view of this possibility, doubtless the Governor would order that if, at any time, he and his mother arrived at Singapore, they should be well received.

Chapter 13: The Break Up Of The Monsoon.

The night and early morning passed quietly. The chatter of many voices showed that a portion, at any rate, of the assailants were beyond the stockade; but it was not until nine o'clock that numerous parties were seen coming from the forest.

"I suppose they have been making ladders all night," Harry said to Abdool, who was with him on the wall; from which, owing to the fact that the house stood on a rising knoll of ground, which commanded a good view over the stockade, the assailants could be seen.

"Well, I have no doubt we shall be able to beat them off. We have as many men as we want for the circuit of the walls and, while we shall be partly sheltered, they will have to advance in the open."

The Malays had, indeed, been busy since daybreak in manufacturing arrows from thin reeds and bamboos, used in the construction of the huts demolished on the previous evening; tipping them with chips of stone and winging them with feathers, of which plenty were found in the houses and scattered about the yard. All felt that this would be the decisive attack; and that the enemy, after one more repulse, would draw off. That the repulse would be given, all felt confident. Already the slaughter of their assailants had been very great, while very few of their own number had fallen.

An hour later, large parties of the enemy advanced to the stockade. This they did unmolested, as the distance was too great for anything like certainty of aim. The rajah again took his place by Harry's side. Presently, at the sound of a horn, a great flight of arrows rose high in the air from behind the stockade.

"They are fire arrows!" the rajah exclaimed. "I will send a hundred men down, to help the women to extinguish them;" and he himself descended, an officer following, with the men.

The women were all seated close to the platforms and, as the arrows came raining down, they ran out; being joined by the rajah and his men. Had the leafy roofs remained in their place, the whole would have been in a blaze in two or three minutes. As it was, the vast proportion of the arrows stuck in the earth, and burnt themselves out; while the few that fell among the debris that had not been cleared away were extinguished, immediately. For two or three minutes the showers of arrows continued; and then ceased as, to the surprise of the assailants, there were no indications of the palace being on fire.

Then the signal was given for the attack and, exasperated by the failure of the plan they had relied upon as being certain to cause a panic, the Malays, with loud shouts, rushed forward. A large number of them carried ladders and, in spite of the many who fell under the arrows of the defenders, the ladders were soon planted against the walls; and the Malays swarmed up on all sides.

A desperate struggle took place. Some of the ladders were high enough to project above the wall. These, with the men upon them, were thrown back. On others the Malays, as they climbed up, were met by the spears of the defenders or, as their heads rose above the walls, with the deadly kris. Their leaders moved about among the throng below, urging the men forward; and Harry, seeing that things were going on well, all round, took the guns from the hands of the soldier who attended him, and directed his aim against these.

Three fell to his first shots. As the soldier handed them to him, reloaded, his eye caught a group of chiefs, behind whom stood what was evidently a picked body of men. In the midst of the group was the rajah to whom Harry had recently been a prisoner. With a feeling of deep satisfaction, that his hand should avenge the murder of his four troopers, Harry levelled his gun between two of the defenders of the wall, took a steady aim, and fired.

Illustration: Without a cry, the rajah fell back, shot through the head.

As the chief was but some twenty-five yards away, there was little fear of his missing and, without a cry, the rajah fell back, shot through the head. A yell of consternation rose from those around him. Two more shots then rang out, and two more chiefs fell.

The others shouted to their men, and a furious rush forward was made. Harry

snatched up a spear, lying by the side of a native who had fallen; shouted to the rajah's guard of twenty men--who were in the yard below, as a reserve in case the enemy gained a footing at any point of the wall--to come up, and then joined in the fight.

The assailants fought with such fury that, for a time, the issue was doubtful. Several times, three or four succeeded in throwing themselves over the wall; but only to be cut down, before they could be joined by others. At last the Malays drew off, amid the exultant shouts of the defenders.

In a short time, the attack became more feeble at all points. The news of the death of their leader had doubtless spread, and its effect was aided by several other chiefs falling under Harry's fire and, ere long, not one of their followers remained inside the palisade. Half an hour later, the lookout from the top of the rajah's house shouted that the whole of the assailants were retiring, in a body, towards the forest.

Excited by their victory, the rajah's troops would have sallied out in pursuit; but Harry dissuaded him from permitting it.

"They must have lost, altogether, over a thousand of their men; but they are still vastly more numerous than your people, and nothing would suit them better than that you should follow them, and give them a chance of avenging the loss they have suffered."

"But the rajah will come again. He will never remain quiet, under the disgrace."

"He will trouble you no more," Harry said. "I shot him myself, and six or seven of his principal chiefs."

"You are indeed my friend!" the rajah exclaimed, earnestly, when the words were translated to him. "Then there is a hope that I may have peace. The death of the rajah, and of so many of the chiefs that have joined him, will lead to quarrels and disputes; and the confederacy formed against me will break up and, while fighting among themselves, they will not think of attacking, again, a place that has proved so fatal to them."

The rajah had some difficulty in allaying the enthusiasm of his men; but he repeated what Harry had said to him, and added that, since it was entirely due to their white guest that they had repulsed the attack, there could be no doubt that his advice must now be attended to, since he had shown himself a master in war.

"Be content," he said. "Wherever our language is spoken, the Malays will tell the story of how three thousand men were defeated by five hundred; and it will be said that the men of Johore surpassed, in bravery, everything that has been told of the deeds of their fathers. There is no fear of the enemy returning here. The rajah and many of his chiefs have fallen, by the hand of our white friend. Henceforth, for many years, you will be able to rest in peace.

"In a month you will have rebuilt the houses, and sown again the fields that have been burnt. After that, we shall have leisure, and a treble stockade shall be built, stronger and firmer than that into which they forced an entry. Your first task must be to carry the bodies of our enemies far out beyond the town, where their skeletons will act as a warning as to what welcome Johore gives to its foes. A present of money will be given to each man, this afternoon, to help him to rebuild his house, and make good the damages that he has suffered."

The interpreter had rapidly translated the speech to Harry as it went on and, as the rajah ended, and the applause that greeted him subsided, Harry said a few words to the interpreter, which he repeated to the rajah. The latter held up his hand, to show that he had more to say.

"My white friend warns me that, for a day or two, we must not leave the town. It may be that the enemy have halted near the edge of the forest, in the hope of taking us unawares. This, however, can only be for a day or two, at most; for I have no doubt that the provisions they brought with them are, by now, exhausted and, if they stop in the forest, they will perish from hunger; therefore let no one go beyond the town, for two days. A watch shall be kept on the roof of my house and, if any of the enemy make their appearance in the forest, a horn will summon all to retire within the walls."

There was feasting that night at the rajah's house. All his officers and men of importance were present. Sacks of rice and other grain were distributed among the soldiers and women; some buffaloes that had been driven inside the wall to serve as food, should the siege prove a long one, were also killed and cut up; and

very large jars, containing the fermented juice of the pineapple, and other fruits, were served out.

During the day the breaches in the palisades had all been repaired and, at night, the whole population were told to remain within its shelter, while numerous guards were posted by the rajah. While the meal at the rajah's was going on, a party of native musicians played and sang, the Malays being very fond of music.

Harry sat at the rajah's right hand, and was the subject of unbounded praise and admiration among the company. Speaker after speaker rose and addressed him and, afterwards, the interpreter said a few words to them in his name, thanking them for the goodwill they had shown, and praising them highly, not only for their bravery, but especially for the manner in which they had carried out the orders given to them. The proceedings did not terminate until a very late hour, and Harry was heartily glad when at last he could retire to rest.

In the morning, the rajah said to him:

"Now, my friend, you have not told me why you have come here. We have been so busy that we have not spoken on other subjects, save the war. The message you sent up to me was that you came from the great white lord of Calcutta, and desired to see me. You may be sure that whatever you desire of me shall be granted for, were it not for your coming, I should now be a hunted fugitive, and my people slain."

"It is not much that I desire, Rajah. The tumangong is willing to grant to us a trading station, on the island of Singapore and, possibly, we may acquire from him the whole island; but we are aware that he is not the rightful lord of the island, and it may be that, in time, you may recover possession of all Johore. Thus, then, I come to you to ask you if you are willing to consent to this privilege being granted to us; which assuredly will benefit your kingdom by providing a market, close to you, at which you can barter your produce for goods that you require, with us or with native traders from the east. At present, we are not in a position to plant this trading station in Singapore, being engaged in serious wars in India; and it may be a considerable time before things have so settled down that we can do so. I have, therefore, only to ask your assent to our arrangement with the tumangong, whenever it can be carried out; and we shall

certainly be willing to recognize your authority, by a gift of money."

"I willingly consent," the rajah said; "it is, indeed, but a small thing. So long as I live, I shall be ready to enter into any treaty with you; and doubtless my successor, whoever he may be, knowing what you have done for us and our state, will also agree."

[It was not, indeed, until the year 1819 that the British took possession of the island, paying sixty thousand dollars to the tumangong. Shortly after they had settled there the young prince, who had escaped from Johore, came down there. He was awarded a pension and, at the death of the rajah, was placed on the throne by the British, to the general satisfaction of the inhabitants.]

The next day, a number of men came in from villages scattered among the hills, who had not heard of the approach of the enemy until too late to enter the town, and take part in its defence. By this time, scouts had penetrated far into the forest, and brought back news that, although there were many dead there, there were no signs of the enemy. The work, therefore, of rebuilding the town was commenced; every available man of the garrison, and those who had come in, being engaged in cutting wood and bringing it in.

In the course of the next day or two several chiefs, whose attitude had before been threatening, came or sent members of their families to congratulate the rajah upon the defeat that he had inflicted upon his enemies, and to assure him of their loyalty to his rule.

Harry had stayed on, at the earnest request of the rajah; but he now declared that he must return to the coast. The rajah's approval of the cession of a trading port, and of the island itself, was written both in the Malay and the English languages, and signed by the chief. Copies were also made and signed, by Harry, to be kept in the palace, in order that on any future occasion they could be consulted.

A great number of presents, of krises and other articles of Malayan manufacture, were offered to Harry; but he excused himself from accepting them, saying that, in the first place, it was not customary for commissioners of the Governor to accept presents; and in the second that, being constantly employed on service, he had no place where these could be deposited, during his

long absences.

On the third morning after the retreat of the enemy Harry started, with his two companions, for the coast; attended by an escort of twenty men of the rajah's own guard, commanded by a high officer. There was now no fear of molestation, but the escort was sent as a mark of honour. Starting early, they reached the coast town in the afternoon.

They were received with great joy by the inhabitants, who had been in a state of abject terror. A runner, who was the bearer of a message to the rajah from the headman, had left on the morning after Harry's party had started; and had returned with the news that he had found the headless bodies of all the escort, but had seen no traces of the white man nor his followers, who had doubtless all been carried off by the enemy. The news caused terrible consternation, as it was thought that the town might be attacked, at any moment. Those of the inhabitants who possessed canoes, took to them and paddled away down the coast. The others fled to the mountains.

Finding, however, from scouts who had been left, that four days had passed without the appearance of the enemy, most of them had returned, on the evening before Harry arrived there. On hearing, from his escort, of the defeat of the invaders and their enormous loss, the most lively joy was manifested; and Harry was treated with almost reverential respect, the men of the escort agreeing that it was solely due to him that the victory had been gained. He made, however, but a very short stay in the village; and the headman at once ordered the largest canoe to be prepared. This was decorated with flowers and flags and manned by twenty rowers who, as soon as Harry and his two companions took their seats in it, rowed off to the brig.

"Welcome back, Lindsay!" Fairclough shouted, as the canoe approached; "we could hardly believe our eyes, when we saw you come down to the canoe. We have been in a terrible fright about you. The natives brought off news that the escort that had been sent down to take you to Johore were, every one, killed; and that, as there were no signs of any of your party, it was certain that you had been carried off. We sent a boat ashore, every morning, armed to the teeth; but they reported that the place was almost entirely deserted, and the two or three men left there said that no news, whatever, had been received of you."

By this time, Harry had gained the deck.

"Where is your escort?" Fairclough asked.

"I am sorry to say that they were all murdered. However, my story is a long one and, although the rajah sent down some food with the escort he gave me, I am desperately thirsty, and will tell you all that happened when I have wetted my whistle."

Fairclough told Hardy to come with them below, and Harry's story was told in full, over sundry cups of tea, which Harry preferred to stronger beverages.

"That was an adventure, indeed," Fairclough said, when Harry had brought his story to an end. "I would have given anything to have been with you in that siege. I own I should not have cared about being a prisoner in that fellow's camp, especially as you were disarmed, and could not even make a fight for it. That affair with the leopard would have been more to my taste; though, if I had been in your place, with nothing but your knife and Abdool's, I doubt whether I should have come out of it as well as you did; but the other business was splendid, and those Malays of the rajah's must have fought well, indeed, to beat off a force six times their own strength."

"The great point is that I have obtained his ratification of the tumangong's grant, whenever it may be made."

"That is satisfactory, of course; but it would not have, to my mind, anything like the importance of your series of adventures, which will be something to think over all your life. I wish I had been there, with my crew, to have backed you up; though I am afraid that most of them would have shared the fate of your Malay escort, in that sudden attack in the forest."

"Yes; with all their pluck, they could scarcely have repulsed such a sudden onslaught though, certainly, the killing would not all have been on one side. I am glad, indeed, that Abdool also came safely out of it; as I should have missed him, fearfully.

"The interpreter showed himself a good man, and I hope that Lord Mornington will, when I report his conduct, make him a handsome present. If he

had not got away with me, it is hardly likely I should ever have found my way to Johore and, if I had done so, I could not have explained to the rajah that he was going to be attacked, or have got him to erect the stockade that was the main cause of our success. In fact, he would probably, in his anger at the slaughter of his escort, have ordered me to be executed on the spot. As it was, he did not take either that, or the loss of his presents, greatly to heart."

"You saved his kingdom for him, there is no doubt. It is not likely that he would ever have ventured to defend himself, had it not been for the confidence that he felt in you, and in the steps you took."

"No; he told me, himself, that he would have taken flight at once and, in that case, his kingdom would have been lost; and he himself, sooner or later, hunted down."

"And now, I suppose we can start as soon as we like?"

"Certainly; the sooner the better. I shall be very glad to be back again, for there is no saying what is going on there. Assuredly, the friendship of the Mahrattas cannot be relied upon. I know that we are not likely to make any fresh move, except in self defence, until Mysore is completely pacified, and a firm government established. Still, there is never any saying what will happen. Having been in the thick of the Mahratta business, all along, I should not like to be out of it, now."

"Well, we will get up anchor at daybreak, tomorrow."

All on board were glad, when the news that they were to sail for Calcutta, the next morning, was circulated through the ship. To the crew, the voyage had been a monotonous one; the weather having been uniformly fine, since they started; and they had had no adventures, such as they had hoped for, with hostile natives.

Nothing was talked of that night, between decks, but Harry's story; which had been told by Lieutenant Hardy to the midshipmen, who had retailed it to the petty officers, and it had rapidly spread. Abdool and the interpreter were made as much of as was possible, considering that neither could understand English; and deep were the expressions of regret that none of the sailors had taken part in so tough a fight.

By the time the sun was up, next morning, the vessel was under weigh and, with light breezes, sailed round Singapore, and then headed northwest. The winds, as before, were light and, as the northeast monsoon was still blowing, the rate of progress was slow.

"I wish we could have got into the Hooghly," Fairclough said, as he walked impatiently up and down the quarterdeck, "before the monsoon broke; but I don't see much chance of it. It generally changes about the middle of April, and we are well on in the first week, now. At the rate at which we are sailing, we shall take at least three weeks before we get there. You see, we are only just clear of the northern point of Sumatra; and it is already a month since we got up anchor."

"But we shall have the wind almost behind us, Fairclough."

"Yes, when it has settled down. It is the change that I do not like. Of course, sometimes we have only a few days of moderately rough weather; but occasionally there is a hurricane at the break up, and a hurricane in the bay of Bengal is no joke. I shall not mind, much, if we get fairly past the Andamans; for from there to the mouth of the Hooghly it is open water, and I should be under no uneasiness as to the brig battling her way through it; but to be caught in a hurricane, with these patches of islands and rocks in the neighbourhood would, to say the least, be awkward."

"Are there any ports among the islands? I recollect hearing an officer say that there was a settlement made there, some years ago."

"That was so. In 1791 an establishment was started in the southern part of the island and, two years later, it was moved to a harbour on the northwest side of the bay. It was called Port Cornwallis; but was abandoned in 1796, being found terribly unhealthy. It was a pity, for it afforded good shelter when the northeast monsoon was blowing, and partially so from the southwest monsoon. No doubt it could have been made more healthy, if the country round had been well cleared; but it was not found to be of sufficient utility to warrant a large outlay, and the natives are so bitterly unfriendly that it would require a garrison of two or three hundred men to overawe them. We should have been always losing life--not from open attacks, perhaps, but from their habit of crawling up, and shooting men down with their arrows."

A week later, they were some seventy or eighty miles to the west of the Andaman group. Directly the brig weathered the northernmost point of Sumatra, the course had been laid more to the west, so as to avoid the dangerous inside passage. When Harry went on deck, in the morning, he found that the wind had dropped altogether.

"There is an end of the monsoon," Fairclough said. "I am just going to shorten sail. There is no saying which way the wind will come. The glass is falling fast but, of course, that is only to be expected. I think, if you are wise, after breakfast you will take off that drill suit, and get into something better calculated to stand rough weather; for that we are sure to have, and any amount of rain. That is always the case, at the changes of the monsoon.

"You see, it is a sort of battle between the two winds; the southwesterly will gain, in the end, but the other will die hard; and it is this struggle that causes the circular storms which, when they are serious, are called hurricanes, though at ordinary times they are simply called the break up of the monsoon, which generally causes bad weather all over the Indian Ocean."

Towards evening, low banks of cloud were seen to the south, and the sky looked dim and misty in the opposite direction.

"They are mustering their forces, you see, Lindsay; and the glass has fallen so far that I fancy the fight will be a hot one. At any rate, we will make all snug for the night."

Sail after sail was taken in, until only a storm jib, a small fore stay-sail, and a close-reefed main top-sail were left standing. The bank of cloud to the south had risen considerably and, when darkness closed in, the upper edge was lit up by the almost incessant flicker of lightning. The upper spars were sent down on deck and then, there being nothing more to be done, the crew, who had all donned rough-weather clothes, awaited the outburst.

That it would be more than ordinarily severe there could be no doubt, and the men, clustered in little groups by the bulwarks, talked in low tones as they watched the slowly-approaching storm from the south; with occasional glances northwards, where indeed no clouds could be seen, but the sky was frequently lit up by the reflections of lightning below the horizon.

"What do you think of it?" Harry asked the interpreter.

"I do not like it," the Malay replied. "I think that there will be a great hurricane. I have seen many changes of the monsoon, but never one that looked so threatening as this."

"It does look bad," Harry said, "though, as I have never been at sea before, at the change of the monsoon, I am no judge at all; but it certainly looks as if we were in for a bad gale. At any rate, we shall be safer, here, than we were in that hut in the mountains."

The Malay made no reply, for some time. Then he said:

"Yes, sahib, but there was something to do, there. Directly we got in, you began to prepare for an escape. It was not certain that we should succeed. They might have come in and killed us, before you were ready but, as we were busy, we had not much time to think of the danger.

"Here we can do nothing."

"No. But, as you see, everything has already been done. You and I have not been working, but the sailors have been busy in taking off sail, and getting down all the upper spars. We are ready for the worst, now; just as we were when we had opened the passage for our escape, and we felt fairly confident--although we might meet with many dangers, we had a good chance of getting safely away."

"There are the danger signals, Lindsay," the captain said, as a pale light suddenly shone out above.

Looking up, Harry saw a ball of fire on the main-mast head. Presently, this seemed to roll down the mast, till it reached the top-sail yard; then it broke into two, and these rolled out until they remained stationary, one at each end of the yard. Harry had never seen this phenomenon before.

"What is it?" he asked Fairclough, in an awed voice.

"They are often seen, before the outburst of a severe tempest. Of course, they look like balls of phosphorus; but in reality they are electric, and are a sign that the whole atmosphere is charged with electricity. Sailors have all sorts of

superstitions about them but, of course, excepting that they are signs of the condition of the air, they are perfectly harmless."

He raised his voice.

"Don't stand near the foot of the masts, lads; keep well away from them. There is nothing to be afraid of, in those lights; but if we happened to be struck by lightning and it ran down the mast, some of you might be knocked over.

"I don't know why," he continued, to Harry, "the first flash of lightning at the beginning of a storm is always the most dangerous. I can't account for it, in any way, but there is no question as to the fact. I always feel relieved when the first clap of thunder is over; for I know, then, that we are comparatively safe from danger, in that way."

Gradually the stars disappeared.

"Mr. Hardy," the captain said to the lieutenant, who was standing near, "will you go down to my cabin, and see how the glass stands?"

Harry did not hear the answer, when Hardy returned, but Fairclough said to him:

"It has gone down another quarter of an inch since I looked at it, half an hour ago; and it was as low, then, as I have ever seen it.

"Mr. Hardy, you had better send the men aloft, and furl the main top-sail, altogether; and run down the fore stay-sail. We can get it up again, as soon as the first burst is over. Put four men at the wheel."

There was still no breath of wind stirring. The stay sail was run down, but the men hung back from ascending the shrouds of the main mast.

"They are afraid of those lights," Fairclough said, "but I do not think there is the slightest danger from them."

"I will go up, myself, sir," Hardy said; and he ran up the starboard shrouds while, at the same moment, one of the midshipmen led the way on the port side. The sailors at once followed their officers.

The latter had nearly reached the yard, when the two balls of fire began to roll along it, joined in the centre, and then slowly ascended the topmast. The fireballs paused there for half a minute, and then vanished.

"Now, Eden," the lieutenant said, "let us get the work done, at once, before that fellow makes his appearance again."

The men followed them out on the yard, and worked in desperate haste, with occasional glances up at the mast head. In a couple of minutes the sail was firmly secured in its gaskets, and all made their way below.

"Thank goodness, here it comes, at last," Fairclough said; "the suspense is more trying than the gale itself."

A low murmur was heard, and a faint pale light was soon visible to the south.

"Get ready to hold on, all!" he shouted to the men.

The sound momentarily increased in volume, and the distant light brightened until a long line of white foam was clearly discernible. It approached with extraordinary speed. There was a sudden puff of air. It lasted but a few seconds, and then died away.

"Hold on!" the captain again shouted.

Half a minute later, with a tremendous roar, the wind struck the brig. Knowing which way it would come, Fairclough had, half an hour before, lowered a boat and brought the vessel's head round, so that it pointed north. The boat had then been hoisted up.

In the interval of waiting, the ship's head had slightly drifted round, again, and the wind struck her on the quarter. So great was the pressure that she heeled far over, burying her bows so deeply that it seemed as if she were going to dive, head foremost. The water swept over the bulwarks in torrents, and extended almost up to the foot of the foremast. Then, very slowly, as she gathered way, the bow lifted and, in a minute, she was scudding fast before the gale; gathering speed, every moment, from the pressure of the wind upon her masts and hull, and from the fragment of sail shown forward. At present there were no waves, the surface of the water seeming pressed almost flat by the weight of the wind.

Then there was a deafening crash, and a blaze of light. The fore-top mast was riven in fragments, but none of these fell on the deck, the wind carrying them far ahead.

"You had better make your way forward, Mr. Hardy," Fairclough shouted, into the lieutenant's ear, "and see if anyone is hurt."

Fortunately the precaution which had been taken, of ordering the men away from the mast, had prevented any loss of life; but several of the men were temporarily blinded. Three or four had been struck to the deck, by the passage of the electric fluid close to them; but these presently regained their feet. Hardy returned, and reported to the captain.

"You had better send the carpenter down, to see that there is no fire below."

In a minute the man ran up, with the news that he believed the foot of the mast was on fire. Mr. Hardy went to a group of men.

"Get some buckets, my lads," he said quietly, "and make your way down to the hold. I will go with you. As was to be expected, the lightning has fired the foot of the mast; but there is no cause for alarm. As we have discovered it so soon, we shall not be long in getting it under."

The men at once filled the fire buckets and, led by Mr. Hardy, went below. As soon as the hatchway leading to the hold was lifted, a volume of smoke poured up.

"Wait a minute, till it has cleared off a little," the lieutenant said; and then, to the midshipman who had accompanied him:

"Go to the captain, and tell him that there is more smoke than I like, and ask him to come below. Tell him I think the pumps had better be rigged, and the hose passed down."

Fairclough, who was accompanied by Harry, joined him just as he was about to descend the ladder.

"I will go down with you, Mr. Hardy," he said.

"Mr. Eden, will you go up and send down all hands, except those at the wheel? Set a strong gang to rig the pumps, and pass the hose down."

He and the lieutenant then made their way along the hold. The smoke was very thick, and it was only by stooping low that they could get along. They could see, however, a glow of light ahead.

"We can do nothing with this," the captain said, "beyond trying to keep it from spreading, until we have shifted all these stores. The gang with buckets had better come down, empty them on the pile, and then set to work to clear the stuff away, as quickly as possible."

The men, who came along gradually and with difficulty, began to remove the barrels, coils of rope, and spare sails stowed there. Several of them were overpowered by the smoke, and had to be carried up again; and others came down and took their places.

In three or four minutes the hose was passed down, and the clank of the pumps could be heard. Mr. Hardy took the nozzle and while the men, now a strong party, worked at the stores, directed a stream of water upon the flames.

For a time, the efforts seemed to make no impression, and the steam added to the difficulty of working. Another gang of men were set to work, forward of the mast and, after half an hour's labour, the stores were so far removed that the hose could be brought to play upon the burning mass at the foot of the mast.

The lieutenant had been relieved by Harry, and he by the two midshipmen, in succession. Changes were frequent and, in another quarter of an hour, it was evident that the flames were well under control. The men engaged below relieved those at the pumps and, in an hour from the first outbreak, all danger was over, though pumping was kept up for some time longer.

The captain made frequent visits to the deck. The vessel was still running before the wind, and the sea had got up. The motion of the ship was becoming more and more violent but, as there was nothing to be done, the men below were not disturbed at their work, and this was continued until smoke no longer ascended.

Chapter 14: The Great Andaman.

Leaving a party below, to clear away the burnt barrels and debris, and to extinguish any fire that might still smoulder among them, the rest returned on deck. Terrible as was the storm, it was a relief, to all, to cling to the rail and breathe the fresh air, after the stifling atmosphere of the hold.

The scene, however, was a terrible one. Lightning was flashing overhead incessantly, although the thunder was only occasionally heard, above the howl of the storm. The sea was broken and irregular, leaping in masses over the bulwarks, and sweeping the decks. The force of the wind continually tore the heads off the waves, and carried the spray along in blinding showers.

"We are very near the eye of the hurricane," Captain Fairclough shouted, in Lindsay's ear. "The men at the wheel tell me she has been twice round the compass, already; but this broken sea would, alone, tell that. We must get a little sail on the main mast, and try to edge out of it."

A small stay sail was got out and hoisted, and the helm was put down a little. Though still running at but a slight angle before the wind, the pressure was now sufficient to lay her down to her gunwale. The crew gathered under shelter of the weather bulwark, holding on by belaying pins and stanchions.

Night had now set in, but it made little difference; for the darkness had, before, been intense, save for the white crests of the tossing waves. Sheets of foam blew across the deck and, sometimes, a heavy fall of water toppled down on the crew. A pannikin of hot soup had been served out to the men, and this would be the last hot refreshment they would obtain, before the gale broke; for the hatchways were all battened down, and it was impossible to keep the fire alight.

"The best thing you can do is to turn in, Lindsay," Fairclough said, after the former had finished his soup--a task of no slight difficulty, under the circumstances. "You can do no good by remaining up."

"How long is it likely to last?"

"Probably for two or three days, possibly longer."

"I will take your advice," Harry said. "I shall be glad to get these wet clothes off."

For a time, he was sorry that he had lain down, for the motion was so violent that he could, with difficulty, keep himself in his berth. Being, however, completely worn out by the buffeting of the gale, the efforts required to hold on, the excitement of the fire and storm, it was not long before he dropped off to sleep; and he did not wake up until a ray of dim light showed that the morning was breaking. The motion of the ship was unabated and after, with great difficulty, getting into his clothes, he went up on deck.

Except that the clouds were somewhat more broken, there was no change. Dark masses of vapour flew overhead, torn and ragged. The wild tumble of waves rose and fell, without order or regularity. Forward, the bulwark on both bows had been carried away, and the deck was swept clear of every movable object.

One watch was below, the men of the other were for the most part gathered aft, and lashed to belaying pins. Fairclough was standing near the wheel. With some difficulty, Harry made his way to him.

"Not much change since last night," he said. "I feel quite ashamed of myself, for having been sleeping in my berth while you have all been exposed to this gale."

"There has not been much to do," the commander said. "In fact, there is nothing to be done, except to keep her as much as we dare from running straight before the wind. We have not had much success that way for, as you see, the tumble of water shows that we are still but a short distance from the centre of the gale. I sent the starboard watch below at four bells and, in a few minutes, we shall be relieved. Hardy wanted to stay with me, but I would not have it.

"The cook has managed, somehow, to boil some water, and served a pannikin of coffee to all hands, just before the watch turned in; and he has sent word that

he will have some more ready, by the time they come up again."

He looked at his watch, and called out, "four bells."

One of the men made his way to the bell, with alacrity. The watch below did not come up, for a few minutes, as they waited to drink their coffee. As soon as they appeared, the men on deck went below.

"All the better for your sleep, Mr. Hardy?" Fairclough asked, as the other joined him.

"Very much better, sir. I think the cook ought to have a medal. The cup of coffee before we turned in, and that we have just drunk, have made new men of us."

"You will call me, instantly, if there is any change, Mr. Hardy.

"Mr. Eden, you had better come with us. The coffee will be ready, in my cabin."

There was no possibility of sitting at the table. But, sitting down on the floor to leeward, and holding a mug in one hand and a biscuit in the other, they managed, with some difficulty, to dispose of the meal. Then Fairclough, putting on some dry clothes, threw himself on his bunk. The midshipman retired to his own cabin, and Harry went on deck.

"How are we heading, Mr. Hardy?" he shouted, when he joined the lieutenant.

"At the present moment, we are running nearly due east but, as we have been round the compass, several times, since the gale struck us, there is no means of saying, with anything like certainty, where our position is. But I was talking it over with the captain, before I went down, and we both agreed that, as the centre of the hurricane is undoubtedly moving to the northeast, we must have gone a good many miles in that direction.

"Of course, there is no means of determining how far till we can get a glimpse of the sun; but there is no doubt that, if the gale continues, we shall soon be in a very perilous position, for we must be driving towards the Andamans. We

may have the luck to pass north of them, or to go between them.

"We tried, last night, to get up a little more sail; but she would not stand it, and we were obliged to take it off again. So we can do nothing but hope for the best."

Two hours later, Fairclough came out again.

"I am afraid that you have not been to sleep," Harry said.

"No. I am all the better for the rest, but sleep was out of the question.

"How is she heading now, Mr. Hardy?"

"Northeast, sir."

Fairclough took his telescope from the rack in the companion and, slinging it over his shoulder, mounted the ratlines to the top.

"Have you made out anything?" he asked the sailor stationed there.

"I have thought, once or twice, sir, that I saw land ahead; but I could not say for certain. It is so thick that it is only when the clouds open a bit that one has a chance."

Although he had taken his glass with him, Fairclough did not attempt to use it, at present; but stood gazing fixedly ahead. A quarter of an hour later there was a sudden rift in the clouds, and a low shore was visible, some five or six miles ahead; and a dark mass, much farther off, rising into the cloud. Fairclough instantly unslung the telescope, and adjusted it. A minute afterwards the clouds closed in again and, telling the man to keep a sharp lookout, he descended to the deck.

"We must set the main top-sail on her again, close reefed, of course. We are running straight for land and, unless I am much mistaken, it is the great Andaman. There is a lofty hill, some distance back from the shore. I only caught a glimpse of its lower part, but none of the small islands have any hill to speak of. The shore is about six miles off and, as the peak lies about the centre of the island, and as this is a hundred and forty miles long, we are some seventy miles

from the northern point.

"You know what that means. However, we must do all that we can, to keep her off."

"Ay, ay, sir," Hardy said, turning without another word, and then gave orders to the men to set the top sail.

This was done, and the ship's course was laid parallel to the shore. The wind was now nearly northwest, and she lay down until the water was several planks up her deck. The crew were all lashed to windward, clustering where they would be most out of danger, should the mast go.

Fairclough stood for a minute, looking at the shivering mast, and the shrouds stretched like iron bars.

"We must get the guns overboard, Mr. Hardy; she will never stand this," and indeed the waves, striking her broadside, were falling in a cascade over her.

Calling four of the men, Hardy made his way down into the lee scuppers, where the water was nearly up to their waists; opened the portholes and slacked the lashings, when the four guns disappeared overboard. It required much greater pains to get down the guns from the port side, as tackle had to be attached to each, so that they could be lowered carefully, one by one, across the deck; but all worked heartily, and these also were launched overboard.

"That has eased her, a bit," Fairclough said, when Hardy rejoined him. "They helped to pin her down, and I could almost feel the difference, as each gun went overboard."

"I am afraid that it will make no difference, in the long run," Hardy said. "She must be making a great deal of leeway, and I should say that she will be on shore in a couple of hours, at the latest. Still, we may have time to look out for a soft spot."

"We should not have much chance, in that case, Hardy; my only hope is in another shift of wind."

"But it will go round more to the north, sir, and then we sha'n't be able to lie

our course, at all. It has gone round a point, since we got up the top sail."

"Quite so; and I doubt whether it will go round soon enough to save us. If it should go round a little more to the north, we must try and get her on the other tack; but I am afraid, in such a sea, she will not go about. Of course, our great aim is to reach Port Cornwallis; or, if we cannot get as far as that, I have just been having a look at the chart, and I see there are three narrow straits. How much water there is in them, I do not know. They are most vaguely marked on the chart. One of them is but thirty miles north of our present position and, if we find that we cannot make the northern point, I shall try to get in there. I am not sure that, in any case, it would not be the best plan; for if there is only water enough to run a mile or so up this passage, we shall ground in comparatively still water; whereas, as the wind has been blowing from every quarter, it is almost certain that there will be a tremendous sea in the open port."

Fairclough placed himself at the wheel, and told the two midshipmen to go round, and tell the crew that there was an inlet ahead, but the depth of the water was uncertain. When they approached it, all hands would come aft, so as to avoid being crushed by the falling masts. A dozen of the men were to take hatchets, and cut away the wreckage if the mast fell, leaving only a couple of the shrouds uncut. When this was done, directly the vessel began to break up, those who could not swim were to make their way by these shrouds to the floating mast. Those who could swim could make, at once, for the shore.

"When all have left the ship but Mr. Hardy and myself, we will cut the shrouds; and the masts will probably ground, ere long."

While before the sailors had, for the most part, been gazing at the coast, on which they had little doubt that their bodies would soon be cast up; they became lively and active, as soon as they received the order. It seemed that, after all, there was a chance for them.

Four hours passed. The wind had now so far headed them that the brig could no longer keep her course parallel with the shore. Twice they had endeavoured to put her about, but each time failed; and she was now making so much leeway that the coast was less than three miles away. A tremendous sea was breaking upon it. One of the midshipmen had, for the past hour, been in the foretop with a glass; and the captain himself now went up, and took his place beside him. He

saw at once that, accustomed as he was to use his telescope in rough weather, it would be useless here; for the motion was so great that it was only by following the midshipman's example, and lashing himself to the mast, that he could retain a footing.

"You are sure that you have seen no break in the surf, Mr. Eden?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"We ought not to be far from it, now, if it is rightly marked on the chart."

Another hour passed, and they were within a mile and a half of the shore.

"I think that I can see a break, over there, sir," and the midshipman pointed to a spot a mile along the coast.

"Pray God that it may be so," Fairclough said, "for it is our only chance."

Two or three minutes later, he said:

"You are right, there is certainly a break there. There is a line of surf, but it does not run up the shore, as it does everywhere else."

He at once descended to the deck.

"Thank God!" he said, as he joined Mr. Hardy and Harry who, on seeing him coming down, had made their way to the shrouds, "there is a break in the surf. It is not a complete break, but there is certainly an inlet of some sort. And though it looks as if there were a bar, there may be plenty of water for us for, with such a sea as this, it would break in three fathoms of water and, as we don't draw more than two, we may get over it. At any rate, it is our only hope."

"It gives us a chance, if we strike," the lieutenant said, "for it will be comparatively calm water, inside the bar. Those who can swim should have no difficulty in getting ashore. The others might do so, on wreckage. Her masts are sure to come out of her, if she strikes heavily."

"I shall be obliged if you will go up to the foretop, Hardy, and con the brig in; but mind you, come down before we get to the white water. You may as well

send Mr. Eden down."

Mr. Hardy was not long before he came down again and, at the captain's suggestion, both he and Harry went below, and armed themselves with pistols. As soon as they came up again, they took their places by Fairclough. The seamen had all gathered aft. The boatswain had cut the lashings holding the spars--that had been sent down from aloft--in their place by the bulwarks. The boats had all been torn from their davits, or smashed; with the exception of the largest cutter, which lay bottom upwards in the middle of the ship, securely lashed to the deck.

"Now, men," the captain said, raising his voice almost to a shout, so that all might hear him, "you have behaved as well as men could do, during this storm; and I have no doubt that you will continue to do so, to the end. Remember that no one is to leave the ship, till I give the order. If you are cool and calm, there is good ground for hope that all may be saved.

"If the mast falls, you who have hatchets run forward at once, and stand in readiness to cut the lanyards; but don't strike until I give the order."

They were now fast approaching the line of surf.

"Let everyone take hold of something," Mr. Fairclough shouted. "If we strike, we are sure to be pooped."

Another minute, and she was close to the breaking waves. Everyone held his breath as, impelled by a great breaker, she dashed into the surf with the swiftness of an arrow. There was a shock, followed by a grating noise, and then the brig slowly came to a standstill.

"Hold on, hold on for your lives!" the captain shouted, as a wave even larger than the last came towering up behind them, in an almost perpendicular wall. It struck the vessel with tremendous force, and swept waist deep along the deck; while the vessel, herself, surged forward. There was another shock, but this time much slighter and, as the next wave carried them on, there was a general cheer from the sailors.

"She has floated, she is through it, hurrah!"

She was, indeed, over the bar.

"There are men in the water," Fairclough shouted. "Get ready to cast ropes to them."

Four men, who had been swept overboard by the rush of water, were rescued; two others were found dead on the deck, having been dashed against the stanchions, or other obstacles.

The brig continued her course, four or five hundred yards farther then, as the banks of the inlet closed in, Fairclough gave orders for the anchors to be let go. Everything had been prepared for this order, and the anchors at once dropped and, as soon as fifty fathoms of chain had been run out, the brig swung round head to wind.

"Muster the men, and see if any are missing."

This was done, and only one, besides three found dead, did not answer to his name. The general opinion was that he had struck against something, as he was swept overboard, and had been killed or disabled; for all who had been seen in the water had been rescued.

"Serve out an allowance of grog, all round, Mr. Eden," Fairclough said, "and tell the cook to get his fire alight, as soon as possible. We shall all be glad of a good meal.

"Well, thank God, everything has ended far better than we could have hoped for!"

Two hours later the crew, having got into dry clothes, were sitting down, enjoying a plentiful allowance of pea soup and salt junk; while the officers were partaking of similar fare, in the cabin. None who saw them there would have dreamt of the long struggle they had been through, and that the ship was well nigh a wreck. It was now late in the afternoon, and Fairclough gave orders that all might turn in, as soon as they liked; except that an anchor watch, of four men, must maintain a sharp lookout, for the natives of the island were bitterly hostile to the whites.

"I don't think there is any real danger," he said to Harry, "or that they will

attempt to take the ship. Their habit is, I have heard, to lie in hiding, and to shoot their arrows at any stranger who may land."

They sat chatting, for an hour, after the meal was concluded. Then the conversation flagged, and Fairclough said, presently:

"I think that we may as well follow the men's example, and turn in. I can hardly keep my eyes open."

The gale was still blowing strongly, in the morning, though its force had somewhat abated. But inside the bar there was but a slight swell, and the brig rode easily at her anchors; for the wind was now several points west of north, and they were consequently protected by the land.

The work of repairing damages began at once for, owing to the length of the voyage, the stores of provisions and water were beginning to run very short. Two or three buffaloes had been bought, at the village where Harry had landed but, with the exception of some fruit, and the meat sent off by the tumangong, no other fresh food had been obtained, since they sailed from Calcutta. The boat was turned over and launched; and the work of making a new fore-top mast, and overhauling the rigging, proceeded with.

During the day, several of the natives were observed at the edge of the forest by Harry who, having no special work to do, had been asked by Fairclough to keep his eye on the shore, and to ascertain whether they were being watched; as he intended, when the repairs were finished, to see if any spring of fresh water existed in the neighbourhood. He therefore kept a telescope directed on the shore and, soon after daybreak, made out two little men at the edge of the trees.

The natives of the Andaman Islands are among the lowest types of humanity known. Their stature does not exceed five feet and, with their slender limbs and large heads, their appearance is almost that of a deformed people. They use no clothing whatever, plastering their bodies with clay, or mud, to protect the skin from the sun's rays. Animals are scarce on the islands, and the people live chiefly on fish. They carry bows and arrows, and heavy spears; to which, in most cases, are added shields. They inhabit roughly-made arbours, and seldom remain long at any spot; moving about in small communities, according to the abundance or scarcity of food. They use no cooking utensils, and simply prepare their food by

placing it on burning embers.

The men first made out soon disappeared but, later on, Harry could see that there were many of them inside the line of forest.

"It is a nuisance," the captain said, when he told him the result of his examination of the shore. "I suppose, in a day or two, we shall have hundreds of them down here. I don't think they will try to interfere with us, as long as we are at work; but they will certainly oppose us, if we attempt to enter the forest, and will effectually prevent our wandering about in search of water. We could only go in a strong body and, even then, might lose a good many lives from their arrows.

"Of course, we should be able to beat them off; but I should be sorry to have to kill a lot of the poor little beggars. One can hardly blame them for their hostility. Naturally, they want to have the place to themselves, and are just as averse to our landing as our forefathers were to Julius Caesar and his Romans.

"Of course they would be, if they only knew it, very much better off by being civil. We have numbers of things that would be invaluable to them. For instance, I would willingly give them a dozen cooking pots, and as many frying pans, if they would let us obtain water peaceably. I suppose that, at some time or other, Malays landed here, and carried off a number of heads; or they may have been shot down by some reckless ruffians of traders, and have so come to view all strangers as deadly enemies. However, so far as I have heard, there is no chance of their being friendly; and native traders say that, of vessels that have been wrecked on the coast, none of the crew ever escaped.

"By the way, I believe that fish are extremely plentiful here. We have a good supply of fishing lines on board, for we generally fish when we are at anchor."

"If you will let me have them, tomorrow," Harry said, "Abdool and I will look after that. I hate having nothing to do and, certainly, fish would be a very agreeable change, after such a long spell of salt meat."

"You shall have them, the first thing in the morning."

Accordingly, the next day the lines were got out; and the Malay interpreter,

who knew a great deal more of fishing than did Harry or Abdool, took the matter in hand. The hooks were baited with pieces of meat, or shreds of white or scarlet bunting. The fish bit eagerly, and all three were kept actively employed in drawing them up, and rebaiting the hooks. They were of all sizes, from a quarter of a pound to four or five pounds and, by dinner time, there were enough to furnish an ample meal for all on board.

"I will keep three or four of the men at work, this afternoon," Fairclough said, "and we will have night lines down. We can salt down those we do not eat and, at any rate, we shall not be drawing much on our stores."

By evening the new fore-top mast was in its place. As the heaviest part of the work was now done, orders were given for a boat's crew to start, in the morning, to cruise along the coast and see if any stream ran into it. Mr. Eden was to be in command. The crew were to be well armed, but were not to attempt to effect a landing.

The sea had now calmed down, and the southwest monsoon was blowing steadily.

"You had better go south. The land is much higher there, and there is more likelihood of there being streams. I think you will be able to lie your course or, at any rate, make a long leg and a short one. You are to go, as nearly as you can tell, twenty miles. If you do not meet with a stream by that time, turn back. You will have the wind free, then, and can be back here well before sunset. Of course, if you find fresh water, you will at once return.

"Would you like to go with the boat, Mr. Lindsay?"

"Very much. My hands are so sore, from hauling in the lines, that I am afraid I shall not be able to help in the fishing, tomorrow."

The party started early. It consisted of ten men, the coxswain, the midshipmen, and Harry. The surf was no longer breaking on the bar outside. There was a bright sea, with white-crested waves and, before starting, the captain ordered a reef to be put in the sails.

"She could carry full sail, well enough," he said to Harry, "but there is no

occasion for haste; and it is always best to be on the safe side, especially when a middy is in command. Besides, it is just as well to keep dry jackets."

A keg of water and a supply of food, sufficient for two days, were placed on board.

"I expect you will be back by three o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Eden; but it is always well to provide against any accident."

With the sheets hauled tight aft, the cutter was just able to lie her course, outside the line of breakers. In a little over an hour there was a break in the shore, and a stream of some forty feet wide fell into the sea; and a general cheer broke from the sailors, who had been put on allowance for the past week.

"Put her about, coxswain," the midshipman said; "we need go no farther."

"Can't we land, and have a bathe, sir?" the coxswain asked.

"Certainly not. That is the very thing that we mus'n't do. For anything we know, there may be natives about; and some of us might get stuck full of their arrows before we could get out of range. This will be good news, and there will be no longer any need for your being kept on short allowance of water."

At ten o'clock the boat re-entered the inlet, and lowered sail by the side of the brig.

"You have been successful, I suppose, by your coming back so soon, Mr. Eden?" the captain said, when they were within easy hail.

"Yes, sir. There is a small stream, about seven miles from here."

"That is very satisfactory. Now you can come on board. There is plenty of work for all hands."

Everyone, indeed, was busy in repairing damages. The carpenters were engaged upon the bulwarks and the stern, which had been much damaged by the wave that had lifted them over the bar. As there were not sufficient planks on board for this work, canvas was utilized for filling up the gaps in the bulwarks; and this, after being nailed to temporary stanchions, was coated with pitch. All

hands worked cheerfully. The change of diet already benefited them, and the news that there was plenty of fresh water near enabled the remaining supply to be freely used--a matter of no slight consequence, to men working in the broiling sun.

Two days later the work was finished and, on the following morning, the anchors were weighed and the sails shaken out; and the brig left the inlet that had saved them from destruction and, after sailing out to sea a couple of miles, came about and laid her course for the mouth of the stream.

The fishing had been continued, without intermission. Watches had again been set, and the work of attending to the lines was very welcome, as helping to pass away the four hours of darkness. By the time they left the inlet, a sufficient quantity had been salted down to last the ship's company for a week, without recourse to the salt-meat casks.

The carpenter, with three or four assistants, had patched up the second cutter--the boat that had been least injured. The others had been broken up for firewood, some of the pieces being reserved for the repairs of the cutter.

As soon as the brig reached the mouth of the stream she was anchored, two hundred yards off the shore. The water barrels had already been got up on deck, and some of these were lowered into the first cutter, of which Mr. Hardy took the command. It was not deemed advisable to employ the second boat in bringing water on board as, if heavily laden, the water would force its way in through the hastily-executed repairs. The captain, then, accompanied by Harry and an armed crew, took his place in her; and went ahead of the larger boat into the stream.

It was found to be but three or four feet deep, with a slow current and, for some little distance up, was too brackish to be used. It was not until they entered the line of forest that it was found fresh enough. The men in the first cutter proceeded to fill their casks, while those in the other boat laid in their oars and, musket in hand, watched the forest. In a few minutes the work was done, and the first cutter rowed straight for the brig; while the second cutter followed her, for some distance beyond the trees, and there waited for her return.

"So far, so good," Fairclough said; "but I am afraid that we shall be disturbed, before we have made another trip. No doubt, some of the natives followed the

cutter along the shore, yesterday. I don't suppose they recognized what your object was, as you did not enter the stream; but when they saw the brig going the same way this morning, I have no doubt that they set off in this direction. However, with one more boat load we can manage, well enough, until we reach the Hooghly for, with this wind, we shall make a quick run."

In a quarter of an hour the cutter was seen returning and, when it approached them, Fairclough again took the lead. All appeared still in the forest, and the men had just begun to refill the casks, when a shower of arrows fell among the boats.

"Let half your men go on with their work, Mr. Hardy, and the others stand to their arms."

Not a single foe was visible, but the arrows still flew fast from among the trees.

"Open fire!" Fairclough said. "Fire anywhere among the bushes. I don't suppose that we shall hit them, but it may frighten them. They can't know much about firearms."

From both boats a scattering fire of musketry at once opened, the men loading and firing as quickly as they could. The effect was immediate. Arrows still fell, but only occasionally; and evidently shot at random, for but few of them came near the boats.

The men in the first cutter were working energetically, dipping breakers into the water and emptying them into the large casks. In three or four minutes these were filled, and Hardy hailed the captain.

"We are full up, now, sir, both casks and breakers."

"Then retire at once, Mr. Hardy. We will follow you."

As they issued from under the trees, the arrows again fell fast.

"Don't fire," the captain said; "perhaps they may issue out, and then we will give them a lesson--that it is better not to interfere with men who are doing them no harm."

This proved to be the case. No one had been hit by the fire from the boats and, now that the shooting had ceased, the natives, with shouts of triumph, ran out from the forest. There were some hundreds of them.

The captain hailed the boat in front.

"Stop rowing, Mr. Hardy, and open fire on them.

"Now, lads," he went on, to his own crew, "fire steadily, and don't throw away a shot."

Illustration: The rattle of musketry broke out again.

As the rattle of musketry broke out again from both boats, many of the natives dropped. The others stopped, at once. A shower of arrows was discharged; and then, as the fire was kept up, they fled back into the woods; and the men, again taking to their oars, rowed out without further molestation to the brig. None of the crew had been killed, but four were wounded by the arrows.

"I hope they are not poisoned," Fairclough said, in a low voice, to Harry. "I don't know whether they use poison, on these islands; but we must hope not. However, we will not frighten them by even hinting at the possibility of such a thing."

Happily, however, no evil symptoms resulted. The wounds were, for the most part slight and, the next day, all were able to return to their duty. The fair weather now set in and, ten days later, the brig dropped anchor in the river, opposite Calcutta.

Harry at once went ashore, and handed to the Governor a full report of what had taken place.

"I have not time to read this rather bulky report of yours, at present, Captain Lindsay," the latter said, with a smile. "Please give me the pith of it, as shortly as possible."

"The island, sir, is well adapted for a trading station; and would, I should think, when the forests are partly cleared away, be a healthy one. I have interviewed the tumangong, who has signed a document agreeing, at any time in the future that it may be desired, to cede either a trading station or the whole island to us. He was greatly pleased with the presents that you sent; and is, I believe, thoroughly in earnest in his desire for a trading station to be established so close to him. The Rajah of Johore has ratified this agreement, and has given his cordial consent for the cession of the island to us.

"It seems that he, himself, is an usurper. The rightful heir is a boy of seven or eight years old, and I think it is possible that, either at the present man's death, or possibly even before that, he may ascend the throne. At present, he and his mother are in the hands of the reigning rajah; but I have promised her that, if we

take possession of Singapore, she and her son can find an asylum there, and a small pension for her maintenance; and she, on her part, has promised that she will bring up her son to regard us as his best friends; and that he, if he ascends the throne, shall also ratify the treaty, and will become our warm ally.

"As to the Dutch, the reply of their Governor is with the report, but certainly it is an unfavourable one; and no cooperation, in the work of repressing piracy, can be expected from them."

"I did not expect it, Captain Lindsay; and indeed, as I told you at the time, only sent you to Batavia in order to account for the presence of one of our ships of war in those waters.

"Well, sir, your mission has been, in all respects, most satisfactory. I shall read your report, and give it full consideration, at my leisure. For the present you will remain here, available for any office, military or civil; but at present, at any rate, you will retain your civil employment.

"I will not ask you to dine with me, today, as it is hardly likely that I shall have time to read your report, this afternoon; but I shall be glad if you will do so, tomorrow, and you can then answer any questions that may suggest themselves to me."

Chapter 15: Assaye.

While the Deccan had been torn by civil war, the Government of Bombay had extended their territory. The Nabob of Surat, who had been under their protection, had died; and they had taken the government of the province into their own hands. A civil war having broken out, at Baroda, they had supported one of the rival princes; and had, after a good deal of fighting, placed their candidate on the throne--various districts being assigned to them, in return for their assistance.

Holkar, on hearing of Bajee's arrival at Bassein, placed his brother Amrud on the musnud, and commenced a series of atrocities, in Poona, equal to that which it had suffered at the hands of Ghatgay; respectable inhabitants being robbed and ill treated, many tortured, and some killed, in order to wring from them the treasures that they were supposed to have concealed.

During the months that followed his return to Calcutta, Harry remained attached to the staff of the Marquis of Wellesley--for to this title Lord Mornington had succeeded, during his absence, on the death of his father--and was sent on various missions; among others accompanying the Governor General's brother, the Honorable Henry Wellesley, to the court of Oude. He could now speak Hindustani, as well as Mahratti; and was very useful in acting as an interpreter, and in aiding to carry on the negotiations.

In February, 1803, he was sent by the Governor General to join the force that Major General Wellesley was preparing, in Mysore, to aid Bajee Rao to recover his throne. The treaty that the latter had concluded with the Government, on his arrival at Bassein, was a most advantageous one to the English. In return for their assistance, he agreed that a force of infantry, with guns and European artillerymen, should be stationed within his territories; their maintenance being paid by handing over to the Company a large amount of territory. The two parties were to support each other in case of war, and the Peishwa bound himself not to make aggressions against other states, nor to negotiate with them without the Governor's consent. The Peishwa agreed, also, to abandon the Mahratta

claims on Surat, and other districts that had been occupied by the English.

On arriving at General Wellesley's camp, Harry reported himself to that officer for service.

"I am very glad to have you with me, Captain Lindsay. I have frequently heard my brother speak of your services, and your perfect knowledge of Mahratti, and your acquaintance with its people will be of great value to me.

"You know the Peishwa well. Do you think that he will be faithful to the engagement that he has made with us?"

"Certainly not, sir. He has been intriguing, ever since he ascended the musnud. His duplicity is only equalled by his treachery and, as soon as he is restored, in Poona, he will again begin his intrigues with Scindia and the other Mahratta chiefs."

"That is the opinion that I have formed of him, from what I have heard," the general said. "However, the terms of the treaty will render him practically our servant; for we shall maintain a body of troops near Poona, which will effectually prevent any scheme of his from succeeding.

"What course Holkar will take, we cannot say; but the other Mahratta chiefs have all entered into a confederacy against us, and we shall have the forces of Scindia, of the Rajah of Bhopal, the Rajah of Berar, and the Rajah of Kolapoore to deal with."

The partition of Mysore had, indeed, done much to unite the Mahrattas together. The ever-increasing power of the British was a serious source of alarm for, in addition to Mysore, Lord Wellesley had, without a shadow of justification, obtained the control of Oude.

"I am sorry, sir, that the Rajah of Berar has declared against us. I was nearly three months with him; and should, after the news of the capture of Seringapatam, have fallen a victim to the fury of the Mohammedans in the city, had he not taken me under his protection. But at the same time, I have no doubt in my mind that he was ready to join whichever side was victorious."

"You have, then, no good opinion of the Mahrattas, Captain Lindsay?"

"I have met but one honest man among them. Nana Furnuwees was not only an extraordinary man, but devoted his talents wholly to the good of the state. His word could always be relied upon. His life was simple, and his habits frugal. I honoured and esteemed him, greatly."

"Yes, it was owing to you, as my brother told me, that he was released from prison. I was greatly struck with the story, when I heard it; because it showed how much can be accomplished, even by the youngest officer who is active, and enterprising, and ready to act on his own initiative. I saw a copy of Mr. Uhtoff's report of the affair.

"Well, you will be attached to my staff, with no particular duties, at present; but doubtless we shall find plenty for you to do, when we once cross the frontier into the Mahratta country."

Harry found that, in addition to the eight thousand infantry and seventeen hundred cavalry, under the command of General Wellesley, the Nizam's force of eight thousand regular troops and fifteen thousand irregulars were advancing towards the frontier, the whole commanded by Colonel Stephenson. On the 25th of March these forces advanced, and were joined by numerous small Mahratta chiefs in the Peishwa's interest. General Wellesley's army advanced straight on Poona, which was evacuated at once by Holkar's force and, as it was stated that he intended to burn the town, before he retired, the general hastened forward with his cavalry and, on the 20th of April, took possession of the place. Colonel Stephenson, whose cooperation was no longer required, moved north towards the Godavery, to protect the country against the irruptions of Holkar.

Four weeks later Bajee Rao arrived from the coast, and resumed his seat on the musnud amid great rejoicings by the inhabitants; who had suffered terribly, both at the hands of Ghatgay and Holkar.

Scindia, having recovered from the effects of his defeat by Holkar, had returned, crossed the Nerbudda, and encamped on the Nizam's frontier. He was busy preparing for war, in conjunction with the Rajah of Berar; and had even made overtures, to Holkar, to join in opposing the English. Bajee Rao himself, as was afterwards discovered, was also in friendly communication with Scindia.

The Resident at Scindia's court was ordered to leave it, unless that prince retired from his position on the Nizam's frontier. Scindia, when summoned, sent a defiant reply and, as it was now evident that war was impending, General Wellesley was invested with full powers; and Lord Lake, who commanded the army of Hindustan, was ordered to advance to attack the formidable force of French infantry, under Perron, and take possession of Delhi, Agra, and other places held by the Mahrattas. Another attempt was made to persuade Scindia to retire; but evasive answers were returned, and it was not until the 3rd of August that the Resident quitted Scindia, and Wellesley prepared to attack Ahmednuggur.

The possession of this place was of great importance, because it was situated close to the Nizam's frontier, and afforded great facilities for future operations. The town was surrounded by a wall, flanked by towers; and was defended by a number of Arabs, and a battalion of Scindia's regular infantry. These offered a vigorous resistance for, after a breach had been made in the walls, and the troops had entered, they retired; fighting from house to house, and keeping up a heavy fire. However, by nightfall they were driven inside their fort.

A battery of four guns was erected, within four hundred yards of it; and these opened with such effect that the governor surrendered, on being allowed to depart with the garrison and their private property.

On the 24th, General Wellesley crossed the Godavery; Colonel Stephenson moving in the direction of Aurungabad. Scindia and the Rajah of Berar were now within forty miles of him; but they suddenly turned off, as if intending to make a dash for Hyderabad, where the Nizam had expired, three weeks before.

Wellesley followed close after them, and they then turned and took up a position to the north of Julnapoor, a town lying east of Aurungabad. On the 2nd of September, Julnapoor was captured by Colonel Stephenson; who afterwards made a night attack upon Scindia's camp, inflicting considerable loss.

On the 21st the whole Mahratta army, with sixteen battalions of regular infantry, were encamped twenty-two miles north of Julnapoor and, the next day, the army marched against them by two routes; Colonel Stephenson taking the western road, and General Wellesley the eastern.

The next afternoon, when about to halt, General Wellesley learned that the Mahrattas were encamped about six miles from him, on the banks of the Kaitna. He determined to attack them at once, without waiting for Colonel Stephenson; for in another day they would, in all probability, send off their infantry, and begin to carry on a desultory warfare with their horse.

Illustration: Plan of the Battle of Assaye.

The general rode on, with his staff and an escort of cavalry, and obtained a view of the Mahratta host from rising ground. They were in the fork formed by the junction of the Kaitna with the Juah. Their right consisted wholly of cavalry, and was protected by the high and rocky bank of the stream; which was, at one or two points, impassable for guns. Their left, consisting of the infantry and artillery, was posted in the village of Assaye, which lay near the fork of the river.

The general determined, at once, to attack at this point. The force under his command consisted of four battalions of Sepoys, and the 74th and 78th Regiments; with the 19th Dragoons, and three regiments of native cavalry--in all, four thousand five hundred men. Opposed to them were ten thousand five hundred disciplined troops, taught and commanded by European officers; Scindia's irregulars, and the infantry of the Rajah of Berar; with a well-appointed train of artillery, of over a hundred guns, and some forty thousand cavalry.

From the position in which the British force arrived they had to march, for some distance, parallel with the river; and exposed to a terrible artillery fire, which created such havoc, especially among the bullocks drawing the guns, that the cavalry could not move forward. The infantry therefore proceeded alone, crossed the Kaitna by a ford; and then, swinging round, advanced against the village. While they were crossing the river, the Mahratta cavalry were brought up from their former position, and took post behind Assaye.

The steadiness with which the little force advanced to the attack, against so immense an army, had already had the effect of shaking the Mahrattas. It seemed to them that their opponents must be conscious that they were invincible. Pouring in a volley, the first British line charged with the bayonet. The Mahratta infantry at once wavered, and then gave way; and fell back on their second line, posted near the Juah.

As the 74th Regiment passed through the village, a body of Mahratta horse charged them; but they were met by the British cavalry, who drove them, with great slaughter, into the river. The second Mahratta line gave way, with scarcely any resistance; and the British cavalry, pressing hotly after them, cut them up terribly. The infantry followed, as quickly as possible.

But suddenly there was a roar of guns, behind them; and the flying Mahrattas at once rallied, and faced their pursuers. As they advanced, the force had captured the Mahrattas' guns; but numbers of the artillerymen had thrown themselves down, lying as if dead. As soon as they saw that the British line was still pressing forward in pursuit, the artillerymen leapt to their feet and, turning the guns, opened fire.

The general at once put himself at the head of the 71st Regiment and the native cavalry and, after a desperate conflict, in which the general had his horse shot under him, succeeded in recapturing the guns. In the meantime, Colonel Maxwell with the cavalry had, again and again, charged the fugitives who had rallied; and succeeded in completely breaking them up, but was himself killed.

The battle had lasted three hours. One thousand five hundred and sixty-six of the British force were killed, or wounded, being rather more than a third of the troops engaged. The enemy left twelve hundred dead on the field of battle, and the country through which they retreated was covered with their wounded. The camp, with a number of bullocks, and a large quantity of military stores and ninety-eight cannon, fell into the hands of the victors.

Scindia, in great alarm, sent an ambassador to the British camp and, after various conferences, a truce was agreed upon between him and the general; the conditions being that Scindia should not approach within forty miles of his frontier, and that the British should not enter his dominions.

On the day after the battle of Assaye, the general sent for Harry.

"Captain Lindsay, I have a mission which you can carry out better than any of my other officers. I wish you to make your way across the country, to inform General Lake of the victory we have won; and to point out that, at present, Scindia is paralysed, and will be unable to send troops to aid his force in the northwest for, should he do so, I shall at once enter his territory.

"Do not run the risk of returning, but tell Lord Lake that my orders are that you shall remain with him. I do not think that we shall have much fighting here though, no doubt, later on, Holkar and the Rajah of Berar will reform their armies and try conclusions with us again; while, on the other side, there is likely to be heavy fighting. You must, of course, travel in disguise, but you are already accustomed to that."

"I will willingly undertake the mission, sir."

"Would you like to take anyone with you?"

"I should be glad if you will give me four troopers, from one of your native cavalry regiments. I shall, of course, ride as a petty chief, but I might be interrupted in small villages, were I alone with only my servant; whereas, if I had four followers, it would appear natural to them, as even the pettiest leader is always accompanied by a party, however small, of horsemen."

"Certainly. I will give orders to the colonel of the 1st Cavalry to choose four well-mounted men, who can speak Mahratti. There are many such in his regiment."

There was no difficulty about disguises, for a large quantity of native clothing had been found in the camp. Harry chose a dress suitable for a native in command of some fifty or sixty men; and the four troopers attired themselves in the garments of native soldiers, which indeed differed in no way from those worn by the peasantry. Harry had packed his uniform in his native saddlebag; and also his cocked hat, after taking out the stiffening so that it would lie flat; and had exchanged his own saddle for that of one of Holkar's horsemen. He advised the men to do the same so that, when they joined Lord Lake, they would be able at once to appear in uniform. There was an abundance of native swords and spears lying where the Mahratta force had been defeated.

Abdool had at once been sent into the village, and had there succeeded in buying some brown dye, used in colouring the clothes; and with this Harry stained his face and hands and, two hours after receiving the order, rode out from camp, followed by Abdool and the four troopers.

He considered that there was but little danger in the journey as, for the greater

portion of the distance, he would ride through the dominions of the young Nizam. He would, however, have to pass through the territory of the Rajah of Berar; beyond this, he would enter the country in which the British were already supreme. While in the Nizam's dominions, he experienced no difficulties; the news of the victory of Assaye had already spread, and the inhabitants were relieved of the fears they had been entertaining of a great raid, by Holkar. The passage, therefore, of a petty chief with four followers was regarded with indifference; and indeed, he was generally supposed to be one of the Nizam's irregular cavalry, on his way with some message to Hyderabad.

Still less attention was paid to him in the villages of Berar. Many bodies of the rajah's troops had already passed through, on their way to Nagpore, and they were naturally taken to be some of the fugitives.

They travelled as rapidly as possible. The horses were all inured to long journeys, and they had made from fifty to sixty miles a day. They halted at a village, twenty miles east of Nagpore. Nothing unusual had happened, and Harry had just lain down to sleep, when there was a sound as of people gathering in front of his hut.

He was about to rise, to see what was going on; when the door was opened, and a number of armed villagers at once poured into the room, and he was seized before he had time to leap to his feet. He made no attempt at resistance but, believing that some mistake had been committed, he angrily demanded the reason of this assault.

He was dragged out into the street. As this happened he heard pistol shots and, a moment later, the four troopers rode up.

One of them had remained at the door of the hut, while the others had lain down. Seeing a number of people moving about, he had roused his companions. They had got out of the window at the back of the hut. Here their horses had been picketed and, mounting at once, they rode out, just as a body of men made a rush at the door of their hut. By the use of their pistols and swords they had broken through these and, seeing the crowd in front of the hut that Harry had occupied, they charged without hesitation.

The villagers, unprepared for such an attack, fell back; losing their hold of

Harry, and Abdool, whom they had also captured. The latter darted away and, in a few seconds, returned leading the two horses.

"Shall we set the houses alight, before we start, sahib?" one of the troopers asked.

"No; they may rally in a minute or two, and the sooner we are out of it, the better."

He turned and started at once and, as he did so, a dropping fire from matchlocks and guns was opened upon them. The villagers' arms were, however, wholly untrustworthy, and the powder bad. One of the troopers was hit in the arm but, with that exception, they rode out unharmed.

"What does it all mean, Abdool?" Harry asked as, after riding fast for a quarter of a mile, they broke into a slower pace. "Of course, they must in some way have recognized me, for I heard some of them saying, 'Death to the English infidel!'"

"It was through me that they recognized you, sahib," Abdool said. "They seized me before they entered your hut, and tied a bandage round my mouth, to prevent my giving any alarm. As they took me out into the road, one of them said:

"'Son of Sheitan, I knew you directly I saw you. You were with that English officer, in Nagpore. Then, when I looked at the head of your party I saw that, though he had changed his dress, and stained his face to the colour of ours, it was the same man who came as an envoy to our rajah, and whose house we attacked.

"'We shall hear what the rajah says to him when we take him to Nagpore.'"

"I understand now, Abdool. I have thought of my own disguise, and that of the troopers; but as you always, except when riding behind me, dress in your native clothes, it seemed to me a matter of course that you would pass without difficulty; and it never occurred to me that you must, during our three months' stay at Nagpore, have become known by sight to most of the people there. It is a bad blunder, and it will be a lesson to me, in future."

Then he turned, and spoke to the troopers.

"You have done well, indeed, tonight," he said, "and I owe it to you that I have escaped, if not death, an imprisonment of months. If I had been taken to Nagpore, and handed over to the rajah, he would doubtless have imprisoned me; but would not have ventured to take my life, for he would have known that the part that he had taken against us would be more readily forgiven, than the murder of a British officer. But I do not think I should have reached the palace. Furious as the people must be at their crushing defeat at Assaye, they would have torn me to pieces, the moment they heard from my captors that I was an Englishman; therefore I feel that you have saved my life.

"How was it that you were not also surprised?"

When he heard how the alarm had been given, and how they had at once mounted and ridden out, just as a party were about to enter the hut, he said:

"It was well done, and shows that you are quick fellows, as well as brave. I shall report your conduct when we join the army, and shall myself give you a batta of six months' pay.

"Now, we will ride on for a few miles, and then leave the road and take shelter, till morning, in a wood. The horses have had five hours' rest at the village, and there will be time for them to have as much more, before we mount again.

"It is lucky that you bought some grain for them, this evening, instead of waiting till the morning, so they can have a good feed before starting."

Henceforth they avoided the villages as much as possible, and passed unquestioned until they reached the Hustoo river which, at this point, formed the eastern boundary of Berar. They swam the horses across and, after stopping for a few hours at Dundava, rode on; and continued their journey due north, and crossed the Sone river at Maunpoor, having accomplished a journey of nearly a thousand miles in twenty days.

On arriving there Harry found that General Lake had left, six weeks before, and had encamped at Secundara where, on the 26th of August, despatches had

been received from the Governor General, authorizing active operations against Scindia and his allies; and two days later the force halted on the Mahratta frontier, within sight of the mosque at Coel, where Perron was encamped.

Perron, a French officer in Scindia's service, commanded no less than forty-three thousand men, and four hundred and sixty-four guns. About half of these were with Scindia in the Deccan, and the force encamped at Coel numbered about twenty thousand.

Perron, an active and ambitious man, had assumed an almost independent position. A large grant of territory had been given him by Scindia, and in this he ruled with absolute authority and, had it not been for the interposition of the British, it is probable that he would, ere long, have assumed the position of an independent prince. Indeed, his army of partially disciplined men was more than a match for the whole force of Scindia.

At a short distance from Coel was the fortress of Alighur, which was considered to be almost impregnable. It was defended by a triple line of walls and fortifications, so that an enemy entering it would have to advance by a devious route from one gate to another, exposed all the time to a terrible artillery fire. It was almost surrounded by a swamp, and the only approach was along a narrow strip of firm ground, leading to the gate.

Early on the morning of the 29th, the British troops advanced to attack Perron's force; but it at once drew off, although the infantry were supported by twenty thousand horse. Believing that Alighur was impregnable, Perron left a strong force there under one of his officers, named Pedron, and marched with his army towards Agra.

On the 4th of September a storming party, commanded by Colonel Monson, left the British camp; and was accompanied by two batteries, each consisting of four eighteen-pounders. A portion of the defenders was posted on the strip of dry ground, outside the gate, where a battery with three guns had been mounted. Before daybreak, Colonel Monson moved forward, with two companies of the 76th Regiment. The enemy took the alarm before he reached their battery, and fled towards the gate, without waiting to discharge their guns.

Monson pressed after them, in the hope of being able to enter before the gate

was shut; but he was too late. The entrance was raked by the guns on the walls, which opened with a destructive fire of grape. Ladders were applied to the walls, but these were manned by so strong a body of pikemen that it was found impossible to gain a footing. So bold were the defenders that, as the soldiers fell back, they ran down the ladders and pursued them hotly; but were soon beaten off.

A six pounder was brought up to burst open the gate, but its fire did but little damage; and a twelve pounder was then employed. The gates yielded, and the storming party rushed in. But during the twenty minutes that had elapsed, between the guns opening fire and the time at which the gate yielded, the troops had been exposed to a terrible fire, both of grape and musketry. Colonel Monson was wounded, and the loss was heavy.

The second gate was forced with comparatively little difficulty, although a terrible fire of artillery and musketry was kept up, from the walls on either side of the road, and from the bastion commanding it. The assailants pressed so hotly, upon the defenders of the second gate, that they gained the third before the enemy had time to close it.

But another and stronger gate had still to be passed, and here a desperate stand was made. The troops were obliged to take shelter, close to the wall, until the twelve pounder was brought up. It was of little avail, for the artillerymen were shot down as soon as they endeavoured to work it. At length, two or three officers gathered a party, and made a rush at the wicket gate. Half a dozen muskets were discharged, together, at the lock; and the gate at once gave way.

The whole party rushed forward into the interior of the fortress, gained the ramparts, and opened fire on the enemy, who in vain attempted to drive out the force gathered near the gate; and Pedron, finding further resistance impossible, surrendered.

The loss of the victors, in killed and wounded, amounted to two hundred and twenty-three; while that of the garrison, in killed alone, exceeded two thousand. An enormous quantity of military stores was found here, the French having made it their chief depot. The number of guns captured was two hundred and eighty-one.

On the 7th of September, the army marched for Delhi. On the way, General Lake received a letter from Monsieur Perron, saying that he had quitted the service of Scindia, and requesting a free passage to Lucknow. The easy capture of a fortress that he and his engineers had rendered, as they believed, impregnable, and the loss of all his military stores, sufficed to show him that he could not hope to withstand the progress of the British; and that it was better for him to resign, at once, than to continue a hopeless struggle, especially as the loss of Alighur would excite the fury of Scindia, and possibly lead to his arrest and execution. He had, indeed, received information that he had already lost Scindia's confidence; and that intrigues were being carried on, with some of his officers, to deprive him of his jagheer and command.

His request was therefore granted and, escorted by a party of his own bodyguard, and by some British dragoons, he proceeded to Lucknow and, afterwards, settled in the neighbourhood of Chandernagore.

The capture of Alighur had indeed made a tremendous impression upon the native mind and, as the army advanced, several fortresses that might have made a long defence were abandoned.

On the 11th, General Lake's army encamped within six miles of Delhi; but the tents were but just pitched when intelligence was received that a large force of the enemy was in position, two miles distant. It consisted of sixteen battalions of regular infantry, six thousand cavalry, and a large train of artillery; commanded by Monsieur Bourquieu, Perron's second in command.

General Lake at once, with the whole of his cavalry, reconnoitred the position that the enemy had taken up. It was two miles from the camp, and consisted of a low hill, covered by broken ground on each flank. Seeing that the enemy could only be attacked in front, General Lake ordered the infantry and artillery to come up.

While waiting for their arrival, the cavalry suffered some loss from the enemy's artillery fire. The general, seeing that it was doubtful whether an attack on so strong a position would be successful, determined to attempt to draw the enemy from it. The cavalry advanced a short distance and then, as the fire upon them redoubled, they were ordered to fall back. Their line had hidden the approach of the infantry from the enemy; and the latter, believing that the

cavalry were retreating, left their entrenchments and started in pursuit, with shouts of victory. The cavalry opened right and left, and the enemy found themselves face to face with a steady line of infantry; who at once advanced, the general himself leading them, at the head of the 76th Regiment.

A tremendous fire was opened upon them by the Mahratta guns but, when within a hundred paces of the enemy, the whole line fired a volley, and then charged with the bayonet. The enemy did not stand for a moment but, seized by a panic, fled in all directions, pursued by the cavalry and the horse artillery battery. These followed them as far as the banks of the Jumna, and great numbers of the enemy lost their lives in endeavouring to cross the river.

The British loss, in killed and wounded, was nearly six hundred men; while that of the enemy was estimated at two thousand. Sixty-eight pieces of cannon, two waggons laden with treasure, and thirty-seven with ammunition fell into the hands of the victors who, on the 14th, crossed the Jumna, and took possession of the city without opposition; being welcomed enthusiastically by the population, who had long groaned under the terrible oppression of their Mahratta masters.

Two days later, General Lake paid a visit to the unfortunate emperor, who was now eighty-three years old. He had been blinded by his brutal conquerors, and lived in a state of misery, and poverty, greater than that of any of the tillers of the fields of the wide empire over which he had once ruled. He lived for another three years, and was succeeded by his son, Mirza Akbar.

Leaving a force at Delhi, General Lake marched southward, as the strong town of Agra was still in the possession of Scindia's troops. He arrived before the city on the 4th of October and, in three days, had cut off their communication with the surrounding country; his cavalry being assisted by five thousand horse, sent by the Rajah of Bhurtpoor, who had, as soon as he heard of the fall of Alighur, hastened to enter into an alliance with the British.

The garrison was strong, and seven battalions of Scindia's regular infantry were encamped on the glacis, and held possession of the town. The garrison, however, refused to admit them into the fort; as they had determined to share, among themselves, the large amount of treasure deposited there.

Inside the fort great confusion prevailed. The troops had been commanded by

English officers, in Scindia's service, and these had been imprisoned as soon as the war broke out. No answer was, therefore, made to the summons to surrender.

On the morning of the 10th, Scindia's infantry were attacked. They fought stoutly, but were finally defeated, and their twenty-six brass guns captured. Two days later, two thousand five hundred of them, who had retired when defeated, and taken shelter under the guns of the fort, came over in a body and took service with the British.

Siege operations were at once commenced and, on the 17th, a battery of eight eighteen-pounders opened fire, with such effect that a breach was almost effected; when the garrison released the British officers, and sent them to the camp to offer to surrender. They were allowed to do so, and to leave the fort with their clothes, but without arms. Six thousand then marched out under these conditions.

One hundred and sixty-four pieces of cannon, with a vast quantity of ammunition and stores, were found in the fort; together with twenty-two lakhs of rupees, which were divided among the captors.

On the 20th, Harry, with his little party, joined the army. He and his troopers had, at Benares, resumed their uniform. He at once waited on General Lake, and handed him the despatch in which General Wellesley had described the victory at Assaye.

"This is great news, indeed, sir," the general said, "but I cannot understand how you have brought it here so speedily."

"I rode in disguise through Berar, sir, and of course the troopers were also disguised. Except that I was attacked in one village--where I was recognized by a peasant who had seen me, when I was staying as the Governor General's envoy at Nagpore, before the capture of Seringapatam--I got through without difficulty."

"Yes; I heard from the Marquis of Wellesley that the rajah had been kept from declaring against us, by a young officer of great ability, whom he had sent to Nagpore for the purpose, and who narrowly escaped assassination there when the news of the fall of Seringapatam was received. I think he said that you had a

perfect knowledge of Mahratti, and also of Hindustani; and that he had sent you to accompany his brother, General Wellesley.

"Well, the news of Assaye is welcome, indeed, and Scindia will be very chary of weakening his army in the Deccan by sending reinforcements in this direction.

"I see, sir, that General Wellesley has begged me to temporarily place you on my staff as, in the present troubled state of the country, it would be dangerous to endeavour to make your way back to him. Of course, I will gladly do so, for your knowledge of the languages will be very useful to me, for none of my staff can speak either of them well."

General Lake sent for the head of his staff, introduced Harry to him, and informed him of the news that he had brought; and then ordered a general salute to be fired, by all the available guns in the fort and artillery batteries. It was not long before the roar of cannon began, telling the army that a splendid victory had been won in the west; and a short time later notices were affixed to the gates of the forts, and other public places, relating how General Wellesley, with but four thousand five hundred men, had routed the army of Holkar and the Rajah of Berar--amounting in all to over fifty thousand, of whom ten thousand five hundred were disciplined troops, commanded by Frenchmen. The news excited the utmost enthusiasm among the troops, as the disproportion of numbers was far greater than it had been at the battle of Delhi.

Chapter 16: A Disastrous Retreat.

A few days later, the news was received that seven of Scindia's regular battalions had just arrived, from the Deccan, under the command of a French officer; and had been joined by five others, the whole amounting to nine thousand well-trained infantry, with five thousand cavalry and seventy-five guns. As it was understood that they were intending the recapture of Delhi, General Lake marched against them on the 27th of October and, pressing forward with all speed, came up with them on the morning of the 1st of November. They at once retreated; and General Lake, whose infantry was still some distance in the rear, determined to attack them, at once. As they retired, the enemy cut the bank of a large tank and flooded the ground, thereby impeding the advance of the cavalry, and giving time to Scindia's men to take up a strong position between the villages of Laswaree and Mohaulpore.

Illustration: Plan of the Battle of Laswaree.

Their right was protected by a deep ravine; their rear by a rivulet; their front was lined with their seventy-five guns, chained together so as to protect the artillerymen from a charge of horse. The ground in front of them was covered with deep grass, which partially concealed their disposition.

The three brigades of cavalry charged boldly up, but were received with a terrible fire, and fell back with much loss and, seeing the impossibility of carrying the enemy's position without infantry, General Lake deferred making another attack until they came up. As soon as these and the artillery reached the spot, he prepared for an assault.

The Mahrattas had, in the meantime, changed their position; and drawn up one line in front and one in rear of the village of Mohaulpore. The French officer who had been in command of their army had, two days before, left their camp and ridden to meet General Lake's army; and had there surrendered, and a Mahratta officer had succeeded him in command. Shaken by the repeated successes of the British, he now offered to surrender his guns. An hour was

given him to do so but, as no movement was made at the end of that time, orders were given for the advance.

The infantry consisted of the 76th Regiment and six battalions of Sepoys. One of the three brigades of cavalry was directed to support them; another was sent to the right to watch the enemy, and to take advantage of any confusion that might appear among them; the third brigade formed the reserve. The four batteries of artillery were to support the attack. General Lake's plan was to turn the enemy's right flank, and he moved off his infantry along the bank of a rivulet which ran round near the right angle of the enemy's new position. The high grass, for a time, concealed the movement but, as soon as the Mahrattas perceived it they threw back their right flank, and opened a tremendous fire upon the village.

The British artillery now opened, but the enemy's cannon were far superior in number, and were well served; and the ranks of the 76th, who were in front of the advance, were terribly thinned. The general was with them and, as soon as a battalion and a half of Sepoys had come up, led them against the enemy's position.

The latter now opened with canister and, the ground being of a broken character, the formation of the assailants' line was to some extent disordered and the Mahratta cavalry charged. They were repulsed by heavy volleys from the infantry, but they rallied and, being reinforced, were about to resume the attack, when the general ordered the 29th Dragoons to charge. They burst through both lines of the enemy's infantry, wheeled round and charged the cavalry, and drove them from the field; and then turning again, fell on the rear of the second line, which was now hotly engaged with the British infantry who, following the Dragoons at the double, had rushed forward on the guns, captured them, and driven the first line back on the second.

The rest of the British infantry had now come up; but Perron's regular infantry, who were all drawn from hill districts, and had been victorious in many a fight, resisted to the last. Two thousand were surrounded and made prisoners, but the rest all fought until they fell.

The victory of Laswaree cost the British eight hundred and twenty-four men, killed and wounded; but it completed the overthrow of the whole of the

regiments trained by Perron and de Boigne, and laid the tract of country watered by the Jumna under the power of the British.

Harry, who had accompanied the general, having carried the order to the Dragoons to charge, rode with them and came unhurt out of the desperate fight.

A few days later the army quitted Laswaree and moved towards Agra, resting for a fortnight at Besawur. The great successes gained by both the British armies had had their effect, and a number of rajahs came in to make a treaty of alliance. General Lake's force, after a short rest, then marched southward, and took up a position at Biana.

While these events had been going on, a detachment from the army had entered Bundelcund. This had been under the control of the Peishwa but, by an agreement made with him in August, it was ceded to the Company; he receiving, in exchange, grants in the southern Mahratta country, and near Surat. He sent orders to this effect to his officers.

Shamsheer, a descendant of the first Peishwa, refused to obey him; and the British force entered Bundelcund and, being joined by a powerful chief--with eight thousand irregular infantry, four thousand horse, and three regular battalions of infantry, commanded by a European officer--captured several strongholds. Shamsheer then treated for peace but, after having delayed the advance for two months, finally broke off negotiations, suddenly; and the British at once laid siege to Calpee, which capitulated on the 4th of December. Finding himself unable to resist the farther advance of the British, Shamsheer then surrendered.

In October, Ambajee Inglia, who had acted as Scindia's representative and held, under him, extensive territories, had offered to renounce his dependence on Scindia, and become a tributary of the British. Negotiations were, as usual, spun out to a great length; but a treaty was concluded with him, on the 16th of December, by which he agreed to surrender Gwalior and the lands to the north of it, and to remain as an independent sovereign of the other territories in his possession.

A corps, under Colonel White, was sent to take possession of the fortress. The commandant refused to recognize the arrangement but, upon batteries being

erected, a breach was soon effected, and the garrison surrendered.

The news came that Scindia had broken his treaty, and had been defeated with great slaughter by General Wellesley, who afterwards besieged the strong fortress of Gawilghur. Guns were brought up, with great difficulty, over thirty miles of mountains and ravines. They opened fire on the 13th of December and, as soon as a breach was practicable, the place was carried by storm, and a large quantity of guns and ammunition fell into the hands of the British.

The Rajah of Berar, terrified at the defeat of Scindia, now sent to ask for peace, and ceded the district of Cuttack; thereby placing the whole of the maritime provinces, between Madras and Calcutta, in the hands of the British. Scindia, finding himself forsaken by his ally, also made peace, surrendering a considerable portion of his territories.

1804 opened quietly, but peace was not long maintained. Holkar had, after his expulsion from Poona, made peace with Scindia and, when hostilities commenced, had waited to see the result before committing himself. At first he viewed with satisfaction the misfortunes that had befallen Scindia and the Rajah of Berar but, when he saw that they were threatened with annihilation, he prepared to aid them. He had, however, delayed too long and, when Scindia and the Rajah of Berar had been obliged to crave for peace, he kept his army on the frontier of the Rajah of Jaipore, now a British ally.

General Lake addressed a letter to him, saying that the British Government were willing to leave him unmolested; but requiring, as a pledge of his good intentions, that he should withdraw into his own territory. Holkar sent back a long list of demands, which were impossible to satisfy; and also addressed a letter to General--now Sir Arthur--Wellesley, threatening to overrun the whole country, unless some of the districts in the Deccan were ceded to him and, after sending off this letter, he began raiding the territory of Jaipore. Colonel Murray was therefore sent to aid the rajah, and to march in the direction of Holkar's capital; while Lord Lake marched westward, until he neared Jaipore.

On the 15th of May a detachment captured the strong fort of Rampoora, the sole fortress which Holkar possessed north of the Chumbul river; and Holkar immediately fell back. The heat being now intense, the general left Colonel Monson, with five battalions of Sepoys and three thousand irregular horse, sent

by Rajpoot allies, and returned to Agra, losing numbers of his men on the march, by sunstroke.

Harry had been left with Colonel Monson. The latter, intending to cooperate with Colonel Murray, entered Holkar's territory and, on the way, captured a strong hill fort. He afterwards advanced fifty miles beyond the range of mountains that formed the frontier.

On the 7th of July he heard that Holkar was advancing, with his whole army, to meet him. Monson's force was much weakened by the absence of two detachments, one of which had garrisoned the hill fort that had been captured, and another had gone to fetch a supply of grain. Almost at the same time he heard a report that Colonel Murray intended to fall back.

After consulting with Harry, who, as one of Lord Lake's staff, was considered as his special representative, it was agreed that it would be madness, with so small a force, to give battle to Holkar and, at four in the morning on the following day, Monson sent off his baggage and stores; and remained, with his troops drawn up in order of battle, until nine o'clock; leaving the irregular cavalry, under Lieutenant Lucan, to follow in half an hour, and bring him intelligence of Holkar's movements.

Monson marched twelve miles when a trooper of the irregular cavalry overtook him, with the news that they had been completely defeated by Holkar's army, and that Lucan had been made prisoner. The retreat was continued, and the force reached the pass across the mountains on the evening of the following day, and took up a position there. Holkar's cavalry appeared next morning and, on the 11th, Holkar himself arrived and sent in a demand for the surrender of the cannon and muskets. This was refused, and Holkar, dividing his horse into three bodies, charged the detachment vigorously in front and both flanks; but the defenders again and again repulsed the attack. Holkar then drew off about four miles, and was joined by the artillery and infantry.

"What is your opinion, Captain Lindsay?" Colonel Monson said.

"If we had a regiment of British infantry with us, sir, I should say that we might attack them, with success; but with only four battalions of Sepoys, it seems to me that a retreat would be the better choice of two evils. We shall

undoubtedly suffer heavily. The rain is pouring down unceasingly, and I doubt whether we shall be able to get the guns along; but we ought to be able to march as fast as Holkar's infantry and, as to his cavalry, we can certainly beat them off."

Two long marches were made. The enemy's cavalry swarmed round them, but dared not attack; and the force arrived safely at Kotah, where they expected to find food and shelter. The rajah, however, closed the gates and refused to admit them; and the force pressed on towards a ford on the Chumbul. The distance was only seven miles but, from the incessant rain and the state of the road, a whole day was spent in accomplishing it.

The ford was impassable, but during the night it subsided a little, and they were able to cross. A day's halt was necessary, in order to procure some grain; and on the 15th, when the march was continued, the guns sank so deep in the mud that they could not be extricated, and they were therefore spiked and abandoned.

Two days later the force reached another river, but it was so swollen that it was unfordable. The artillerymen were sent across, on elephants; but ten days were spent in carrying the rest of the troops over, partly on elephants and partly on rafts. Terrible privation was suffered, and many men were drowned in crossing; while the wives and children of the Sepoys who, by some gross mismanagement, were left to the last, were slaughtered by the enemy under the eyes of their husbands and fathers.

On the 29th the corps reached Rampoora; where a reinforcement of two battalions of Sepoys, six guns, and a body of cavalry, together with a supply of grain forwarded by Lord Lake from Agra, awaited them. Notwithstanding this reinforcement, Colonel Monson considered it his duty to continue his retreat and, on the 22nd of August, reached the Banass, which was also in flood. Some boats, however, were found, and a portion of the troops were carried across.

Early the next morning Holkar's cavalry appeared, and encamped at a distance of four miles. The next day the river was fordable, and most of the baggage and four battalions crossed. The enemy's cavalry also crossed in great numbers, both to the right and left of the British position.

Their artillery and infantry arrived in the afternoon, and opened fire on the

battalions still left on the bank. Harry was with these. Seeing that they were being decimated by the guns, he called upon the Sepoys to charge. This they did with great spirit, drove back the enemy, and captured some of the guns; but the Mahrattas soon rallied and, led by Holkar himself, charged in such overwhelming numbers that the handful of troops was nearly annihilated. Harry, seeing that all was lost, cut his way through the enemy's horse and succeeded in crossing the river.

Illustration: Harry succeeded in crossing the river.

Colonel Monson continued his retreat, and reached Kooshalpur on the night of the 25th. He found that the native officer in command there had declared for Holkar; but that the fort, which contained the elephants and baggage, still held out. That evening Monson learnt that some of his Sepoy officers were in communication with Holkar; and two companies, and a large portion of the native cavalry deserted.

The whole of the enemy's cavalry now encamped round the detachment. At seven in the evening Colonel Monson continued his march, forming his troops into an oblong, which the enemy in vain attempted to break. On the night of the 27th, after halting for a few hours, he moved again, at one in the morning; but had no sooner cleared the broken ground than the enemy's cavalry made a desperate charge. This was repulsed with great coolness, the Sepoys reserving their fire till the enemy were within bayonet reach.

At sunset the troops, worn out by fatigue and hunger, arrived at the Biana pass; but the enemy brought up their guns, and the retreat was continued. The confusion in the ranks, which had been increasing all day, now extended; and the troops broke and fled to Agra, pursued by straggling parties of the enemy for the greater portion of the distance.

In consequence of this disastrous affair, it was decided that Lord Lake should immediately take the field; although the wet weather still continued, and a large tract of country was under water. Four weeks after the arrival of Monson, with his fugitives, the army marched out of their cantonment, and encamped on the right bank of the river.

The situation was critical. Holkar's army numbered ninety-two thousand men, of whom sixty-six thousand were cavalry, and he had with him ninety-two cannon. He had advanced to Muttra, which had been abandoned at his approach.

Lord Lake sent for Harry.

"I have another dangerous mission for you, Captain Lindsay. I consider it more than possible that Holkar will make an attempt to recapture Delhi. Colonel Ochterlony, in command there, must be warned of the probability of an attack.

He may be in ignorance of what is passing here. You will bear this despatch, urging on him to do all that he can to place the town in a state of defence, and to summon to his assistance as many irregulars as possible from the neighbouring chiefs. The distance is a hundred and twenty miles. I leave it to you whether to go in uniform, or in disguise."

"I think, sir, that I had better disguise myself as, doubtless, Holkar's cavalry are spread all over the country intent on plundering and, should I fall in with them, I ought to have no difficulty in passing myself off as one of themselves. I will leave my uniform here, to be brought on with the baggage. They might take it into their heads to search my saddlebags."

"I think that would be the wisest plan," the general said. "You will, of course, remain at Delhi till reinforcements arrive there. The despatches will be ready for you, in an hour's time."

There was no difficulty in obtaining dye at Agra, and Harry stained himself from head to foot, put on the disguise in which he had ridden with the news of Assaye and, after receiving the despatch, started at once. The direct road lay through Muttra but, as Holkar's main body was at this town, he rode to the northeast as far as Secundara. There was no occasion for any great haste, for it was certain that some little time must elapse before Holkar could march from Muttra; and he accordingly stopped for the night at Coringunga, having ridden about fifty miles. He speedily secured a room, and Abdool at once set to, to prepare a meal. While it was being cooked, there was a sound of a body of horse entering the village.

"It is unfortunate that we have stopped here, Abdool," he said. "We are sure to be questioned."

Ten minutes later the door opened, and an officer of Holkar's irregular horse entered.

"I hear that you have just arrived," he said.

"Yes; I rode in but half an hour ago."

"Where are you going?"

"To Sambol. There seems no chance of fighting, at present; and I therefore left the army to pay a visit, for a day or two, to some friends. My man has just prepared a meal. Will you share it with me?"

"I will, with pleasure," the officer said, "for I have ridden from Muttra, and may have to wait an hour before my supper is ready for me. What may be your name?"

"Puntojee. And yours?"

"Wisnas."

The officer unbuckled his sword, and seated himself on the ground, the room being entirely unfurnished.

"Were you in that affair, when we chased the English dogs from beyond the mountains to Agra?"

"Yes, I was in it; and never wish to campaign in such weather again. I was wet through for three weeks; and hardly feel that I have got dry, yet."

"They are brave fellows, those Sepoys in the English service."

"They are, indeed," Harry agreed. "It seemed that we must destroy them; and yet they withstood our attacks, weary and exhausted as they must have been. The worst of it was that, after all our exertions, there was no booty to be obtained."

"Yes, that was bad. One doesn't feel so disposed to risk one's life, when there is nothing to be gained. We did not even succeed in capturing their treasure chest. If we could have brought our infantry up, we should have destroyed them; but they had to march at the same rate as the guns; and in such weather they could get along but slowly, for it often required the bullocks of four guns to drag one through those quagmires.

"That was where the English had the advantage over us. The road was, no doubt, bad enough for them; it was infinitely worse for us, after they had cut it up in passing.

"It was a mistake when Scindia began to form regiments of infantry, and

Holkar and the Peishwa imitated him. Before that, we had India at our mercy. What power could withstand a hundred thousand horsemen, here today, there tomorrow? Then, we had it in our power to waste all the country, and to starve out the fortresses from Cuttack to the north. Our territory extended from the great mountains on the east, to the sea in the west.

"Now we can only move at the pace of footmen; and while, formerly, no infantry would venture to withstand our charge; now, as you see, a handful of Sepoys set us at defiance, repulsed our charges, and gained Agra simply because our guns and infantry could not arrive to help us."

"There can be no doubt that you are right," Harry agreed; "but I cannot blame Scindia and Holkar for forming regiments of infantry, trained by foreign officers. They had seen how the regiments so raised, by the English, had won great victories in the Carnatic and Bengal; and they did not think at that time that, ere long, they might become formidable to the Mahrattas. Scindia and Holkar raised their regiments, not to fight against the strangers, but against each other. It was their mutual hostility that so diminished the strength of the Mahrattas. When dogs fight dogs, the wild boar ravages the land."

"It is true enough," the other said. "As a nation we might have ruled Asia but, divided among ourselves, wasting our forces against each other, we have allowed the stranger to wrest province after province from us.

"Now, I will go out and see that the men have all got quarters, and that the people of the village are feeding them, as they should. In truth, we have been having a bad time, lately."

"Yes, indeed; I thought myself lucky, sometimes, to get a handful of grain after twenty hours in the saddle.

"It cannot be helped, comrade. We must drive the strangers back towards Allahabad; recover Benares, Agra, and Delhi; and then we shall be able to rest in peace, for a time, before we settle accounts with Scindia, and the others who have made a disgraceful peace with the English. We shall never have peace in the Deccan till we sack and destroy Bombay, and force the last Englishman to take to his ships."

Harry started with Abdool before daybreak the next morning and, riding all day, reached Delhi late in the evening. Putting up the horses, he proceeded to the house occupied by Colonel Ochterlony, the Resident.

"Will you tell the colonel," he said, "that I am an officer with despatches from General Lake?"

He was at once shown in. Colonel Burns, the commander of the garrison, was with the Resident. Neither was surprised that the messenger should be a native, for they knew the difficulties a British officer would encounter in travelling from Agra.

"I have ridden with a despatch for you, Colonel, from General Lake. I am Captain Lindsay, and have the honour of serving on the general's staff."

"I am glad to see you, sir," Ochterlony said, kindly. "Your name is pretty well known, to all of us, as that of an officer who has successfully carried out several dangerous enterprises; and this cannot have been one of the most dangerous of them, for indeed, in that disguise I do not think that anyone would entertain the slightest suspicion that you are not what you appear to be.

"I am told you speak Mahratta perfectly."

"I was brought up among the Mahrattas, sir. I have got through easily, and only once came upon a body of Holkar's cavalry."

"You have just arrived, Captain Lindsay?"

"Yes, not ten minutes ago."

The colonel rang the bell, and directed a servant who came in to bring in wine and refreshments. He then opened the despatches which, after reading, he passed across to Colonel Burns.

"Of course, we have heard reports of the disaster to Monson's force. Was it as serious as they say?"

"It was very serious, sir. I was with them, and they suffered terribly. They lost their guns and baggage, and at least a third of their infantry."

"It is unfortunate, very unfortunate, Captain Lindsay. We have had so many victories, of late, that the natives must have almost concluded that we were invincible; but this check will encourage them, and will doubtless bring many waverers over to their side."

"I don't think that it was, in any way, Colonel Monson's fault. His column was to join that of Colonel Murray--who, however, doubtless learning the great strength Holkar had with him, fell back--and with only five battalions of Sepoys, and a dozen guns, it was practically impossible that Monson could, single handed, resist the attack of ninety thousand men. If he had had with him a couple of British battalions, and a regiment or two of our cavalry, he might have held the passes but, alone, it did not seem to me possible that he could do so; especially when the enemy's cavalry could have crossed the hills at other points, and taken them in the rear. Even if he had resisted all attacks, he must have been starved out.

"As being, in a sort of way, representative of General Lake, Colonel Monson was good enough to ask my opinion; and I quite agreed with him that the best plan was to fall back. We believed, of course, that we should find shelter at Kotah, but two days' march in the rear and, had not the rajah declared for Holkar, and shut his gates, all would have been well; for we beat off all attacks, on our way there. It was his treachery, and that of the commandant of Kooshalpur, that caused the disaster."

"Holkar is at Muttra, and Lake is about to march against him?"

"Yes, sir. If Holkar gives battle there he will, no doubt, be defeated but, as this despatch will have informed you, General Lake feared much that, as he advances, Holkar will content himself with harassing him on the march with a cloud of horsemen while, with the main body of his army, he marches rapidly north, to endeavour to recapture Delhi and obtain possession of the Emperor's person. It is to warn you of that danger that I have ridden here."

"The danger is, no doubt, serious," the Resident said; "and the town is certainly in no position for defence. The walls are in a most dilapidated condition, and would crumble after a few hours' cannonade. Colonel Burns's force is wholly inadequate to defend a city of some ten miles in circumference. The irregular troops cannot be relied upon, in case of need. However, we must

do what we can and, as we may be sure that General Lake will hasten on with all speed, we shall not have to hold out for many days.

"Now, Captain Lindsay, as you say that you only left Agra yesterday morning, and have ridden some eighty miles, today, I am sure you have need of rest. The general has told me to employ you on any duty that I may think requisite; therefore, if you will come here at eight o'clock tomorrow morning, I shall be glad, indeed, of your services. Where did you leave your horses?"

"I left them at a khan, a few minutes' walk from here."

"Then if you will go down, and tell your man to bring them up, they can be put up in the stables here. I have already ordered a room to be prepared for you. My servants will give your man some food."

The next morning Harry, after taking the early breakfast a servant brought to his room, went down to Colonel Ochterlony's office.

"I have not brought my uniform with me, Colonel," he said, "for I might have been searched."

"That does not matter. Two of my escort shall ride with you, which will be sufficient to show that you represent me. Here is a list of the zemindars within fifteen miles of the city. You will, today, visit as many of them as possible, and request them to ride in to see me, tomorrow morning. I have directed that you are to have one of my horses for, after the work yours has just had, it will need two or three days' rest.

"Say nothing about the possibility of Holkar's coming here. They might hang back, if you did so. I would rather meet them as a body, and open the matter to them, myself. You will be able to see, by their manner, if any of them have thought of the possibility of the city being besieged. If they have, some of them will possibly excuse themselves coming; though I think that the great majority will come, for they must know well enough that, if Holkar took the city, his troops would ravage the country, as they have done all the villages through which they have passed; and that, therefore, it is to their interest to aid in its defence.

"I am going now to see the Emperor, and to obtain from him an order for all the able-bodied men of the city to set to work, under my orders and those of Colonel Burns, to repair the fortifications at the points where an enemy would naturally attack them.

"In any case, where you see that those you call upon make excuses for not coming in, you have my full authority for telling them that all who do not do so will be regarded as our enemies, and will be severely punished, and their estates forfeited. No excuse, whatever, will be accepted unless, on your arrival, you find that a man is seriously ill; in which case you will order that his son, or some near relation, be sent to represent him."

For the next three days, Harry spent his whole time on horseback and, although it was evident to him that several of those he visited were averse to going into Delhi, none of them ventured to incur the displeasure of the English Resident by an absolute refusal. Each morning, therefore, Colonel Ochterlony received those Harry had visited on the previous day. He told them, frankly, that it was possible that Holkar might appear before the walls; but assured them that he had no doubt of being able to resist all attacks, until General Lake arrived, which he would be sure to do in a few days.

In the meantime, great numbers of men laboured at the walls. The battlements had in some cases fallen, and the gaps were filled up with sandbags. The moat, which had been neglected for many years, was cleared out; and the side made steeper, so that an attacking party would have to use ladders, both for descending into it and climbing out. The bastions were repaired, as far as could be done; and the houses in the lane that ran round, inside the wall, were all loopholed for musketry.

Many of the irregular cavalry had deserted; but the Sepoys stood firm, knowing how terrible were the cruelties perpetrated, by Holkar, on all who fell into his hands. Their number was small; but they were, to some extent, strengthened by the levies brought in by the zemindars.

There was no time to be lost for, on the 2nd of September, General Lake had approached to within a mile of Muttra; which had already been abandoned by Holkar, whose horsemen made their appearance before Delhi on the 7th. The irregular cavalry and those of the zemindars were ordered to attack them but, as

soon as they left the town, they dispersed and rode away.

The next day the enemy's infantry and artillery came up, and a heavy fire was immediately opened on the southeast angle of the city wall. In twenty-four hours the whole of the parapet was demolished, and some partial breaches made in the wall itself. The Sepoys, encouraged by the presence and efforts of Ochterlony and Burns, stood their ground with great courage and, at nightfall, laboured incessantly at repairing the breaches, and in making a new parapet with sandbags.

Towards morning they formed up; passed out through one of the breaches, led by their officers; made a rush at the battery that had been doing so much damage, bayoneted or drove off the enemy stationed there, and spiked the guns.

In the meantime, some guns had been playing against the southern walls. Here they were able to approach, through gardens and the ruins of a village, until near the defences and, establishing a powerful battery, opened fire, and soon made a breach in the walls between the Turkoman and Ajmere gates.

Unable to hinder them the Sepoys, aided by a portion of the population, worked from the morning of the 10th until that of the 12th to form an inner defence. The houses near the breach were pulled down, and the materials used for forming strong barricades at the mouths of the streets leading from it. The houses themselves were loopholed, and everything was prepared for a desperate defence. During that day the guns continued to enlarge the breach; and the Sepoys, who had laboured almost incessantly for four nights and days, were able to lie down for some hours.

That night passed quietly. Holkar had probably heard, from adherents in the town, of the retrenchment that had been formed; and Colonel Ochterlony believed that the absence of any movement towards the breach was a sign that he was making preparations for a sudden attack at some other point. Sentries were placed along the walls facing the encampment of his army and, just before dawn, the discharge of a musket, at the Lahore gate, showed that it was against it that the enemy's attack was directed.

The Sepoys had been bivouacked in an open space, in the centre of the city, and they at once proceeded to the point threatened. In the dim early morning

light, a great mass of men could be made out approaching and, at the same moment, fifty guns opened fire on the gate, to cover their advance. The cannon on the bastion by the gate replied, directing their fire on the infantry column. These, however, pushed forward with loud shouts. Many of them carried ladders and, although suffering heavily from the musketry fire--opened as soon as they came within easy range--they placed the ladders against the wall, and strove to climb them. The face of the wall was flanked by the bastion and, from this, an incessant fire of musketry was maintained by a strong force of Sepoys; while others repulsed, with the bayonet, the efforts of their assailants to gain a footing, and hurled backwards many of the ladders. Holkar's men, who had expected to effect a surprise, and carry the wall before its defenders could arrive there, soon lost heart and in a short time fled, leaving most of their ladders behind them.

The little garrison remained under arms all that day and the next night, expecting another assault. But, on the morning of the 15th, Holkar and his army were seen marching away in the distance and, on the 18th, Lord Lake arrived.

Harry had not taken part in the defence of Delhi. He had, on the day before Holkar's army arrived before the city, ridden out to Sekerah, some five-and-twenty miles away. It was some distance beyond any point he had hitherto reached; but the petty rajah, who held a wide jagheer, could put five hundred men in the field. A small British force had been stationed there; but it had been recalled, at once, when Harry brought the news of the probable approach of Holkar. The rajah then promised to send three hundred of his troops, to aid in the defence of the city; but none had arrived, and Harry's mission was to urge him to send them off, instantly.

The rajah had, however, heard that Holkar's force was within a day's march of the capital and, entertaining no doubt that he would carry the feeble defences without difficulty, had resolved to throw in his lot with him. Harry was now riding in uniform, having obtained the loan of a jacket, trousers, and cap from one of the British officers of the garrison. The rajah received him in his palace; and Harry saw at once, by the scowling faces of the men who gathered round him, that he had only waited for the news that Holkar's army was near Delhi before throwing off the mask of friendship.

"I have come over, Rajah," he said, "to tell you that Colonel Ochterlony requests that you will send every available fighting man to Delhi, at once. He

prays you to despatch as many as you can possibly gather together."

The rajah replied coldly:

"Why should I do so? By tomorrow night Holkar, with his great army, will have captured the town. Why should I send my men there to die, fighting for strangers? I take no orders from them. I have received the Emperor's, it is true; but he is old and infirm, and is a prisoner in your hands."

"I deny that he is a prisoner, Rajah. He is treated with all honour, and is in a very different position from that which he occupied when he was imprisoned by the Mahrattas."

"The Mahrattas are a great people," the rajah answered, angrily. "Has not Holkar driven a force of the infidels into Agra? And soon, when he has captured Delhi, he will defeat the rest of them, and carry his arms to Benares."

"In that case," Harry said quietly, "it is a pity that he did not first crush the English army, and then march to Benares, and finish with Delhi at his leisure. Instead of so doing he has avoided a battle, and is retiring north with his army."

"It is not true!" the rajah shouted. "He wishes first to gain possession of the capital, to liberate the Emperor and, after that, he will soon make an end of your people."

He made a sign to those standing round him, who immediately threw themselves upon Harry. The latter offered no resistance, seeing that it would only lead to his being killed, on the spot.

He was at once dragged out from the audience chamber to the courtyard beyond. He saw the bodies of the two native troopers who had accompanied him. Abdool, who had also been with him, was missing and, knowing how watchful and active he was, he hoped that he might have mounted and ridden off, before he could be attacked.

Chapter 17: An Escape.

Harry's arms were at once bound. He was placed on a horse and, escorted by ten natives, was taken out of the town and, after a ride of three hours, arrived at the foot of a strong hill fort, perched on a lofty rock. Here the party dismounted. Halfway up the hill they passed through a gate in the lower wall; and then mounted to the fort, where the officer in command received them and, on reading an order from the rajah, conducted the prisoner into a room at the summit of the highest tower. His arms were then unbound, and the governor and soldiers left the room, locking and barring the door behind them.

On the way, Harry had thought over his position. It did not seem to him desperate, if only Holkar failed to capture Delhi; and even if he did so, there was still some hope. He had no doubt that the rajah was waiting to see how matters went. If Holkar captured the city, he would probably send him in to him as a pledge of his goodwill; but he might still hesitate, until he saw the issue of the battle that was likely to be fought outside the walls, when the English army arrived there. He had hitherto affected friendship with the English; and had offered no objection, whatever, to the small force being stationed near his town. But, doubtless, the news of the disaster to Colonel Monson's force had shaken him; and convinced him that the English were not invincible, and that Holkar's immense army would inflict a decisive defeat upon them, in which case those who had shown any friendly feeling towards the English would be made to suffer for it--by devastation of their lands, and the loss of their jagheer, if not of their lives. Harry felt, therefore, that the success of the attack on Delhi would probably be as disastrous, to himself, as to all the defenders of the city.

His first impulse was to look out from the loopholes of the tower. On the one side, as he had noticed, the rock fell sheer away from the foot of the wall, to a depth of two or three hundred feet. On the other side he looked down into a courtyard, sixty feet below him. This was surrounded by high and very strong walls, bristling with cannon; and with strong circular bastions at each corner.

Immediately below him was the flat roof of the house occupied by the rajah,

when staying at the fort; and round the yard were low buildings, doubtless containing provisions and munitions of war; and some of them allotted to the picked corps who did duty there, the huts for the rest of the garrison being lower down the hill, near the second wall.

In one corner of the room was a door. On trying it, he found it to be unfastened and, opening it, he walked out. There was a flight of narrow stone steps, in what was evidently a projecting turret. Ascending these, he found himself on a flat roof, on the top of the tower. He spent half an hour here, examining carefully the features of the ground and the defences of the fort. The place, though strong, did not approach, in this respect, many of the hill forts that he had seen in the Deccan; and he concluded that a British force of moderate strength could easily effect its capture though, if stoutly held, it could defy native attack.

He then returned to the room below. Half an hour later, some armed natives entered. One of them carried a large bundle of straw, which he threw down in one corner; another bore a dish of rice, and a third a skin of water. They had evidently been told not to address him for, as soon as they had placed their burdens on the ground, they retired without any remark.

"This is bad," Harry said to himself, when they had left. "I would just as lief sleep on straw as on a bed but, if I had had some blankets, I might have made myself a rope; though I don't think it would have reached the roof of the house below, much less to the courtyard, so that idea must be given up. I have heard of fellows working their way through the floors of their cells; but they have taken away my knife, and there is not a scrap of furniture from which I could get some iron to manufacture a tool. There is no concealing a knife, when they bring my food; for it is sure to be as it is today--rice, or some other grain, boiled, and not even a spoon to eat it with.

"The door seems the only possible way though, at present, I cannot see where the possibility comes in. It is of solid wood, and strong enough to cage a tiger. Still, if I am to get out, I fancy that it must be through the door."

A closer examination of it did not increase his hopes. Even when he pushed his hardest against it, it did not yield in the slightest degree. He sat down on the straw, and turned over every possible idea in his mind. No scheme of getting out

of the difficulty presented itself.

"The only chance that I can see is that, instead of four fellows coming up with the man who brings my food, there may be only two. Taking them by surprise, and snatching a weapon from them, I might manage three of them; but I could not even hope to silence five, before they gave the alarm.

"I hope that Abdool got away safely. I think that if he did, he was likely, when he had once shaken off pursuit, to come back and try to find out what had become of me. His face could not have been particularly noticed, for I expect the troopers were attacked as soon as I entered that scoundrel's house; and if he took off his uniform, and went in in native dress, there would be little chance of his being recognized. When he finds out where I have been taken, he will no doubt go back to Delhi, and report; but with Holkar within two miles, they have too much on their hands to think of sending to demand my release. If Holkar fails to take the place, and retires as Lake approaches, there will no doubt be a hot pursuit; and certainly they could not send two or three hundred men here. Less than that would be of no good, whatever. The rajah has committed himself, by the murder of my troopers and, as he cannot hope for forgiveness, he would either fly to Oude, or else move in here with his force, with which he would think himself safe from anything short of an army.

"It is certain that, with such important work on hand, no men can be spared for a rescue expedition. No, there is not a shadow of chance, unless Holkar is defeated."

Having settled this matter in his mind, and decided that no amount of thinking would enable him to see a way of escaping; Harry dismissed the subject from his thoughts, ate his rice, and lay down as soon as it became dark, having had but little rest for the past week.

Two days passed. As he was sitting on the platform over his cell, he heard a distant boom, and knew that Holkar was besieging Delhi. The next day, to his satisfaction, the sound of cannonading was again distinct.

"At any rate," he said to himself, "Holkar has not carried the place by a sudden rush. There is a regularity about the fire that shows that it is deliberate. No doubt they are breaching one of the walls."

Going to the other side of the platform, he saw that a good many of the rajah's followers were standing on the wall, listening to the firing. The wall itself was some thirty-five feet below the spot where he was standing; neither loophole of his cell commanded a view of it, so that a prisoner could hold no conversation with the guard below.

Presently another man came up on to the walls, and approached the group there. He was, like the others, dressed in a small white turban, a short jacket made of unbleached hemp; underneath which was a loose tunic, bound at the waist with a sash, and coming down to the knees. He carried a spear and matchlock, and across his shoulder a small shield was slung. The others did not turn round and, when a few yards from them, he looked up at Harry; and the latter saw, to his delight, that he was Abdool.

Harry dared not make any gesture that might be noticed; but he nodded his head slightly, and walked to the other side of the platform, where he remained for a short time, and then returned. Abdool looked again in his direction; but continued to talk with the others as to the attack upon the town, and agreed with them that Holkar would make short work of its defenders.

Presently the whole party descended to the courtyard, together. Some of them went down to the lower wall, to talk to their comrades there; but whether Abdool accompanied them, or was still in the fort, Harry could not make out. He did not, indeed, remain long on the platform but, after looking towards Delhi for some little time, he went down to his room.

It was evident that Abdool had enlisted in the rajah's service; and had, no doubt, been engaged by the governor of the fort. The rajah would be uneasy in his mind, and would assuredly take on any men that presented themselves; in order to strengthen himself, if Holkar failed to take the town; and also to gain the latter's approbation, by joining him with as large a force as possible. Probably Abdool had only enlisted on the previous day; and would, of course, need time to acquaint himself with the fortifications, the position of the guards, and the manner in which he could best communicate with him.

Harry's meals were brought up twice a day, at seven o'clock in the morning and at nightfall. Hitherto he had been quiet and patient, as there was nothing to be done but to await the course of events. Now that he knew Abdool was there,

and would certainly endeavour to open communications with him, it was difficult for him to keep quiet; and he passed hours in pacing round and round his room. Occasionally he went up to the roof, but he could see no signs of Abdool; and therefore remained but a short time on the lookout as, were he to keep on watching the courtyard, it might attract notice, and the idea might occur to someone that he was expecting some signal to be made to him.

Three days passed without a sign; and then, when the guard came in with his ration, Harry saw that Abdool was one of the number. As he glanced at him, Abdool, who was standing a little way behind the others, shook his head, and retired with them. Harry felt a momentary disappointment; but saw at once that nothing could be attempted in broad daylight; and that it was at night, only, that there was a possibility of success. He thought that Abdool had only come up in order to see the nature of the fastenings of the doors, and the general position.

He was not with the party who came up in the evening but, in the centre of his rice, Harry found a small piece of paper rolled into a ball. There was not, however, light enough to enable him to read it; but he lay awake half the night and, at the first gleam of daylight, went up on to the platform and, seating himself so that he was not visible from below, waited till he could see to read the letter. It was, of course, in Mahratti; and so badly written that he had difficulty in deciphering it. He finally, however, made it out.

"Tomorrow evening, when I come up, we will attack the others, if all goes well; if not, will try the next evening."

So intent was he, in deciphering the writing, that he had hardly noticed the outburst of heavy firing in the distance. He had feared the enemy had captured Delhi on the previous day, as he had heard no firing; but now the roar of cannon was very heavy, and he had no doubt that Holkar was trying to take the town by assault.

In less than half an hour the sound ceased, suddenly.

"They have either taken the town, or been beaten off decisively," he said to himself.

In the afternoon he saw a party of horsemen approaching, followed by some

palanquins.

"That looks hopeful," he said to himself. "A messenger has probably brought the rajah news that the assault has failed, and he is bringing his zenana here for safety, until he hears the issue of the battle, which will probably take place in a day or two. I wonder whether this will upset Abdool's plans!"

The rajah's return was greeted by the discharge of matchlocks. Presently, however, this was succeeded by cries of rage and a clamour of voices.

"Holkar has been thrashed. Now it is a toss up whether the rajah will, in his anger, send up and have me brought down and executed. I think the chances are in my favour. The fellow is evidently crafty, or he would not have persuaded Ochterlony that he was friendly towards us; and I think he will hold me as a sort of hostage so that, if Holkar is defeated, he may make favourable terms for himself by offering to surrender me."

It was not until an hour later that Harry heard a party ascending the stairs. When the door opened, he saw that two of the men carried torches. Abdool, who was in the rear, closed the door behind him, and then said, "Now sahib!" and struck down the man in front of him with his tulwar.

Harry had risen to his feet, as he heard the men coming; and had braced himself up for a spring, when Abdool gave the word. With a blow straight from the shoulder, he struck the man carrying the dish senseless to the floor; tore the sword from his sash; warded off a hasty blow delivered by one torch bearer, who was too much astonished at the sudden attack to act with decision, and cut him down; while, at the same moment, Abdool almost severed the neck of the other.

"Thanks, Abdool," Harry said, grasping his follower's hand, "you have saved my life!"

"Not yet, sahib. Our work has but begun. There are other dangers to be met. However, the arrival of the rajah has been fortunate. The news he has brought has--but first, let me finish the man you knocked down."

"There is no occasion for that. Tear his sash into strips, and bind his hands and feet; and gag him with his own turban.

"Now, what is our next step?"

"I have a rope round my body, sahib, to lower ourselves on to the ramparts. I am wearing an extra suit of clothes, so that you can get up as one of the garrison. I think we have plenty of time, for it is not likely that these men will be missed. Everyone is too excited by the news, that Holkar has failed to take Delhi, to notice whether we return or not."

He took off the outer garment that he had brought with him, while Harry removed his uniform and attired himself in it and, placing the turban of one of the soldiers on his head, possessed himself of a shield, spear, and dagger, and then said:

"What next, Abdool?"

"We will put out these torches, sahib,"--these were still burning on the floor--"the light might be noticed from below, and they might wonder why we stayed here so long."

"Are there any guards on the walls?"

"No, sahib; they have them on the lower wall, but not here."

The torches were extinguished, and then they went up to the platform above. They fastened one end of the rope to the battlement, having first tied knots at short intervals.

"I will go down first on to the wall, sahib; and if by chance any man may have come up from below, which is not likely, I can hide," and he at once commenced to lower himself down.

In two or three minutes, Abdool was joined by Harry. The courtyard was dark, save that a few torches burned here and there. A great babble of talking was going on, and the windows of the rajah's house were lighted up.

"What are your plans, Abdool? I see that we shall be able to get through the gates, here, without fear of discovery. Is the gate through the other wall shut?"

"Yes, sahib, it is always closed at sunset. Except where the road comes up to

the gate, there is only one place where the rock projects at the foot of the wall, and there is a possibility of climbing down. That was where I had intended we should cross the wall. The height is but twenty feet, there, and I have another rope of that length. There are no sentries placed, except over the gate.

"It is quite possible that, even there, there is none tonight. There is no order among these fellows, as there is among the Company's troops and, as there is no enemy near, they think that such a watch is unnecessary; and if any have been sent there, they are pretty sure to have gone to the huts, to talk over the news from Delhi. The matter should be easy enough.

"We may as well start at once. These fellows will quieten down presently, and will then be more likely to hear any noise we may make."

Looking about, they went down by the stairs leading to the courtyard and walked carelessly across. Taking care to avoid mingling with the excited groups and, at the same time, keeping as far from the torches burning in the courtyard as possible, they passed through the gate--which was standing open without a guard--and followed the zigzag road, with towers placed at its corners, each mounting two guns so as to sweep the approach.

There were two high walls on either hand, loopholed for musketry; and Abdool said that there was a platform, wide enough for two men to pass, along the whole length of it. The road terminated in a heavy gate, some forty yards above that through the outer wall. A bastion covered it so that, were the lower gate carried, an enemy would not be able to bring guns to bear against it. This gate stood open and, passing through it and behind the bastion, they came at once upon the low, stone-built huts where the majority of the garrison lived, in time of peace.

Several torches were burning here, and round each of these were groups of men, talking excitedly. Leaving Harry behind one of the huts, Abdool strolled up for a few minutes, to listen to the conversation, and then rejoined his master.

"What are they saying, Abdool?"

"They are saying, sir, that it was wrong of Holkar to attack the city, before he had defeated the English. It has cost many lives. But when the English are

defeated he will be able, without doubt, to capture the city; which probably would open its gates to him, seeing that no assistance could come to them."

"No one doubts, then, that Holkar will defeat us?"

"Not in the least," Abdool replied. "They say that he has two hundred cannon. These will mow down the English. Then the cavalry will charge, and there will be an end of the matter."

"They seem to have forgotten all about Laswaree," Harry said. "But we had better be going. Where is the way up to the wall?"

"Close by, sahib."

They ascended the steps. As far as could be seen the wall was entirely deserted, and they made their way cautiously until close to the gate. Harry then stopped, and Abdool went on with noiseless tread. He soon returned.

"It is as I thought: no sentries are yet posted."

"But that tower over the gate, Abdool, is a great deal too high for us to descend by that rope that you have got."

"Yes, sahib. We go out by an entrance on to a bastion, flanking the gate. The rope will be long enough there or, at any rate, there will be but a very short drop."

They entered the tower through the door communicating with the wall. Abdool led the way.

"Keep close to me, sahib. I went down here this morning, and can find my way in the dark. I did not think that there was much chance of our coming this way, but it was better to find out all about it."

Moving slowly and cautiously, they came to a flight of steps. They descended some twenty feet, and found themselves at an open portal, leading on to the flanking bastion. The rope was soon fixed.

"I will go first, sahib, and will let you know how far you will have to drop;

for the wall looks, to me, higher than it was at the point where I intended to descend."

Illustration: Abdool at once slipped down.

It was tied round the neck of a gun, and Abdool at once slipped down. There was a pause, then a slight dull sound, and the rope hung loose.

"The knot at the end is ten feet from the ground," Abdool said, in a low tone.

"That is near enough," Harry replied, and then he swung himself over.

When he came to the last knot, he lowered himself to the full length of his arms and let go. The fall was not much more than a yard; and Abdool stood close by, ready to catch him, should he miss his foothold on alighting.

They at once started, at a rapid pace, down the hill. They had nearly reached the plain when the deep note of a horn was heard.

"That is the alarm!" Harry exclaimed. "They have found out that I have gone."

"They will soon be after us, but there is no fear of their catching us," Abdool said, as they broke into a trot. "No one will know, at first, what has happened. Everyone will run to his post; then they will have to search the fort, and all the ground between it and the lower wall. All that will take time. It may be an hour before horsemen start.

"I did not think that they would miss you till tomorrow morning."

"I suppose the rajah sent up for me, to amuse himself by threatening me. He would hardly venture to do more, until he is sure that Holkar has defeated us. However, as you say, there is very little chance of their catching us."

As soon as they were down on the plain, Harry went on:

"We had better strike north, for an hour or two. They are sure to ride across the plain in the direction of Delhi, thinking we shall make straight for the city."

"That will be best, sahib."

Fortunately the rain had ceased, and the sky was cloudless, so that they were able to direct their course by the stars. For two hours they kept due north, and then turned west. It was a long journey from the point where they turned. Harry calculated that it would be nearly fifty miles. The fort was some fifteen miles northeast of Sekerah, and they were now farther away from Delhi than they had been when they started. He felt the advantage of the light native dress, and the sandals that Abdool had given him instead of his boots.

When they came across cultivated ground they walked; but a great portion of the country was a sandy waste; with the ruins of villages and temples that had, in the palmy days of the empire, stood there. Across this they went at a trot, for the sand was generally compact enough to sustain their weight.

"We shall hardly get there before day breaks, sahib," Abdool remarked.

"No; but that is of little consequence. Probably, by this time, Holkar will have marched away--either to give battle or, what is more likely, to recruit; and for many miles round Delhi the country will be rejoicing, at having been spared the ruin that would have befallen it, had he taken the city. So I have no fear that we shall be hindered on the way; for though they may wonder at my appearance--for the dye has now almost worn off, and anyone can see that I am a white--they will be all the more willing to render us any assistance.

"There is no fear of the rajah's horsemen keeping up the pursuit, beyond halfway between Sekerah and the city; for they must know that all the zemindars and people round it are in our favour, and that they might be attacked, when beyond the limits of the rajah's jagheer."

When morning broke they could see, in the distance, the minarets of Delhi.

"They must be ten miles away, Abdool, and I will enter the next house we come to. I fancy, from our position, we must be close to the residence of the zemindar who, at once, brought in a force of fifty men to aid in the defence of the town. There we are sure of hospitable treatment and, indeed, I sorely need rest and food. I have eaten nothing since yesterday morning and, counting the distance we made to the north after leaving the fort, we must have walked nearly

fifty miles."

Half a mile farther they saw a house, and made straight for it.

"Is Shuja Khan within?" Harry asked an armed retainer standing at the entrance.

The soldier recognized Harry--having seen him when he called upon his master--and replied:

"He returned last night, my lord."

"Will you tell him that Captain Lindsay, who was treacherously captured by the Rajah of Sekerah, has just escaped, and is on his way to the city; and that he asks for his hospitality?"

"Enter, my lord," the man said, salaaming deeply. "Our master will, I am sure, gladly receive you."

He showed Harry into a large room where, a few minutes later, the zemindar joined him.

"Peace be with you, sahib! I am rejoiced to see you in safety; for I heard, at Delhi, that you had not returned, and there were fears that ill had befallen you and your escort."

"My escort were killed, and I myself carried a prisoner to the rajah's hill fort; and I have owed my escape to the faithfulness of my servant, who got away when the others were massacred and, disguising himself, got into the fort and contrived my escape."

"All honour be to him!" the zemindar said. "Then you have walked all night?"

"Yes; we went ten miles to the north first, knowing that we should be pursued; for we heard the alarm given, just after we started. We have walked fifty miles and, when I say that I have eaten nothing since yesterday morning, you may be sure that we are sorely in need of refreshment."

"It shall be got ready, at once, sahib; and, while it is being prepared, you can take a bath and a change of garments."

"I need the bath almost as much as I need a feed," Harry laughed. "I have just been looking into the glass, and I see that I am well-nigh as dark as when I came to you, nine or ten days ago."

His host led him to a room containing a bath, which was soon filled by the servants, one of whom brought in a handsome suit of the zemindar's clothes. It was more than half an hour before he went down again. As soon as he entered the room, a servant brought in a meal; consisting of slices of meat on a skewer, and a pillau of chicken.

The zemindar sat by while he ate his meal, and Harry gave him a short account of the manner in which he had effected his escape. The former, in turn, related the events of the siege; adding that spies had brought in the news, late in the afternoon, that Holkar would march away in the morning, as he had heard that the English army was but two days distant.

"Was he going to meet the English, or to retire towards Malwar?"

"That I cannot say, sahib, for the spies could not tell us. Doubtless he and his army are much dispirited, at their failure to take the city. But the general opinion of the townspeople was that he would give battle, be victorious, and would return and continue the siege."

"I have no fear of his being victorious. He knows, in the battles of Assaye and Poona, how Scindia was utterly routed; and how, at Laswaree and Delhi, the Mahrattas were scattered; and I do not think that he will venture upon giving battle. But if he does, I have no fear, whatever, of the result. It was more than his whole army could do to break up Monson's force, although composed entirely of native infantry, until it was near Agra. This time there will be British infantry and cavalry, and the Mahrattas will never stand against their charge."

Harry had already enquired about Abdool, and found that he had also had a meal, and was now asleep.

"Now, sahib," Shuja said, "it were best that you should rest, for a time. There

will be nought doing in Delhi today and, after the heat of the day is over, we can supply you with horses and an escort."

Harry accepted the invitation, for he was stiff and sore from his exertions. The man showed him to a room that had been prepared for him, and he was soon fast asleep. He did not awake until the sun was getting low. He at once went downstairs.

"The horses are ready," the zemindar said, "but I pray you to take a meal, before mounting. It is ready, and will be served directly."

Harry, who had been too tired to do justice to his food in the morning, was by no means sorry to take another meal. As he rose to go, he thanked the zemindar most heartily for his kindness.

"It is an honour that you have bestowed upon me," the zemindar said, courteously. "You and your brave countrymen are fighting to free us from the oppression of the Mahrattas, and any one of your race would meet with a hearty welcome here."

The horses were now brought round. The one intended for Harry was a very handsome animal, richly caparisoned.

"It is a fine horse, indeed," he said, as he was about to mount.

"The horse is yours, sahib," Shuja Khan said. "He is of good breed, and will carry you far and fast. I shall esteem it a great honour that you should ride him.

"Do not thank me, I pray you. 'Tis but a little thing to do, for one of our brave defenders; of whose deeds one of your officers was telling me, when he was deploring your loss."

"I thank you most heartily, Khan; and, after the manner in which you have given it, I cannot refuse so handsome a present. I shall be proud to ride such an animal; and you may be sure that, as I do so, I shall often think of him who presented it to me; and shall assuredly mention, to Colonel Ochterlony, the very great kindness with which you have received me."

As he rode off, followed by an escort of four of the zemindar's retainers, he

saw with satisfaction that Abdool was also attired in clean white garments.

"You have done well, I hope, Abdool?"

"I have been well treated, indeed, sahib, and the zemindar's head man told me that I was to consider the horse on which I ride my own. He will carry me well, for he is a stout and serviceable animal. I was wondering what we should do for horses; for there are but few in the city, as most of those owning them sent them away, with their valuables, on hearing of Holkar's approach."

"The zemindar is a generous man, indeed. He has, as you heard, presented me with the horse that I am riding. It is certainly a splendid animal and, though my own was a good one, this is far better. In fact, I have seen no handsomer horse, anywhere.

"I wish you had as good a one, Abdool, and then we need not fear being overtaken, though half the Mahratta army were in pursuit."

They entered the city by the northern gate, and saw nothing of the enemy, who were encamped on the other side of the city. Harry was most warmly received by Colonel Ochterlony.

"I have been in much anxiety about you," he said. "That you had been detained was certain; but I hoped that that petty rajah would not have ventured to harm you, for he would be sure that, sooner or later, we should have a heavy reckoning with him."

"I fancy, sir, that he was waiting for news from here. He was convinced that Holkar would take the city, and defeat Lord Lake. Had he done so, I have no doubt that he would either have sent me prisoner to him, or would have despatched me and forwarded only my head. As I felt certain that things would not turn out as he stated, I had no great fear for my life; but I thought that I might have been kept a prisoner for a very long time, for Lord Lake would have his hands full in other directions."

"Then he released you on the news that Holkar had failed to capture the city?"

"No, sir; I got away owing to the fidelity of my orderly who, after riding off

himself, when the two troopers with me were attacked and killed, entered a hill fort where I was confined, took service there, and contrived my escape. I shall hand in a report with the details, for your perusal, when things have quietened down a bit. My man has rendered me other valuable services, and I should be greatly pleased if, in consideration of the fidelity and daring that he has shown, you would think fit to recommend him for promotion as a native officer. He belongs to the 3rd Bombay Cavalry."

"I should certainly have pleasure in doing so, Captain Lindsay. I shall, of course, be drawing up a list of the zemindars and others who have rendered service, and recommending them for reward to the Government. If you will give me the particulars as to the man's name and services I will include him in the list. He has been with you some time, has he not?"

"Yes, sir, for upwards of six years. He accompanied me from Calcutta to Nagpore, when I went on a mission to the rajah, whom it was desirable to keep neutral until the war in Mysore was brought to an end. He was at Assaye, and journeyed in disguise across the country with me, to carry the news of that victory to General Lake. He took part with me in the cavalry charge at Laswaree, and in the retreat of Colonel Monson's column."

"That is quite good enough," Colonel Ochterlony said. "But I should think that it would be the shortest and best way for you to recommend him direct to Lord Lake, who would be able to put him in orders at once. At the same time, I will send to Calcutta a recommendation that some special reward should be granted to him. There will be a large number of forfeitures of the estates of those who have sided with Scindia and Holkar. I make no doubt that, on my strong recommendation, he will obtain a grant of the revenue of a village or two. Such a grant would do good by showing that instances of fidelity, even in the case of a private soldier, do not go unnoticed or unrewarded. We expect the general's arrival here in a couple of days."

"I shall be very glad, sir, if only because my uniform is coming on with his baggage. At present, with my white face and this showy native dress, I feel that I am stared at by everyone I meet. The uniform that Captain Ewart lent me I had to leave behind, when I made my escape."

"It will not inconvenience him, poor fellow," the colonel said, "for he was

almost cut in two, by a cannon shot, as the enemy advanced to the last assault."

When the general arrived within three miles of the city, Harry rode out to his camp and, having first obtained his uniform, went in to report himself.

"So you got through safely, Captain Lindsay? I supposed that you had, when the news reached us that Delhi was defending itself stoutly for, had they not had some days warning, they could hardly have held out for an hour."

"This is Colonel Burns's report of the military operations of the siege, sir; and this is a letter from the Resident; and this is my own report, of my doings since I left you at Agra."

"Thank you, Captain Lindsay. I shall have a communication to send to Colonel Ochterlony this afternoon, and should be obliged if you will carry it for me."

Harry bowed and left; and then joined the officers of the staff, who were just sitting down to lunch, and were all glad to see him again.

"So you managed to get through Holkar's lines, Lindsay?"

"Oh, yes! I met with no difficulty, and only fell in once with any of his troops. I spent an evening with their officer, and after that rode through without interruption. There was really no danger, and I do not think Holkar, himself, could have suspected me of being a British officer."

"And now, about the siege. You may imagine that we were all very anxious about it; for though, of course, we should soon have retaken the place, there would have been a general plunder and massacre by that brute Holkar."

"You must wait for particulars until you get there," Harry said, "for I know nothing about it whatever, except what I have heard."

"And how is that?"

"I was, at the time, a prisoner in the hands of the petty Rajah of Sekerah. He promised to send in three hundred men. The day before Holkar arrived, I was sent to urge him to despatch them instantly to aid in the defence. He was

evidently impressed with the idea that Holkar was going to retake the place without any difficulty, and would afterwards annihilate our army; so, thinking that was the winning side, he arrested me, and sent me off to a hill fort, fifteen miles away, and murdered my two troopers."

"And how did you get away?"

Harry gave an account of the manner in which Abdool had managed his escape.

"Such a fellow as that is a jewel."

"He is indeed, Major; and I would not part with him for any money. He came round with me from Bombay to Calcutta, six years ago, and has ridden with me ever since. He fought most gallantly, in the Malay Peninsula and at many other places. In my report, to the general, of my last adventure I have mentioned his services with me in my various journeys, and have strongly recommended his promotion."

"He well deserves it," the major said. "He has, like you, carried his life in his hand for, if he had been detected, undoubtedly he would have shared your fate."

Chapter 18: An Awkward Position.

Three hours later, Harry was sent for by the general.

"I have read your report, Captain Lindsay, and thoroughly concur with you that the very meritorious conduct of the soldier of the 3rd Bombay Cavalry, who has so long been attached to your service, should be rewarded. I cannot, of course, promote him in his own regiment. He will therefore appear in orders, tomorrow, as appointed havildar in the 5th Bengal Cavalry, which is at present under my command; with a statement that, having now completed ten years' service in the Bombay army, and having for six years of it been serving chiefly in this presidency, and having distinguished himself by his fidelity and courage, he has now been specially singled out for this promotion; and will be henceforth in charge of an escort of twenty men, of his new regiment, attached to the general's staff.

"As to yourself, sir, I have, in a despatch that will be sent off this evening, strongly recommended you to the Governor General for promotion to the rank of major. You were, I see by our army list, promoted to the rank of captain, seven years ago, before being sent to Calcutta; and, considering the distinguished and dangerous services that you have rendered, I wonder that you have not received another step. That is, however, accounted for by the fact that you have now, for some time, been away from Calcutta with General Wellesley and myself. I am sure that my recommendation will at once be complied with."

"I am very grateful for your kindness, sir."

"You owe it to your own merits, and not to any kindness on my part," Lord Lake said. "You have an altogether exceptional record and, even in the comparatively short time that you have been with me, have performed most valuable services. Colonel Monson reports most highly of your conduct during his retreat; and the mission that you undertook, at my request, to Colonel Ochterlony was a most dangerous one and, in itself, sufficient to ensure your promotion. There are many zealous officers in the service; but few, indeed, so

qualified, by their acquaintance with the native languages, as to undertake the missions with which you have been entrusted, and have so successfully carried out."

Harry took the despatches and at once mounted his horse; which Abdool had brought round, as soon as his master was summoned to the general's tent. After he had left the camp, he called Abdool up to his side. The latter was still in his native dress.

"Abdool, I shall have to look out for another cook and body servant; unless, indeed, I have another trooper told off to me."

Abdool looked at Harry in astonishment.

"How is that, my lord? Are you dissatisfied with me?"

Harry laughed.

"Not in any way, Abdool; upon the contrary. But your name will appear in orders, tomorrow, as promoted to the rank of havildar, in the 5th Bengal Cavalry, as a recognition of your faithful services.

"It is a great honour," Abdool said, "especially as I have not served as a soubahdar; but I would far rather stay with you. You have been a father to me, and I pray you to let me remain as I am."

"You are to remain with me, Abdool. If you had had to leave me I should, myself, have told the general that I was sure you would rather not do so; and that, when you left me, I should myself show my gratitude for your good services; but of his own accord he has arranged this. You are not to join your new regiment, but are to command twenty sowars of the 5th, which are to be attached to those of the general's staff, for escort duty. In this way you will still be with me, but as a native officer instead of a servant; and should I be sent on any special duty you will, I am sure, be able to go with me, as before."

Abdool's face brightened.

"That would be well, indeed, sahib. It will truly be a great honour to be an officer and, if I ever return to my native village in the Deccan, I shall be

regarded with great respect, and the faces of my father and mother will be made white at the honour I have won. Still, I fear that I shall not be as much with you as I have been, before."

"Nearly as much, Abdool. I expect that Lord Lake, knowing how much I am indebted to you, will permit me to take you with me, when engaged on any detached service; and you and your troopers will form part of his escort, at all times. Besides, it is likely that, as matters stand, I shall not be sent away on any special duty for some time to come. You will, I know, be glad to hear that the general has recommended me for promotion, also; and that I shall shortly be a major."

"That pleases me more than my own promotion, sahib. I thought that you would have had it long ago, after that business at Nagpore."

"I had only been a captain then a few months, and was very young for that rank. It would have been unfair to others if I had been promoted then. I am still very young to be a major."

"It is not years, but what you have done," Abdool said. "Did you not obtain the release of Nana Furnuwees, and so change the state of affairs, altogether, at Poona?"

"Well, it was for that I got the rank of captain and, since then, though I have made a few journeys that would have been perilous, had I not been able to speak Mahratti like a native, I have had no opportunities of specially distinguishing myself.

"As soon as we get to Delhi, you had better order yourself a uniform. You know the dress worn by the native officers of the 5th; and you must hurry the tailor on, for you may be sure that the army will not remain long at Delhi; but will set off to meet Holkar as soon as provisions are collected, for there is no saying how far we may have to march before we meet him. I do not think that he will be in any hurry to give battle."

On the 18th of October, the army arrived before Delhi. Holkar's cavalry were still in the neighbourhood; but news came that the infantry, with a considerable number of his guns and a few thousand horsemen, had left him. On the 29th he

crossed the Jumna, below Panniput, to attack a detachment of one battalion of Sepoys and some matchlock men who were, under Colonel Burns, returning to the station at Saharunpoor--from which he had hastened, when a report reached him that Holkar meditated an attack on Delhi. He was overtaken by Holkar at Shamlee.

The inhabitants of the place joined Holkar, but Burns formed his camp into a square, and repulsed all attacks; until General Lake, with six regiments of cavalry, the horse artillery, and a brigade of infantry, arrived to his relief on the 3rd of November; when Holkar at once retired, and marched south into the district known as the Doab, where his horsemen plundered and burnt every village near his line of route. General Lake followed at once.

He had, before leaving Delhi, sent the rest of the British infantry, with two regiments of cavalry, under General Fraser, to attack Holkar's infantry and artillery; which had retired into the dominions of the Rajah of Bhurtpoor who, although he had been the first to enter into alliance with the British, after the capture of Agra, had now declared against them. They had taken up a position near the rajah's fortress of Deeg, which was believed to be impregnable.

Their position was a very strong one. An extensive morass and a deep tank covered their front. On their left was a fortified village; and on their right the fort of Deeg, which was supported by several lines of batteries.

Harry had been directed to accompany General Fraser, and was to take with him Abdool's little troop, to serve as escort and furnish messengers. Abdool--now in his new uniform--rode at its head, behind General Fraser's staff, as he reconnoitred the enemy's position; and felt no small pride in his changed position, especially as the British officers of the staff, all of whom had heard of the manner in which he had brought about Harry's escape, took special notice of him; and on the march one or other had often dropped behind to have a talk with him.

The next morning the British troops moved forward to the attack, in two lines. The 76th Regiment rushed impetuously against the fortified village, and drove its defenders out at the point of the bayonet. A tremendous fire was at once opened by the batteries behind it but, without for a moment hesitating, the 76th charged them, and were speedily in the thick of their enemies. The 1st Bengal

European regiment, which followed, seeing them almost surrounded, ran down to their assistance; and were followed by the Sepoys; and Holkar's infantry, unable to resist the assault, fled to shelter of their next line of guns.

General Fraser himself led the attack upon these. They were also carried; but the general fell, mortally wounded. Colonel Monson, who now succeeded to the command, reformed the troops--who were in some disorder, owing to the impetuosity of their charge--and led them forward again. Battery after battery was captured. Numbers of Holkar's men tried to cross the morass, but sank in the mud and lost their lives. The rest took refuge under the walls of Deeg, whose guns at once opened fire upon their pursuers.

While the tide pressed forward, unchecked, the Mahratta horse had ridden down in the rear of the British; and had taken possession of the first line of batteries, and had turned their guns upon their late captors. The consequences would have been serious, had not Captain Norford gathered together twenty-eight men of the 76th Regiment, and led them against the Mahratta horse. These, staggered by the daring with which this handful of men advanced against them, fired a hasty volley and fled. Captain Norford was killed, but the men took possession of the guns; which the Mahrattas, thinking that the day was altogether lost, did not attempt to recapture.

As the fortress of Deeg was far too strong to be attacked by any force unprovided with siege guns, the British drew back, until beyond the range of its cannon; carrying off all the guns captured in the batteries, eighty-seven in number. The total amount of artillery employed against our troops was no less than one hundred and sixty guns. Our loss was naturally heavy, amounting to over six hundred and forty killed and wounded; while that of the enemy was estimated at two thousand killed, or smothered in the morass.

The force encamped beyond the reach of the guns of Deeg, awaiting orders from General Lake. The battle was scarcely over when Colonel Monson rode up to Harry, and said:

"It is of great importance that General Lake should receive the news of our victory, as soon as possible. There is no one so well fitted to carry it as you are. There will be no occasion for disguise, this time; for Holkar's depredations must have excited the whole population against him. At the same time, you had better

take your havildar and his troopers with you. It will command respect and, if you should come across any small body of Holkar's marauders, I am sure that you will give a good account of them."

"Can you give me any indication as to where General Lake is likely to be, at present, sir?"

"He marched from Shamsheer to Mahomedabad and, as he probably took the road through Sekerah, he no doubt settled accounts with that rascally rajah. I understood, from him, that he suspected Holkar would make for Sherdanah; as the Begum of that place has five battalions of drilled troops, and forty guns, which would be a welcome reinforcement. After that he will, of course, be guided by Holkar's movements.

"The reports of the peasantry lead me to believe that the enemy are advancing in the direction of Furukabad. I should say that you had best cross the Jumna at Muttra, and ride to Alighur. In that way you will not be likely to meet Holkar's force; which must, at present, be beyond the Ganges."

Half an hour later, Harry started with his escort. He crossed the Jumna at Muttra, and there learned that Holkar had, the night before, arrived within twelve miles of the town; and was, as usual, destroying everything before him. Harry continued his course to Cod, within a mile or two of Alighur, which he reached late in the evening.

The capture of the fort, believed to be impregnable, had had the effect of producing so profound a respect for the British arms that Harry, on his arrival, was received by the principal men of the town; and a large house was placed at his disposal, for himself and his escort. Supplies were at once furnished and, when a meal had been eaten and the horses attended to, the troops lay down for the night.

Harry had been informed that a horseman had brought in news that the British army had arrived at Bareilly. He started at daybreak and, late the next evening, after a ride of over one hundred miles, rode into Lord Lake's camp.

"What news do you bring?" the general asked, as he alighted from his horse.

"I have to report, sir, that on the 13th the force under General Fraser attacked the enemy, who were very strongly posted within gunshot of the fortress of Deeg. After hard fighting he completely defeated them, captured eighty-seven of

their guns, and drove them from under the guns of Deeg, which at once opened fire on us. The enemy's loss was estimated at two thousand. Ours was not known, when I left the camp; but it was roughly estimated at over six hundred in killed and wounded. Among the former, I regret to say, was General Fraser, who was mortally wounded by a cannon shot, while leading on his men."

"I am sorry to hear of his loss," General Lake said, "while the rest of your news is satisfactory, indeed. Reports had reached me that the Rajah of Bhurtpoor had joined Holkar but, after coming into Agra and begging that we would accept him as an ally, I had difficulty in believing that he would have turned against us; especially as he must have known that, if Holkar was defeated, he would have to bear the whole brunt of our anger--which he could not hope to escape, as his territory lies within two or three days' march of Agra."

The general called his staff, and told them of the brilliant victory that had been won at Deeg. The news spread rapidly through the camp, and was greeted with enthusiastic cheers by the troops. In the meantime Lord Lake had entered his tent, and obtained full particulars of the battle.

"I was close to General Fraser when he was struck, sir," Harry concluded. "He and his escort were with the cavalry, when it charged the second line of their batteries. Five of the escort were killed; and I may say that the others, led by their havildar, were among the first in at the guns."

"I have just received news," the general said, "that Holkar crossed this morning, at Surajepoor; and was believed to be on his way to Furukabad. He is evidently on the march to Deeg and, if he joins his troops there, they may attack Colonel Monson's force. Therefore I intend to leave the tents and infantry to follow; and shall start at daybreak, with the cavalry and horse artillery; and hope to overtake him, especially as he has lately moved fast, and will probably rest a day or two at Furukabad."

The next day the cavalry marched upwards of forty miles and, on the following morning, continued their journey. They had fifty-eight miles now before them. With occasional halts they marched all day, crossed the Ganges at Surajepoor, and pushed on until within a mile of Holkar's camp. Believing the British to be many miles away, no precautions had been taken against surprise; and the first intimation of an enemy being near at hand was the opening of fire,

at daybreak, by Lord Lake's artillery into their camp--the guns being posted so as to permit the British cavalry to attack, without coming across the line of fire.

Round after round of grape was poured into the camp; and then the guns ceased firing, as the six regiments of cavalry dashed in among the panic-stricken enemy. Scarcely any resistance was attempted and, in a few minutes, the ground was strewn with dead. Holkar had mounted and ridden off, with a portion of his cavalry, before our men entered the camp; and did not draw rein until he reached Caline, eighteen miles distant. His troops fled in all directions, hotly pursued by the cavalry, for twelve miles; great numbers being overtaken and cut down. The cavalry halted from sheer fatigue, having performed the almost unparalleled march of seventy miles since their last halting place; an exploit rendered all the more wonderful by the fact that they had made a march of three hundred and fifty miles in the preceding fortnight.

Their loss, in the action, was only two killed and twenty wounded. Holkar's loss was estimated at three thousand killed on the field; and half of his cavalry, which was previously sixty thousand strong, were now but scattered fugitives.

That day three royal salutes were fired, for as many victories; namely, that at Furukabad, that at Deeg, and the capture of Shaddone--the last of Holkar's fortresses in the south--by Colonel Wallis. As was expected, Holkar and his cavalry, as soon as they recovered from their panic, rode to Deeg and joined the remains of the infantry and artillery there.

General Lake remained a day or two, to rest the troops after their exertions. The brigade of infantry that, had been left behind when the cavalry started on their last march, had been ordered to move rapidly down to Agra; and to escort thence the heavy guns that would be required for the siege of Deeg and, on the 1st of December, General Lake joined the force near that fortress. The battering train arrived from Agra on the 12th, and the trenches were opened on the following day.

In point of territory, the country ruled over by the Rajah of Bhurtpoor was a comparatively small one. It was inhabited by a people called Jats, who differed in many respects from the communities round them. They were hardy, industrious, and brave; and had, at one time, taken a prominent share in the wars of that part of India, and had been masters of Agra. They had lost the city,

however, in 1774; and with it a considerable portion of their territory. Under the present rajah, however, they had regained some of their lost ground and, on his entering into an alliance with the British, he had received a considerable increase of territory.

In these circumstances the defection was wholly unexpected. The rajah had a standing army of six thousand men; and could, on an emergency, place fifty thousand in the field. Nevertheless, seeing how other very much more powerful native princes had been unable to withstand the British arms, his conduct was not only ungrateful and treacherous, but wholly unaccountable.

It was necessary for the army to move forward to Deeg with great circumspection. Holkar's cavalry constantly hovered round them, and they had to protect an enormous train conveying the siege appliances and provisions for the force. In view of the comparatively small equipage now deemed sufficient, in native wars in India, the size of that which accompanied Lord Lake's army, on this occasion, appears prodigious. The followers were estimated at not less than sixty thousand. Besides elephants and camels, a hundred thousand bullocks were employed on preparations for an advance into the town.

But, during the night, Holkar and the garrison of Deeg retired, and made for Bhurtpoor. On the morning of the 25th, therefore, the British took unopposed possession of Deeg; capturing, there and in the batteries outside, a hundred guns. A week later, General Lake moved forward to Bhurtpoor. Holkar, as before, had not entered the town; but had formed a camp a few miles distant. Here he was able to maintain himself, for the Rajah of Bhurtpoor had called to his assistance a great marauding leader, Ameer Khan, who was raiding in Bundelcund; and also a leader named Bapeejee Scindia; and these, with the rajah's cavalry and that of Holkar, formed so powerful a force that the British cavalry were fully occupied in keeping them at a distance from camp, and in protecting the convoy.

On the day of the arrival of the army before Bhurtpoor, Harry--who had now been gazetted to the rank of major--was sent to Agra, thirty-four miles distant, with orders respecting a convoy that was about to be sent off from there. He was accompanied by Abdool and ten troopers. At that time Ameer Khan had not appeared upon the scene, and it was not considered that there was any danger of the communications with Agra being interfered with.

Harry reached the city in the afternoon, and waited there until four o'clock next day; seeing that the preparations for the convoy, which was a very large one, were completed. It started at that hour, and was to get as far as possible by nightfall; so that it would be able to reach the camp by the following evening. After seeing it in motion, Harry started with his escort for the ride back. He was some ten miles away from the convoy when night fell. Bhurtpoor, like Deeg, stood on a plain, surrounded by swamps and morasses; the situation having been chosen from the difficulties these offered to the advance of an enemy.

After proceeding for five miles farther, Abdool, who was riding with Harry, said:

"I do not know, sahib, but it seems to me, by the sound of the horses' hoofs, that we have left the track."

Harry called a halt; and Abdool dismounted, and found that his suspicion was correct, and that they had certainly left the road.

"This is awkward," Harry said, "for we do not know how long it is since we left it, or whether it is to the right hand or left."

The night was indeed a very dark one, a mist almost covered the sky, and it was only occasionally that a star could be seen.

"We must go carefully, or we shall fall in one of these morasses."

Two troopers were sent off, one to the right, the other to the left. One of them, when he had gone about a quarter of a mile, was heard to shout that he was fast in the morass. Abdool and four of the men rode to his assistance, and presently returned with him, having with the greatest difficulty extricated his horse. Nothing had been heard of the other trooper. Again and again Harry shouted, but no reply came back. They waited half an hour, and then concluded that either the man, on his return, had missed his way altogether; or that he had fallen into a swamp, when they were too far off to hear his voice, and had perished there.

Harry again gave the word for them to move on, this time at a walk. Abdool preceded them on foot. Presently he said:

"The ground is getting softer, sahib. I think that we are approaching a

swamp."

"We had better all dismount," Harry said, setting the example.

"Now, let each move in different directions, going very cautiously, and calling out if he comes upon soft ground."

He himself, with two of the troopers, remained with the horses. One after another, the men came upon swampy ground; one only continued to find it firm.

"I suppose that that is the way we came into it, Abdool," Harry said, as the others returned to the horses. "We must follow him, and will do it on foot. This is getting serious."

For a quarter of a mile, they kept on ground that was comparatively firm. Then the man ahead of them gave a sudden shout. He had fallen, waist deep, into a little stream. He was soon hauled out.

"There is nothing to be done, Abdool, but to halt till morning. Let us go back, till we can find a piece of ground dry enough to lie down upon."

They had made, however, little progress when their feet began to sink up to the ankles.

"It is no use, Abdool. We have evidently lost our bearings, altogether. We must stay where we are till morning, or we shall get helplessly bogged."

The hours passed slowly and painfully. From time to time, the men endeavoured to find firmer ground, but always without success; and it was with the deepest satisfaction that, at last, they saw the sky begin to lighten. Half an hour later, they were able to form an idea of their position.

They were far in what appeared to be a wide morass. There were pools of water in some places, and it seemed almost miraculous that they should have succeeded in so far entering the swamp where, even by daylight, there scarcely seemed a yard of firm ground. Abdool again went ahead and, step by step, the little troop followed; frequently having to turn back again, on finding the line that they were pursuing impassable.

They were still a hundred yards from what appeared to be solid ground when they heard loud shouts and, looking round, saw some fifty horsemen skirting the edge of the morass. When they reached the point opposite to the little party, they dismounted and opened fire. One of the troopers fell dead, and several of the horses were hit.

"There is nothing for it but to surrender, Abdool," Harry said, as some of the troopers returned the fire.

The enemy rode off for a hundred yards; and then, leaving the horses in charge of a few of their number, they returned to the edge of the morass, threw themselves down in the long coarse grass, and again opened fire. Two more of the troopers fell, at the first discharge. Harry drew out his handkerchief, and waved it.

Illustration: Harry drew out his handkerchief, and waved it.

"We will not surrender, if they are Holkar's men," he said to Abdool. "We should only be tortured, and then put to death. If they are Bhurtpoor's men, we may have fair treatment."

Therefore, as soon as the enemy had stopped firing he shouted:

"Whose soldiers are you?"

"The Rajah of Bhurtpoor's," was shouted back.

"We will surrender, if you will swear to take us to Bhurtpoor and hand us over to the rajah. If you will not do so, we will defend ourselves to the last."

A native officer stood up.

"Assuredly we will take you to the rajah. I swear it on my faith."

"Very well then, send a man to guide us out of this place."

An order was given. One of the men went back and mounted his horse, and rode along by the edge of the morass for nearly half a mile. The others, more slowly, followed him.

"It is clear that this place in front of us is absolutely impassable," Harry said, "or they would never all move away."

"It is lucky that you have not got your favourite horse today, sir," Abdool said--for Harry had bought, from one of the cavalry, a horse that had been captured from the Mahrattas, as one was insufficient for the work he had to do.

"I should be very glad, indeed, Abdool, if I thought that I was likely to return to camp soon. But in such peril as this, it is but a small satisfaction to know that he is safe."

"What do you think of our chances, sahib?"

"I don't think the Rajah of Bhurtpoor will harm us. He must feel that his situation is almost desperate, and it would put him beyond the reach of pardon, if he were to massacre his prisoners."

The Jat had now dismounted, and could be seen making his way towards them on foot; sometimes coming straight, but more often making long bends and turns. It was evident, by the absence of any hesitation in his movements, that he was well acquainted with the morass.

"If that is the only way to us," Harry said, "it is marvellous, indeed, that we made our way so far."

"I think, sahib, that it was the instinct of the horses. I felt mine pull at the rein, as I was leading him, sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left; and I always let him have his way, knowing that horses can see and smell better than we can and, as we were all in single file, you followed without noticing the turns."

In ten minutes the man arrived. He spoke to Harry, but his language differed widely from either Mahratti or that spoken by the people of Bengal. However, he signed to the troopers to lay down their arms and, when they had done so, started to rejoin the others; and, leading the horses, the party followed. The path was fairly firm, and Harry had no doubt that it was used by fowlers, in search of the game with which, at certain seasons of the year, the lakes and morasses abounded.

When they arrived at the edge of the swamp, where the others were awaiting them, Harry handed his sword to their leader. He and his party then mounted and, surrounded by the Jats, rode to Bhurtpoor. Their entrance was greeted with loud shouts and acclamations by the populace. Making their way straight through the town, which covered a large extent of ground, they reached the palace, a noble building built upon a rock that rose abruptly from the plain. Ascending the steep path leading to the gate, the party entered the courtyard. Here the captives remained in charge of the horsemen, while the leader went in to report to the rajah.

Illustration: View of the Rajah's Palace, Bhurtpoor.

Presently he came out, with four of the rajah's guard, and these led Harry and Abdool into the audience chamber. The rajah, with a number of personal attendants, entered and took his seat.

"You are an officer in the English army. What is your rank?" the rajah said in Mahratti.

"I am a major."

"Of what regiment?"

"I am on the personal staff of the general."

"And this man?"

"He is a native officer, at present commanding a portion of the general's escort."

"How was it that you were alone, last night?"

"I had ridden to Agra, the day before; and was too late, in starting back, to gain the camp before it was dark. I lost my way and, finding that we were in the heart of the morass, we were obliged to wait till morning."

"It is well that you did not try to get out. Had you done so, none of you would be here now.

"You speak Mahratti like a native."

"I was some years at Poona and, as a child, had a Mahratta woman as a nurse, and learnt it from her."

The rajah was silent for a minute or two, then he asked:

"Does your general think that he is going to capture my town?"

"I do not know, but he is going to try."

"He will not succeed," the rajah said, positively. "We gave up Deeg, because we did not want a large force shut up there. Our walls are strong but, were they levelled to the ground, we would still defend the place to the last."

"I am aware that your people are brave, Rajah. They fought well, indeed; and if Holkar's troops had fought as stoutly, the result might have been different."

The rajah again sat in thought for some time, then he said:

"I do not wish to treat you harshly. I can honour brave men, even when they are enemies. You will have an apartment assigned to you here, and be treated as my guest; only, do not venture to leave the palace--at least, unless you leave it with me. There are many who have lost friends at Deeg, many who may lose their lives before your army retires, and I could not answer for your safety. Would you like this native officer to be with you?"

"I should esteem it a great favour, Rajah. He has been with me for several years, and I regard him as a friend. Thank you, also, for your courtesy to me."

"You will give your promise not to try to escape?"

As Harry believed that, in the course of a short time, the British would be masters of the town, he assented without hesitation.

The rajah looked pleased.

"You need be under no uneasiness as to your troopers. They will, of course, be in confinement but, beyond that, they shall have no reason to complain of

their treatment."

The rajah said a few words to one of his attendants, who at once motioned to Harry and Abdool to follow him. Harry bowed to the rajah and, with Abdool, followed the attendant. He was taken to a commodious chamber. The walls and divans were of white marble; and the floor was paved with the same material, but in two colours. The framework of the window was elaborately carved, and it was evident that the room was, at ordinary times, used as a guest chamber.

The attendant left them, for a few minutes.

"This is better than I had even hoped for, Abdool. There can be no doubt that the rajah, though he put a good face on it, is desperately anxious; and behaves to us in this way, in hopes that he may finally obtain better terms than he otherwise would do, by his good treatment of us."

"He looks honest and straightforward, sahib. 'Tis strange that he should have behaved so treacherously, just after the Company had granted him an increase of territory."

"We must make some allowances for him. No doubt, like all the Indian princes we have had to do with, he is ready to join the strongest side. He heard that Holkar was coming down with an immense army, and believed that we should not be able to withstand him. In that case he, as our ally, would share in our misfortunes. His territories would be ravaged; and he himself killed or taken back, as a prisoner, to the Deccan. He was probably hesitating, when the news came of Monson's disastrous retreat. This doubtless confirmed his opinion of Holkar's invincibility; and he determined, as the only way of saving himself, to declare for him."

The attendant now entered, with four men bearing cushions for the divans and carpets for the floor, large ewers and basins, with soft, embroidered towels, and a pile of rugs for beds. After he had retired, Harry went to the window and looked out. Below was the courtyard, and the room was on the first story.

"Well, if we are to be prisoners, Abdool, we could hardly wish to be better suited. A fortnight's rest will do us no harm, for we have been riding hard almost ever since we left Agra with Monson's force."

"It is well, sahib, that you were with us when we were captured. Had we been alone, we should have had no mercy. It is because the rajah regards you as such a valuable prisoner that we have been spared.

"If you had not given your promise, I think we might have made our escape."

"We might have done so, Abdool; but if I had not given my promise, you may be sure that we should not have been lodged so comfortably."

Chapter 19: Bhurtpoor.

Half an hour later the attendant entered with two servants, carrying a large tray with a variety of dishes. After they had eaten the meal, Harry proposed that they should go up to the top of one of the central towers of the palace, to obtain a general view of the country.

"It would be better to do that than to venture down into the courtyard, at present, Abdool. The sight of our uniforms might give offence, as it would not be understood that we have the rajah's permission to move about the palace. We must wait till the man comes in with the tray. It is possible that he may understand enough Mahratti to make out what we want, and will show us the way up.

"It would never do for us to try to ascend alone. We might accidentally open the door of the rajah's zenana, and then I doubt if even his desire to hold me as a hostage would suffice to save our lives."

The attendant understood enough of Mahratti to make out their request, and offered at once to accompany them. They ascended numerous staircases until, at last, they reached the flat roof of the palace; above which rose three round towers, surmounted by domes. The highest of these had a gallery running round it, a few feet below the dome.

The attendant led the way to this and, on reaching the gallery, they found that it commanded a very wide view over the flat country. The town itself covered a considerable space, the walls being eight miles in circumference. At the eastern end the fort, a square and solid edifice, was built on ground somewhat higher than the town. It had bastions and flanking towers and, as had been learned from

prisoners taken at Deeg, it had a moat much wider and deeper than that which ran round the town walls. It was built within these, one side of the square looking across the country, while the other three were inside. Although the houses were for the most part scattered, the town had a picturesque appearance, from the number of trees growing within it.

Towards the northeast the fort of Deeg could be clearly seen and, to the southwest, the mosques and fort of Agra were faintly visible in the clear air. At a distance of a mile and a half from the city was the British camp, with its white tents; and an irregular black mass marked the low shelters of the camp followers and the enormous concourse of draught animals.

It certainly seemed a hazardous enterprise for so small a number of troops to attack such a large and populous town, strongly fortified, and held by a brave people. Harry remarked on this to Abdool, but the latter said, confidently:

"They cannot stand against the English, sahib. General Lake has always been victorious."

"He has so, Abdool, and that is one of the reasons why I do not feel so certain of his success as I did. He has never yet undertaken a siege, and his impetuosity and confidence in his troops may lead him to make an attack with insufficient numbers, and before it is really practicable. I do not think that this town is to be taken by storm, and I doubt whether Lord Lake will be content to wait for regular siege operations, before he tries an assault.

"Look over there, towards Agra. If I am not mistaken, there is a large body of cavalry out there. They are certainly not our men, they are too much mixed up for that. Possibly the rajah may have obtained the aid of a band of Pindarees, or of some other irregular troops; at any rate, it will give trouble to the convoy we left yesterday."

He looked at the camp again.

"There is a stir in the valley, and it looks as if they had heard of that force out there, and are about to start to attack it."

Three regiments of cavalry set out. As they were getting ready, two horsemen

could be seen to ride off, at a gallop, from a group of trees half a mile from the camp. As soon as they approached the mass of horsemen in the distance, they turned and rode off at full speed.

"They have evidently no idea of fighting, today, whoever they are. We may as well go down again, Abdool. This is a grand lookout; and we shall, at any rate, get a general idea of the direction in which the attack will be made."

Two days later they were able, from their lookout, to see that bodies of men came and went between the camp and a group of trees, halfway between it and the town.

"I expect that they are establishing a battery among those trees," Harry said, "and it will not be long before the affair begins."

The next morning, six eighteen-pounders opened fire from the wood and, in the afternoon, another battery of eight mortars began throwing shells into the town. The guns on the walls answered, and a brisk fire was kept up, for the next ten days. During this time several breaches had been effected in the wall, near the southeast angle, but the defenders had fixed strong wooden stockades in the debris every night, so that no attack could be made. In order to prevent this being done with the last-made breach, it was determined to assault at once.

The two prisoners had not had the lookout gallery to themselves. Some of the rajah's officers were constantly there, and any movement of troops was at once reported by them. The rajah himself had, twice or thrice, come up for a short time to watch the operations; and had, on each occasion, talked for some minutes with Harry.

"Your people will be mad, if they try to attack us through that small hole in the wall," he said, on the afternoon of the 14th. "Were they to level a quarter of a mile of the wall, they might have some chance, though I doubt whether they would ever get a footing at the top; but with all my soldiers ready to defend that small opening, and with thirty or forty guns to fire at your people as they advance, it is as ridiculous as if ten men should attempt to take this palace. What do you think?"

"I cannot say, Rajah. From here I am unable to see what is taking place at the

walls, nor how wide is the breach you speak of, nor how deep the ditch beyond; therefore I can give no opinion."

"The English are brave fighters," the rajah said. "They have taken places in a few hours that seemed impregnable, but they cannot perform impossibilities. Our walls are defended by forty thousand men and--although in the open field I do not say that you might not defeat us, seeing how your troops are disciplined, while with us each man fights for himself--when it is a question of holding a wall or defending a breach, I can trust my soldiers. We are twice as numerous. We have heavier guns, and more of them, than you have and, as I told you, the English will never get into Bhurtpoor."

At seven o'clock in the evening, a deep and almost continuous roar of guns broke out.

"The assault has begun!" Harry exclaimed. "We shall not see much, but we may get some idea as to how things are going from the lookout."

It was too dark for the movements of troops to be seen, but the quick flashes of the guns on either side, and a play of flickering fire along the top of the wall showed that the storming party was approaching. The attack was made in three parties: one advanced against a battery which the defenders had established outside the walls, at a spot where its fire would take in flank any force advancing against the point towards which the fire of the English guns had been directed; another was to attempt a gateway near the breach; while the central column, consisting of five hundred Europeans and a battalion of Sepoys, was to attack the breach itself.

For a time the roar of firing was incessant. The alarm had been given as soon as the British columns advanced from the wood. Notwithstanding this, the right column advanced straight against the battery, captured it, and spiked the guns. The left column, as it approached the gate, came upon a deep cut filled with water and, having no means of crossing this, they moved to the support of the force attacking the breach. This had been greatly delayed. The ground to be crossed was swampy, with many pools and, in the darkness, numbers lost their way, and the force arrived at the point of attack in great confusion.

A small party of twenty-three men only--of the 22nd Regiment, under

Lieutenant Manser--who formed the forlorn hope, crossed the ditch, breast high in water, and mounted the breach. In the confusion that reigned among the troops, some of the officers had lost their way, and there was no one to assume the command or to give orders; and Lieutenant Manser, finding that he was unsupported, and could not with a handful of men attempt to attack either of the bastions, from which a terrible fire was being maintained, made the men sit down and shelter themselves as well as they could, in the debris of the breach; while he himself recrossed the ditch to summon up the support. In this he failed. All order was lost, and the men who formed the forlorn hope were at last called back, and the whole force retired, suffering heavily from the terrible fire to which they were exposed. Eighty-five were killed and three hundred and seventy-one wounded.

A more deplorable and ill-managed assault was never made by British troops. As Harry had thought possible, Lord Lake had treated the capture of Bhurtpoor as if it had been but a little hill fort. He had made no attempt to carry out regular siege operations but, trusting to the valour of his troops, had sent them across a considerable distance of plain swept by the enemy's fire, to assault a breach defended by some of the bravest tribesmen of India; and had not even issued commands which would have ensured order and cohesion in the attack.

The lesson that had been taught was not sufficiently taken to heart. Some more batteries were placed in position and, on the 16th, opened a heavy fire against the wall on the left of the former breach, which had been repaired during the two nights following its successful defence. So heavy was the fire from the new batteries that another breach was made in the course of a few hours. The Jats stockaded it during the night, but the timbers were soon knocked to fragments and, for five days, a continuous cannonade was maintained and a large breach formed.

It was necessary to find out how wide the ditch was, and three native cavalry and three British troopers, all dressed as natives, suddenly dashed out of the camp. At a short distance behind them a number of Sepoys ran out, as if in pursuit, discharging their muskets as they did so. Just as the six horsemen arrived at the ditch, two of the troopers' chargers were made to fall. The native havildar shouted to the soldiers on the wall to save them from the accursed feringhees, and show them the nearest entrance to the city. The soldiers pointed to a gate near the breach and, as soon as the men had again mounted, the havildar rode

with them along the ditch, and made the necessary observations.

Then they put spurs to their horses, and rode off--the Jats, on seeing that they had been deceived, opening upon them with musketry. Their excitement and fury, however, disturbed their aim, and the six horsemen rode into camp unhurt, and reported that the ditch was not very wide, and that it did not seem to be very deep.

Portable bridges were at once constructed. These were to be carried by picked men, who were instructed in the best method of pushing them over the ditch. To prevent the recurrence of the confusion that had been, before, caused by the assault in the dark, it was determined that it should be made in daylight and, on the following afternoon, the storming party moved forward. It consisted of four hundred and twenty men from the European regiments, supported by the rest of those troops, and three battalions of native infantry. Colonel Macrae was in command. The whole of the batteries opened fire, to cover the movement and keep down that of the besieged.

On arriving at the ditch, it was found that the portable bridges could not be thrown across as, during the night, the garrison had dammed up the moat below the breach and turned a quantity of water into it, thus doubling both its width and depth. A few gallant fellows jumped in, swam across, and climbed the breach; but there were few capable of performing this feat, encumbered by their muskets and ammunition; and Colonel Macrae, seeing the impossibility of succeeding, called them back, and retired under a tremendous fire from the bastions and walls.

This assault was even more disastrous than the last, for the loss in killed and wounded amounted to nearly six hundred. Harry was deeply disappointed at these reverses, which the rajah himself, with great glee, reported to him with full details.

There had been other fighting: two British convoys on their way from Agra had been attacked by the horsemen of Ameer Khan, Holkar, and the rajah. The first might have been successful, for the twelve hundred bullocks were escorted by only fourteen hundred men; and these, although they might have defended themselves successfully, were unable to keep the convoy together. The animals, excited by the firing, were rushing off in all directions when, fortunately, a body

of our cavalry which had been sent out to meet the convoy arrived, and drove off the enemy with a loss of six hundred men.

The next morning a general movement could be seen in the British camp. The rajah, who was immediately informed of it, came up to the lookout.

"The English general has given it up as hopeless," he said. "They are about to march away."

"It looks like it, Rajah," Harry admitted, "but I should hardly fancy that Lord Lake will take such a step. He has tried to take the town by a sudden assault, and I think that he will not retreat until he has attempted to do so by a regular siege operation."

An hour later the whole of the tents had been pulled down and, presently, both the troops and the huge body of followers and cattle were in motion.

"They are not going to Agra," the rajah said, after watching them for some time; "they must be going to march to the north."

Two hours later, the great procession had arrived at the north of the town. There they halted, and their long lines of tents began to rise.

"They are going to try another point," the rajah exclaimed. "Truly they are brave men, but they will be repulsed, as they were before."

"I fancy they will begin in another way, Rajah, and will make regular approaches, so that they will not have to pass across the open ground swept by your guns."

This indeed turned out to be the case. The trenches were at once opened and, ere long, two batteries were established at a distance of four hundred yards from the wall. Two days later another, still nearer, opened fire and, by the 20th of February, the trenches had been pressed forward to the edge of the ditch; and a mine sunk, with the intention of blowing up the counterscarp, and so partially filling the ditch. The troops intended for the assault took their places in the trenches at an early hour, so as to be ready to attack as soon as the repairs made by the garrison in the breach during the night could be destroyed by the batteries.

The Jats, however, had been rendered so confident by their previous successes that, during the night, they made a sally, crept into the advanced trench--from which the workmen had been withdrawn--and started to demolish the mine and carry off the tools. As the storming party moved down through the trenches the Jats--who had made the first sally--joined by a considerable number from the town, rushed forward and attacked them; and inflicted considerable loss before they were repulsed. A portion of them, however, still held the advanced trench; and when the 75th and 76th, who were at the head of the column, were ordered to dislodge them, they hesitated.

The repulse of the former attacks had had its effect, and the troops, believing that the enemy would have filled the mine with powder, and would explode it as they advanced, refused to move. The remaining men of the flank companies of the 22nd stepped forward but, as they were too few to attack so considerable a number of the enemy, the 12th and 15th Sepoy Regiments were called to the front, and these advanced gallantly.

The enemy were driven from the trench at the point of the bayonet. The ditch, however, had again been flooded, and was found to be impassable; but there was a bastion to the right that had been damaged by the breaching guns, and the troops at once made for this. A few men of the 12th managed to climb up, and planted the flag of their regiment on it but, as only one could mount at a time, and the Jats were swarming down upon them, they were recalled; and the force again drew off, having lost, in killed and wounded, nearly nine hundred men. Notwithstanding the terrible losses that had been suffered, General Lake persevered in his intention to carry the place at the point of the bayonet; and on the following day the batteries opened their fire on the bastion that had been nearly carried by the 12th Native Infantry.

The position had become serious. The cavalry had, a fortnight or three weeks before, defeated those of the rajah and his allies with heavy loss, and brought in a convoy; and Ameer Khan, who had only joined the Rajah of Bhurtpoor in the hope of plunder, had deserted his ally and ridden off, with his following and a large body of Pindarees, with the intention of devastating and plundering the district of Rohilcund. Three regiments of British cavalry, under General Smith; and as many of native horse, with artillery, followed on his track and, after a pursuit of three weeks, at last came up with him, annihilated his infantry and captured his guns. His cavalry, however, for the most part escaped, as the horses

of the pursuers were completely worn out.

They returned to the British camp, after more than a month's absence, from a chase extending over seven hundred miles.

Their absence had greatly increased the difficulties in the British camp. Without their protection, the danger to which convoys were exposed was great. Provisions were running short in camp, the ammunition was almost exhausted, and numbers of the guns were rendered unserviceable. These circumstances afforded the only excuse that can be made for a fresh attack upon Bhurtpoor.

It was even more disastrous than those which had preceded it. The 75th and 76th Regiments, deeply ashamed of their conduct on the preceding occasion, volunteered to a man; and they, with the other European regiments and five regiments of Sepoys, under the command of Colonel Monson, moved out to the attack at three in the afternoon. Nothing could exceed the courage which they displayed, and their conduct rivalled that of the storming party at the siege of Badajos; but they were fighting against impossibilities. The bastion could not be climbed. Some of the soldiers drove their bayonets into the wall, one above another, and attempted to climb up by these steps; but were knocked down by logs of wood, large shot, and other missiles. Others attempted to get in by the shot holes that had been made, here and there; but as only one man could enter at a time, they were killed before a footing could be obtained. All this time a terrible fire was maintained by the enemy against our men, showers of grape and musketry swept their lines, pots filled with gunpowder and other combustibles exploded among them, bales of cotton dipped in oil fell flaming in their midst.

For two hours the hopeless conflict was maintained. Then the order was given to retire, and the men fell back; having lost, in killed and wounded, nine hundred and eighty-seven of their comrades. Thus the four assaults had cost the army three thousand two hundred and three of its best soldiers. The force was still further weakened by a large number of deaths from dysentery and fever, the result of the miasma rising from the marshes.

The camp was now shifted to drier ground, to the northeast of the town, the movement being harassed by the enemy's horse. The rajah, who had been jubilant over his success, looked grave when the new encampment was fixed.

"They have not done with me, yet," he said to Harry. "Why do they not go, now they see that they cannot take the place?"

"Because were they to do so, Rajah, half India would be in arms against them in a fortnight. Never before, since we set foot in India, have such defeats been inflicted upon us; and Lord Lake cannot march away and so own himself entirely beaten. Never before has an English general out here so blundered.

"Still, although unable to take Bhurtpoor, General Lake knows well enough that he can easily repulse all attacks on his camp. He knows, too, that the greatest efforts will be made to send up reinforcements. Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta will all send every available man and, ere long, his losses will be much more than counterbalanced by the forces that will join him. We have, during our history, suffered several disasters; but never one that has not been redeemed and revenged."

"Holkar was here, this morning," the rajah said, after a long silence. "He came to congratulate me on our victory. After he had done so, he asked that you and your troopers should be handed over to him. I need scarcely say that I refused. You were captured by my men and, though I am in alliance with Holkar, I do not owe him any fealty. It is I who have aided him, while he has given but little assistance to me; and would, I am sure, ride away and leave me to my fate, if he knew where to go to. But his country, his capital, and his forts are all in the hands of the English; and he stays near here because it is, at present, the safest place for him."

On the 23rd of March, the British cavalry returned. For a month no attempt had been made to renew the siege, but the camp still remained as a threat against Bhurtpoor, and the time had not been lost. Convoys, escorted by strong parties of infantry, had come out from Agra. Supplies of all kinds, battering guns and ammunition, arrived almost daily. The armourers worked at the old guns, and made them again fit for service; and everything showed that, when the attack was renewed, it would be much more formidable than before.

The cavalry were given a few days' rest after their arrival but, before daybreak on the 29th, they moved out in hopes of surprising Holkar. He had, however, scouts well posted far out; and he effected his retreat with the loss, only, of some of his baggage animals. He retired some miles to the southwest,

and again pitched his camp.

On the 2nd of April the cavalry, with the horse artillery, again moved out at midnight and, this time, came upon the enemy undiscovered; and before they had time to mount their horses, the cavalry charged them in front and on both flanks, while the artillery swept the camp with grape. Great numbers were slain, both in Holkar's camp and in the pursuit, which was continued for eight miles. The whole of the camp equipage, the greater portion of the guns, and the bazaars were captured and, during the next day or two, large bodies of Holkar's troops, considering his case hopeless, deserted him. When in his flight he crossed the Jumna, he had but eight thousand horse, five thousand infantry, and thirty guns; the remains of the great army with which he had crossed the river, confident of victory, the year before.

On the following day Lord Lake, who had received considerable reinforcements, again moved his camp to the southeast of the city, and prepared to resume active operations against it. The rajah had, for some time, been in a despondent state and, the next morning, he came alone to Harry's room.

"I want to have a talk with you," he said; and Abdool, seeing that the conversation was to be a private one, at once left the room.

"My friend," he said, "I have, for some time, felt that my cause was becoming hopeless. I have never supposed that, after failing four times, and each with heavy loss, your people would continue the siege. But I see now that I was wrong. We might repulse another attack, and another; but of what use would it be? Your people would only become stronger, after each defeat.

"I see now that I have acted as one bereft of sense. I had no quarrel with the Company. They added to my territory, they had promised to defend me against all attacks but, when I heard that Holkar was approaching with so vast an army, I thought that surely he would recapture Delhi, and drive you out of Agra, and perhaps down to Calcutta; or that, after taking Agra, he would turn against me. And so, foolish man that I was, I joined him.

"And now I would fain make peace, and I pray you to go to your general, and ask what terms he will grant. They may be hard, but I am in no position to stand out. Ameer Khan has been chased and routed, Holkar is little better than a

fugitive, and owns only his horse and saddle. There is no one to whom I can look for aid. I put myself in the English general's hands."

"I will willingly go, Rajah. No doubt it has been supposed, for weeks, that I and my escort have perished. And when the general hears of the kind treatment that we have received--a treatment so different from that we should have met with, had we fallen into the hands of Holkar--it will, I feel certain, have an effect on the terms that he will lay down."

Harry had, each day, paid a visit to the troopers, who were confined in a large airy room opening into the courtyard. They had been well fed, and had been permitted to go out into the open air, for several hours a day, and to mingle freely with the Jat soldiers. Half an hour after his interview with the rajah Harry went down there. To his surprise, he found Abdool and the troopers all mounted, as well as a party of the rajah's own guard.

Before leaving, the rajah had returned his sword to him. As he rode through the streets, followed by his own troopers and with the rajah's guard riding ahead, the people looked on with curiosity, but evinced no animosity against him. Successful as had been the defence, the fact that the British had received great convoys and reinforcements had caused a feeling of apprehension as to the final result. Food, too, was becoming very scarce for, although small quantities were brought in by the side opposite to that occupied by the camp, this was altogether insufficient for the needs of a large population, swollen by the fighting men of the whole country.

Even these supplies had ceased, since the return of the British cavalry and the rout of Holkar, and the fighting men were losing heart. Their losses had been small, in comparison with those of the besiegers; but the defeat of Holkar impressed all with the fear that the British must, in the end, triumph. They had already done more than any who had tried to stem the tide of the British power. They had repulsed them four times, and their defence would be the subject of admiration for all the native peoples of India. Therefore, when it was known that the captured English officer was leaving the town, with his troopers, the idea that the end was near caused general satisfaction.

Harry left the town by the gate nearest to the British encampment. The rajah's guard still accompanied him, but halted halfway between the walls and the

camp; and there dismounted, the officer in command telling Harry that his orders were to wait until his return. Numbers of the soldiers had gathered at the edge of the camp, on seeing the party riding towards it; and when the guard fell back, and Harry with his troop approached, and it was seen that it was a British officer with an escort of native cavalry, a loud cheer broke out.

Most of the soldiers knew Harry by sight, and all had heard of his being missing with his escort and, as the time had passed without any news of him arriving, it was supposed that all had been killed by the horsemen of Ameer Khan or Holkar. Many of the men of the 5th Native Cavalry were in the crowd, and these shouted welcomes to their comrades; while several English officers ran up and shook Harry by the hand.

"I have been a prisoner in Bhurtpoor," he said, in answer to the questions. "I have been extremely well treated, but I cannot tell you more now. I am here on a mission to the general."

Curious to ascertain the cause of the cheering, General Lake appeared at the entrance of his tent, just as Harry rode up.

"Why, Major Lindsay," he exclaimed, "where did you spring from? We had all given you up as dead, long ago!"

"I have been in Bhurtpoor, sir, and am now here in the character of the rajah's ambassador."

"That is good news. But come in and tell me, first, about yourself."

Harry briefly related how they had lost their way in a morass, and had been attacked in the morning; and that, finding it impossible to make a way out, he had surrendered. He spoke in the warmest terms of the rajah's treatment of him and his followers.

"We were treated as guests, rather than prisoners, sir; and lived in a handsome room, got excellent food, and had the run of the palace. Scarce a day passed on which I did not have a talk with the rajah, himself."

"It is an exceptional case, indeed," the general said. "Had you fallen into Holkar's hands, or into those of Ameer Khan, very different treatment would

have awaited you. And now, what has the rajah to say for himself?"

"His plea is, sir, that he believed Holkar's army would assuredly sweep us away; and that, in that case, he would have been attacked by him for having formed an alliance with us."

"His position was certainly an awkward one," the general said. "And now, what does he propose?"

"He does not propose anything, sir. He places himself in your hands. He admits his faults; and is, as he may well be, heartily sorry for them. He believes that he might still defend his town for some time but, his allies having been thrashed, he sees that, in the end, he must be overpowered. He asks that you will formulate your demands."

"Your news is very welcome, Major Lindsay; for indeed, I am as anxious to be off as the rajah can be to see me go. Scindia is giving trouble again, and has written a letter couched in such arrogant terms that it is virtually a declaration of war. I could not leave here until the town was captured; for it would have seemed to all India that we had been defeated, and would have been a terrible blow to our prestige. Therefore, at all costs, I must have taken the place. It will, however, be another fortnight before we shall be ready to recommence the siege.

"I do not wish to be hard on the rajah, and I know that the authorities at Calcutta view the case in the light that he has put it, and are willing to believe that his turning against us was not an act of deliberate treachery, but a fear of Holkar.

"His treatment of you and your escort is, in itself, much in his favour. Of course in this, as in similar cases, we could deprive him of his dominions, and send him a prisoner to a fortress; but the Governor General is most anxious that this business should be concluded. It has already cost us more men than we lost in the overthrow of Tippoo's power. He has given me authority to negotiate a peace, if the rajah offers to surrender. He has named the terms, approximately; and the rajah's treatment of you will certainly induce me to minimize the demands, as far as possible, especially as it is most important that the force shall be available elsewhere.

"Of course, the grant of territory made to him will be rescinded. In the second place, we must, until all the terms of the treaty are fulfilled, retain the fortress of Deeg, which we shall garrison strongly. The rajah must pay twenty lakhs of rupees towards our expenses. We shall not demand this at once, but three lakhs must immediately be paid. One of his sons must be given up to us, as a hostage for the fulfilment of the treaty. The rajah must also bind himself not to enter into any communication with any princes, or chiefs, at war with us.

"I think that you will allow that those are not hard conditions."

"Certainly not, sir; and I have no doubt that the rajah will agree to them, without hesitation."

"I will have a draft of the treaty drawn up, in half an hour," General Lake said. "Of course, you will carry it back to the rajah?"

"Certainly, sir. Fifty men of his bodyguard are waiting for me, halfway between the camp and the town."

Harry left the tent, and found the officers of the staff and many others waiting to welcome him back.

"They will all want to hear what you have to tell, Major," the head of the staff said. "You had best go into the mess tent, and hold a durbar."

The tent was soon filled with the officers, with the exception of the chief of the staff, who had been sent for by the general.

"In the first place, Lindsay," one of the officers said, "we take it that you have come on a mission from the rajah. Does he mean to surrender?"

"He is willing to surrender, if the terms are not too onerous."

The announcement was received with a loud cheer. There was not one present but believed that the next assault would be successful, but the cost of the previous attacks had been so great that it was believed the city would not be taken, unless with great slaughter. The unhealthiness of the country had told upon their spirits, even more than the repulses; and the news that they would soon be able to march away created the deepest satisfaction.

"And now, for your own adventures, Lindsay."

"My adventures began and ended in a swamp. It was four o'clock before the convoy left Agra, and I then rode on fast till it was night, when I was still five or six miles from the camp. It was pitch dark, and we lost our way and, presently, found ourselves in a deep swamp, and could discover no way of getting out of it."

Then he told them of the attack; how they had been obliged to surrender and had been guided out of the morass.

"When we reached the rajah's palace, all our troubles were ended. A handsome chamber was placed at my disposal, and the havildar of my escort was allowed to be with me. I was treated rather as an honoured guest than as a prisoner. I lived on the fat of the land, and was permitted to wander about the palace, and spent most of my time in the gallery round the highest tower, where I could see all that was going on. The rajah himself was most kind to me, and enquired daily if my wants were supplied to my satisfaction. He would often come up to the gallery and chat with me, sometimes for an hour. The troopers, also, were all well treated."

"You have received a great deal of misplaced commiseration," one of the officers said. "We have all thought of you as having been tortured to death, either by Holkar or Ameer Khan; and now we find you have been better housed and better fed than we have.

"And you are going back again, I suppose, with the chief's answer?"

"Yes; I must not tell you the conditions, but I think I can say it is certain that the rajah will not hesitate a moment in accepting them."

"Well, he deserves to be let off leniently, if only for his treatment of you and your men. It is a contrast, indeed, to what has generally happened to officers who have fallen into the hands of any of these native princes."

There was a general talk until an aide-de-camp came in, and asked Harry to accompany him to the general's tent.

"There is the draft of the treaty," the latter said. "I hope that there will be no

delay in returning a prompt answer. I want either yes or no. These Indian princes are adepts in the art of prolonging a negotiation. If you see that he has any disposition to do so, say at once that I have told you that the terms I offer are final, and must be accepted or rejected."

"Very well, sir. I hope to return with the answer tomorrow, early."

And, followed by his escort, Harry rode for the city. The rajah's guard mounted, as soon as they saw him coming, and escorted him to the palace. The street leading to it was now thronged with people, and it was evident to Harry that, among the great majority, there was a feeling of hope that he was the bearer of acceptable terms; for among the poorer class the pressure of want was already severe.

Chapter 20: Home.

Harry, on arriving at the palace, at once went to the rajah's room.

"Well, sahib, what terms does your general offer me?"

"Terms which I think, sir, you will have no hesitation in accepting. Here is a draft of the treaty that he proposes."

The rajah glanced at the document, which was written in English and in Mahratti, for none of the general's staff understood the Jat language. Harry saw, at once, that the terms were far less onerous than the rajah had expected; for his face brightened, and the air of despondency that it had for some days expressed passed away.

"It is better than I had looked for," he said. "As a rule, the English have not been merciful to those they have subdued. That the territory they gave me would be taken away was a matter of course. The sum to be paid is heavy but, as they have given me time, I can manage to collect it without much difficulty. This is all that is demanded; and that they should hold Deeg and my son as a hostage, until the money is paid, is fair and just."

"I thought that the conditions would meet with your acceptance, Rajah; and I may say that your kindly treatment of myself and my escort has gone some way in mitigating the terms that would otherwise have been demanded. But the general said that you must understand that he can make no further diminution of his demands; and that tomorrow he expects an answer, yes or no."

"I reply yes, at once, Major Lindsay. A load has been lifted from my mind. I shall still have my liberty, my capital, and my people; and am grateful, indeed, for the clemency that has been shown me. I had relied somewhat upon your good offices; but had small hopes that, after what has taken place, I should be offered such terms."

The rajah at once sent for his sons--of whom Harry had seen but little, for

they were always on the walls, encouraging the troops and seeing that the breaches were repaired, as soon as made. The rajah read to them the draft of the treaty. They too were visibly relieved; for they had talked the matter over with their father, on the evening before, and had agreed that, probably, he and his family would be kept as prisoners in a fortress, that the fortifications of the town would be destroyed, and some nominee of the British Government created rajah.

"The general has not said which of my sons is to be hostage?"

"No, Rajah, he left that to you. I may say that he took the same view of your position as that which you, yourself, explained to me; namely, that you joined Holkar simply from the apprehension that, if the English were defeated by him, he would next turn his arms against you."

"Which of you will go?" the rajah asked his sons.

All expressed their willingness.

"Then I will choose my third son," he said to Harry; "the others will be more useful here."

Harry rode out, early in the morning, with the news that the rajah accepted the terms offered to him. In an hour the treaty was written out formally, the general affixing his signature. Harry returned to the city, this time accompanied by a general officer, and both signed their names as witnesses to the rajah's signature. Some bullock carts, with chests containing the three lakhs of rupees, were already in the courtyard; and with these and the rajah's third son, Harry returned to camp.

The army afterwards started to meet Scindia, who had advanced with his army, with the intention of joining Holkar and assisting the Rajah of Bhurtpoor. He had, for some time, been almost openly hostile; had sent his relation, Bapeejee Scindia, with a strong body of horse, to act in concert with the cavalry of Ameer Khan and Holkar; and had sent letters to the Government which amounted to a declaration of war. But when Holkar reached his camp a fugitive, and he heard that Bhurtpoor had surrendered, he at once fell back; and endeavoured to make excuses for his conduct, alleging that Bapeejee Scindia has acted entirely without orders, and that he had himself advanced only with the

intention of mediating between the Rajah of Bhurtpoor and the English.

No one was deceived by his assurances, but it was thought politic to pretend to believe them. The Marquis of Wellesley's term of office had expired, and a successor had come out, with orders to carry out a policy differing widely from that which he had followed. The latter had enormously extended the area of the British possessions in India, the British troops had won a marvellous series of victories; but this had been effected at an immense cost and, so far, the revenue drawn from the conquered provinces barely sufficed to pay the expenses of occupation and management.

The treaties, too, that had been entered into with various rajahs and chiefs might, at any moment, plunge the Government into war in support of our allies and, accordingly, Lord Cornwallis was again sent out, to carry out the policy of maintaining friendly relations with the native powers, and of abstaining from interference in their quarrels with each other. Indeed, a breathing time was urgently needed. The rapid progress of the British arms had aroused a feeling of distrust and hostility among all the native princes; and it was necessary to carry out a strong but peaceful administration in the conquered provinces, to give confidence to their populations, to appoint civil officers of all sorts; and so to divide the troops that, while they ceased to threaten any of the native powers, they should maintain order in the new dependencies not yet reconciled to the change of masters, or capable of appreciating the benefits arising from orderly rule.

Accordingly, Scindia's excuses were accepted. A considerable portion of the dominions that had been wrested from him were restored; and even Holkar, whose atrocious cruelties to all the British soldiers and officers who fell into his hands should have placed him beyond the pale of pardon, was again invested with most of his former possessions--with the object, no doubt, of counterbalancing Scindia's power as, had Holkar been driven to take refuge in the north, as a fugitive, Scindia would have become paramount among the Mahrattas.

One of the last acts of the Marquis of Wellesley was to offer Harry a high civil appointment, in one of the new provinces; but he declined it, upon the ground that he was about to apply for leave to go to England. He had, indeed, already formed the idea of quitting the service altogether. The presents he had

received from Bajee Rao, on his first arrival at Poona, and on being invested as Peishwa; and the still larger one that Nana Furnuwees had given him; had been, for the most part, invested in the purchase of land at Bombay. In the eight years that has elapsed, the town had greatly increased in size; and the land had been gradually sold, at four or five times the sum that it had cost, and the proceeds sent to England. Harry was, therefore, a rich man.

He had been constantly engaged in service for nearly nine years and, as he had never been settled long enough to have an establishment of his own, his military pay had much more than sufficed for his wants; and the large increase which he had obtained, when engaged in civil or special duty, had been entirely laid by. There was, then, no further occasion whatever for him to remain in the service. At any rate, he determined to obtain a three years' leave; and before the end of that time, he could finally make up his mind on the subject.

A month, therefore, after the siege of Bhurtpoor was concluded, Harry had an interview with Lord Lake, and requested three years' leave to go to England.

"You have well earned it, Major Lindsay. Your services have been very great and, if the war was likely to continue, I should have asked you to reconsider your request; but as, from what I hear, a complete change of policy has been determined upon, and it has been decided that there shall be no further extension of our territory, there is likely--at any rate for a time--to be a period of peace. The board of directors desire to consolidate the territory that we have gained, and wish to abstain from all embarrassing alliances, or from any meddling in the affairs of the native princes.

"You, who have been so long at Poona, and understand the shifty nature of Scindia, Holkar, and indeed of all the native princes, must know well that these orders are much more easily given than carried out. If our restraining hand is removed, we shall have Scindia, and Holkar, the Peishwa, the Rajahs of Berar, Kolapoore, and Bhurtpoor at each other's throats again. They will treat our declarations, that we desire peace, only as a proof of weakness; and may, at any moment, lay aside their private quarrels to unite against us; and, unlikely as it may seem at present, my conviction is that there will never be permanent peace in India until we are masters from Cape Comorin to the borders of Afghanistan. It may be another half century, and will certainly only be after hard fighting; but I believe that, until all India acknowledges our rule, there will not be anything

like permanent peace within its borders."

"I am afraid that that is so, sir. The only really sincere and honest man that I have met, bent upon serving his country, was Nana Furnuwees and, in consequence, he was equally hated by the Peishwa, Scindia, and Holkar. I was certainly extremely well treated by the Rajah of Bhurtpoor; but this was, no doubt, largely due to the fact that he thought that, if matters went against him, his courtesy to me would tell in his favour, while ill treatment or murder would have put him beyond the pale of forgiveness."

"Your application comes at a fortunate moment, for I am sending a regiment of Bombay cavalry back to their presidency, and it will be well that you should travel with it through Jaipore and Ajmeer to Surat, and so on to Bombay, which will save you a long journey--unless, indeed, you wish to travel by way of the Ganges."

"I would much rather go to Bombay, sir. I wish to visit the good people who brought me up. I will ask you to allow Havildar Abdool to go with me. I don't know whether he will wish to take his discharge, but I should think he would do so and, as he belongs properly to the Bombay army, and is indeed a Mahratta, I am sure that he would prefer to settle there."

"I will certainly do that, and will see that the services he has rendered are mentioned in his discharge; and I will, myself, write to the Government of Bombay, saying that I had intended to grant him a small holding, as a reward for his fidelity; and asking that this may be bestowed upon him, either in the Concan, or in some of the territory that we have become possessed of above the Ghauts."

Abdool was greatly moved, when Harry told him that he had applied for and obtained leave.

"You will take me with you, master, I hope?"

"I think, Abdool, that you would do better to remain in your own country. You would feel very strange in England, among people none of whom speak your language. You would also feel the cold, greatly."

"I would rather go with you, sahib. Were I to go back to my native village, I should find myself among strangers, for I have now been nearly fifteen years away; and what should I do without employment?"

"Well, we will think it over, Abdool. Lord Lake kindly offered to write a letter in your favour to the Government of Bombay, asking them to give you the charge of a village district, which would keep you in comfort."

"I should not be comfortable if I were not with you, sahib."

"Well, Abdool, we are going with the Bombay regiment which starts tomorrow, and shall travel through Central India to Surat. There I shall leave them in the Concan, and cross the Ghauts to Jooneer, and pay a visit to Soyera, Ramdass, and Sufder, and see them all comfortably settled; and then go down to Bombay. So we shall both have plenty of time to think it over."

Accordingly the next morning Harry, after saying goodbye to all his friends, started. The journey to Surat was nearly seven hundred miles, and was accomplished without incident. On their arrival at Jowaur, they ascended the Ghaut to Trimbuck, and then rode to Jooneer, and another half hour took them to the farm.

Harry was received with delight by its occupants. It was six years since he had parted from his old nurse at Bombay, and he had greatly changed since then. He was now a tall and powerfully-built man.

"And so you are already a major, as was your dear father!" she said, after the first greetings were over. "It seems to me but a short time since you were an infant in my arms. But what brings you here?"

"There is going to be a general peace for some time, Soyera; and I have had enough of fighting, and am on my way home to England, where I hope to learn something about my father's and mother's families. I have three years' leave, and as I am as rich as I could desire to be, possibly I may return here no more."

"I shall grieve, Harry; but it is natural for you to do so, and I shall feel happy in the thought that you have become all your parents could have wished, and that I have been the means, in some way, of bringing this about."

"In all ways, Soyera. I owe not only my life, but all that I am, to you. Had you been without friends, I would have taken you to England. But happily you are among your own people, and have now been living with your good brother and his wife for four-and-twenty years; and I can leave you, knowing that you are perfectly comfortable and happy.

"Have you any desire to better your condition, Ramdass? I owe you, too, so much that it would greatly please me to be able, in some way, to show that I am grateful for the shelter you gave me for so many years."

"There is nothing," Ramdass said. "I have all that I can desire. Had I more, I should have greater cares. Those who are rich here are not the best off, for it is they who are squeezed when our lords have need of money. My sons will divide my land when I die, and my daughter is already married and provided for. Had I

a larger farm, I should need more hands and have more cares. The bounty which you before gave me has gratified my utmost desires."

A messenger had already been sent off to Sufder, who rode in the next day. He, too, was well and comfortable, and was viewed as a man of importance by the villagers.

Harry remained there four days longer, then bade farewell to those who had proved themselves his true friends, and rode down to Bombay. On the road he had a long talk with Abdool, who remained fixed in his determination to accompany him to England, if he would take him.

"Very well, Abdool, so it shall be. But if, at any time, you have a longing to come back to your own country, I will pay your passage, and give you enough to make you comfortable for life."

Harry remained but a few days in Bombay, wound up his affairs with his agents there and, being fortunate in finding a vessel that was on the point of sailing, took passage in her for England. The voyage was an uneventful one. They experienced bad weather off the Cape but, with that exception, carried all canvas till they entered the Channel. Here they encountered another gale, but arrived safely in the Thames, four months after leaving Calcutta.

It was now January, 1806, and after going with Abdool to an hotel, Harry's first step was to procure warm clothing for himself and his follower. The weather was exceedingly cold, and although Abdool had, as he considered, wrapped himself up in an extraordinary way, he was unable to keep warm, except when sitting in front of a huge fire.

"Is it always like this, sahib?" he asked, in a tone of great anxiety.

"Oh no, Abdool, only for perhaps two months out of the twelve. You will find it pleasant enough in summer and, after two or three winters, will get accustomed to the cold. You had better not think of going out, till you get your clothes. I will have a tailor in to measure you. I should say that it would be more convenient for you to take to European clothes. You will not find them uncomfortable, as you have for so many years been accustomed to uniform. They are much more convenient for getting about in, and you will not be stared

at in the streets; as you would be if you went about in native costume. However, you can wear your own turban, if you like."

Abdool willingly consented to this proposal. A tailor was consulted, and suggested loosely-cut trousers and a short jacket, similar to that now worn by the French zouaves, and differing but little from that of the Indian cavalry. In this, with the addition of a long and warmly-lined cloak, Abdool professed his readiness to encounter any degree of cold.

As soon as his own clothes had arrived, Harry went to Leadenhall Street and, sending in his card, was shown into a large room, where two or three of the governors of the Company were seated, considering the reports that had been brought from India in the ship in which Harry had arrived.

"Your name is familiar to us, Major Lindsay," the gentleman at the head of the table said cordially. "You have been mentioned in numerous despatches, and always in terms of the highest commendation. First, by the Governor of Bombay; then by the Marquis of Wellesley, for the manner in which you secured the neutrality of Berar, during the Mysore war; then again, if I remember rightly, for obtaining concessions for our occupation of the island of Singapore, when we are in a position to undertake it. He also sent us your report of that business, by which it appeared that you had some extremely perilous adventures, entailed by your zeal to obtain the Rajah of Johore's consent to the cession. Sir Arthur Wellesley mentioned your name in his despatch after Assaye, and Lord Lake's despatches make numerous mention of your service with him. Altogether, I do not think that any officer has received such warm and general commendation as you have done."

"Thank you, sir. I have always done my best, and been exceptionally fortunate in being engaged in services that gave me an opportunity of, in some degree, distinguishing myself."

"Pray sit down, Major. My colleagues and myself will be glad to know a little more about you. When the Governor of Bombay informed us that he most strongly recommended you for a commission, he mentioned that you were a son of Major Lindsay who, with his wife, was killed in the Concan, at the time of that most unfortunate and ill-managed expedition to Poona. We had never heard of your existence before. Had it been brought before our notice we should, of

course, have assigned a pension for your bringing up and education."

Harry, at his request, gave a very brief outline of the manner in which he had been saved by his nurse, who had taught him English, and prepared him for entering the service when he came of age.

"I have returned to England," he said, "partly to find out, if possible, any of my relatives who may exist on my father's or mother's side."

"I have no doubt that we shall be able to put you in the way of doing so. Doubtless, at the time of your father's and mother's death, we notified the fact--at any rate to your father's family--and received communications from them. We will cause a search to be made. Where are you staying?"

Harry gave the name of the hotel.

"We will send you word there, as soon as the records have been searched. At any rate, it is certain that the birthplace of your father and the residence of his father will be found, at the time he obtained his appointment as cadet. I have no doubt that the letter communicating his death was directed to that address."

The next day a messenger brought a note to Harry's hotel:

"Dear Major Lindsay:

"We find that your grandfather was a landowner in Norfolk. His address was Parley House, Merdford. The letter sent to him with the account of your father's death was answered by a son of his; who stated that his father had died, two months before, and enquired if any news had been obtained of an infant who, they had learned, had been born some months before the murder of its parents. We replied that the report to us had stated, 'body of infant not found.' We, at his request, wrote to Bombay on the subject.

"The answer was as before that, although the body of the child was not found with those of its father and mother, no doubt whatever was entertained that it had been killed. It was some days after the catastrophe happened before any report of it reached the authorities, when a party of cavalry were at once sent out. Many of the bodies had been mutilated, and some almost devoured by jackals. No doubts were entertained that the infant had been altogether devoured."

"The remains were all buried at the spot where they were found; and a stone was erected, some months afterwards, by the officers of his regiment; recording the deaths of Major Lindsay, his wife and child, at that spot."

Two days later Harry took his place with Abdool on the north coach and, after spending a day at Norwich, drove in a post chaise to Merdford. Here he heard that Parley House was two miles distant and, without alighting, drove on there. It was a fine house, standing in a well-wooded park. On a footman answering the bell, Harry handed him his card, "Major H. Lindsay."

He was shown into a library and, a minute later, a gentleman entered. He was about sixty years of age, of the best type of English squire; tall, inclined to be portly, with genial face and hearty voice.

"We are of the same name, I see, Major Lindsay."

"We are, sir; and, strange as it may appear to you, of the same blood."

"Indeed!" he said, shaking hands with his visitor. "What is the relationship? It must be a distant one, for I was not aware that I had any connection of your rank in the army.

"By the way, now that I think of it, I have seen, in the reports of our campaigns in India, the name of a Captain Lindsay frequently mentioned."

"I am the man, sir."

"I am glad to know that one who has so distinguished himself is a relation of mine, however distant."

"It is not so very distant, sir. In point of fact, I am your nephew."

The squire looked at him in bewilderment.

"My nephew!" he repeated.

"Yes, Mr. Lindsay. I am the son of your brother, also Major Lindsay, of the Bombay Army. I returned from India but ten days ago; and learned for the first

time, from the governors of the Company, the family to which my father belonged. Had it been otherwise, I should have written to you, years ago, to inform you that I was the infant who was supposed to have perished, when its father and mother were killed."

Harry thought that the colour paled a little in his uncle's face.

"You have, of course, proofs of your identity?" the latter said, gravely.

"Certainly. I have the evidence of the Indian nurse who saved my life, and brought me up; that of a cousin of hers, who was an officer of the band that attacked my father; and that of her brother, with whom I resided from the time she brought me there--three days after the death of my parents--until I was twelve years old, when she placed me with a lady in Bombay, for two years and a half, to be taught to speak English perfectly. After that, I was some three years in the service of the Peishwa.

"These depositions were, by the order of the Governor of Bombay, sworn to by them before the chief justice there. My identity was fully recognized by the Governor of Bombay, who at once recommended me for a commission, in consequence of some service that I had rendered to the Government; and the recommendation was accepted by the court at home, and my commission dated from the time of my appointment by the Governor."

"I see a likeness in you to my brother who, when I last saw him, was about your age. I do not say that you are exactly like him, but your expression and voice both recall him to me. As a matter of form, of course, I should like to see these depositions. I am curious to know the details of your adventures.

"But that will keep. I will at once introduce you to my wife and daughter. Like your father, I was unfortunate in my children. I know that you had several brothers and sisters born before you, all of whom died in their infancy. I did not marry until some years later than he did. I had two boys, who were both drowned when out in a fishing boat at Yarmouth. My daughter was the youngest."

He rose from his seat and led the way to the drawing room, where a lady some fifteen years younger than himself was seated at work, with a girl of

nineteen or twenty.

"My dear," he said, "I have a surprise for you. This gentleman, Major Lindsay, who has distinguished himself greatly in India, is our nephew. He claims, and I may say at once that I see no reasons whatever to doubt it, that he is the child of my brother Harry who, as you may remember, was, with his wife, killed in India a few months after we were married. My enquiries resulted in leaving, as it seemed, no room for doubt that the infant had perished with his parents, and that its body had been devoured by wild beasts.

"But it now appears that he was saved by his nurse, who happened to have a relation who was an officer in the party that attacked Harry's camp. She took him to the house of a brother, and there he was brought up; and he afterwards went down to Bombay, where he satisfied the Governor as to his identity, and received a commission. I have not heard further particulars yet, but Major Lindsay--

"I suppose I shall come to call you Harry, in time, nephew--

"Will tell us all about it, himself. I am sure that you will join with me in welcoming Harry's boy heartily, and in my satisfaction that he has proved himself well worthy of his race."

Harry was a little surprised at detecting a tone of warning, in the manner in which the last words were spoken; and at the agitation with which Mrs. Lindsay had listened to her husband. This disappeared, however, as she held out her hand to him.

"I welcome you back to England, nephew. Yours is indeed a strange story. I know that my husband was greatly attached to your father."

"Yes, I loved him dearly," Mr. Lindsay said, "and can see a resemblance to him in his son. He is taller and more strongly built than Harry was. I do not say that the features are very like, but there is something in the expression of his face, and tone of his voice, that recalls him to me strongly.

"This is my daughter Mary. We called her so after your mother. It was a fancy of mine, for I knew her well before she married your father. The two families were on terms of great friendship, and for her sake, as well as for my brother's, I

gave her the name."

"I am glad to meet you, cousin," the girl said, holding out her hand frankly to him. "It is, of course, a great surprise to us, and I can hardly realize yet that you are really my cousin."

"Now, Harry," his uncle said briskly, "I will give orders to have your things taken out of the post chaise, and carried up to your room. We shall be having lunch directly and, after that, you shall tell us your story at full length."

Ten minutes later they sat down to lunch. When Harry rejoined the others, he fancied he saw traces of tears in the eyes of Mrs. Lindsay and her daughter; and he thought that perhaps they had been thinking that, if their own boys had lived, they also would be young men now.

After the meal was over, the squire said:

"Now, wife, we will all adjourn to the library. It is the most comfortable room in the house, and the cosiest--just the place for listening to a long story. I have told William to get two more armchairs there, so that we can sit round the fire--which is quite the proper thing to do when a story has to be told."

The light had faded out of the sky, and the curtains were drawn; but the squire would not have candles lighted, saying that the blaze of the fire was the proper thing to listen by. Harry related fully the manner in which he had been brought up and trained, by his nurse, for the time when he could present himself at Bombay; and also his adventures in the Deccan, which had paved the way for his obtaining a commission. He told the rest more briefly, though he was obliged, in answer to the questions of the others, to go somewhat further into his personal adventures.

"It is a wonderful story," the squire said, when he at last finished. "There are many things that you have cut very short; and which you must, some other time, tell us fully. Your poor father would have reason to be proud of you, indeed, had he lived to see you now. He thought that he was wonderfully fortunate, in obtaining a majority at the age of thirty-five; but you have got it ten years younger.

"Well, we have not spared you, for we have kept you talking over four hours."

Dinner passed off quickly, and when wine had been placed on the table, and the servants retired, Mr. Lindsay said:

"You will understand, Harry, that although absolutely certain that you are my nephew, I do not resign, and offer you my seat at the head of the table, until the documents that you have brought are formally examined."

"What do you mean, uncle?" Harry asked, in surprise.

"I mean, of course, that as your father's son, this estate is yours, and not mine."

Harry rose to his feet.

"I don't understand you, uncle. I never dreamt for a moment--" and he stopped.

"That your father was my eldest brother. Yes, he was a year older than myself; and at his father's death would, of course, have succeeded to the estate. But he died before him; and you, as his son, will of course succeed."

"But I could not dream of such a thing, uncle. Do you think that I have come down here with the idea of turning you and my aunt and cousin out, and taking your place? If I had known it, I should not have come down at all. It would be monstrous if, after you have been master here for twenty-five years, I should come down to claim the estate from you."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Harry," his uncle said, gravely. "Naturally, it did not occur to us that you were ignorant that your father was the eldest son. We thought, from your manner, that you would be willing to arrange everything on amicable terms; for of course, legally, you are entitled to all the back rents, which I honestly say I could not pay. Your aunt's little fortune, and my portion as younger brother, will be amply sufficient to keep us three comfortably; but as to paying the arrears, it would be impossible."

"My dear uncle, the whole thing is impossible. I have returned home with an

ample amount of money to live in luxury. I did not think it necessary to mention, in my story, that Nana Furnuwees presented me with a considerable sum of money; and Bajee Rao did the same. This I invested in land close to Bombay, which is now covered with houses, and fetched five times the price I gave for it. In addition to this, I have been in civil employment for the past six years and, as I have always been on the move, I have never had the expense of an establishment, and have thus saved some five thousand pounds.

"Therefore I am master of something over ninety thousand pounds; and can, if I do not return to India--which I have, I may say, already made up my mind not to do, buy an estate. I have had very much more than my share of adventures, and have marvellously escaped. If I return, my luck might change.

"At any rate, I have had enough of it. I have made a very handsome fortune and, even putting everything else aside, would rather know that I owed all I possessed to my own good luck and exertions, than to an accident of birth."

"But that cannot be, lad."

"Well, uncle," Harry said obstinately, "if you choose to see things in that light, all I can say is, that I shall at once throw up my leave and return to India; and if you choose to leave this house and estate, it may go to wreck and ruin for anything I care."

"Well, well, my boy, we won't say anything more about it, now, but will leave it to the lawyers to settle."

"I shall certainly employ no lawyers in the matter, uncle. By all means, obtain your solicitor's opinion as to whether the proofs I have put in your hands are sufficient to establish, beyond all fear of doubt, the fact that I am the son of Major Harry Lindsay. It matters not whether my father was your elder brother or not, to anyone except ourselves. I am perfectly satisfied with having proved, to the satisfaction of all in India, that I am the son of a brave officer. My object in coming to England was not to see whether I was entitled to money, but simply to find friends among the families of my father and mother; and if it were to end in my turning you, my aunt, and cousin out of the place you have believed to be your own, for so many years, my visit here would be a dismal failure, and I should bitterly regret having set foot in England.

"Please do not let us say anything more about it. The matter, so far as I am concerned, is concluded; and nothing that can possibly be said will shake my determination, in any way."

In order to break the silence, for Mrs. Lindsay and Mary were both wiping their eyes, Harry went on:

"Now that we have finished this question, uncle, I will tell you how I got the ratification of the treaty, that will some day be made for our occupation of Singapore, from the Rajah of Johore. As far as the excitement went, it certainly was the most stirring business that I was ever employed in;" and he at once launched into the narrative of his capture, the escape, the adventure with the tiger, and the defence of Johore.

"It seems to me, Harry," his uncle said, when he had finished, "that you not only have as many lives as a cat, but as a whole posse of cats. I cannot but think that it was a wild business, altogether; and that, having got the assent of the gentleman with the very hard name, there was no occasion to bother about the rajah, who seemed to have no authority whatever."

"But he might have got it, you see, uncle. It may be ten years or more before a governor general will be able to attend to the business, and it was as well to get it settled, once for all."

"What did the rajah present you with for saving his capital?"

"He offered me a number of weapons and things but, as I had no place to put them in, I could not be bothered with them. I do not think that cash was at all a strong point with him, and I don't suppose he had a thousand dollars in his treasury. I was a little surprised that he did not offer me half a dozen young ladies as wives; but had he done so, I should have resisted the temptation, as they would have been even more trouble than the weapons."

"You never fell in love with any of the Indian beauties, cousin Harry?"

"I have never seen any to fall in love with. The ladies of the upper class in India, whether Hindus or Mussulmans, always go closely veiled; and as to the English ladies, in the first place they were nearly all married, and in the second

place I went as little into society as I could help, being on the Governor General's staff, and nearly always away on duty. Certainly I never saw anyone who caused my pulse to beat faster; which I believe, from what I have read, is one of the many symptoms of being in love."

Harry then enquired about his mother's relations.

"I, unfortunately, can tell you nothing about them. She was an only daughter when she married your father. Both her parents died, years ago. They only had a lease of the place they lived in, and I really cannot tell you anything whatever about them. There was a son, who would, I suppose, succeed to any property his father left; but he was a ne'er-do-well, and was seldom at home, and I have never seen or heard of him, since."

"Well, I am quite content with the relations that I have found, and shall not trouble myself to seek further."

Four days passed. At the end of that time, Mr. Lindsay received a letter from his lawyer and, after breakfast, asked Harry to go into the library with him.

"About that business that we were talking about, I have today received an answer to my letter. My lawyer is of opinion, from what I told him of these papers, that your case is a strong one; and that though, if I chose, I might give you a great deal of trouble, he thinks that in the long run you would succeed. As I don't want to give you trouble; and as I am, myself, as completely convinced that you are my brother Harry's son as that I am his brother, the matter may now be considered as finally settled."

"Quite so, uncle. I don't want to hear anything more about it. If you choose to be obstinate, and turn out, I can only say that I shall be sorry that the old house, where my father and you were both born, should go to wreck and ruin. At any rate, let the matter rest, for the present. Possibly it may yet be arranged to the satisfaction of all parties."

"It will certainly not be arranged to my satisfaction," the squire grumbled, "unless you become master here."

"We will talk it over, in six months' time."

He related the conversation to his wife who, to his surprise, looked pleased.

"Nothing could be better," she said; "it would be an excellent plan."

"What on earth do you mean, Louisa?"

"You are as blind as an owl, Peter. There can be only one meaning in what he has said, only one arrangement that could be satisfactory to all parties."

"And what is that, my dear?" the squire said, a little testily.

"I mean, of course, that he should marry Mary."

The squire sat down suddenly, in his surprise.

"Such an idea never entered my head," he said. "But why should you think of it? Why, the young fellow has only been here four or five days!"

"That is quite long enough for him to see that Mary is a charming girl," Mrs. Lindsay said. "He has seen very little of ladies; and he is, no doubt, struck with the idea that she is an extremely nice girl. I don't say that he is in love with her, yet; but quite enough, perhaps, to foresee that, ere long, he will feel more ardent than he does at present; and that it is the only arrangement possible, since we are determined to turn out for him.

"Now mind, Peter, you do not throw out the slightest hint, either to him or to her, that such a solution has ever occurred to us. It might spoil everything. It would make Mary shy with him, and might cause him to be awkward. You give your consent to remain here, for six months. By that time the question will have solved itself. If I am wrong, no harm will have been done. If I am right, the arrangement will be, as he says, a satisfactory one to us all."

"I was always against cousins marrying," Mr. Lindsay said, doubtfully.

"Don't be absurd, Peter. I don't say that, in some cases, there is not a good deal to be said against it; but where both the man and the woman are healthy, and come of healthy families, no union can be more likely to be happy."

"But I think I have heard you speak--"

"Never mind what you have heard me speak, sir; circumstances alter cases, and this case is altogether an exceptional one.

"We certainly could not wish for a finer young fellow as Mary's husband. He is a desirable partner, in every respect. He is himself well off and, although I quite agree with you that, whatever it costs, we must give the dear old place up, I grant that it would be very pleasant to avoid so terrible a wrench.

"The one thing I don't like is that man of his. He moves about so noiselessly that it is like having a ghost in the room."

"It is you who are absurd, now, Louisa," the squire said. "The man has, over and over again, proved himself to be a most faithful friend to him. I own that it is a little trying to see him standing behind Harry's chair, without moving, except when his master wants something; but after all, that is less fidgety than having footmen dodging about you.

"Well, Louisa, I will take particular heed of what you have said, and will be mum as a mouse, until we see how the cat jumps."

Mrs. Lindsay's prevision turned out correct. Harry remained a week longer at Parley House. Then he heard that an estate was for sale, two miles away, and drove over quietly to inspect it. Ten days later he wrote from London, and said that he had bought the place.

"He is the most obstinate fellow that I ever knew!" Mr. Lindsay exclaimed, as he read the letter.

"What is it, dear?"

"He has bought Hungerford's place, and never gave me the slightest hint of his intentions."

"Well, I think it will be very nice to have him so near us," Mrs. Lindsay said, decidedly.

"Oh, of course, and it will be so handy for--"

"Peter, will you take another cup of tea?" his wife said, sharply; and Mr.

Lindsay knew that he had nearly put his foot in it.

A week later Harry came down again--to see, as he said, what required to be done to the house; and he needed no persuasion to stay at Parley Hall. To decide upon matters, he needed a great deal of advice, both from Mrs. Lindsay and Mary; and then, having put the house into the hands of the builders and decorators, he went up to town again. However, he frequently ran down to see how things were getting on and, before the alterations were all finished, Mary had consented to become its mistress.

Abdool preferred to remain as his master's body servant, as before. He had even, before leaving India, picked up a certain amount of English; and had improved considerably his knowledge of the language during the long voyage. Mary, fortunately, had not shared in her mother's feelings about him but, on learning that he had, several times, saved Harry's life, had taken to him greatly. He never returned to his native land.

And although Harry and his wife talked, sometimes, of making the voyage to India, they were never enabled to accomplish it for, as children grew up around them, Mary was no longer free to travel. Abdool's devotion was now divided between his master and mistress and the little ones, who were never tired of listening to his stories of their father's adventures.

Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay lived to an advanced age, and died within a few weeks of each other. Harry then moved to Parley Hall, and sold the estate he had bought; as the management of one estate, and his duties as county magistrate, occupied as much time as he cared to give. The only complaint made against him, by his neighbours, was that he did not care for field sports. But, as he said, he had seen enough bloodshed to last him his lifetime; and would neither shed the blood of bird nor beast, though he had no quarrel with those who liked that sort of thing.

He kept up a regular correspondence, to the end of her life, with his old nurse; and his interest in his Indian friends never abated. He was an old man when the Indian mutiny broke out, and two of his grandsons took their share in the long siege of Delhi, and served with both the forces which, under Sir Colin Campbell, fought their way into Lucknow, and finally broke the neck of the Sepoy mutiny.

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