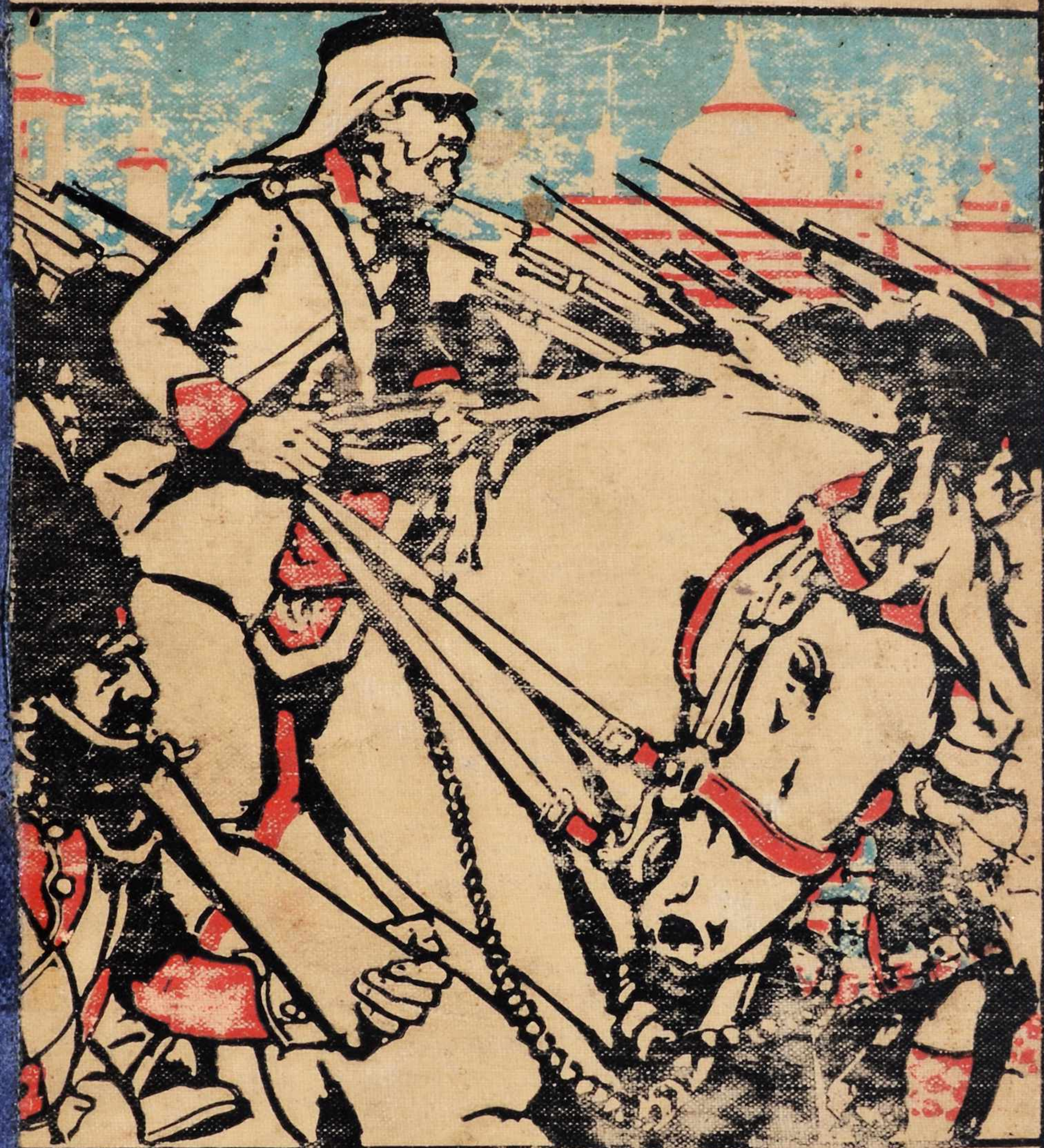
ROMANCE·OF·EMPIRE

INDIA

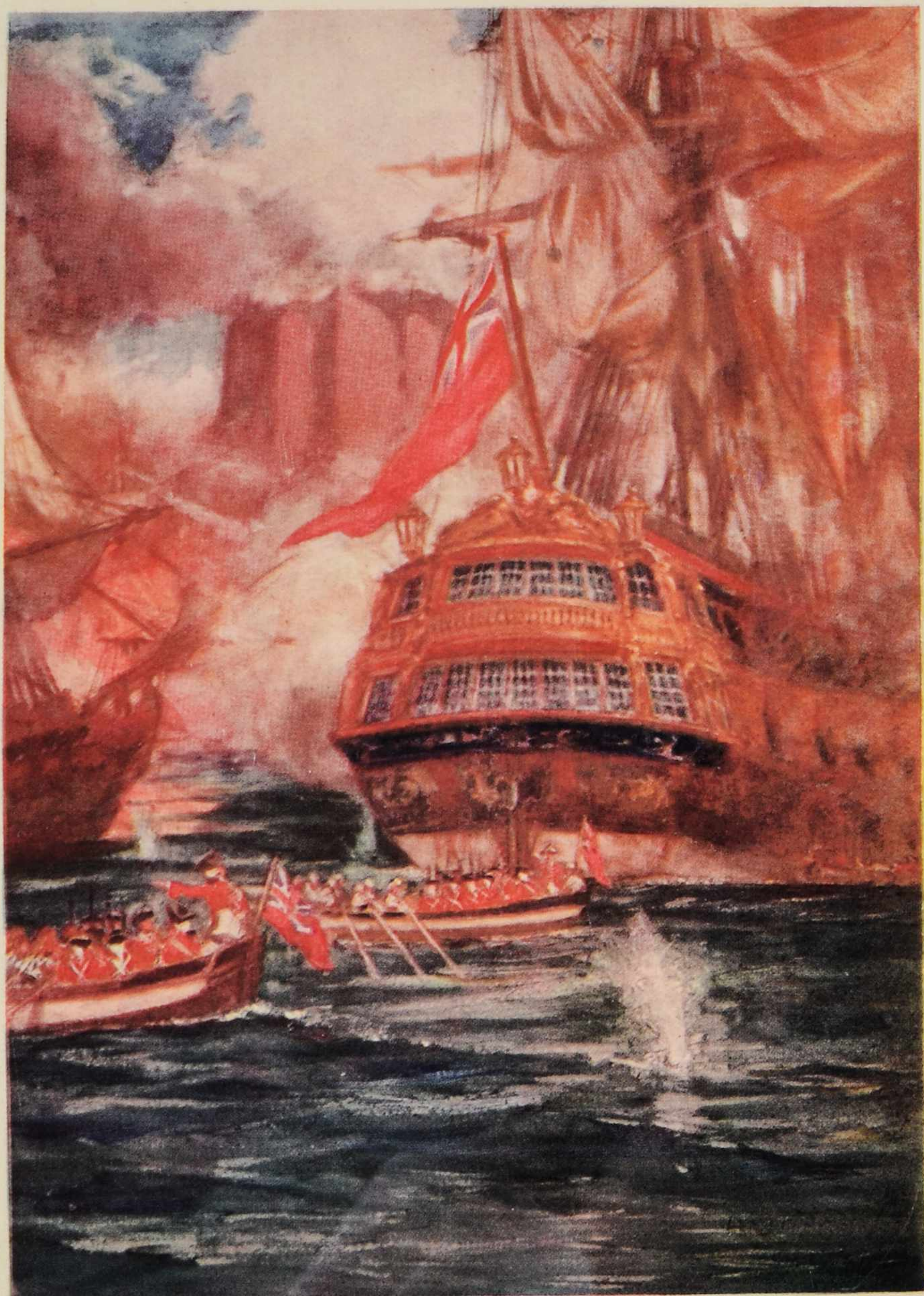


BY·VICTOR·SURRIDGE
ILLUSTRATED·IN·COLOUR
BY·A·D·McCORMICK·R·I

Romance of Empire Series

EDITED BY JOHN LANG

INDIA



Storming of Geriah, 1756

ROMANCE OF EMPIRE

INDIA

BY

VICTOR SURRIDGE

WITH TWELVE REPRODUCTIONS FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS IN COLOUR BY

A. D. M'CORMICK, R.I.

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TO MY MOTHER

PREFACE

ROMANCE and India are inseparably associated; but to glean more than a few jewels from the inexhaustible mine at our disposal is impossible within the limits of a single volume. This is in no sense a history; rather has it been the endeavour in the following pages to touch lightly upon the more romantic events in our empire story, and to trace by a series of picturesque incidents the gradual evolution of India, from the warring and troubled condition in which it was found by the hardy merchant-adventurers of old, to its present proud position as "the brightest jewel in the Imperial Crown."

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MAP

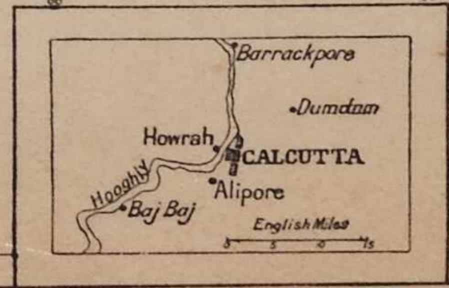
India xiii

INDIA

English Miles

0 100 200 300 400

Hindu Kush
Jagdalak P.
Kabul
Jellalabad
Khurd Kabal P.
Peshawar
N.W. FRONT. PROV.
CASHMERE
GHURKAS
Ghazni
AFGHANISTAN
Kandahar
Jhelum
Gujerat
Chillianwalla
SIKHS
JAUTS
Lahore
Sobraon
PUNJAB
Multan
Sutlej
Simla
Kalanga
HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS
TIBET
Brahmaputra
Kalat
BALUCHISTAN
Indus
Meerut
Delhi
(MOGUL)
Aligarh
ROHILKHAND
NEPAL
Khatmandu
Punakha
BHUTAN
Chamorchee
RAJPUTS
Laswari
Bhurtpore
RAJPUTANA
UNITED PROVS
Agra
Lucknow
Ajmere
Cawnpore
Fatehpur
Segauli
Buxa
Gwalior
AGRA AND OUDH
Ganges
(HINDUSTAN)
Benares
Patna
Monghyr
EASTN BENGAL
Irrawaddy
CHINA
SIND
BOMBAY
Jhansi
Allahabad
Buxar
Chunar
Behar
AND ASSAM
Tropic of Cancer
CENTRAL INDIA
BENGAL
Murshidabad
(MARATHA)
PRESIDENCY
Plassey
Hooghly
Chittagong
BURMA
Indore
Narbada
Baroda
Chandernagore
Ft William
CALCUTTA
Yandaboo
Ava
Surat
CENTRAL
Nagpore
PROVINCES
Orissa
Hooghly
ARACAN
Gulf of Cambay
BERAR
R. Mahanadi
Assaye
ARABIAN
Kalyan
Ahmednugur
(NIZAMS)
BOMBAY
Poona
(DOMINIONS)
Irrawaddy
PRESIDENCY
HYDERABAD
Golconda
Secunderabad
Hyderabad
PEGU
Rangoon
SIAM
SEA
BAY OF
Geriah
Bijapur
R. Godavery
TENNASSERIM
Goa
DECCAN
R. Kristna
BENGAL
Malabar Coast
MYSORE
Vellore
MADRAS
Bangalore
Arcot
Ft St George
Seringapatam
Wandiwash
Cannanore
Mahe (Fr.)
Pondicherry (Fr.)
Calicut
Deva Cotta
Ft St David
Cuddalore
Porto Novo
CARNATIC
Trichinopoli
Tanjore
Cochin
TRAVANCORE
INDIAN
OCEAN
C. Comorin
CEYLON



Bartholomew, Edinr

THE ROMANCE OF INDIA

CHAPTER I

THE WONDERFUL EXPLOITS OF SIVAJI

OVER two and a half centuries ago—in the year 1646 to be precise—a travel-stained band of men entered the courtyard of the royal palace of Bíjapur, a city with which the fates have dealt hardly, and which to-day is little more than a ruin. But at the time of which we are writing Bíjapur was the capital of a large and important kingdom in the southern portion of the peninsula, and was inhabited by a brave and warlike people.

The men dismounted from their shaggy mountain ponies and looked about them curiously. It was evident that they had come from afar, for their hair was long and matted, and their speech rough and uncouth; and the splendidly dressed officer of the guard, who had been eyeing them with suspicion, mentally decided that they were Maráthás, or tribesmen who lived in the wild hilly country in the far west.

"Behold, we bear important tidings!" they cried. "We must see His Majesty Muhammad Adil Shah."

When they were at length admitted, the monarch, in the presence of a brilliant court, asked them their business.

"We have come to tell Your Majesty that Sivaji, son of Shahji, has taken the fort of Torna."

A murmur of surprise and incredulity went the round of the assembled courtiers, but the king, raising his hand to command silence, bade the messengers continue their narrative.

"May it please Your Majesty," they resumed, "our lord Sivaji has been troubled in his mind since many days. Long has he considered with sorrow that the fort was not maintained in a manner befitting the safety of the country. But now, zealous of Your Majesty's glory, he has deposed the governor and vested himself with the authority of this miserable one."

"How say you?" interrupted the king. "This is Shahji's son?"

"Even so, Your Majesty. We humbly pray you to look with favour upon our master Sivaji, that by your royal approval of a patriotic deed you may strike terror into the hearts of those base ones who seek to stir up the kingdom into sedition and revolt."

The king plucked uneasily at his beard. "Shahji," he muttered to himself—"Shahji, the powerful noble and general in command of the Bíjapur army! How came his son thus to take the law into his own hands?"

"Tell me," he commanded sternly, "how old is this capturer of forts?"

"Your Majesty, he is but nineteen years."

The king's brow cleared, and a broad smile passed round the Court. What manner of youth was this who seemed so anxious for his country's welfare? Certainly it was not a matter to be taken seriously. So the messengers were dismissed with the promise that their petition should receive attention at a later date, while the courtiers smiled to themselves over what they considered a very excellent joke.

This is the first glimpse we have of the renowned Sivaji. A Hindú boy, of martial spirit and keen imagination, fed from his earliest years on the wonderful exploits achieved by the legendary heroes of India, burning to follow in their steps and to do noble deeds for his country and his religion, we see him in company with a few boyish friends and a ragged band of low-caste natives capture an important fort. The tried men of war surrender in astonishment to these inexperienced youths, while the aged Governor delivers up his sword in mute dismay. Sivaji has placed his foot on the first rung of the ladder of fame.

The youthful hero lived with his guardian at Poona. The old man was very much shocked by his ward's daring actions, but his lectures and entreaties made no impression; the spirit of adventure was in Sivaji and he would not be restrained. The aged tutor took to his bed in despair, and shortly afterwards died. On his deathbed his dying eyes seemed to see something of the future in store for the boy,

for he called him, and bade him go on as he had begun.

"My son," he murmured with faltering accents, "I pray that you will continue your campaign for independence. Protect Brahmins, kine and cultivators; preserve the temples of the Hindús from violation; and follow the fortune which lies before you." And so saying, the old man expired.

Thus was Sivaji left his own master. His father was far away fighting in the wars. Poona, as the map will show, is some distance from Bíjapur. It is situated in the Maráthá country, a wild and mountainous region, very difficult of access. Sivaji crouched in his native hills like one of the cunning mountain tigers, and made himself stronger and stronger. By bribes and other means he got possession of several forts. Men occupying posts of honour and distinction were glad to enter his service. Little by little his power and possessions increased. Now here, now there, as the opportunity presented itself, forts were taken, districts seized, until at length Sivaji found himself ruler over a large province.

News travelled slowly in those days, and the Bíjapur Court were little aware of what was really going on. They had other and more important affairs to attend to than the suppression of a mere mountain robber, and it was not until they received a taste of Sivaji's power that they condescended to notice his existence. A large treasure was being forwarded to court by the Governor of Kalian. A powerful escort was sent with it to ensure its safety, for the country abounded in thieves, and caravan robberies

had become very numerous. The camels, bearing the precious burden, picked their way gingerly along the rocky pathways. Before and behind rode mounted men, fingering naked swords and keeping an anxious look-out for danger. Suddenly there was a thunder of horses' feet, and Sivaji at the head of three hundred men swept like a whirlwind upon them. The escort fled in every direction, and the booty was borne with all speed to the young bandit's mountain fastness.

Bíjapur, lacking its treasure, sat up in indignation and alarm. "Treachery!" muttered the king. "Shahji must be concerned in this. He is using his son to plot against me!" And so the doughty general, who was fighting his country's battles far away, was treacherously seized and conveyed to the capital. With tears in his eyes he protested his innocence; but the king's heart was black with suspicion. The veteran soldier was thrown into a dungeon, and the door built up save for a tiny opening. "If your son does not submit within a certain period," he was told, "the aperture shall be for ever closed." The unhappy parent, face to face with death, sent an urgent appeal to his too-enterprising offspring, and the growling of the mountain tiger ceased for a time to trouble the ears of Bíjapur.

A few lines are here necessary to explain the general position of India at this period. In 1526 Bábar the Lion, a fierce and warlike prince, swept down from Afghanistan to establish a throne in India. This, known to history as the Great Moghul Empire, flourished exceedingly, and was now at the zenith of

its power. Seated on his world-famed "peacock" throne at Delhi, Shah Jehan, fifth and most splendid of his line, held supreme sway over the northern part of the peninsula. Never before, never since, was an Indian court so magnificent. The splendours of Delhi were the wonder and amazement of the few European travellers who found their way thither. The peacock throne alone, a mass of living light, with its tail blazing in the shifting colours of rubies, sapphires and emeralds, was a thing which, once seen, was stamped for ever on the memory. The French jeweller Tavernier turned faint and giddy when he beheld it, but his business instincts revived sufficiently to enable him to make a valuation. He estimated its worth at the enormous sum of six and a half millions sterling. The buildings of the city were lordly and magnificent. Every one has heard of the Taj' Mahal, one of the glories of the world. Built by Shah Jehan to shelter the remains of his favourite wife, and later used as his own tomb, this still remains, a marvel of architecture, to bear witness to the sumptuous splendour of those times.

In the Deccan two kingdoms still held themselves free from the Moghul yoke. The word "Deccan" means "South," and this territory comprised all that huge district south of the Narbadá River. These two kingdoms were Bíjapur and Golconda (otherwise called Hyderabad). The inhabitants of India consisted of a large number of martial races, differing from each other in language, in custom and in creed, and were perpetually engaged in warfare.

The two southern kingdoms were wont to fly at each other's throats, or at other times to unite against their more powerful neighbour. For it was the dream of Shah Jehan to conquer the south, and so to establish the Moghul Empire from the Himálayas to Cape Comorin. But the time was not yet ripe for action. The crafty emperor was waiting for the day when, worn out by internal quarrels, and split up into various parties, they should both fall an easy prey to the northern invaders. When the exploits of Sivaji began to be noised abroad as far as Delhi, Shah Jehan chuckled. He foresaw that the young Maráthá would prove very troublesome to Bíjapur. And was this not a very excellent thing? Shah Jehan was right. Sivaji proved very troublesome indeed; so much so that Bíjapur assembled an army to destroy him.

But what had become of Shahji? That unfortunate soldier, after languishing in gaol two years for his son's misdoings, was suddenly released. Bíjapur had not so many good generals that she could afford to keep them in prison, and Shahji was sent rejoicing to the south to take up his neglected command. Meanwhile the expedition for Sivaji's suppression made ready to start, under the command of Afzool Khán, an officer of high rank, but a vain man, who declared that this little excursion was mere child's play. The insignificant rebel should be brought back captive and humiliated, and cast in chains under the footstool of the throne.

It was September of the year 1659 before the

expedition set out. It made quite an imposing sight, and the people cheered encouragingly as the procession wound slowly out of the huge city gate. There were swarthy cavalrymen to the number of five thousand, who jingled along merrily on their wiry horses, and cracked jokes together on the subject of their quest. "Were they sent out to capture a boy bandit?" they would ask jestingly, and their bearded throats shook with merriment at the very idea. In their train marched seven thousand infantry, the choicest procurable. These, too, had their own ideas on the subject of the expedition, and would pass their hours in merry badinage at their youthful foe's expense. It tickled the fancy of the Bíjapur soldiery to think of him as a boy. Long strings of camels laden with stores, rockets, ammunition and swivels, paced majestically beside the marching troops, while a considerable train of artillery—or at least what was considered artillery in those days—rumbled and clattered in the rear.

Sivaji, nestling among his native hills, heard of the coming of the expedition, and laughed. Here was an adventure after his own heart. And was it not eminently flattering that Bíjapur should think him worthy of so mighty an army and so splendid a leader as Afzool Khán? Nevertheless he must walk warily; it would not do to let the enemy catch him tripping. So the tiger began to play a cunning game. Afzool Khán learned, rather to his relief, that Sivaji had no intention of resisting his august self. The "insignificant rebel" seemed to be quite overcome by the magnitude of his own sins. He

"longed only to kiss the feet of the advancing warrior, and to make his peace with Bíjapur. Would the mighty Khán use his great influence to intercede on his behalf?"

The vanity of Afzool Khán was gratified by these offers of submission. He despised his adversary as only a rich Muhammadan noble can despise any one, but at the same time he knew that his task was not without difficulty. To penetrate the wild and hilly country where Sivaji lay hid was like putting one's hand in a hole to draw out a badger; there was a distinct probability of being bitten in the attempt. So he posed as the representative of an outraged but still generous ruler, and decided to hear what Sivaji had to say for himself. To this end a Brahmin, high in his master's confidence, was sent to see the rebel. With him went suitable attendants, and together they arrived at Sivaji's place of residence, where a cordial welcome awaited them.

While others slept that night, a strange interview took place. The great Sivaji knelt at the Brahmin's feet and wept bitterly. India is divided into two great schools of religious thought—Hindúism and Muhammadanism. The latter was the religion of the governing classes. Sivaji was a zealous Hindú, and it was his ambition to restore his faith to its former proud position. These aims he now confided to his guest. The Brahmin was touched, for to be a Brahmin is to be a member of the Hindú priesthood, and of high caste in consequence. It did not become a Brahmin,

said Sivaji, to fight against the true religion. If he would assist him to destroy the Bíjapur army he should receive a position of power and affluence—he should be loaded with treasure and jewels. The Brahmin was still more touched. He gave Sivaji his blessing, and swore to serve him.

By the Brahmin's aid a conference was brought about between Sivaji and the haughty Khán. Sivaji professed to be in great terror of the power and grandeur of the Bíjapur general, and it was agreed that they should meet, each accompanied by only one attendant. The trysting-place was in the middle of a dense jungle. Through a narrow pathway, cut for the occasion, Afzool Khán was borne in his palanquin. Several hundred yards in the rear was stationed his bodyguard of fifteen hundred men; they did not advance farther for fear of alarming Sivaji. Some distance back the army lay encamped. Afzool Khán got out of his palanquin and stared impatiently about him. "Where was this Sivaji, and why was he so long in coming?" he muttered querulously. To encourage the Maráthá he had laid aside all his warlike garb, and, clad in thin muslin, was armed only with his sword. Presently two figures were seen advancing in the distance. The foremost, Sivaji, was dressed like the Khán in simple white muslin, but underneath he wore a coat of chain armour, while a crooked dagger lay hidden in his sleeve. On the fingers of his left hand was fixed the treacherous and deadly "wagnuck," a sharp instrument shaped like a tiger's claw, and capable of easy concealment in a half-closed hand. In his attendant's sash were stuck

two swords—an ominous sign—but entirely unnoticed by the unsuspicious Khán.

By slow degrees Sivaji approached the waiting general. Every now and again he would stop, and with signs of alarm make as if to turn back. Afzool Khán watched him, impatiently contemptuous. Then, to dispel the chieftain's fears, he motioned his attendant from him and stood alone with folded arms. At length the two stood face to face. Sivaji fell on his knees and kissed the general's feet, and the Khán, pleased by his act of submission, raised him up and tenderly embraced him. A moment later, he started back with a cry of alarm, his crimson-stained robe bearing ghastly evidence of the wound inflicted by the deadly "wagnuck." "Treachery!' he gasped, and, drawing his sword, slashed fiercely at his white-robed assailant. The blow glanced harmlessly off the concealed armour. Sivaji drew his dagger with deliberation, it glittered for a moment in the air, and then, with a groan, the haughty general tottered and fell at the Maráthá's feet. His attendant rushed hastily to the rescue. "Surrender, and your life shall be spared," cried Sivaji, but the man refused to accept mercy upon such terms, and, after a few minutes' unequal struggle, he too fell dead across his master's body.

Then the blast of a horn rang out on the air. All at once the surrounding thickets became alive with Maráthá troops, who, uttering their war-cry, rushed headlong upon Afzool Khán's patiently waiting army. Leaderless and taken by surprise, the Bíjapur soldiery turned tail and fled in disorder. Many

surrendered and were taken into Sivaji's service; others, who attempted to escape, wandered about miserably for days in wilds from which they found it impossible to extricate themselves. Those who did not die of hunger and exhaustion fell by degrees into the hands of Sivaji's men, and were taken prisoners. The bandit himself surveyed the wreck of the once mighty army with great gladness, and offered up many prayers and thanksgivings for the horses, elephants and treasure that had fallen into his hands. Shortly after this the countrymen of Bíjapur had reason to wring their hands and groan in bitterness of spirit, while the nobles uttered many strange and curious oaths. A grim warrior mounted on a shaggy pony led an army of long-haired, fierce-faced men right up to the gates of Bíjapur city, leaving behind him a long trail of plundered towns and villages, of fields blackened by fire, and homesteads left empty and desolate by the sword. For thus did Sivaji return thanks for the complimentary attention of His Majesty Muhammad Adil Shah.

It was the Moghul territory that next felt the benefit of Sivaji's enterprise—felt it so keenly that the Delhi Court, usually somnolent, was excited to a pitch of fury. A new emperor had come to the throne, Aurangzebe, the greatest of an illustrious line. A grim man this, silent and unemotional, concealing his feelings under the stern mask of religious piety. Yet his religion did not prevent him from deposing his aged father and shutting him up in prison. It did not move him to spare the lives of

his three brothers, each of whom had plotted to win the throne. Rather did it act as an incentive to spur him on, for the creed of Aurangzebe was hard and narrow, and the breast of Aurangzebe never harboured a generous emotion. He heard of the doings of Sivaji with an impassive face. He learnt how his land had been desolated and his people plundered, and remained unmoved. "Clearly," he remarked, "this mountain rat must be punished for his insolence."

Shaista Khán, the Emperor's uncle, led a large army southwards. He had orders to carry the war into the Maráthá's country, to reduce their forts, and to exterminate their leader. The campaign opened well. Forts that Sivaji had captured were recovered, and Poona was occupied without resistance. Then the rainy season set in. Military operations being impossible, Shaista Khán resolved to make Poona his headquarters. His army was encamped around the town, while he himself built a pavilion at the foot of the fortress for the accommodation of himself and his numerous wives.

The royal general, who loved the luxury and ease of Delhi, found it rather dull at Poona, so when the anniversary of the Emperor's coronation came round, he determined to give a great feast to celebrate the event. The night arrived, and the Khán's pavilion was given up to mirth and revelry. In the court adjoining the guest-chamber a company of musicians entertained the feasters with more or less sweet strains of melody. Shortly before midnight a strange man approached the bandmaster and saluted. "What

would you?" gurgled the musician, who had been tasting somewhat freely of the Khán's wine-skins. "My lord commands that when midnight strikes you shall play louder than you have ever done before, so that more honour be done to the occasion." "My lord's commands shall be obeyed," was the reply. "Of a truth he shall be drowned in music." The messenger again saluted and withdrew as silently as he had come.

Meanwhile the feast went forward merrily. Wine was not spared, and the Khán and his friends were all more or less in a state of convivial intoxication. Suddenly a tremendous uproar filled the air. Trumpets blared as they had never blared before, while kettledrum vied with kettledrum in making night hideous. The bandmaster was performing his task bravely. But above all this din came the sound of piercing shrieks from the seraglio, or women's quarters. Startled and amazed the guests leapt to their feet, and at the same moment a band of armed men, the redoubtable Sivaji at their head, broke into the room. At their heels came a string of fearful and screaming women. Instantly all was chaos and confusion. Shaista Khán, too muddled with drink to understand what was going on, tottered unsteadily to his feet. His young son, sword in hand, bravely flung himself upon the intruders. But his courage availed him little, for a Maráthá blade hissed and sang in the air, and the boy fell headless at his father's feet.

Shaista Khán was the objective of the attack, and towards him they rushed with whirling blades

and fierce cries. The women saw their master's danger and, sweeping the lamps to the floor, plunged the room into total darkness. Can you not imagine the confusion which followed ? Friend and foe swayed and fought together in horrible disorder; random blows fell upon the women and attendants. The Moghul general staggered to a window, and tried by this means to escape from the building. For a minute or two he clung to the window-sill, swaying to and fro, and reaching for the ground with his feet —not a very dignified position for the uncle of the mightiest Emperor in the world—and then Sivaji slashed at him with his sword and cut off one of his fingers. The commander of the Imperial forces dropped to the ground with a howl of pain, and fled uphill towards the fort as fast as his legs would carry him. Baffled in this direction, the Maráthás turned their attention to the Moghul encampment. Tents were overturned and plundered, flying soldiery overtaken and cut down. It was a scene of the wildest disorder, and the northern soldiers ran hither and thither like rabbits to escape the long swords of their assailants. When the officers had got their men into something like order, Sivaji and his merry men were gone. All that could be seen of them were the torches tossing derisively in the distance, as the mountain warriors ascended exultantly to their impenetrable fastnesses.

The Emperor Aurangzebe bent his brows in black displeasure when he heard of this escapade. "It seems that this 'rat' has sharp teeth," he remarked drily; "he shall be given something to bite."

CHAPTER II

SIVAJI IS CROWNED KING

When Hindú story-tellers of the present day relate to enraptured audiences the wonderful exploits of Sivaji, they will tell how it came to pass that native Indian and white-faced Englishman first fought together on the shores of Hindustan. And if the story-teller be anything of a philosopher he may go on to declare that the English, by their successful resistance of Sivaji's attack—Sivaji, who feared nobody and was feared by all (unless it be by the proud Aurangzebe, who called him a rat),—foreshadowed themselves the future masters of India. But it is necessary first to know a little of how the English came to be in India, and what they were doing there.

To the Portuguese belongs the honour of discovering the oversea route to India. The great Columbus essayed to find it, but came upon America instead, thus adding another continent to the dominions of his master, the king of Spain. His Majesty of Portugal, who had previously refused Columbus's services, was greatly chagrined by the chance he had thus let slip, and resolved on an expedition on his own account.

So on the 8th of July 1497 the brave Portuguese mariner, Vasco da Gama, set out from the Tagus with three small ships to seek the land which lay beyond the wild southern seas. They had a perilous voyage; many times it was thought that the ships would founder, so greatly were they buffeted by the huge waves which rolled around them. Night and day the men laboured at the pumps to keep their frail cockleshells afloat, until at length the terror and mystery of the great unknown seized them, and they clamoured to their leader to turn back and brave no further perils. Vasco da Gama was a man great in heart and in deed. He placed the rebellious pilots in irons, and threw overboard every chart and instrument of navigation he possessed. "God will guide us," he remarked placidly; "we require no other aid. And if so it be that that aid fails us, then neither I nor any of us will look upon our native country again."

Faint of heart and weary the sailors toiled on. Each day they saw some comrade stricken down with scurvy—a dread disease they now beheld for the first time. But at length their perseverance was rewarded, and eleven months after they had set sail from Portugal, the far-stretching coastline of Western India greeted their wondering eyes.

The vessels cast anchor off Calicut, which was then ruled by an independent native rajah called the Zamorin. Can you not imagine the feelings of curiosity and delight with which the poor worn-out sailors gazed shorewards upon a new and beautiful country? They saw a noble town containing many fine buildings, with a fertile plain rising up in the

background, bounded by a distant range of lofty mountains. The inhabitants flocked down to the beach to behold the strange new-comers, and marvelled greatly at the Portuguese ships. The voyagers found themselves treated kindly by the Zamorin, who was greatly struck at finding his visitors so different in manner and appearance from the foreigners who frequented his port. And so Vasco da Gama discovered India for his master; and although there were many plots laid against him by the Moors, who were jealous at finding their trade interrupted by these audacious strangers, he succeeded in winning his way back to his own country with very marvellous tales of the things he had seen and heard in the East.

Da Gama's voyages were chronicled by one Gaspar Correa,[1] and in the light of present-day circumstances it is curious and interesting to quote a passage from the English translation of this work. It runs thus: "In this country of India they are much addicted to soothsayers and diviners. . . . According to what was known later there had been in this country of Cannanore a diviner so diabolical in whom they believed so much that they wrote down all that he said, and preserved it like prophecies that would come to pass. They held a legend from him in which it was said that the whole of India would be taken and ruled over by a very distant king, who had white people, who would do great harm to those who were not their friends; and

[1] *Lendas da India*, translated by the Hon. E. J. Stanley for the Hakluyt Society.

this was to happen a long time later, and he left signs of when it would be. In consequence of the great disturbance caused by the sight of these ships, the king was very desirous of knowing what they were; and he spoke to his diviners, asking them to tell him what ships were those and whence they came. The diviners conversed with their devils, and told him that the ships belonged to a great king, and came from very far, and, according to what they found written, these were the people who were to seize India by war and peace, as they had already told him many times, because the period which had been written down was concluded."

It was because the King of Cannanore thought that these palefaced strangers were the people spoken of by the soothsayer that he welcomed them so kindly. But he was wrong. The Portuguese were not destined to rule over India; and although they monopolised its foreign trade for nearly a century, and established themselves very strongly in the towns along the coast, it was not to be expected that they would be permitted to keep their rich find all to themselves. Soon dazzling tales of the fabulous wealth and vast resources of the Orient began to reach English ears, and England resolved to strike a blow for the eastern trade. A number of wealthy merchants met together to discuss the situation. Difficulty after difficulty cropped up, until it began to look as if their project would never be realised. But at last in 1601 the famous East India Company was incorporated by royal charter, and her ships sailed the main in search of the wonderful lands

beyond the seas. The spirit of enterprise was abroad. The Dutch were the great maritime nation of that time, and you may be sure that they did not intend to remain idle while other nations grew rich and prosperous. So it came about that the coast of India became busy with white traders of many nationalities, and bitter was the rivalry which existed between them.

Some distance north of Bombay is situate the town of Surat. This ancient city was an exceedingly prosperous seaport belonging to the Great Moghul. Ships from many countries brought their merchandise thither, and the fame of Surat as the chief centre of Indian commerce spread far and wide. The European companies set up trading-stations here,—factories as they were called in those days,—and the shareholders at home grew rich on the gold that poured continuously into their coffers.

For some time Sivaji thought wistfully of the riches of Surat, and when Sivaji gave himself over to thought something usually happened. One day the wealthy merchants in the Moghul seaport found their town surrounded by four thousand men, all armed to the teeth, and led by the redoubtable Maráthá chieftain. The strangers did their work leisurely, but well. For four days the city permitted itself to be plundered, and then the Maráthás took their departure, bearing with them many elephants and camels richly laden with booty. It was at Surat that Sivaji discovered he was not invincible. He found the English factory barricaded and placed in readiness for a siege, for the stubborn Englishmen

were disposed to yield their treasure to no one. Sivaji was mildly surprised by this show of resistance, and brought his whole strength to bear upon the tiny fort; but the garrison stuck grimly to their task, and for once in his life Sivaji had to acknowledge himself beaten. He had, however, the satisfaction of capturing one Englishman, and to him he gave an object-lesson in eastern methods. The poor fellow was led before Sivaji in a great state of mind, for he fully expected to be chopped into little pieces. He found the famous outlaw seated in a tent outside the town ordering the heads and arms of prisoners to be cut off. But it must not be supposed that Sivaji was naturally cruel or vindictive. He resorted to such violence only when he suspected his prisoners were deceiving him and concealing part of their possessions. While the frightened Englishman watched, expecting his turn to come every minute, a wretched Jew was dragged into the tent.

"Come now," said Sivaji, "tell me where you have buried your hoards and you shall be released." The man obstinately refused. At a sign from their master two swarthy Maráthás flung themselves upon their captive and forced him to his knees, while another held a gleaming dagger within an inch of his throat. Still the unhappy creature refused to speak. Three times the question was repeated; three times the knife grazed his lean and scraggy neck. Then Sivaji leaned back and laughed. "Surely," he quoth, "only a Jew would set a greater value upon his goods than upon his life. Let the man go free."

To the mighty Aurangzebe at Delhi tales were

brought of the "Mountain Rat's" audacious exploits. To these the Emperor would listen grimly, vouchsafing little remark. But one day came news which probed even his indifference, and made the ruler of millions feel as angry as the lowest of his subjects. For the one vulnerable part of Aurangzebe was his religion, and that no man might wound with impunity. He learned that Sivaji, with a powerful fleet, was plundering the rich Muhammadan pilgrims as they journeyed to the sacred city of Mecca, and he swore that once and for all the infidel should be exterminated. Sivaji, however, did not accompany his men upon these naval excursions, except upon one occasion, when he was so violently sea-sick that he vowed never more to trust himself on the water.

Once again a large army marched southwards. Sivaji's spies were quick to bring him the news, and for the first time in his life the Maráthá leader showed some signs of fear. The Moghul army far outnumbered his, and was led by a famous general who had never known defeat. Sivaji was perplexed and, contrary to his usual custom, called a council of his principal officers to decide what should be done. Eventually negotiations were entered into. At first the Moghul general was very suspicious of Sivaji's advances, for had he not heard of the fate of the luckless Afzool Khán? He at all events was in no hurry to have any secret conference with the Maráthá, and in the meantime set about invading his territory and capturing his forts. So earnest, however, were Sivaji's protestations of good faith,

that the Moghul at length became convinced of his sincerity. "Tell your master," he said to the waiting messengers, "that if he submit he may rely not only on pardon, but upon favour and protection from the Emperor, and this I swear upon the honour of a Rájput."

Sivaji left his native mountains, and, with a small escort, hurried to the imperial camp. There he prostrated himself before the general, and expressed sorrow for all his past misdeeds. Many days were passed in friendly confabulation, and then an agreement was drawn up, Sivaji agreeing to surrender the forts and land he had captured from the Moghuls in return for the right of collecting revenue in certain districts. And thus was a mighty Emperor and his general hoodwinked by a crafty Maráthá who could neither read nor write. For, though they knew it not, the revenue he was allowed to collect would more than compensate him for the territory he surrendered!

To visit the Emperor at Delhi, to see the splendour of his Court, and to be embraced by the great ruler himself, was a long-cherished dream of Sivaji's. Aurangzebe one day received a long letter in which the Maráthá chief set out in courtly strain his desire to visit the Emperor and to kiss the royal threshold. "Bid him come," said Aurangzebe; for his crafty mind foresaw that Sivaji might be a useful ally in the forthcoming campaign against the South. So it being intimated to Sivaji that he would receive a warm welcome at Delhi, he set out in March 1666 upon his journey northwards. Five hundred choice

horsemen were told off to escort their loved chieftain and his eldest son, while a thousand sturdy Mawulees completed the procession.

Sivaji expected great things of the visit. He had an idea that Aurangzebe would create him Viceroy of the South, which practically meant making him absolute ruler over all the Moghul possessions in the Deccan. When he drew near the capital he looked out for some high dignitary of the Court to bid him welcome, for it was the custom that guests of distinguished rank should thus be met. But to his disgust only two officers of inferior rank came forward, and the slight rankled deeply in the Maráthá's heart.

It seemed to be Aurangzebe's purpose to do everything possible to humiliate his visitor, and to overwhelm him with the power and grandeur of the Moghul Empire. Sivaji was kept waiting three months at Delhi before the Emperor would give him audience. When at length a day had been appointed for the Maráthá to be presented at Court, Aurangzebe made great preparations to impress him with his own magnificence. It was his usual custom to dress very simply, but now he caused himself to be arrayed in his most splendid garments, strings of dazzling jewels hung round his neck, whilst diamonds and rubies of great size glistened and shone from his turban. Seated upon the radiant, gem-incrusted peacock throne he was a magnificent sight—calculated (as he thought) to strike awe into the heart of any man.

What a brilliant spectacle an audience in those splendid halls must have been! Can one not imagine the great throne, mounted on a high dais, and glitter-

ing with a thousand points of light—the Emperor, sparkling from head to foot with jewels, haughtily surveying the assembled courtiers,—the golden platform whereon the great nobles stood in all their gorgeous attire,—the other platforms of silver and marble thronged by the lesser nobles in order of their rank? It is difficult in these prosaic days to conjure up in our minds such scenes of Oriental splendour.

In the midst of all this magnificence, Sivaji held a haughty head—and nursed a burning heart. If Aurangzebe thought to tame his fiery spirit by such parade of pomp and circumstance he was mistaken. Sivaji found himself admitted to the gold platform, but he also found himself placed at the very bottom of the long row of attendant nobles, and at this fresh humiliation his anger overflowed. He saw his hopes of the Viceroyship dashed to the ground, he realised that Aurangzebe was trifling with him, and his indignation, which had been smouldering for months, broke forth tempestuously.

Out of the glittering ranks he stepped—a short, spare figure with flashing eyes and fierce gesture, and in ringing tones addressed his reproaches to the Emperor. No one dared to stem the torrent of his wrath as he voiced his bitter resentment at the manner in which he was being treated.

Aurangzebe listened in stony silence; once only, when the furious Maráthá chief accused the courtiers around him of cowardice and servile adulation, did he permit the ghost of a smile to flicker across his thin lips. The outburst was soon over, and Sivaji swung angrily out of the chamber. Aurangzebe gave orders

that he should be admitted to no more audiences. He further commanded that a guard should be set about his house, which he should not be allowed to quit without an escort responsible for his safe custody.

Thus did Sivaji find himself a prisoner. His faithful soldiers were allowed to return to their own country, and he and his young son were left alone in his enemy's capital. Aurangzebe was happy, for he thought he had the Maráthá completely in his power. They brought him news that his prisoner was sick—almost at the point of death. The Emperor was indifferent; sick or well the "Mountain Rat" could do little harm at Delhi. But after a while the invalid grew better. You will remember that Sivaji was a pious Hindú, so that it was only natural that he should send thank-offerings of fruit and flowers and other things to the Brahmins and nobles of his acquaintance. The most curious part of these gifts was the baskets in which they were packed. They were long and slender, and bore a remarkable resemblance to coffins; but after some weeks the guards stationed outside the house became quite accustomed to the sight of these unwieldy-looking packages.

One evening a strange thing happened. Sivaji, who was supposed by all to be still weak and ill, jumped out of bed in surprisingly active fashion, and proceeded to tie up his son in one of the coffin-shaped baskets. This being done, he put himself into another one and was borne by his servants out of the house, through the cordon of soldiers outside, along the crowded thoroughfares, to a distant part of the city.

Sivaji openly defies the Great Moghul

There horses were awaiting them, and the wily Maráthá—whose illness had been nothing more than a hoax—succeeded in escaping unobserved from the capital. Once outside the gates they put spurs to their horses, and set out in hot haste for the Deccan. Great was Aurangzebe's wrath the following day when a trembling officer told him the story of the ruse. But by that time pursuit was out of the question, and in December 1666, after nine months' absence at Delhi, Sivaji, in the guise of a pilgrim, once more set foot in his own dominions.

It may be imagined with what joy the Maráthás welcomed home their loved chieftain, whom they had almost given up for lost. To celebrate the event was their first impulse, and this they did by recapturing most of the territory they had been obliged to give up to the Moghuls. But there was one stronghold in particular that Sivaji longed to recover. This, Singurh by name, was a well-nigh inaccessible fort, held by a strong garrison. Sheer from a deep glen in a precipitous mountain side a mighty crag rose to the height of nearly ninety feet. On its summit, two miles in circumference, Singurh was built. On one side the rock shelved gradually inward, and as it was considered utterly impossible to attempt an assault from this quarter, it was not so strongly fortified as were the others.

Sivaji, however, believed in doing what was least expected. One moonless night a thousand picked men set out by different paths for Singurh, uniting in a thicket a few hundred yards from the base of the rock. Tannaji, Sivaji's trusty lieutenant who

had charge of the expedition, motioned his men to keep silence, and crept cautiously forward, until he stood right underneath the slippery crags. Then with a dexterity born of long practice, he threw a thin line, to which was attached a leaden ball, over one of the trees which projected from beneath the battlements. By this means a knotted rope was drawn up and secured by a springed hook to the tree.

One by one the Maráthás, active as cats, noiselessly ascended the rope, climbed the projecting wall and lay down inside. No sentry ever patrolled this remote part of the stronghold, and so they were secure from interruption. But when the three hundredth man was scaling the frail ladder, he slipped, and thinking himself falling, uttered an involuntary cry of alarm. The others held their breath and strained their ears to detect if the noise had been heard. It had; for a soldier came forward carelessly, lantern in hand, to see what was the matter. His shrift was short, for a bowstring twanged and the man fell heavily to the ground with an arrow through his heart. Again all was silence, but even as they listened, a confused hubbub arose from the interior of the fort.

Tannaji, hoping still to take them by surprise, pushed forward with his three hundred men. Silently and unseen the bowmen plied their deadly arrows in the direction of the voices, until a number of blue lights and torches gleamed forth, lighting up the scene with lurid glare, and enabling the garrison to discover their assailants. A desperate fight took

place, and the Maráthás, with panting chests and aching limbs, strove hard to win the fort. The odds were overwhelming, but slowly and surely they forced the enemy back. Then their brave leader fell, and losing courage they began to retreat. At this moment Tannaji's brother came up with the reserve force. "The ropes are destroyed," he cried, "escape is impossible; the fort must be captured or you die. Now is the time to prove yourselves Sivaji's men!"

Above the clatter of arms and the groans of the wounded, the fierce battle-cry of the Maráthás rang out upon the air. "Hur, Hur, Madheo!" they yelled, and rushed anew to the attack. "Hur, Hur, Madheo!" and the defenders gave way before that furious charge. "Hur, Hur, Madheo!" and the invaders had gained the fort. But their loss was heavy; over a third of their number had perished in the fight. Five hundred of the garrison, together with their gallant commander, were slain, while hundreds more, trying to escape over the rocks, were dashed to pieces in the attempt. Sivaji was overjoyed when he heard of the success of this exploit, but wept bitterly when he learned of Tannaji's death. "The den is taken," he cried, "but the lion is slain; we have gained a fort, but, alas! I have lost Tannaji, my faithful friend!"

The crowning point in Sivaji's career was, figuratively as well as literally, his coronation. In his extraordinary life he had never looked back on good fortune; year by year his power and prestige had steadily increased, and now he was no mountain robber, but a ruler holding sway over a vast territory

and governing a mighty people. He had long struck coins in his own name, and styled himself Rajah and Maharajah. It would be a fitting climax, he thought, to declare his independence, and set up a new dynasty and a new kingdom.

And so on June 6, 1674, Sivaji was solemnly crowned. The Maráthá leader had not forgotten what he had seen at Delhi, and the function was carried out with an amazing wealth of pomp and circumstance. When at length the ceremony was over, the newly crowned "Ornament of the Khsetriyu race, Lord of the Royal Umbrella, and King of the Maráthás," was weighed against gold, as was customary on such occasions, and the gold distributed among the Brahmins. These gentlemen were very much disappointed to find how little Sivaji weighed, for he was a small, spare man, without a superfluous ounce of avoirdupois!

On the fifth day of April 1680, in the fifty-third year of his age, there passed away one of the greatest leaders of men the world has ever seen. For despite his faults, which were many, Sivaji must go down to history as a great man and a great genius. Himself an enthusiast, he had in addition that rare faculty—the quality of inspiring enthusiasm in others. When we consider how he embarked upon his adventurous career with a mere handful of half-naked Maráthás, how he had to contend with innumerable difficulties, yet never let himself be dismayed by adversity, and how finally he founded a power which was destined mightily to affect the history of India, and which actually became our own immediate predecessor in

conquest, we cannot withhold from him our tribute of the deepest admiration.

Aurangzebe heard of the death of his most formidable enemy with great gladness. Yet though he affected to despise Sivaji during his lifetime, in death he paid him a generous compliment. "He was," he said, "a great captain, and the only one who has had the magnanimity to raise a new kingdom, while I have been endeavouring to destroy the ancient sovereignties of India; my armies have been employed against him for nineteen years, and nevertheless his state has been always increasing."

CHAPTER III

AN EMPIRE IN ITS DEATH-GRIPS

"COME what may, I have launched my vessel on the waves. Farewell—farewell—farewell!"

In a spacious tent in the city of Ahmednugur Aurangzebe lay dying. The discomfited remnants of a once great and glorious army were encamped within the town walls; outside, a victorious foe thundered arrogantly at the gates. Listen—and you can almost hear the great Moghul Empire tottering to its fall. Already the vultures, scenting their prey afar and ravening for the spoils, were gathering about the dying giant. The end was indeed near. For the last twenty years the prestige and genius of Aurangzebe alone had sustained the mighty empire from breaking up. Now that he lay stretched upon his deathbed, tossing feverishly from side to side, and giving utterance at intervals to broken sentences of terror, remorse, despair and desperate resignation, the one last prop was being taken away; and with the death of Aurangzebe the Moghul Empire—one of the most magnificent the world has ever known—had almost ceased to exist.

But despite its approaching end the Moghul

Empire acquired during the last years of Aurangzebe's reign a degree of power it had never before attained. In 1683 the Emperor had set out upon his long-planned conquest of the South. An army assembled at Delhi, whose magnificence—eclipsing even the sumptuous splendour of Xerxes' mighty hosts—is without a parallel in history.

Cavalry from the great provinces which lay beyond the Indus, infantry from Kashmir, Rájputána and Bengal, artillery fashioned by the most cunning gunsmiths in the Indies, elephants from the vast forests of Hindustan—all were gathered together at the Emperor's bidding outside the capital. Aurangzebe took command in person. His tent, as large as a palace, was fitted up with every conceivable luxury. Halls of audience, courts, cabinets, mosques, oratories, and baths, all hung with the finest silks and velvets and adorned with cloth of gold, were to be found within the twelve hundred yards of canvas which comprised the walls of the Emperor's apartments. The camp resembled a moving city. Leopards and tigers, hawks and hounds innumerable—everything in fact that would in any way make for amusement—accompanied the army. The generals vied with one another in the splendour of their attire and the costliness of their equipment. Everything, moreover, was in duplicate. While the Grand Army rested to-day in extravagant ease, thousands of slaves were busily preparing a giant city of canvas, identical in all respects with the other, for their reception to-morrow.

The magnificence and unwieldiness of the army

proved in the end its undoing. But before the process of decay set in it had accomplished Aurangzebe's lifelong ambition. The Empire of the Moghuls extended its dominion from the snowy peaks of the Himálayas in the distant north to where the blue waters of ocean lapped the sands of Comorin in the far-away south. All India was bound together in allegiance under one head. But although the Moghuls grasped at supreme authority in the peninsula, they never succeeded in transforming their gigantic clutch into complete possession.

The kingdoms of the South did not fall without a struggle. Around the walls of Bíjapur—grim, frowning walls, built of hewn stone solidly compacted, and stretching six miles in circumference—the Moghul army coiled itself like some great glittering serpent. The gallant Patháns defended themselves with resolute heroism. Their artillery—the best in India—daily hurled defiance at the silken tents outside. Artifice and assault made no impression upon those adamant ramparts. But Aurangzebe was in no hurry for conquest. He knew that presently another force—more formidable than even the vast resources of the Indies could produce—would come to his assistance.

Nor was he wrong in his expectation. Giant Death in the guise of Starvation stalked through the beleaguered city. Their provisions exhausted, their ammunition spent, the brave defenders were at length obliged to capitulate. A breach was knocked in the walls of the captured city, and through this, seated on a portable throne, the Moghul Emperor was carried in triumph. The young king was

brought in chains before him. "Away with him to prison!" exclaimed the haughty despot. Three years later the unhappy king died in captivity; some whispered that he had been done to death by poison or the knife. And so on the 15th October 1686 Bíjapur was blotted out of the roll of Indian kingdoms. To-day you will find its once proud capital given over to desolation and decay. The stately ruins of majestic temples and noble tombs, of lordly mosques and resplendent palaces, greet you from every side—grim, silent landmarks of the departed grandeur of this fallen city.

A few months passed. The inhabitants of Golconda were alarmed to find long lines of gaily coloured tents, surmounted with brilliant banners and inhabited by swarthy, silken-clad warriors, set up in their territory. The vanguard of the Grand Army had arrived. They sent ambassadors to the Emperor-General to inquire the reason of this warlike incursion into their kingdom, inasmuch as only last year they had concluded a treaty of peace with the Moghuls. Surely the great Emperor would not stoop to violate his most sacred word! Aurangzebe smiled sphinx-like. With all gravity he assured the tremulous delegates that he was merely on a pilgrimage to the tomb of a noted Muhammadan saint who had had the misfortune to be buried in their country. His intentions were entirely pacific.

Golconda might well look askance at the half-million or so of glittering warriors who accompanied the Moghul on his pious mission; but they could get no further information. Then ensued a colossal

game of cat and mouse. Aurangzebe so played upon the feelings of the bewildered monarch of Golconda as to reduce him almost to frenzy. In a desperate endeavour to gain the good-will of the Emperor he poured his hoards of treasure and jewels at his feet. Even the women of his household were stripped of their ornaments that they might go to swell the peace-offering.

Aurangzebe accepted the gifts as his natural due. He showed no sign of pleasure at their magnitude or richness. Then—his plans completed—he struck his blow. The unhappy prince learned of the Emperor's gratitude by receiving a declaration of war. The pretext was trifling. He was accused of having employed a Brahmin as his minister, and of having formed an allegiance with the "infidel Maráthás."

This contemptuous treatment of his advances filled the heart of Kootub Shah with bitter indignation. All the martial spirit of his ancestors blazed up fiercely in the affronted king. He swore that so long as a man remained alive to defend it, Golconda should never surrender to the haughty Moghul. But Aurangzebe's "pilgrimage" had not been entirely devoted to prayer and fasting. Bribery and corruption had been busily at work amongst the Golconda magnates, and when poor Kootub Shah issued his call to arms, the troops upon which he trusted basely deserted him and went over to the enemy.

Undismayed by adversity, the gallant prince gathered together the handful of men which still remained to him, and, shutting himself up in his

capital, sent a message of proud defiance to the besieging army. For seven months he bravely continued to hold out. Then treachery was again employed, and the warlike monarch found his stronghold betrayed by his own people into the enemy's hands. The fort was captured, and he himself taken prisoner; but with such dignity and resignation did he bear his misfortunes that the name of Kootub Shah is held in love and reverence by his countrymen even to this day.

With the fall of Golconda Aurangzebe's triumph was complete; all India lay stretched at his feet. But the flood-tide of success was soon to turn; the height of Moghul conquest marked also the beginning of the end. More territory was in their hands than they were able to govern; and the history of the next fifty years presents the melancholy spectacle of the gradual decay of a great empire.

What now of the hardy Maráthás whom Sivaji had raised to the level of such a formidable power? We may be sure that they had not been idle whilst Aurangzebe was making his triumphal progress southwards. The Grand Army, with its unwieldiness and its luxury, presented a fruitful field for Maráthá plunder. The silken Moghul generals, padded out with wadding and protected by chain armour, could not contend against the long-haired, wiry, sinewy Maráthás who, riding barebacked on their shaggy ponies and unarmed save for their long and glittering sabres, swept down incessantly from their native mountains to pillage the Moghul encampment, leaving a grim trail of fire and slaughter behind them to

mark their devastating course. The Grand Army was too large, too cumbersome to retaliate effectually. All valour and discipline had been eaten away by the universal luxury which prevailed. Nothing indeed was so little desired by the northern invaders as the sight of the enemy.

It must not be supposed, however, that Aurangzebe did nothing to check the Maráthá depredations. A number of expeditions were sent against them; their fortresses were stormed and their country laid waste. The crowning Moghul success was the capture of the Maráthá king. Sivaji's successor was not nearly so great a man as his father. Not that he was lacking in courage and enterprise in warfare, but he preferred a life of ease and pleasure. Wine and women were dearer in his eyes than the clash of arms and the hoarse roar of warriors as they sweep exultantly to the charge.

Aurangzebe received news one day that Sambaji had taken up his residence at a small village not far from the imperial camp. Calling one of his favourite officers to him, he bade him go and bring the "insolent rebel" back a prisoner. "By the beard of the Prophet," cried the enraged Emperor, "I shall never return to Delhi until I have seen the head of the Maráthá weltering at my feet!"

Meanwhile the unsuspecting victim was engaged in one of his usual orgies. Suddenly a loud tumult was heard outside. Then a messenger, breathless with running, rushed frantically into the room and threw himself at his master's feet.

"The Moghuls," he cried—"the Moghuls are

upon us! Flee, Your Majesty; flee ere it be too late!"

Flushed with wine, the Maráthá staggered to his feet.

"What do you mean, you dog?" he shouted angrily. "Away, or you shall be beaten for your presumption. How dare you bring such a ridiculous story into my presence!"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when another messenger burst into the room.

"They are surrounding the house," he gasped. "Flee, Your Majesty! In another minute escape will be cut off!"

"Are they all mad?" roared the infuriated monarch. Then a jangle of steel was heard outside, and a party of Moghuls broke into the apartment. The foremost slashed fiercely at the Maráthá king with his sword. Sambaji's favourite courtier rushed in and received the blow. Then Sambaji himself was secured, and, mounted on a camel, was conveyed in triumph back to the Moghul encampment.

There was great excitement throughout the camp when it was known that the redoubtable Maráthá chieftain had been captured. An immense multitude flocked to see their dread enemy being brought a helpless prisoner through the Moghul lines. The banging of drums and clashing of cymbals heralded the approach of the procession, and a loud fanfare of trumpets announced the joyful tidings throughout the innumerable tents which dotted the plain as far as the eye could reach. Seated on his throne, amid

a crowd of glittering nobles, Aurangzebe surveyed his prisoner with a contemptuous smile.

"Little as you deserve mercy," he said, "yet in our great magnanimity we will consent to spare your life. But you must renounce your religion, trample upon your gods, and cry aloud before the multitude, 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet!'"

Something of the fierce spirit of Sivaji leapt up in the Maráthá's heart as he heard these haughty words. Drawing himself up to his full height, and gazing proudly around, he hurled all the curses and abusive epithets at his command at the name of the sacred Prophet.

"Shall I, King of the Maráthás, become a Mussulman?" he cried. "Not if you were to give me your daughter's hand in marriage!"

Insult could no farther go. For once in his life the dignified Aurangzebe lost command of his temper. "Drag the blasphemous dog from our presence!" he roared. "He shall suffer for this insolence."

The fate of the unhappy Sambaji was a terrible one. Every torture human ingenuity could devise was heaped upon him ere death put an end to his sufferings. His eyes were seared out with red-hot irons, his tongue was torn from his throat, and then—after enduring agony unspeakable—his head was finally struck from his shoulders. Thus did Aurangzebe wreak his revenge upon the Maráthás.

The barbarous execution of Sambaji was not only a great crime, it was a great error. Deliberately Aurangzebe had sown the dragon's teeth; he was to

reap an abundant harvest. Eighteen years later, when the broken and enfeebled remains of the Grand Army were chased in ignominious flight up to the gates of Ahmednugur, their pursuers were the dauntless Maráthás, whose hearts had been set ablaze by the murder of their king. A few months later, when in the ninetieth year of his age, Aurangzebe sank disappointed and embittered into the grave, India was a gigantic maelstrom of seething revolution.

From the ashes of the two lost kingdoms of the South had arisen a monster with a thousand heads. In every quarter hundreds of petty chieftains asserted their independence, numbering among their followers deserters from the imperial troops, or scattered fragments from the disbanded armies of Golconda and Bíjapur. As flies gather round the body of a dying animal—powerless to retaliate—so these individually insignificant bands buzzed angrily around the carcass of decaying Moghul greatness. Every mountain and every valley poured forth its horde of freebooters to devastate the plains and lay waste the villages with fire and sword.

In the North things were not very much better. The Hindús were groaning under the taxes which Aurangzebe—his statesmanship warped by religious bigotry—had imposed upon all not professing Muhammadanism. The Rájputs had risen in open revolt. About this time, too, a sect destined to play a prominent part in the future history of their country first came into prominence. These were the Sikhs who, starting as a purely religious community, preaching the doctrine of universal toleration, had

developed into a formidable military power. The change was wrought by necessity alone, for the harsh persecution of their sect by the Muhammadans had rendered their lives unbearable. Now they were no longer pious visionaries, but fierce soldiers burning to avenge their people's wrongs.

Encouraged by the weakness of their enemy, the Sikhs rose with fresh determination. Under their fiery leader, Banda, they ravaged the low-lying country with fanatical fury. Unspeakable atrocities are laid to their charge during this tumultuous outburst. But their triumph was short-lived. A Moghul army was sent against them which, led by a skilful commander, repeatedly repulsed the rebels. Their crowning success was the capture of Banda and a large number of his officers and followers. The majority of these were executed on the spot, but Banda and seven hundred and forty others were reserved for severer punishment.

Dressed up in black sheepskins, the wool outside—in playful allusion to their shaggy and unkempt appearance—they were mounted upon camels and paraded through the streets of Delhi, amid the hooting and jeering of the mob. They were all beheaded on seven successive days. Each one was offered his life if he would give up his religion. But these doughty warriors did not fear death; they laughed in the faces of their executioners and bade them do their worst. For Banda was reserved an even more terrible fate. Decked out in all the insignia of royalty, with scarlet turban and robe of the finest cloth of gold, the unhappy Sikh leader was

exhibited in an iron cage before the mocking multitude. Behind him, grim and forbidding, stood his executioner—a naked weapon glittering in his hand. Around him, the severed heads of his compatriots, stuck on long pikes, glared with sightless eyes upon their chieftain's wretched plight. Even a cat that had once been a favourite pet of Banda's was killed and stuck on a pike, thereby demonstrating the complete destruction of everything that had belonged to the fallen leader.

A dagger was handed to him, and he was ordered to stab his infant son. On his refusal the child was butchered before his eyes, and its heart was thrown in his face. Then the monsters, glorying in his torture, tore him to pieces with hot pincers. But to the last he remained constant to his faith, and exultant in his martyrdom. All other Sikhs that could be found were hunted down like wild beasts, and it was a long while before the nearly exterminated sect was strong enough again to renew its depredations.

And now we come to the culminating point of the great tragedy. Delhi, the mighty, the magnificent, was to fall, and her greatness be humbled in the dust. The voice of the stranger was to be heard in the land; the foot of the invader was to be set in those stately palaces; and the streets of the once proud city were to run red with the blood of her murdered inhabitants.

Since the days of Darius, Persia has never produced a greater warrior than the valiant Nadir Shah. The son of a humble shepherd, his first serious step in life was to place himself at the head of a small

band of freebooters. Like Sivaji, he rose from power to power, until at length the royal diadem of Persia encircled his ambitious brow. Then he picked a quarrel with the Moghuls and invaded India.

Since Aurangzebe's death, thirty years before, many emperors had ascended the peacock throne—all puppets in the hands of powerful and unscrupulous ministers, who raised them up and deposed them as best suited their plans. The present Emperor was far from a mighty warrior, but he got together the best army he could under the circumstances, and marched to repel the invasion. His disorganised troops were severely defeated by the trained Persian soldiery, and being without means of resistance he advanced to the enemy's camp and threw himself on the mercy of the conqueror. But the object of Nadir Shah was not conquest alone; he wished to replenish his empty coffers. So he told the Emperor he would retire if two crores of rupees were forthcoming.

All might have gone well but for the treachery of a powerful Indian noble. He thought he had been slighted by the Emperor, and, thirsting for revenge, he begged for a private audience with Nadir Shah.

"Behold," he cried, "how small a sum is this you would demand! Is not the land wealthy? Is it not overflowing with riches? Why, I can provide from my small province alone all that you ask from the whole empire!"

The greed of the Persian king was kindled. He determined to proceed to Delhi himself and levy the exactions under his own eye. Accordingly, in

company with the Emperor, he advanced to the capital with his whole army, and both monarchs took up their residence in the royal palace. The troops were distributed throughout the town. The people shrank in terror from the ferocity of the invaders, and regarded their intrusion with disgust.

On the second day a rumour began to fly about the city that Nadir Shah was dead. Then the oppressed inhabitants rose up in their wrath and proceeded to wreak their vengeance upon the hated strangers. Every Persian within reach was barbarously slaughtered. Even those that had been furnished for the protection of the noblemen's palaces were dragged out into the streets and butchered with inconceivable fury. Nadir Shah did his best to quell the outbreak, but without avail. All through the day and the night following the tumult continued with increasing force. When dawn broke after a night of horror, the Persian king mounted his horse and rode through the city, hoping to restore order by his presence. The first sight that met his gaze was the bodies of his murdered countrymen weltering in their blood. Even as he looked, a shot rang out and a favourite officer, riding by his side, fell to the ground dead. Then his self-restraint gave way, and the passions that had been smouldering in his heart broke forth in all their force. "Let there be a general massacre!" he commanded.

The scene that followed is probably unexampled in history. All the horrors that rapine, lust, and thirst for vengeance could inspire were enacted on that unhappy day. The fierce Persian troops fell

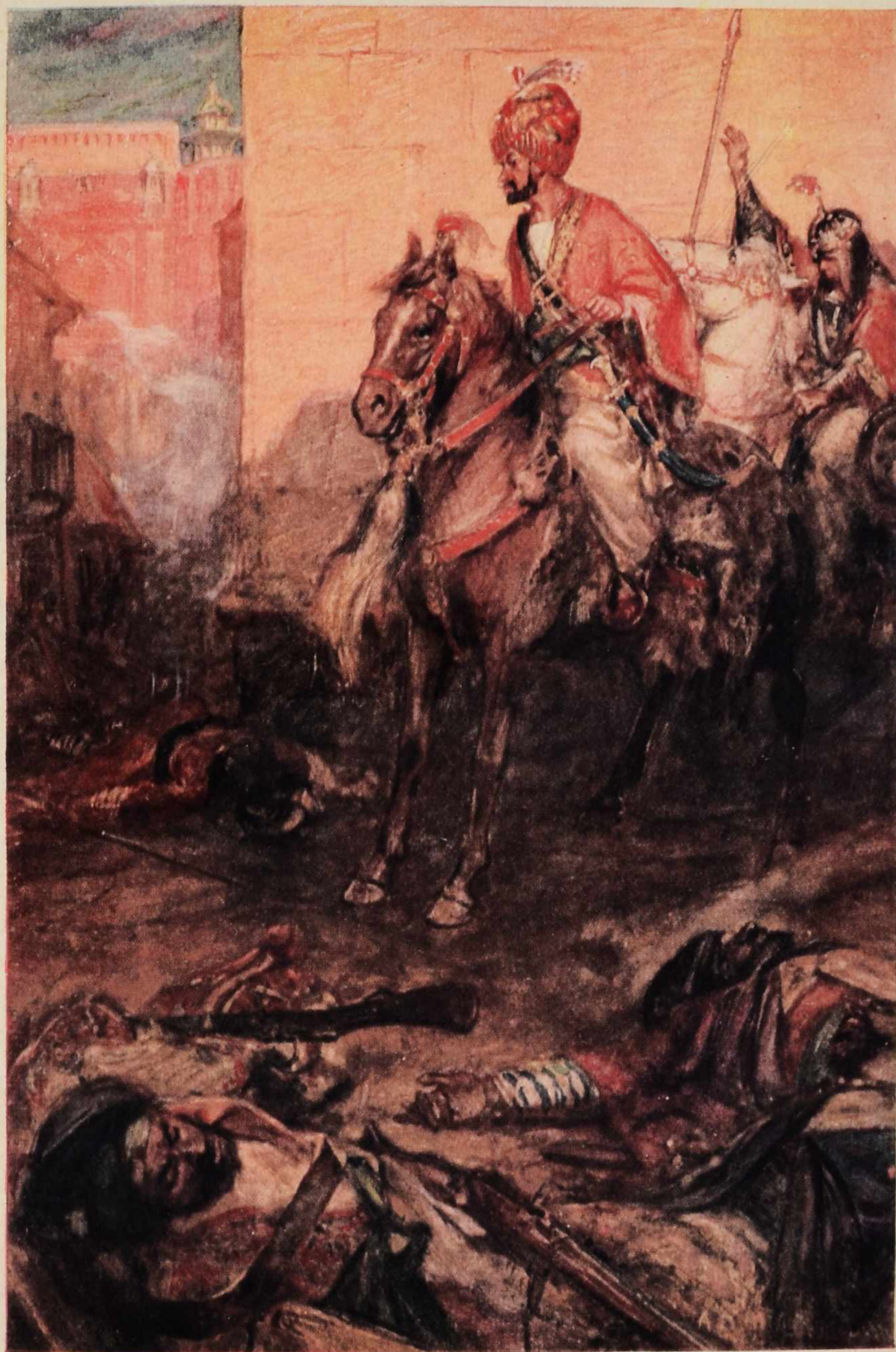
ruthlessly upon the trembling inhabitants. Men, women, and children were given over to the sword; the streets ran with great rivers of blood. Thick columns of smoke ascended to the cloudless sky, as the houses were pillaged and set on fire.

From early sunrise until the shadows of dusk were stealing over the city the horrible carnage continued in unabated fury. During all this time Nadir Shah sat in gloomy silence, listening to the shrieks of the butchered populace. At length the Emperor and his chief nobles screwed up their courage and timorously ventured into his presence. With downcast eyes, they stood before him, till the Persian warrior gruffly bade them speak. The unhappy Emperor burst into tears and raised his hands appealingly.

"Put an end to this horror, I entreat you!" he cried. "Spare, oh, spare my miserable people!"

Nadir Shah gave the word that the slaughter should cease. Such was the marvellous discipline among his troops that the instant the order was received every sword was sheathed. The massacre ended as suddenly as it had begun. And so the curtain of night at length descended upon one of the saddest scenes in history, and from their place in the heavens the great stars gazed calmly down upon a city given over to weeping and wailing—its marble palaces black with the fire of the destroyer, its streets running red with the blood of its murdered people.

But the punishment of Delhi was not yet over. The massacre was but a prelude to the plunder which followed. All the vast stores of treasure and jewels which the wealth of the mighty Moghul emperors had



"The first sight that met his gaze was the bodies of his murdered countrymen"

accumulated were annexed by the Persian invaders. Even the peacock throne did not escape. The great nobles were obliged to forfeit their possessions, and the common people were plundered with every imaginable cruelty.

At the gates of the city strong guards were posted that none might leave it while the extortion was in progress. Every man was forced to state the amount of his fortune, and to pay accordingly. Hundreds died of the ill-treatment they received; many more committed suicide rather than face the disgrace and the torture. "Sleep and rest forsook the city. In every chamber and house was heard the cry of affliction. It was before a general massacre; but now the murder of individuals." But the prime cause of all this misery was not allowed to escape. Nadir Shah demanded of the treacherous nobleman the whole of the sum he had said his province was able to furnish; and the wretched man swallowed poison as the speediest way out of his difficulties.

The greed of Nadir Shah being satisfied by his fifty-eight days' pillage of Delhi, he took his departure, bearing with him plunder valued at thirty-two crores of rupees. But he left behind him a broken and desolated country. The Moghul Empire—long tottering—had at last received its death-blow. The star of the east had risen, blazed with oriental splendour, and set in a sea of blood; but out of the west was to spring a new, and even mightier, power, destined to build upon the ashes of India's departed glory a great and glorious empire that should be the envy and the wonder of all the nations of the world.

CHAPTER IV

ANGRIA, THE PIRATE

EUROPEAN traders in India found themselves in a sorry plight about the middle of the eighteenth century. Not only was their trade sadly hampered and restricted by the bitter rivalry which existed between the various companies of merchants, but they had other and more formidable enemies to deal with—men who knew little and cared less about the laws of honour and chivalry usually obtaining between civilised nations, and who seized every opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the unfortunate merchants without stopping to inquire too closely whether they were "playing the game" in a fair and sportsmanlike manner.

These were the dreaded pirates of the Malabar coast—fierce, desperate ruffians all of them, and numbering among their motley bands outlaws and cut-throats of nearly every nationality. Their small, swift-sailing boats—bristling with guns and manned by bloodthirsty and unscrupulous crews—would lie in wait for the richly laden merchantmen trading between India and the west. Swooping down on their helpless victims they would clamber aboard,

massacre the crew, and transfer the precious cargoes to their own spacious holds.

Sometimes a stout merchantman would succeed in shaking off her assailants, and would beat her way into harbour with half her crew aboard dead or dying. Others would sail out of port, full of hope and high spirits, never to be heard of again. And then the hardy merchant-adventurers who had sent them forth would shake their fists seawards, and breathe forth terrible threats of vengeance against the pestilential marauders of the high seas.

Why, it may be asked, did not the rival traders bury their differences for a time, and take joint action to stamp out a common foe? It must, alas, be confessed that the conduct of the European trading companies in the matter was not as gallant as it might have been. They were too much engaged in cutting each other's throats for one thing; and again, although they keenly regretted the loss of their own ships, the sight of their rivals' disasters afforded them unmitigated satisfaction. So they submitted themselves to the pirate yoke, made treaties with them, and paid them large sums of money to let their ships pass unmolested.

Head and shoulders above the many picturesque villains who flourished in those bad old days towered the redoubtable Angria.

Here was a very prince of pirates! It would have been strange, indeed, to find him anything else when we consider the bold and adventurous blood that coursed through his mighty veins. Many are the tales that have come down to us of the doings

of this remarkable family—tales in which it is probable truth and fiction are closely interwoven. The light-hearted chroniclers of those stirring times took care not to spoil a good story by a too scrupulous attention to the truth. But it cannot be denied that these eighteenth-century narratives are fascinating to a degree, and, be they true or false, shed a vivid light upon the manners and customs of our interesting desperadoes. Let us follow, then, as closely as may be, the story of the romantic uprise of the famous house of Angria.

In the year 1643, so it is said, an Arabian merchantman, putting out from Muscat, fell in with the most unfavourable weather, and, driven by the gale down the west coast of India, went ashore at length in a small bay near Choul. The long and trying voyage had put rather a strain upon the tempers of both master and men, and at the time of the wreck relations between them were of anything but a cordial nature. When the Rajah of the district heard that a strange vessel had been cast ashore in his territory he sent his officers to investigate matters. Into the ears of these attentive strangers the crew took occasion to pour their unhappy tale, accusing their captain of treating them with great cruelty and inhumanity. The captain also had a story to tell. He dilated at length upon the unruly and mutinous conduct of his crew, and appealed to his judges to uphold the principles of discipline and good order. But, unfortunately for him, he was one and his accusers were many. The officers, with splendid impartiality, decided that the will of the majority

must prevail. With all politeness they informed the captain that it was their painful duty to put him to a slow and lingering death, and proceeded to put their sentence into immediate execution.

Now the Rajah, whose territories they had invaded, happened at the time to be carrying on a little war with the Great Moghul. The campaign was not progressing so favourably as he could wish—he had, in fact, been twice defeated—and he regarded the strangers as a welcome addition to his army. So they were grafted on to about a hundred of his own subjects, and, commanded by a petty officer, marched valiantly to the front.

On the way they chanced to run into a party of Moghul troops, who outnumbered them five to one. Deeming discretion the better part of valour, their leader hurriedly betook himself from the scene of action. The others, dismayed by their captain's inglorious flight, prepared to follow his example. But help was to come from an unexpected quarter. The leader of the shipwrecked crew was one Sambo Angria, who, we are told, was a "bold, enterprising, hardy fellow," and this gentleman stepped valiantly into the breach. "Surround yourselves," he cried, "with the wagons and luggage-carts you have brought with you." This was done, and from the hastily improvised shelter they opened a withering fire upon the enemy.

The Moghuls were somewhat taken aback by this new turn of events. But they had no intention of letting their prey escape, and carried on the attack with vigour. Night fell at length, and the valiant

Angria devised a new plan of campaign. Calling his crew together, and selecting twenty natives to accompany him, he crept unseen out of the entrenchment. Slowly and silently the little band worked their way round to the rear of the enemy. Now they were within striking distance, and with loud shouts they rushed to the attack. From the shelter of the wagons the remaining portion of the garrison continued to ply a steady fire. The daring enterprise was quite successful. Deeming reinforcements had come against them the Moghuls scattered in confusion. To complete their discomfiture, the garrison now abandoned their defences, and rushed to the attack. All except thirty-six of the enemy were cut to pieces; Angria, it is said, accounting for forty with his own hand.

Laden with spoil, the gallant little company continued on their way. At length they came up with the main army. Angria immediately proceeded to the Rajah's tent and gave him a glowing account of their adventures—not forgetting to mention his own share in the transaction. The Rajah was astonished and delighted. In the joy of his heart he gave Angria an important place in the army, and the valorous sailor soon raised himself to the highest rank. Ten years later he married the daughter of the Grand Vizier, and in 1675 he died, full of years and honour. His master soon followed him into the grave, leaving behind him a son who succeeded to the title.

Now the new Rajah was a little puffed up by his freshly acquired honours. He thought fit to assert his complete independence, and refused to pay tribute

to the Moghuls. The Court at Delhi, more amused than alarmed by this little show-off, ordered the Nabob of Surat to invade his dominions and to give the refractory Rajah a few elementary lessons in politeness.

The valiant Angria had been blessed with a son who had inherited in no small degree his father's martial genius. To him the command of the Rajah's army ought by right to have been given. But the young potentate was a little jealous of Angria the second; the chief command was given to another officer. Not unnaturally Angria felt himself slighted. "If I cannot command one side," he reflected, "there is no reason why I should not lead the other." So he offered his services to the Nabob of Surat, who appointed him his second-in-command.

Angria, with an eye to further favours, performed prodigies of valour. He had, moreover, a little score to wipe out against his former master, and every prisoner who fell into his hands was put to a painful death. To his great delight, the officer who had usurped his post was captured and brought before the Nabob. Angria was for striking off his head without more ado, but the Nabob demurred. The prisoner, quick to perceive his captor's merciful disposition, flung himself at his feet and implored protection. "Fear not," said the Nabob, "your life shall be spared." Concealing his chagrin with the best possible grace, the thwarted general stalked away—thenceforward to brood darkly over revenge.

Now the Rajah had come to the conclusion, some time before, that he had committed a serious blunder.

Many secret messengers had he sent to persuade Angria to return to the fold. Great were the favours he promised as a reward. "We will," he cried, "give you our sister to wife, appoint you our Grand Vizier, and make over to you the command of our army." The indignant general eagerly embraced the opportunity for revenge. But before he finally deserted the Nabob he won over a number of his officers and men, promising them great privileges if they would go over with him to the other side.

All things being ready, he approached the unsuspecting Nabob.

"I have," he said, "conceived a great plan whereby we shall be enabled to bring disaster upon our foes. Let Your Highness proceed through some secret passes of which I have knowledge, and fall upon the enemy's flank. I will advance swiftly and attack them from the other side, and so shall they be plunged into confusion."

The Nabob thought the idea an excellent one, and set off with the greater part of his army. So well did he obey his general's directions that presently he found himself boxed up in a long and narrow ravine. But when he tried to emerge into the plain he was greatly disconcerted to find his way barred by the enemy. He attempted to retire by the way he had come, but Angria and the disaffected troops were keeping the other end. The unfortunate ruler was caught like a rat in a trap. He made a gallant attempt to break out, but in vain; his whole army was routed, and 6000 of his choicest troops left dead on the field.

Having accomplished his revenge, Angria rejoined his old master. Duly appointed Grand Vizier, his wedding with the Rajah's sister took place shortly afterwards amid general rejoicing. But he was not destined long to enjoy his honours. In 1686, whilst valiantly leading his troops to the attack, he fell with a Moghul bullet through his heart. He left two young sons whom the Rajah adopted and brought up with great care. The elder died before reaching man's estate, but the other, Connaji Angria, thrived exceedingly, and speedily became a great favourite at court.

When he reached his twentieth year a great feast was held to celebrate his coming of age. But of the many rich presents then bestowed on him, the one young Angria prized most was the gift of his uncle the Rajah. Just inside the harbour of Bombay, about three leagues distant from the anchoring-ground, is the small rocky islet of Kaneray. From its precipitous shores a strongly fortified and well-nigh impregnable castle raised its towers skywards. This stronghold the benevolent Rajah presented to his nephew, at the same time giving him a number of vessels, and placing a company of officers and men under his command.

In return for this favour Angria joined the Rajah's army. Another rupture with the Moghuls had occurred, and so greatly did he distinguish himself in the campaign that the worthy Rajah was quite overcome with gratitude. Honours and distinctions were showered with a prodigal hand upon the fortunate young soldier.

Angria meanwhile had been pondering how best

to make use of his island possession, and had been seized with a brilliant idea. He had been very much struck by the vast wealth of treasure which the European traders brought from over the western seas. Why, he meditated, should not some of these riches be his? He confided his views on the subject to his royal relative, who was no less enthusiastic. His sympathy took the practical form of money, ships and men, and Angria commenced strongly to fortify his sea-girt castle. Then he sallied out in his vessels and plundered the rich merchantmen that came his way, and it was not long before he became a source of terror to the peace-loving traders.

But the young pirate was not satisfied with his tiny rock-bound island—he had far more ambitious aims. So he assembled an army of about 20,000 men, and sailed along the coast looking for fresh fields to conquer. A glance at a map of India will show the town of Geriah marked about half-way between Bombay and Goa. The Portuguese had built some strong fortifications here, and Angria came to the conclusion that it would make an excellent base from which to conduct his marauding expeditions. So here the expectant army was landed, and soon there arose, grim and forbidding, upon the palm-covered Malabar coast one of the most formidable strongholds in the eastern world.

Picture to yourself a wide and spacious harbour. A mile from land a rocky promontory rises boldly from the sea, its face washed round and smooth by the surging waves of ocean. On its crest a giant fortress, enclosed by massive walls and flanked by

lofty towers, looks frowningly down upon the seething waste of waters. A narrow strip of land connects this promontory with the shore, and here in this sandy isthmus are capacious docks where the ships of the pirate fleet are built and repaired. Such was the fortress which Angria had seized upon and added to, and it was destined in after-years to prove a very tough nut for our gallant jack-tars to crack.

But the pirate chief did not confine his depredations to seizing Geriah. By driving out the Portuguese and other traders he acquired a strip of land along the coast one hundred and twenty miles long by about sixty broad. Here other settlements and ports were built, and Angria found himself virtually a king ruling over a considerable tract of country. The chance capture of a vessel on which a large number of the finest Arabian steeds were embarked gave him another idea, and soon a considerable body of cavalry was sent to swell his already formidable army. In that heterogeneous force many nationalities were to be found. Hindús and Moors, Dutchmen, Portuguese, and Frenchmen—aye, and even Englishmen—swore allegiance to the freebooter's blood-stained flag—reckless, devil-may-care fellows, each one of them, fierce fighters and conscienceless villains, whom their own countrymen had cast out of their communities on account of their lawless ways.

In his sea-girt castle, Angria established all the state and ceremony appertaining to a mighty monarch. Ambassadors from the neighbouring states and provinces flocked to do him homage. A brilliant throng surrounded his throne; richly dressed

generals, admirals, and other high officers were in constant attendance. No silken courtiers these—but terrible desperadoes, whose bejewelled swords and glittering daggers had all been stained in the blood of the helpless and terror-stricken victims of their insatiable greed.

Such, then, is the story of Angria's rise to power. Here let us leave the pirate king. To follow him through all his romantic adventures, to narrate in detail the wars he waged against his cousin the Rajah, his audacious incursions into the neighbouring provinces, and the rich prizes that fell into his hands at sea, would take a book in itself. We have marked well his audacious exploits; we have seen him become a scourge and terror to traders far and near; now let us follow the repeated attempts made to oust him from his proud position and to raze his castle turrets to the ground.

CHAPTER V

HOW THE BRITISH FOUGHT THE PIRATES

On the 26th of December, in the year of grace 1715, a stout merchantman sailed gaily into Bombay harbour and dropped anchor amid the thunderous salute of guns and the loud cheering of the populace. Bombay had got a new Governor, and the valiant merchant-adventurers expected great things of him. Worthy Governor Boone was not the man to disappoint the people if he could help it. He straightway announced his intention of reducing the fierce pirates of Malabar. No more should British ships sail the seas in fear and trembling; henceforward they should be masters of the waves. And the townsmen who heard his words shouted "Huzza!" and waited for their Governor to carry out his promise.

From that day Bombay began to resound with the clanging of hammers and the rasping of saws; slowly and laboriously huge inchoate masses of timber and iron resolved themselves into the dim outlines of noble vessels. Governor Boone was building a fleet. For many months he watched their gradual progress with eyes lit up with fond paternal pride. At length all was finished, and within two years of the new

Governor's arrival there sailed out of Bombay one of the strongest fleets the East India Company had ever set in eastern waters.

Nine brave ships of war, bearing such good English names as *Britannia*, *Victory*, *Defiance*, *Revenge*, *Fame* Galley, *Hunter* Galley, *Hawk* Galley, *Eagle* Galley, and the *Princess Amelia*, carried between them one thousand two hundred and fifty men and one hundred and forty-eight guns. Besides these there were a number of fireships and smaller vessels carrying the troops who were to attack the fortress by land. Of these two thousand five hundred were European soldiery, while one thousand five hundred were Sepoys, that is to say, native soldiers in the service of the Company.

On the 17th of April 1717 the fleet sighted the lofty turrets of Geriah, and the larger ships were told off to bombard the castle. But a serious difficulty awaited them. By no means whatsoever could the soldiers ascend the steep and slippery face of the frowning promontory. Any attempt at escalade was out of the question. So the troops were landed at some distance from the fortress, and marched to attack the shipping which lay within the harbour. Again disaster overtook them. When they had proceeded about half the distance they found themselves sinking knee-deep into the yielding soil. The spring-tides flowing over the sands had converted them into a treacherous quagmire. Further progress in this direction was impossible. Meanwhile, as the bewildered soldiers were floundering helplessly in the mud, a brisk cannonade was opened upon them from

the town, spreading disaster and dismay through their already disorganised ranks.

Sadly and painfully the little company retreated to the ships, where a council of war was now held. It was found that the guns of the fleet made little or no impression upon the massive fortifications of the castle. There was nothing to do but to abandon the expedition, and, baffled and disconsolate, the fleet sailed back to Bombay. But no flying of bunting or firing of cannon hailed their arrival. Of the gallant little band who had sailed so valiantly out of the harbour but a few days before, two hundred had been committed to their last resting-place beneath the waves; three hundred others lay aboard seriously wounded. The survivors declared morosely that the fortress was impregnable, and that any attempt to capture it was merely a waste of money, ships and men. But wise-heads ashore shook their heads sagely, and it soon began to be whispered that bad management and inefficient officers might possibly explain the failure of the long-cherished project. Be it as it might, one thing was certain—the pirates had won the first round.

Governor Boone, however, was an obstinate man. He would sooner have died than admit defeat, and this first reverse only stirred him into fresh activity. Eighteen months later his fleet again put to sea, this time with the addition of two vessels, the *Addison* and the *Dartmouth*, recently arrived from England. But their destination was not Geriah; that fortress was deemed unassailable. It was decided to direct the attack upon the island of

Kaneray, which from its position just outside Bombay harbour was a serious menace to British shipping.

To the north, south and west Kaneray is bounded by steep walls of precipitous rock; to the eastwards, however, there is a fine sandy cove where the pirates were wont to anchor their vessels. Fronting this was a great castle, flanked by two grim bastions, one on either side of the cove. From each of these bastions six wicked-looking guns pointed threateningly seaward. It was clear that any boats attempting to effect a landing upon the flat-stretching sands could be sunk in a few seconds.

It was Guy Fawkes day when the fleet cast anchor off the tiny island, and each man aboard swore lustily that the pirates should be treated to a display of fireworks such as they had never before witnessed. For five days the frigates poured broadsides into the front works of the castle, and the enemy's guns, which had belched forth furiously at first, were one by one dismounted and reduced to impotent silence.

Then the British decided to land their men. But this proved no easy matter, and sixty brave sailors bit the dust before the rest of the company succeeded in gaining the sands. "Forward, men," cried their leader, his cutlass glittering in the air, "the fort shall fall to-day!" But his words ended in a choking gurgle as he fell with a bullet through his lungs. Then a fierce rush was made uphill towards the castle walls. But the pirates were ready for them. Every loophole in the massive ramparts

spat its deadly fire, and each discharge littered the ground with dead and dying soldiers.

Alas, that such actions must be chronicled! Two of the commanding officers now disgraced their flag by showing the white feather. Instead of leading their men resolutely up to the walls to storm, and maybe to carry, the position, they were the first to turn and flee. The storming party, lacking a leader, wavered and broke in confusion, and a wild stampede for the boats ensued. The contest was abandoned; the fleet returned to Bombay; and nearly a quarter of the men it had carried were left stiff and stark before the frowning battlements of Kaneray.

Need it be said that the pirate king was exceedingly jubilant when he heard of this disaster? He greatly increased his fortifications and defences, and from his impregnable rock uttered a proud defiance to all the world. Moreover, he received a welcome addition to his forces, for a number of Dutch and English pirates, who had been sweeping the Arabian seas until these waters became too hot to hold them, now hastened to enroll themselves under his flag. So instead of being weakened by all the assaults that had been made upon him, he found himself stronger than ever, and his daring exploits became daily more audacious and bloodthirsty.

What now of that staid body of merchants in London, in whose hands the direction of the East India Company was placed? They received the news of their servants' disastrous exploits with keen dismay. The Court of Directors did not care much

for martial glory—save as a means of gaining dividends; but they recognised that stronger steps must be taken if they wished their ships to sail immune from piratical attacks. So they sent a deputation to the King, and unburdened themselves of all their grievances. Their manifest distress so aroused the royal compassion, that His Majesty graciously appointed a squadron of battleships to proceed to India to stamp out the notorious pirates. To Commodore (afterwards Admiral) Matthews fell the distinction of the chief command, and in the beginning of September 1721 he led his little fleet into Bombay harbour. There were only four vessels, it is true, but they were well manned, and carried one hundred and sixty guns between them, and hopes ran high that this time, at any rate, the British sailors would come off victorious.

To make assurance doubly sure, however, it was decided to invoke the aid of the Portuguese. Somewhat to the Englishmen's surprise this was at once forthcoming, and the Viceroy of Goa, the Portuguese General of the North, and all their troops drew up in martial array at Choul. Here they were joined by the British land forces, who brought twenty-four fine field-pieces to assist in the assault. It was decided to attack the pirates in their stronghold at Allabeg (about forty-two miles south of Bombay), and towards Allabeg the combined armies marched.

Meanwhile the fleet, which now consisted of all the Company's vessels as well as the royal squadron, sailed southwards and entered Allabeg harbour. Misfortune, however, fell early upon them,

for one of the largest ships went ashore *en route* and sustained severe damage. The land army, now five thousand strong, drew up to the town with a great flourish of trumpets and encamped upon the sands. All was ready for the attack.

At this juncture the Viceroy of Goa began to repent the haste with which he had adventured his precious person into an atmosphere savouring of possible danger. He pretended to be seized with a sudden attack of sickness, and caused himself to be carried aboard one of the ships out of all harm's way. With a fine flow of generosity he declared that he did not wish the joy of the forthcoming combat to be delayed until his recovery, and prayed that the assault might be allowed to proceed. So the General of the North took his colleague's place at the head of the Portuguese army, and the allied troops boldly advanced towards the castle walls of Allabeg.

The besieged pirates offered a stubborn resistance, and a desperate fight took place. Scaling-ladders were raised against the walls, up which the troops courageously swarmed. Many were killed in the conflict, but at last it seemed as if the enemy were beginning to give way. A gallant little middy named Thomas Bellamy clambered up the defences, the colours flying in his hands, and succeeded in fixing them fast to the summit of the wall. At this moment the great gates of the castle swung suddenly apart, and Angria's hordes poured forth to the attack. With elephants and cavalry they flung themselves fiercely on their foes. Frightened at this unexpected development the General of the North

sounded the retreat, and the Portuguese fell over each other in their efforts to escape the long glittering swords of their antagonists. The British, deserted by their allies, were cut to pieces and the greater part of their ammunition captured. Once again the pirates had triumphed, and the dashing attack upon the castle was converted into a miserable rout.

The baffled army assembled once more upon the sands, and proceeded to count their losses. Then an incident of a comic-opera nature occurred. Commodore Mathews, who had been surveying the contest through his telescope, came ashore in a terrible rage. White with fury and inarticulate with passion at what he considered the cowardice of the Portuguese, the bluff English sailor danced up to the General of the North. For a few moments he could only prance about and wildly gesticulate; then a happy thought struck him. Lifting his cane he thrust it into the haughty general's mouth. Thus only could he express in fitting terms his consuming wrath at the treachery of his ally!

And so the great expedition met with the fate of its predecessors. Small wonder then if the Europeans grew disheartened, and began to despair of ever ridding themselves of their dreaded enemy. Even the chance capture of one of Angria's warships a short time afterwards did not do much to relieve the general despondency, although they tried valiantly to persuade themselves that the tide of success was at last turning in their favour. As this was the first prize they had ever taken from the pirates,

any enthusiasm they may have felt was to a great extent excusable. But Angria soon made amends by recapturing his vessel, together with several others belonging to the Company, and the spirits of the little factory at Bombay sank once more to zero.

In 1734 Connaji Angria died. But if the British thought that they would now be left in peace for a time, they were doomed to disappointment. Sambaji Angria, who succeeded his father, continued the sport with renewed zest. Albeit, in 1745 he too went the way of all flesh, and his brother reigned in his stead.

The new Angria was a fine figure of a man. So at least we are told by an English merchant who had on one occasion the doubtful pleasure of making his acquaintance. Tall and well built, with a fine olive complexion and fierce martial aspect, he looked every inch a pirate chief. Nor did he belie his appearance, for every vessel that came his way was ruthlessly set upon and plundered by his cut-throat band. Matters grew from bad to worse, and the European traders began again to meditate the feasibility of another attack upon Geriah. But when they thought of its immense strength and unassailable position, their ardour cooled and they would sigh despairingly for some *deus ex machinâ* to place the doughty pirates at their mercy.

For Angria was at this time stronger than ever before. His strip of coast-line held many spacious ports, and the inhabitants of the district were glad to acclaim him as their king. An army of thirty thousand men defended his possessions, while his

gunners and sea-officers were mostly skilled Europeans. Add to this a fleet of over sixty vessels, elephants, cannon, and small arms innumerable, and you have an approximate total of Angria's fighting forces.

But, as the old adage has it, pride is wont to precede the fall; and one of the causes of the pirate's overthrow was his insolent behaviour towards his old friend and aforetime ally, the Rajah. To this potentate the Angrias were in the custom of paying tribute as an acknowledgment of his former services. The new ruler, however, refused to pay, and when ambassadors were sent to claim the money, he slit their noses, and sent them back to their master with contemptuous messages. The Rajah was furious, and sought British aid to revenge himself upon his enemy.

That was in 1755; and about this time a squadron under the command of Admiral Watson put into Bombay harbour to refit and clean. As they had not very much to do, it was decided to embrace the opportunity to wipe off old scores against the pirates. So, promising to assist the Rajah by every means in their power, the British set to work to prepare for the expedition.

Shortly afterwards a strange vessel made its appearance off the pirate's stronghold. Angria surveyed it with amused interest. What innocent lamb was this that dared to venture so close to the wolf's lair? Presently his amusement gave way to astonishment. "Have all the crew lost their wits?" he muttered to himself as he brought his telescope to bear upon his mysterious visitor. Certainly the

conduct of the vessel was not a little peculiar,—tacking about from side to side, heaving-to now and again, and altogether behaving in a curious and apparently aimless manner. After this had been going on for some little time the pirate became annoyed. He ordered two gallivats to be manned, and bade their commander tow the stranger into port. Gallivats, it may be mentioned, were vessels of seventy tons, each carrying from two hundred to three hundred men.

But as soon as the attacking force emerged from the harbour, the mysterious craft went about and scudded seaward under all sail. The pirates gave chase but had to return empty-handed. Angria's curiosity was piqued; he would have given a good deal to know the nature of his unbidden guest's business. Had he been told that Watson's trusty lieutenant, Sir William Hewett, was aboard, and that he had been spying out the land for the forthcoming expedition, it is probable that he would have cursed himself heartily for letting the ship escape so easily. As it was, Sir William returned to Bombay with a detailed chart in his possession which proved afterwards to be of incalculable utility.

On the 7th of February 1756, Admiral Watson hoisted his flag on the line-of-battle ship *Kent* and led his squadron out of Bombay harbour. The force included three ships of the line, one vessel of fifty guns, another of forty-four, several armed vessels belonging to the Bombay Marine, and five "bomb ketches," and it carried over four hundred guns and nearly three thousand seamen. Besides these there

was the land battalion, comprising seven hundred Europeans and six hundred Sepoys, commanded by the great and gallant Clive, who, although still a young man, had already achieved deeds which had set the world ringing with his name. These, however, must be left to another chapter.

For several days the squadron sailed southwards along the palm-covered Malabar coast. Then in a spacious creek a little to the north of Geriah they came upon their Maráthá allies. Between forty and fifty ships had been sent by the incensed Rajah to assist in the wiping out of his wrongs, while on shore a widespread city of canvas covered nearly ten thousand of his warriors.

Something like consternation reigned in the pirates' stronghold. Never before had such a mighty force been sent against them. Their fate was wavering in the balance. Angria left the fortress in his brother's charge and hastened to the Maráthás' tents, hoping to effect a compromise before it became too late. If, he thought, he could only bring about another reconciliation with his erstwhile friend, all might yet be well; their combined troops would together wipe out the British force. But the memory of the insults to his ambassadors still rankled deeply in the Rajah's heart; he rejected the pirate's overtures with scorn.

Four days later the British ships arrived off Geriah, and next morning, in two parallel divisions, advanced to within fifty yards of the embattled rock. A wisp of smoke spurted from one of the bomb ketches, there was a heavy boom, and a shell went

whizzing and shrieking towards the pirates' stronghold. Soon all the British guns were in action; shot and shell rained furiously about the massive walls and turrets. The enemy replied with spirit, plying their cannon in no half-hearted fashion. In the middle of this fierce duel a sheet of flame was seen to shoot skywards from the harbour; a stray shell had set one of the pirate ships afire. The flames spread rapidly; ship after ship fell victim to the leaping tongues of fire, until at length the entire fleet was wrapped in a mantle of flame. In a few minutes nothing was left of the once-dreaded flotilla save a few blackened and dismasted hulks.

At four o'clock in the afternoon Admiral Watson gave the order to cease firing; but the enemy's cannonade, which had become desultory and spasmodic, was at once renewed with fresh vigour. So the guns from the ships boomed forth once more, and for two hours continued to riddle the defences with destructive fire. By six o'clock Angria's guns were silenced. Yet a flag of truce sent ashore in the expectation that the enemy would surrender, received as answer only a volley of musketry.

Three hours later Clive landed at the head of his men and stationed himself between the Maráthá army and the fortress, in order to prevent the Maráthás from plundering the castle when it should fall.

When morning dawned the white flag of surrender was seen to be flying from the smoke-stained turrets, and Clive marched to take possession. As they approached the fort the pirates' guns once

more rang out, killing one man and wounding an officer. The British retreated to their former position, while the ships once more poured broadsides on the obstinate and treacherous foe.

For yet three hours the picturesque Malabar haven continued to resound with the dull, heavy booming of the guns. Then the pirates deemed they had had enough; their flag was hauled down for the last time from their castle towers. Never again should it float over such a desperate company of ruffians!

When the news of the surrender became known the Maráthás made a rush towards the castle, eager to strip it of the vast store of plunder believed to be concealed within its walls. But quick as they were, the British were before them. Drawing his sword and brandishing it above his head, Captain Forbes swore by his Maker to strike the Maráthá leader's head from his shoulders if he advanced one step farther towards the fort. Sulky and discontented, our allies gave way.

Cooped up in its dank and desolate dungeons when the British took possession of Geriah they found eight Englishmen, two Scotchmen, and three Dutchmen, who had fallen into the hands of the robbers. The booty captured was considerable. Elephants and cannon and vast piles of rupees awaited the pleasure of the victors.

And Angria? His reign was over; his Nemesis had overtaken him. But though he never fell into the hands of the British, he ceased from that day to trouble the Indian seas. It had taken long to

destroy his power, many lives had been lost in the process, but the tardy retribution had at length fallen, and Angria and his famous Castle Geriah were together banished into the limbo of half-forgotten things.

CHAPTER VI

DUPLEIX PLAYS AT KING-MAKING

ONE morning in the early autumn of the year 1739 the bells of London town rang out a merry chime. War—glorious war—had at last been declared against our old-time rivals and very worthy foes the Spaniards! And as from tower and steeple the gladsome news clashed and reverberated far and wide, the loyal townsfolk poured in their thousands into the squares and open places of the great city to take their part in the national rejoicing. From stately mansion and squalid hovel they came—jubilation writ large upon each countenance, while hand clasped hand in mutual congratulation. For never before, perhaps, had a declaration of war been so universally popular. Captain Jenkins and his famous ear had fired the people's patriotism to fever heat. His historic phrase, "I commended my soul to God and my cause to my country," became the catchword of the hour. The populace clamoured for revenge, and here was revenge ready to their hand.

The connection between these scenes of frantic enthusiasm in England's thronging capital and the

peaceful traders plying their wares on the shores of distant Ind may seem rather remote. Nevertheless it exists. For the war with Spain rang up the curtain upon a great drama, whose scenes spread themselves over three continents, whose theme was mighty nations struggling in their death-grips. And the prize to the victor was Colonial Supremacy. In North America, as in Europe, many fierce battles were fought, many fields were rendered fertile with the blood of heroes who died for their country's cause; but not the least important phase of the great struggle for oversea power was waged upon the vast-stretching plains of the Orient under the blazing Indian sun.

But before attempting in any way to chronicle those great events which wrote so glorious a page upon our Empire story, let us see what was the actual position of the European traders in India at this time. Scattered up and down the coast, separated for the most part by hundreds of miles, were various small settlements, some fortified, others mere stations for barter and exchange. These were occupied by representatives of the various trading companies, chief of which were the British, the French, the Portuguese, and the Dutch. The two latter, however, had already fallen out of the fight; they played no part in the fierce struggle for supremacy. But between the British and the French a bitter rivalry existed, and although the latter were, comparatively speaking, recent arrivals in the field, they held every whit as good a position as ourselves. Moreover, their prestige was far

higher, as the natives were accustomed to consider the French a much mightier nation than their British competitors.

The English Company's possessions were divided into three Presidencies, in Bengal, Madras, and Bombay. Each had its own Governor and Council, whilst its servants were graded as Senior and Junior Merchants and Writers. Look now, for a minute, at a map of India. In Bengal the British held the important town of Calcutta. Opposed to this was the French settlement of Chandranagar, also at the mouth of the Ganges. In the Carnatic the British had Madras, with the subsidiary fort of St. David some hundred miles to the south. Between the two lay Pondicherry, the headquarters of the French Company. Bombay, on the Malabar coast, was, of course, British, while some distance to the southwards lay the French town of Mahé.

Such, then, was the position of affairs when in 1739 the British set out to chastise the Spaniards. Five years later, when the war with Spain blossomed also into a contest with France and, in fine, into a general European conflagration, the French and English Companies in India prepared to take up their country's quarrels. At first, success lay all on the side of our rivals. The British were slow, irresolute, and unready. Whilst they vaguely meditated action, their enemies were already at work.

Thus it came about that when the Governor of Madras woke up to the fact that a sudden raid upon Pondicherry might be fraught with excellent results,

he received a severe rebuff. Dupleix, the brilliant governor of the threatened town, had already been having a little confabulation with the Nabob of the Carnatic. So wisely and so well had he discoursed that when the British sallied out prepared to cover themselves with glory, they found their way barred by the troops of this powerful native prince.

"What!" he exclaimed, raising his bejewelled finger in pious horror, "can it be possible that you contemplate making war in my dominions and without my permission? Am I actually to believe that you intend attacking a peaceful nation who enjoy the inestimable privilege of my protection? Shame upon you! Sooner than countenance such an outrage I would sweep the English into the sea."

Governor Morse returned to Madras in a chastened frame of mind. It never occurred to him to defy the imperial edict. He sat down to think things out. But his reflections were soon interrupted by the appearance of a large fleet off the town. The white lilies of France fluttered from their mast-heads; La Bourdonnais, the great and gallant French admiral, was in command, and it looked as if Madras were in for a very bad time.

Post-haste messengers were despatched to the peace-loving Nabob. "See," they exclaimed, "the French have had the audacity to attack us—peaceful traders—whose unspeakable felicity it is to reside within your dominions and under the shadow of your august protection! Arise, we pray your Highness, and help us chastise them for their insolence!"

But with incredible folly, the messengers had actually forgotten to bring with them the presents customary on such an occasion. Not unnaturally the Nabob's wells of compassion were found to be empty; he intimated that the English must look after themselves. So there was nothing to do but to prepare for the worst. Albeit the result of the siege was a foregone conclusion. Madras was very inefficiently protected. The actual fort, which was surrounded by a defective wall strengthened by four bastions, contained only three hundred Europeans. The rest of the town, inhabited by nearly a quarter of a million natives, was practically defenceless.

The French went about their preparations with businesslike celerity. Twelve mortars were sent ashore to batter the town from the land side, whilst from the sea the anchored vessels continuously pounded the doomed fortress. For two days the British permitted themselves to be thus battered; then they decided to send a deputation to the foe.

The two deputies, Messrs. Monson and Haliburton, were nothing if not brilliant. They came out with the striking suggestion that as Madras was within the territory of the Moghul the attack on it should cease. The French admiral retorted that the fact had not altogether escaped his notice. Still, much as he regretted it, he was unable to fall in with their proposals. Then the British thought they might buy the enemy off. "What contribution," they asked, "will induce you to retire?"

"I do not traffic in honour," was La Bourdonnais'

proud rejoinder. "The flag of France shall be planted on Madras, or I shall die before the walls."

Governor Morse decided humanely to spare La Bourdonnais this painful alternative. Three days later he hauled the British colours from his flagstaff and let the French take possession. But it was a bloodless victory; for while the British had only five killed—and those through the bursting of one of their own guns—the French had not lost a man.

Although Madras should never have been surrendered, the terms of the capitulation were honourable to the British. The town was to be occupied temporarily by the French, but ultimately to be restored for a moderate ransom. The garrison became prisoners on parole. So far all was well. But in Pondicherry a man sat dreaming big dreams, and in the dreams of Dupleix there was no room for the restoration of Madras to the English. When he heard of the conditions agreed to he was furious, and instantly repudiated them. La Bourdonnais, he declared, had exceeded his powers. The gallant admiral hastened southwards to remonstrate. Angry recriminations followed; Dupleix was inexorable. His will being absolute, La Bourdonnais shook the dust of India from his feet in disgust and sailed away for France.

On his way home, however, he was captured by a British man-o'-war and brought to England. But the Directors of the East India Company knew La Bourdonnais for a brave sailor and a valorous gentleman, and he was permitted to return to his own country. Better for him had he remained in

England, for Dupleix's insidious influence had already been at work. On his arrival he was thrown into the Bastille and there allowed to pine for three long, weary years. When the tardy order for release at length reached him, he was a man broken both in body and spirit, and he died shortly afterwards. Such is the reward a nation bestows upon her heroes!

Meanwhile Dupleix was exercising arbitrary powers in India. In defiance of all laws, he publicly broke the treaty and confiscated the property of each inhabitant of Madras, British and native alike. Then the Governor and principal citizens were carried off to Pondicherry, there to be triumphantly exhibited before a mob of fifty thousand people.

One of the participators in this wretched procession was a young man called Robert Clive. A ne'er-do-well at home, he was at the age of eighteen shipped off as a writer in the East India Company's service "to make a fortune or to die of a fever at Madras." Clive was a boy of fierce passions and headstrong will. Many stories are told of his youthful exploits in the little Shropshire village of Market Drayton, where he was the hero of his playfellows and the terror of the local shopkeepers. There are also stories extant of his first miserable years in India, for clerkly duties sat heavily upon a youth of such virile spirit. The salaries paid by the Company were meagre in the extreme, and Clive was seldom out of difficulty or debt.

On one occasion a fellow-writer entered his room and found the future hero of Plassey seated at a table, a loaded pistol placed before him. "Fire that pistol

out of the window!" he was commanded, and nothing loth he did so. The report rang out sharply on the still air. "Ha!" exclaimed Clive, leaping to his feet, "twice I have snapped that pistol at my head and it has failed to explode. Truly, I am reserved for something great!"

Under the cover of night, Clive slipped out of Pondicherry in the disguise of a native and fled to Fort St. David, fourteen miles away. There he laid down his writership to become an ensign in the army. It was not long before the French turned their attention to this stronghold, which had become the seat of the Presidency. A large force, far outnumbering the little garrison, gathered round the town. Things looked desperate indeed. But for three months the tiny company of defenders continued to hold out, repulsing with gallant determination the fierce attacks that were made on them. Then a squadron appeared in the bay with the Union Jack flying from their mastheads, and the French fled precipitately to Pondicherry. Fort St. David was saved!

And now the British deemed it high time to do something on their own account. So far the balance of success lay with the French, but that balance must be rectified. They had lost Madras: they must gain Pondicherry. And so the French stronghold was marked out for attack. It was besieged by sea; it was besieged by land; it was besieged for two long strenuous months; and yet the white lilies floated proudly from the city walls. If bravery alone ensured success, Pondicherry would have fallen long since. The attacks were characterised by an unflinching heroism

worthy of England's best traditions. But the blunders of the British commanders were many and dire, while the defence was brilliantly conducted. And so after losing a thousand men and gaining nothing but derision the British retired gloomily to Fort St. David, leaving the French to sing a jubilant Te Deum over the success of their arms.

The wily Dupleix lost no time in spreading the news of his triumph far and wide. He despatched notes to all the Indian courts, even to the Great Moghul himself, extolling the glories of the French nation and the inferiority of their rivals. To these addresses the oriental potentates returned effusively flattering replies, and the prestige of the French lilies ascended yet a step higher in the eyes of the swarthy inhabitants of the land of the Eastern sun.

But the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in the November of 1748 put a temporary period to Dupleix's far-reaching ambitions. To his great chagrin Madras had to be given back to the British. Their respective nations being no longer at war, the two companies had to keep the peace. But they found themselves occupying a very different position from that with which they had started. From harmless traders they had sprung at a bound into great military powers. The war had brought to India large numbers of superior European troops, and it had been conclusively shown that a few hundreds of these were more than a match for ten times that number of the ill-armed, ill-disciplined, and ill-organised native forces. Here was a wide field of possibilities opened up, and Dupleix was not slow to take advantage of

it. He resolved to play a colossal game of king-making, with India as his chess-board and its rulers as his puppets.

But while Dupleix was monopolising the lime-light and striking heroic attitudes in the centre of the stage, the British strove to encourage themselves by executing a *pas seul* in the wings. The Rajah of Tanjore, who had been dethroned on account of his imbecility, sought the English Company's aid to recover his lost crown. Their reward was to be the port of Deva-Cotta, about fifty miles south of Fort St. David, together with the surrounding district. Fired by the bribe, the Company promised assistance. But the people of Tanjore were by no means dis-posed to have an imbecile Rajah foisted upon them, and their protests were vigorous and forcible.

Having once put their hand to the plough, how-ever, the British dared not look back, and continued the campaign to the bitter end. The result was a qualified success. The Company got Deva-Cotta—they took good care of that—but the Rajah had to do without his throne; he got a pension instead. But this expedition is noteworthy in that it gave Clive his first chance to display his martial genius. He accompanied Major Stringer Lawrence—"the first of that long train of heroes who have rendered the British name illustrious on the plains of Hindo-stan"[1]—as his lieutenant, and, leading the "forlorn hope," distinguished himself with great gallantry.

By this time Dupleix's artful schemes began to be made manifest. Two mighty Indian thrones were

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trembling in the balance, and the Frenchman aspired to fill them with his own creatures. The Viceroy of the Deccan—that great district comprising the whole of southern India—had died in 1748. For the vacant throne there were two claimants, Muzaffar Jang and Nasir Jang. Then again, the Carnatic, the largest and richest province of the Deccan, was ruled by an ancient Nabob, whose high office many aspired to fill. Chief of these pretenders was Chanda Sáhib, a valorous and exceedingly popular native prince.

Between Muzaffar Jang, Chanda Sáhib, and Dupleix a gigantic conspiracy was formed, which to the Frenchman offered decided advantages. For, if successful, Muzaffar Jang would wear the crown of the Deccan, Chanda Sáhib would become Nabob of the Carnatic, while Dupleix would be the power behind the throne in whose hands all authority would really rest.

From the French point of view the scheme worked well. The Nabob of the Carnatic was defeated and killed. His son, Muhammad Ali, fled to Trichinopoli, clamouring to the English for assistance. They sent him a beggarly contingent of one hundred and twenty men. This was all they could do in the way of checking Dupleix's fast rising power! Nasir Jang was next disposed of—not, however, before several bloody battles had been fought—and Muzaffar Jang became nominal master of the Deccan.

Dupleix was jubilant over this triumph of French arms. In Pondicherry the church bells rang out gladly exultant, while the dull booming of the guns

helped to swell the joyful chorus. Hither came the Viceroy to be solemnly installed in his new office. Dupleix and he fell on each other's necks and mingled happy tears.

The ambitious Frenchman cut a fine figure in the festivities which followed. Decked out in resplendent oriental robes, he was declared Governor of India from the Kistna to Cape Comorin. Treasure and jewels were poured at his sandalled feet. Verily, his triumph was now complete. Muzaffar Jang swayed the Deccan, Chanda Sáhib lorded it over the Carnatic, and Dupleix ruled both!

Moreover, a new city had arisen in India. On the spot where Nasir Jang had gasped out his fast-fleeting life a lofty column towered proudly skywards. Pompous inscriptions proclaimed in four languages this glorious achievement of French arms. Around it, mushroom-like, there spread a newly-born town. And its name was Dupleix Fatihabad—the City of the Victory of Dupleix!

With what feelings of dismay and consternation did the British regard this sudden ascendancy of their rivals! What was to happen to them? Who was to lead them forth to victory? Yet, though they knew it not, they had in their midst a giant destined to topple Dupleix's vainglorious monument in the dust, to sweep his countrymen terror-stricken from the land, and to raise up a mighty empire from the ashes of the old. And his name was Robert Clive.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF CLIVE

In the north quarter of the city of Trichinopoli a lofty temple-crowned rock rises sheer to a height of nearly 250 feet. From its summit the eye may command an extensive view of the vast plain below, which stretches in an unbroken line to the distant horizon, and here one August evening, in the year of Dupleix's triumph, a young English officer stood gazing reflectively at the strange spectacle which lay beneath him. All around the encircling ramparts, their tents stretching far away into the distance, lay encamped a mighty host. The last glowing rays of the setting sun sparkled and danced upon the polished steel of their arms and accoutrements, forming, as it were, a giant ring of fire about the beleaguered city. Muhammad Ali—the last hope of the English, who still acclaimed him Nabob of the Carnatic,—crouched despairingly within the walls of Trichinopoli; outside the victorious troops of Dupleix and Chanda Sáhib waited, eagerly expectant, to complete their grim conquest.

Robert Clive, for he it was who stood thus solitary, saw these things with a troubled mind. A few days

before he had, with true British pluck, led a small band of reinforcements into the city, passing through the enemy's lines under cover of night, and bringing upon themselves a sharp tussle with the French before at length they reached their goal. But even with these, he knew the town could not hope to hold out long. The garrison, sulky and disheartened, placed no reliance in their commander. The officers frivolled away their time in petty squabbling. Energy and enterprise had they none. The enemy, far outnumbering them, pressed the siege vigorously. Something indeed desperate must be done if the situation were to be saved.

A few days later Clive stood before the Governor of Fort St. David. With characteristic daring he had again picked his way through the tents of the enemy, and fleeing to the English Presidency, brought with him a vivid account of the sorry plight in which Trichinopoli was placed. Mr. Saunders, a man of strong common sense, listened moodily to the recital. Trichinopoli *must* be saved—there was no doubt about that. British prestige—such as it was—would be ruined if it fell. But how was it to be done? What miracle should preserve it from the hands of the triumphant Dupleix? Governor and Council scratched their heads in sore perplexity.

Then it was Clive stepped into the breach. With eager tongue he unfolded his brilliant scheme, while his audience listened in mute amazement. "Impossible!" cried they at first. Then it began to dawn on them that after all there might be something in what this young man was saying. It was

desperate, they agreed, but still—there was just a chance of success. Anyway, they could not suggest anything better. Governor Saunders leapt to his feet and wrung the young officer's hand. "It can be done," he roared, "and, egad, sir, you are the man to do it!"

For Clive proposed to carry the war into the enemy's country with a vengeance. "No use," he cried, "to sit moping and wailing here! See," and he placed his finger on the map of India, "here is Arcot, chief city of the Carnatic. Chanda Sáhib, in massing his forces around Trichinopoli, has left this vital spot but ill-protected. A spirited attack on it, and it is ours. And once ours——" Clive paused and looked around him, "Chanda Sáhib will have to abandon his siege to get it back again."

Such, in effect, were his words. And Governor Saunders, recognising their wisdom, swept Fort St. David and Madras almost bare of soldiers to provide an efficient force for the expedition. Even then, it numbered only three hundred Sepoys and two hundred Europeans, with three light field-pieces. Of the eight officers, six had yet to undergo their baptism of fire; of these, four—fired by the example of Clive—had only recently laid down the pen to buckle on the sword.

Nothing daunted, the little force set out on the 26th August 1751 to win immortal fame. Four days later they halted ten miles from their goal to learn that the fort was held by eleven hundred men. Still they pushed forward. A thunderstorm broke out in all its tropical fury. Deafening peals of thunder

crashed in their ears, dazzling sheets of lightning played round and about them, torrents of rain soaked them to the skin, but still they strode resolutely onwards. Native spies beheld them and fled to the fort in terror. "These English are invincible," they cried, "not even the lightning can stop them!"

Clive marching through the city, under the curious gaze of ten thousand spectators, found the fort bereft of defenders. The garrison had fled to the hills in fear and trembling. Arcot had fallen—and without a blow!

But to capture the fort was one thing: to keep it another. Clive lost no time in preparing for the siege he knew must follow. Provisions were bought and stored, the guns put in order, and the defences strengthened. Then, the enemy still tarrying, Clive sallied forth to look for them. He found the fugitive garrison, now some three thousand strong, encamped close to the town. In their possession was a large and antiquated field-piece, which they fired while Clive's men were yet some distance away. But they killed nothing more terrible than a camel, and the Europeans, charging at the double, sent them running helter-skelter to the hills. The young commander returned to his stronghold in triumph, for while many English bullets had found their billets in the flying foe, he himself had not lost a man.

It was not long before Clive's prediction was fulfilled. As soon as Chanda Sáhib heard of the fall of his capital, he detached a force of four thousand men from Trichinopoli to go to its rescue. Swelled in its march to upwards of ten thousand, including

one hundred and fifty Frenchmen from Pondicherry, the army entered Arcot on October 3. The townsmen, who had been somewhat conciliated by Clive's considerate treatment of them, remained neutral, and sat down to enjoy the curious spectacle of two contending forces struggling for the possession of their city, caring, for their part, little, if at all, as to which side should ultimately prove victorious.

The fort which Clive so valiantly held with his handful of men was situated near the centre of the town. The surrounding walls, over a mile in circumference, were crumbling away. The ramparts were too narrow to admit of guns being mounted on them. The parapets were low, the flanking towers for the most part in ruins. The moat which encircled it was easily fordable, parts of it indeed being either dried up or choked with rubbish. It might be thought that so weakly fortified a place would fall at once before the overwhelming forces of Chanda Sáhib. But that would be not to know the spirit of those defending it.

For fifty long days the tiny garrison held out with unflinching heroism. Night and day they were begirdled with fire. The rattle of musketry, the hissing of shot and shell, sounded ceaselessly in their ears. Time after time the enemy made a desperate assault upon the walls: time after time, Clive with sleepless vigilance, checked and repulsed them. The devotion and esteem in which the gallant defenders held their young captain were wonderful in the extreme. It is related that when provisions ran short and rations grew painfully meagre, the faithful Sepoys came to Clive with a suggestion. Let the

grain be given to the Europeans, said they, since they require more nourishment than natives of Asia. For themselves, they would be content to subsist upon the water in which the rice had been boiled. "History," says Macaulay, "contains no more touching instance of military fidelity."

It was while making an inspection of the fort that Clive found, one day, a vast and wonderful piece of cannon. This, it was elicited, was a relic of the mighty Aurangzebe—one of the little toys he had employed to batter down the southern strongholds. One thousand yoke of oxen (so said tradition) had been required to draw this mammoth achievement of the gunsmith's art from Delhi to its present resting-place. Clive determined to make use of it. One of the fortress towers was strengthened and raised, and upon this, with herculean effort, the iron monster was hoisted. Then the muzzle was trained so as to command the Nabob's palace, and the garrison prepared to enjoy a little excitement.

Each day the principal officers of the besieging force were accustomed to hold a council of war at the palace. And so, all unconscious of the surprise in store for them, the morrow found these baffled warriors busily devising fresh stratagems to make the fortress their own. The English watched them assemble with cheerful anticipation. Then they loaded their precious weapon. A stone ball weighing seventy-two pounds and thirty pounds of powder completed the charge, and to this a long train was attached. The fuse was lit and the gunners retreated to a discreet distance. Presently there was a

tremendous bang. Right through the middle of the council chamber the gigantic missile crashed, scaring the astonished tacticians out of their wits. "Allah," they cried in alarm, "what new devilry are these English up to?"

Clive thought it would be a pity to discount such an effect by undue repetition. So it was decided to fire the cannon once a day only, at the hour the enemy foregathered to evolve their martial schemes. But on the fourth day a more than usually terrific explosion rent the air. The garrison held their breath and wondered what had happened. Slowly the smoke dispersed and an anxious throng gathered around the resting-place of their glorious relic. But rub their eyes and stare as they might, not a vestige of it was to be seen. Aurangzebe's popgun had been blown into a thousand fragments!

Meantime the authorities at Madras were turning anxious eyes towards the Nabob's capital. A small expedition that had been sent to its relief had failed, but another, and much larger one, was in course of preparation. Could Clive hold out till help arrived?—that was the question on everybody's lips. But assistance was to come from another quarter. A Maráthá chieftain named Morári Ráo had been hired to help the cause of Muhammad Ali. So far he had been a passive spectator of the contest, waiting to see which side would win before he threw himself into the fray. Clive's brilliant defence of Arcot, however, aroused him to both admiration and surprise. "Why, these English can fight after all!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Since they have

shown spirit enough to help themselves, I will lead my troops to their assistance."

On the 20th November Morári Ráo and his daring horsemen appeared outside Arcot. The British saw them through their glasses and cried joyfully that the long-looked-for relief had at last arrived. But the Maráthás were not strong enough to attack in force. They swept like a whirlwind round the city and intercepting and capturing some of the enemy's supplies, disappeared amid a cloud of dust on the horizon.

Rezza Sáhib, who commanded the investing troops, saw he must bestir himself if he wished to capture the fort. He tried to bribe Clive, but his advances were rejected with scorn. "Your father is an usurper and your army a rabble," cried the young Englishman haughtily. "You will do well to think twice before you send such poltroons into a breach defended by English soldiers!"

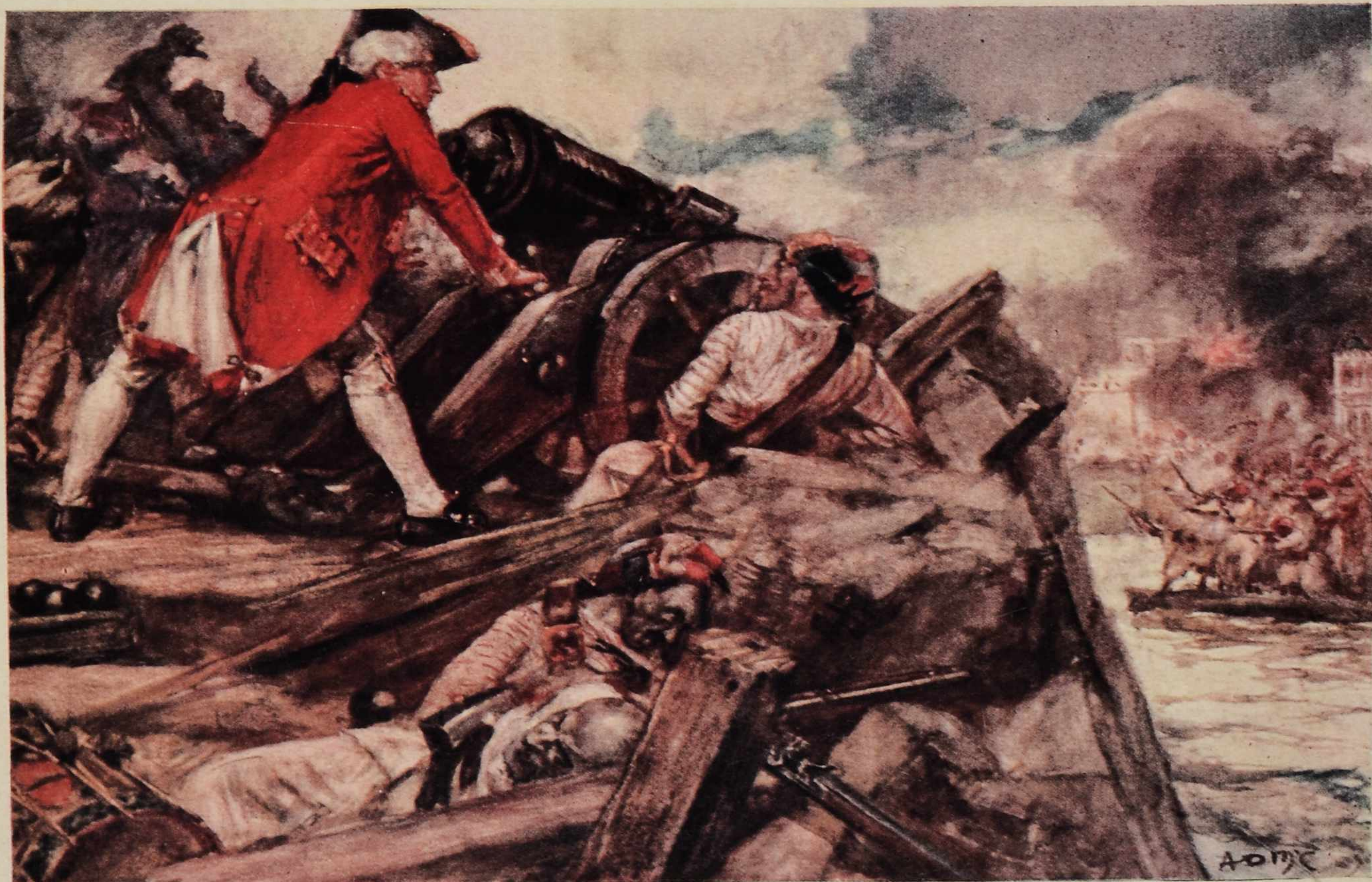
So it was decided to carry the fort by storm; November 25 was selected for the attack. On this day fell a great religious festival on which all devout Moslems work themselves up into a frenzy of fanatical fervour. "Whoever dies fighting the infidels on the feast of Hosein," they declare, "passes at once through the gates of Paradise into the garden of the Houris." Clive heard of their design through his spies, and laboured night and day to make ready for them. Then, worn out by his efforts, he flung himself on to his couch to sleep the sleep of exhaustion.

The first faint streaks of dawn were showing in

the eastern sky when loud and clear the bugles rang out the shrill note of alarm. The attack had begun. Clive was awakened instantly and hurried to his post. It was a sight sufficient to make the most resolute quail that met the young commander's eye. From every side vast multitudes of men were rushing headlong towards the fort. It looked as though nothing could stop that furious charge. Their senses inflamed with stimulating drugs and their minds filled with the fierce lust of killing—drunk, in short, with the drunkenness that a combination of religious frenzy and fiery potions can alone produce — the Moslems were converted for the moment into raging devils. Before them they drove a troop of heavily armoured elephants to batter down the gates with their steel-clad foreheads. But here their weapons were turned against themselves. These huge beasts liked not at all the sting of English musket-balls and, screaming with terror, they turned tail and crashed a disastrous course through the closely-packed masses of the enemy.

The garrison met the charge with unflinching courage. A never-failing hail of musketry met their assailants as they strove to win the breach. Hand grenades and shells were hurled over the parapet to spread destruction among the surging crowds beneath. Field-pieces mowed down their ranks and strewed the ground with dead and dying, but as each division was checked and scattered, another quickly formed to renew the fierce attack.

In the midst of the turmoil Clive suddenly espied a large raft making for a weak spot in the defences.



"Clive himself sprang to a gun"

"Sink them, men!" he roared, but the gunners were flurried and their shots went wide. Nearer and nearer the raft approached and still it and its seventy occupants sailed scatheless through the storm of shot and shell. It was a time for instant action, and Clive himself sprang to a gun. Amid the tense excitement of the moment he alone was calm and cool, and into the midst of the closely-packed crew he sent his cannon-balls with unerring aim. The danger was soon past. A few seconds later found the raft forsaken and its unfortunate navigators struggling for their lives in the water. So the fight went on.

An attack so fierce could not be kept up long, and within an hour the enemy had spent their strength. Four hundred had perished before the walls, while Clive's losses were insignificant. A truce of two hours was called while the enemy buried their dead, and then from the shelter of the houses the bombardment was renewed. At two o'clock next morning the firing suddenly ceased. The garrison braced up their flagging energies. Were the natives going to attack them under cover of darkness? Can you not imagine with what anxiety they peered out into the blackness of the night, expecting every moment to be surrounded by a crowd of ferocious bloodthirsty fanatics. Slowly the hours rolled away, night turned to dawn, and still nothing happened. Suddenly a whisper flew about from mouth to mouth. Rezza Sáhib had retired suddenly from the city, leaving treasure-chest, artillery, and ammunition behind him! Then what a cheer went up from two hundred lusty throats. For Arcot was saved, the

siege was over, and the roll of undying fame was richer by the names of its heroic defenders.

On the evening of the same day Captain Kilpatrick marched into the city with the long-expected reinforcements from Madras. But what use would they have been had the fortress fallen before the Moslems' furious onslaught?

Looking back over the records of our Indian Empire this master-stroke of Clive's stands out vividly as a turning-point in its history. For this was no ordinary martial exploit; the results were wide and far-reaching. To Dupleix it was the first check in his hitherto triumphant career. To the British it came as a much-needed tonic to stimulate them to further effort. More, it gave them a leader who could really lead, a commander whom all were proud to serve under, a compatriot whom the natives could admire and respect. The bronzed fighters of the Deccan began to revise their estimates of British prowess. They realised that the French were not such wonderful fellows after all, and that the British, or at any rate a section of them, were not altogether lacking in warlike courage and enterprise.

Henceforward the tide of success flowed with the English. Trichinopoli was relieved, and the French commander forced to surrender himself and his troops into the hands of Stringer Lawrence. His ally, the valiant Chanda Sáhib, met with an ignominious end. Struck down by the knife of the assassin, his dead body was sent as a present to Muhammad Ali, who chuckled with delight when he beheld the mutilated corpse of his old enemy. The Nabob's hatred ex-

tended even to the grave. Shortly afterwards there was a strange procession in Trichinopoli. A band of hooting natives led a camel in solemn state five times around the city walls. And strapped to the camel's neck was the severed head of the fallen warrior.

Clive had taken an active part in the campaign. It was he who overturned Dupleix's triumphal column and razed the city to the ground. But from no small or spiteful motive. The monument stood as an emblem of French power and magnificence. Its destruction was merely a token of the altered position of affairs. And the native mind, ever fond of signs and symbols, was exceedingly impressed by these portents of England's increasing greatness.

It was Clive also who, marching carelessly along a road one moonlit night, led his troops straight into a cunningly concealed ambush. But Clive had a faculty for getting into awkward places and extricating himself by the sheer force of his genius. Danger was as the breath of his nostrils, and the sorrier the plight, the greater his enjoyment. On this occasion a battery of nine guns, posted in a mango grove about two hundred and fifty yards to the right of the road, suddenly poured a destructive fire into his exposed troops. Farther ahead a large body of native cavalry was waiting to cut the little column into pieces. Clive told off a small detachment to keep these at bay and ordered the rest of his men to take shelter in a watercourse on the left side of the road.

Two hours went by. All this time a duel had been taking place between the opposing artillery. Now Clive's guns were almost silenced by the superior

fire of the enemy. At intervals the native horsemen charged fiercely down upon the English baggage, each time to be repulsed by the gallantry of its defenders. Clive saw he must either capture the concealed battery or beat a retreat. A scout brought him news that the French had posted no sentinels at the back of the grove—they were all eagerly watching the fight from the front. Here was an opportunity, and Clive seized it by sending a force of two hundred Europeans and four hundred Sepoys to take the battery in the rear. They marched off silently and secretly, unseen by the enemy. Nearer and nearer they approached the mango grove. Now they were within thirty yards, and still the Frenchmen plied their guns, all unaware of their advance. Suddenly a sharp volley of musketry took the gunners by surprise. They fled in terror, leaving their guns behind them. When morning broke the British found they had gained a great victory. But success demands a heavy toll, and seventy of Clive's men fought their last fight that night.

A few months later Clive had another escape from wholesale destruction. Tired out by a long day in the field, he lay down to rest in a small village, near the entrance gateway of the temple. Midnight came and found Clive sleeping soundly, while all around the European and native soldiers were wrapped in heavy slumber. The sentries paced drowsily to and fro. A French detachment, including forty English deserters and seven hundred Sepoys, stole silently up to the village. "Halt! Who goes there?" muttered a sentinel sleepily. "Friends—a relief force from

Lawrence," was the whispered reply. "Pass friends, and all's well!" and the wearied soldier again nodded over his musket. A minute or two passed in complete silence while the enemy filed softly into the village. Then the camp was lit up with flashes of musketry as volley after volley was poured into the midst of the sleeping soldiers. Clive was awakened by the spattering of bullets about his bed. A man lying next to him was shot dead. A box at the foot of his cot was smashed into pieces. Then fell on his astonished ears the groans of the wounded and dying, the rattle of musketry, the clatter of arms, and the alarmed cries of the awakened soldiers.

Clive thought the firing came from his own men who had been startled by a false alarm. Leaping out of bed, he sprang towards a party of French Sepoys and beating down their guns with his hands, roundly abused them for what he supposed to be their stupidity. A native officer aimed a savage blow at him. Clive ran in and received the blow from the hilt upon his shoulder. Then realising his mistake he went off to find his own men. Six Frenchmen surrounded him and summoned him to surrender; but badly wounded as he was, Clive rose splendidly to the occasion. "You are surrounded," he cried, "lay down your arms, for escape is impossible!" The French gasped with astonishment and surrendered forthwith.

In Clive's force were some of Morári Ráo's Maráthás. These fierce warriors were delighted to get to such close quarters with the French Sepoys, and scattered them in all directions. They declared after-

wards that they had killed every one of them; but possibly their natural enthusiasm led them to mistake the will for the deed. The remaining Frenchmen and the English deserters were soon forced to yield ground. At length they all bolted into the temple, which they barricaded to resist attack. Clive was in no hurry to disturb this wasps' nest. The enemy could do no harm where they were. So field-pieces were brought up to command the entrance of the temple, and Clive and his men sat down to await developments.

Dawn broke to find them still vigilantly guarding the building. The French commander realised that he was in a trap and made a gallant attempt to cut his way out at the point of the sword. It was an effort born of despair, for he must have known his position to be hopeless. As soon as the Frenchmen showed themselves a hail of bullets swept them to the ground; their brave leader fell mortally wounded, and those who escaped unhurt hurried back into shelter. Clive advanced to the porch to offer terms. Sick with fatigue, and fainting from loss of blood, he stood swaying unsteadily about, supported on either side by a sergeant. An Irish deserter came forward and hurled a torrent of foul-mouthed abuse at his head; then, raising his musket, he fired straight at the wounded man. Luckily for Clive, he was leaning forward at the time and so escaped the assassin's bullet. With the unfortunate sergeants, however, it was otherwise. The ball pierced them both and they fell dying to the ground. Such an act of treachery horrified the

more scrupulous Frenchmen and they surrendered without further ado.

Clive returned to England shortly afterwards, broken in health, but rich in glory and honours. The East India Company could not make too much of him. They entertained him at banquets, they praised him in flowery orations, they toasted him as "General" Clive. "As a token of their esteem and of their sense of his singular services" they presented him with a diamond-hilted sword. But Clive did not allow the flattery he received to blunt his sense of modesty and good taste. He refused to accept it unless his old leader Stringer Lawrence were similarly honoured. To this the Company gladly consented. Thus Clive became the most popular figure of the hour. But of all the compliments he received, it is possible that the one he valued most came from his own father. "Why!" exclaimed the old gentleman in grudging astonishment, "I do believe the booby has some sense after all!"

Contrast the enthusiastic reception of Clive with the fate of unhappy Dupleix. The great king-maker was struggling desperately against overwhelming odds. He saw his wonderful schemes dashed to the ground, his dreams of empire vanishing into nothingness. In vain he strove to build up anew the French power. His health, his vast riches, the wealth of his great intellect, all were lavished in the attempt. But the French Company neither understood nor appreciated him. They were traders—nothing more. They cared nothing for the glory of empire, for the triumphal acquisitions of the sword, for the honours

of eastern titles. So long as the Company paid good dividends they were well content, but now these were falling fast. And so the cleverest Frenchman of his time was recalled in ignominy and disgrace. At home he was flouted and laughed at. His requests for the repayment of money he had spent in the Company's service were treated with derision and scorn. He was denounced as an impostor and a liar. Poor Dupleix! He sank deeper and deeper into the miseries of poverty and despair. "My services," he cried bitterly three days before his death, "are treated as fables; my demand is denounced as ridiculous; I am treated as the vilest of mankind; I am in the most deplorable indigence."

So he died—a man who would have given France an empire. One wonders if during his last wretched moments he ever bestowed a thought on La Bourdonnais whom he had sent to a similar end.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW BENGAL WAS WON

THE curtain has fallen upon the Deccan. The campaigns and conspiracies of the south are shut for a time from our view, and history directs our eyes northwards to Bengal. Through this Eden of the East the mighty Ganges flows before emptying itself by its hundred mouths into the sea. The most splendid cities of India stand upon its banks. The most holy shrines of the people line its shores. Happy are they who can bathe in its sacred waters, for their sins will be washed away. Happier still are they to whom it is given to die and be burned beside its placid stream; Hindú cannot end his days in better wise.

Beside one of the many mouths rises a rich and prosperous town. Viewing it with reverted eye, we behold its streets thronged with a gaily-clad, multi-coloured population. We see the bazaars busy with traders bartering the costly silks and spices of the Orient for the variegated products of the West. We perceive the river crowded with stately vessels bringing cargoes from far-away lands to this great mart of the eastern world. The Union Jack, hanging limp

and motionless in the noonday heat, betokens the city's nationality. For this is Calcutta, the seat of the English Presidency in Bengal: Calcutta, founded upon the mud-banks of the Húglí in 1686 and now become a flourishing and important settlement.

It is 1756, and a spirit of unrest is in the air. A new ruler has succeeded to the Viceroyship of Bengal, and apprehensions are rife. For it is no far-seeing statesman, no wise man of affairs, that sways the sceptre, but a spoiled, vicious, degenerate youth of twenty years. Siráj-ud-Daulá had been brought up in luxury. Nothing that the noble infant desired was withheld from him. Every taste—no matter how depraved—was pandered to; every whim gratified. It was one of his whims to hate the English. He was not clever enough to see the great benefits they had brought to his country by trade. He saw only that they were rich and that they would make fair game for plunder. He was annoyed also at the fortifications they had raised at Calcutta, and he thirsted to sweep the insolent strangers into the sea from whence they came.

Siráj-ud-Daulá lacked many virtues, but few vices, and among the latter greed held a prominent place. Robbery and extortion were the pastimes of an idle hour. It is easy to imagine the young tyrant's rage when he learned that a rich merchant he had marked down for plunder had taken refuge at Calcutta. How dared the English stand between the Viceroy and his lawful prey! He fumed with fury and vexation. The obsequious courtiers added

fuel to the flames of his wrath by the stories they told—richly garnished and highly coloured as became an eastern tale—of the perfidy and villainy of Englishmen. Had they not stored away hoards of treasure at Calcutta, had they not built forts and defences to protect it, had they not broken the Viceroy's laws and flouted his ambassadors; were they not, in short, in every way worthy of death? Siráj-ud-Daulá's eyes glistened when they spoke to him of the treasure; he assembled a mighty army and rushed furiously upon the Presidency.

One can picture the feelings of the poor inhabitants of Calcutta when they learned that a savage and revengeful prince was already on the way to destroy them. Unlike the Europeans of Madras and Fort St. David, they knew little of warfare. Never before had they been called upon to defend themselves, and now, when the hour of their trial was near, they found themselves entirely without means of resistance. Their fortifications were rotten with age, their guns dismantled, their ammunition perilously short. It was the old, old story of negligent authorities and neglected warnings. They had lived so long in peace that they had almost forgotten the possibility of warfare.

With what terrible anxiety was the arrival of the enemy awaited! Roger Drake, the Governor, called many meetings of the Council, and the situation was anxiously discussed. But the citizens lacked a leader to tell them what to do, and their discussions were full of bickering and wrangling. "Barricade the streets," cried one; "Concentrate in the fort," sug-

gested another; "Take to the ships," added a third. A Clive might have saved Calcutta, but the hero of Arcot was far away. Drake was ill-suited for the responsible situation he held; had he been a strong and capable man there might have been no tragedy of the "Black Hole" to record.

On June 16 scouts brought in news that Sirâj-ud-Daulá's troops were near at hand. The effect was to cause a panic in the town, for until the enemy were actually outside the gates, the British did not begin to realise the peril of their position. They thought that the Viceroy was merely "bluffing," and that he would not really dare to attack them. Now all was confusion and alarm. The native inhabitants fled in terror into the country. The white women, who, while their men-folk squabbled, had been labouring with patient courage to make cartridges for the cannon, were hastily put aboard some of the shipping in the river. Two members of Council volunteered to accompany them—ostensibly to see to their safety! "Our Colonel and Lieutenant-Colonel of militia," sneered a spectator, "preferred entering the list among the number of women rather than defend the Company's and their own property."[1]

Worse was to follow—an incident so extraordinary as to make us wonder whether we are really writing of Englishmen. It is charitable to suppose that the days of anxious suspense had so wrought upon their nerves that they did not realise what they were doing. The Governor and chief civil and military officers deliberately abandoned the fort and—escap-

[1] Busteed's *Echoes from Old Calcutta.*

ing the musket shots which the enraged civilians fired after them—took refuge with the women on the river! Then anchors were weighed and sail hoisted, and the fleet moved slowly down stream until they were out of reach of the enemy's guns.

Roger Drake stood on the deck of the ship which had borne him to safety, and gazed backwards toward the city he had betrayed. It was night, and the flames from the burning houses lit up the sky with a fierce glare. What pictures must have arisen in his mind of the despair and wrath of his imprisoned comrades as they learned that their Governor had forsaken them. Morning broke, and he heard the loud roaring of the guns as the enemy renewed the cannonade. He beheld the colours fluttering from the fortress, showing that the garrison still maintained a stubborn fight. Then their tokens of distress caught his eye—their frantic signals for the ships to return and rescue them. It might be supposed that the Governor by this time bitterly regretted his cowardly impulse, and that he would seek to do all in his power to retrieve his name from ignominy. It would have been a simple matter to sail up the river upon the flood-tide. It would have been easy, even then, to take off every one of the garrison, and, under the very eyes of the enemy, to sail away to safety. Yet, incredible as it may seem, although the fort held out for two days after the Governor's departure, Roger Drake did none of these things.

The command of the one hundred and seventy-three Europeans left in the fort fell upon a civilian

named Holwell. But brave and capable as he was, he could not lead his comrades to victory. That was now impossible. Already the enemy were swarming over the parapets and planting their flags upon the walls. Mad with despair a number of the garrison had broken into the liquor-store and made themselves helplessly drunk with the ardent spirits. Holwell saw that further resistance was useless, and delivered up his sword to the young Viceroy.

Siráj - ud - Daulá fussed and fretted when the British leader was brought before him. "Why had they dared to defend their town against his mighty army? Why had Holwell not run away with his Governor? Where was the treasure that the English had been so carefully preserving?" Such were a few of the questions that fell from his querulous lips. Holwell explained that there was no treasure. "No treasure!" cried the Viceroy incredulously. "But I *know* there is treasure. Take care how you attempt to deceive me!" When he learned that the Englishman really spoke the truth, his chagrin was immense. He waved Holwell from his presence in disgust.

It was six o'clock in the evening of June 20 when the captors took possession of the fort. The prisoners, one hundred and forty - six in number, crouched together on the verandah. Many were wounded; all were in a state of utter exhaustion. Over them stood a swarthy guard, lighted torches and naked scimitars gleaming in their hands. To the right and the left of them the factory buildings were blazing fiercely; and as the flames crept nearer

and nearer the prisoners were seized with panic, thinking their deaths were intended by fire and suffocation. Native officers bearing flaring torches approached and entered the adjoining chambers; they were seeking a place to house their captives for the night. Presently they found a tiny cell, about eighteen feet long by fourteen broad, lighted and ventilated by two small barred openings, called by courtesy windows. This was the place where it was the custom to confine refractory soldiers. They named it the "Black Hole," for even to pass a single night in it unfettered and alone was considered an experience never to be forgotten.

Into this gloomy apartment the prisoners were driven at the point of the sword. They entered in an agitated torrent, impelling one another forward like the waves of the sea. It was not until they were all inside and the doors clanged after them that they realised where they were. Then what a terrible rush was there to the windows to obtain air; what frantic appeals to the guards to slay them outright rather than leave them to a night of lingering agony! It was no use; nothing could be done without the order of the Nabob, and the Nabob was asleep!

The story of that ghastly night reads like a canto out of Dante's *Inferno*; there is no need to recount it here in any detail. Those who do not know India cannot in any degree imagine the dead stifling heat of a summer's night when the very birds drop to the ground panting with open beaks for breath. It is bad enough in lofty halls, cooled by waving fans and punkahs. What it must have been in that tiny cell,

crowded to its utmost capacity and ventilated almost not at all, baffles the comprehension.

The prisoners went mad with agony and despair. They fought with each other, and struggled desperately for places at the windows. In their delirious frenzy they called upon their gaolers to fire among them through the barred openings; but the guards scoffed and jeered at their wretched captives, mocking their tortures by handing in scanty supplies of water, and holding up lights to the bars the better to enjoy their agonies. By degrees the tumult died away. The despairing cries of the living were succeeded by the moans of the dying, and even these were at last hushed into silence. Dawn broke, and the native guards flung wide the doors of the tiny cell. A pile of corpses confronted them. When these had been cleared away, twenty-three ghastly-looking figures tottered out into the light of day. Amongst them was one woman, a Mrs. Carey, who survived the horrors of that awful night by nearly forty-five years. The remainder of the one hundred and forty-six prisoners had succumbed to the tortures of thirst and suffocation!

Siráj-ud-Daulá expressed neither pity nor regret when he heard of his unhappy captives' fate. It was not altogether his fault, for he had merely given orders that they should be locked up somewhere safely for the night. Blundering officers had converted this simple order into a dreadful tragedy. Yet the officers went without blame, and the English without sympathy; for to Siráj-ud-Daulá nothing more serious had happened than that the world had

been rather unexpectedly relieved of a number of obstinate and rebellious Englishmen. And in the Viceroy's opinion this was not a circumstance which necessitated a very profuse shedding of tears.

Holwell, one of the survivors, who was brought before him, was treated to another violent torrent of abuse for there being so little money in the treasury. All Europeans were commanded to leave the town before sunset under pain of having their noses and ears cut off. This was followed up by an edict expelling all the British from Bengal, and utterly forbidding them ever again to dwell within its precincts. Calcutta received a new name to commemorate its purging from the infidels. "Henceforth," quoth the Nabob, "it should be called Allingore, 'the port of God.'" Then to the accompaniment of wild, barbaric music, and the fierce banging of drums, the Viceroy stepped into his gaily decorated state barge, and made a triumphal exit from the newly-conquered city.

To Siráj-ud-Daulá the capture of Calcutta and subsequent expulsion of the British from Bengal was a great and glorious achievement unequalled since the days of Timour, the mighty conqueror, who in the fourteenth century had swayed half Asia with a sceptre of blood and iron. His nominal master at Delhi received letters wherein the warlike deeds of his faithful Viceroy were set forth in pompous language and much picturesque embellishment. It is possible that the puppet Emperor was not a little surprised to learn that he possessed in the ruler of Behar, Orissa, and Bengal a subject whose martial

genius was comparable only with that of the greatest names in history!

A few months passed. Siráj-ud-Daulá found to his dismay that his vast revenues were steadily diminishing. It was mortifying to learn, as he did through his ministers, that this was due to the expulsion of the English, who had brought great prosperity to the country by their trade; but the Viceroy loved riches even more than he hated the English, and he began to meditate the advisability of letting them return to their ruined factories under certain severe restrictions. That they would attempt to recover their possessions by force he never for a moment dreamed, for Siráj-ud-Daulá's lively contempt for Europeans was stimulated by his firm belief that there were not ten thousand persons in all Europe. You may judge of his wrath and fury when he heard that a British force was marching rapidly northwards to avenge their murdered countrymen. His whole army was forthwith ordered to assemble at Murshidábád, the capital of his dominions, for the purpose of resisting the daring strangers.

It was from Madras that the avenging army came. The stout settlers at Fort St. George had been greatly moved when the story of the grim tragedy enacted at Calcutta reached their ears, and fierce and bitter were the imprecations they hurled at the bloodthirsty ruler of Bengal.

Their first thought was, not unnaturally, of vengeance, and within forty-eight hours of the receipt of the news it had been resolved that an

army should be sent northwards to bring the haughty Viceroy to his senses. Clive had only just returned to India, and was fresh from his adventure with Angria the Pirate; and it was to him that the leadership of the land forces was entrusted. The naval armament was under the command of Admiral Watson.

It was not until December that the squadron reached Bengal, and sailing up the river, came abreast of the Fort Baj-Baj. Inside this stronghold was Monichund, whom Siráj-ud-Daulá had appointed Governor of Calcutta, with nearly four thousand men. The guns from the ship were soon in action, and till night fell a heavy bombardment was kept up. Clive had slipped ashore with five hundred men to cut off the garrison's retreat should they attempt to escape. Through swampy and difficult country this little force picked its way, until at length reaching the desired position in the rear of the fort, a halt was called, and the wearied soldiers flung themselves headlong down to sleep. Monichund's spies, who had been tracking the British down all during their long march of sixteen hours, beheld them sink into slumber, with never a sentinel posted to keep a look-out or to sound the alarm, and creeping noiselessly back to the fort they told their master what they had seen.

Within an hour the whole army of Monichund had surrounded the sleeping soldiers and seized their unprotected guns. Still they slumbered on, until a volley of matchlock balls and arrows aroused them to a sense of their peril. Thanks to his brilliant

carelessness, Clive had been in many a tight corner before, and on each occasion had come off with flying colours. This was no exception to the rule. The enemy were driven from their position, and the lost guns recaptured. At the end of half an hour's stiff fighting, during which the British lost seventeen men, killed and wounded, a bullet passed in perilously close proximity to Monichund's turban, which circumstance so astonished that gallant commander, that he deemed it high time to turn tail and disappear from the scene. The retreat of the leader was, of course, followed by that of his army, and Clive had the satisfaction of beholding a force which outnumbered his own by eight to one fleeing in disorderly array towards the fort.

Meanwhile a small body of sailors had been landed from the ships to assist Clive. One of these, a man named Strahan, had been imbibing more grog than was good for the maintenance of his mental equilibrium. His footsteps, too, were decidedly erratic, and, as a consequence, he got separated from his companions, and went stumbling about by himself. Presently he found himself outside the fort. The guns from the ships had made several breaches, and through one of these the sailor managed to climb. He immediately found himself in the midst of the garrison. An ordinary man might have felt somewhat disconcerted at suddenly finding himself face to face with a few thousand relentless foes; but it was otherwise with Strahan. Instead of retiring discreetly by the way he had come, he blazed away at the astonished garrison with his pistol, and

then, drawing his cutlass, slashed vigorously about him. "Hooray!" he bawled, "I've captured the fort!" And so he had! for the enemy, thinking their stronghold had been taken by surprise, scattered in all directions. When, attracted by the strange noises they heard proceeding from the direction of the fort, the rest of the contingent arrived upon the scene they found the place evacuated, and their intoxicated comrade in joyful possession of the field!

The valiant Strahan was ordered up next day for punishment. "Well," he exclaimed indignantly, "if a flogging's to be the upshot, it's no me that'll be takin' onny more forts for ye!" And there are no records in history to show he failed to keep his word.

It was a curious predicament which confronted Clive when he had recaptured Calcutta, and vindicated the honour of the British flag. With Siráj-ud-Daulá, who one minute would breathe forth fire and slaughter against all Englishmen, and the next write the most abject letters of submission, a sort of peace had been patched up. But Clive knew that he could place no reliance in the word of the Viceroy, for had he not heard of his secret intrigues with the French, and the rich presents he had offered to their famous general Bussy to induce him to drive the English from Bengal? On the principle that "thrice-armed is he who gets his blow in first," Clive resolved to attack the French before they had time to attack him. Their settlement at Chandranagar was vigorously besieged both by water and land, and although the

garrison defended themselves bravely, it was not long before they were obliged to capitulate.

Clive was now able to turn his whole attention towards the fickle Viceroy, whose huge army and vast resources entitled him to no small amount of respectful attention. But Siráj-ud-Daulá's end was at hand. The canker-worm of discontent had eaten deeply into the hearts of his subjects. Nobles and peasants, merchants and soldiers, all were disgusted with this wayward, dissolute, and vain-glorious prince, all were groaning beneath the burden of his rule. There were whisperings and mutterings in the Nabob's court, sly looks and secret signals were exchanged between apparently faithful and obsequious courtiers. A great conspiracy was on foot to oust the Nabob from his throne, and to raise up Mír Jafar, chief of his army, in his place.

The conspirators unfolded their plan to the British, and begged their assistance. There was much hesitation at Calcutta about having anything to do with the plot; but Clive rejoiced at the opportunity of getting rid of the Viceroy, and it was his firmness that bore down all opposition. "Tell Mír Jafar," said he, "to fear nothing. I will join him with five thousand men who never turned their backs. Assure him I will march night and day to his assistance, and stand by him as long as I have a man left."

The plot progressed apace; when just at the last moment a circumstance arose which threatened to bring death upon all those concerned in it. One of the parties to the scheme was a rich, cunning, and

unscrupulous Hindú named Omichund. He had been at Calcutta when the Viceroy captured the city, and had sustained severe losses. For these the English had promised him liberal compensation. But this was not enough to satisfy his avaricious spirit. He now came forward and claimed three hundred thousand pounds as the price of his silence; if this were not paid the whole conspiracy should be at once revealed.

Clive determined to fight the wily Bengalee with his own weapons. Knavery, he thought, should be defeated by artifice. Omichund was promised all he asked. But Omichund was not so simple as to be satisfied with promises alone. He wished to see a separate clause included in the treaty between the English and the conspirators embodying his own demands. Clive prepared two treaties, one on white paper and the other on red. The white treaty was the genuine one; the red treaty, a spurious document, contained the obnoxious clause. All the contracting parties signed the sham treaty except Admiral Watson, whose conscience would not permit him to be party to such deception. This was a serious difficulty, for Omichund would at once have noticed the absence of such an important signature. So Admiral Watson's name was (with the Admiral's knowledge) added by Mr. Lushington, and the Hindú's eyes lit up with joy as he thought of the wealth he was about to acquire.

All this time, it may be explained, the Viceroy had remained inactive, his suspicions being lulled by the "soothing" letters which Clive from time to time

had addressed to him. One morning he received a rude shock. A courier brought him a missive in which the English commander struck a deeper and a sterner note. Instead of the usual honeyed phrases and flattering protestations there were bitter reproaches and abrupt commands. The Viceroy was invited to choose between submission to the commands of the British or instant war. He chose war.

Near the mango groves of Plassey Clive lay encamped with his tiny force. There were only three thousand men all told, and of these scarcely a third were white. Between them and the Viceroy's vast army of fifty thousand foot and twenty thousand horse rolled the river Húglí. Clive had grave cause for anxiety, for Mír Jafar, in whom he had trusted implicitly, seemed about to play him false. He had agreed to march with his whole force to the assistance of the British and effect a junction with them before the battle; but the days went by and no Mír Jafar appeared, only half-hearted and evasive letters. It seemed as though the arch-conspirator's fears had over-reached his ambitions.

It was a momentous question that Clive had to decide. Should he cross the river with his handful of men and put all to the hazard—staking dearly-won victory against utter annihilation? It was an enormous risk and the chances of success seemed very small. Clive called a council of war—his first and last—and himself voted for retreat. The majority of the officers agreed with him. When the meeting was over Clive strolled apart and, sitting beneath a mango tree, spent an hour in anxious thought.

When he returned to his tent his mind was fully made up; he gave the order for advance.

Clive slept but little the night before the battle. One can well understand his restlessness when so much depended on the action he had taken. The fate of India hung on the morrow's contest. All through the long hours of darkness the sound of drums and cymbals arose from the enemy's encampment. Siráj-ud-Daulá was spending as sleepless a night as his opponent. The nearness of the crisis appalled him. His mind was filled with wild doubts and horrible imaginings, and he sat alone in his tent a prey to gloomy thoughts.

At break of dawn there was a rustle and stir in the Viceroy's camp; great preparation was being made for the coming conflict. Clive, watching them through his telescope, beheld a vast kaleidoscope of brilliant colours, a mighty army clad in flowing draperies and armed with weapons of picturesque and semi-barbaric pattern. They carried spears and swords, daggers and rockets; some had ancient matchlocks, beautifully inlaid, but of little real use. Stretching into the remote distance were line upon line of glittering cavalry, their brass-orbed shields and tasselled lances flashing in the morning sun, while stationed here and there were snow-white oxen, of beautiful and graceful build, which drew behind them fifty great pieces of cannon. These were mounted on cumbrous platforms six feet high and manned by forty French officers and deserters.

With a great flourish of trumpets this vast force moved slowly into the open plain and took up

position in battle array. All the pomp and circumstance of eastern warfare stood matched against a few brave hearts.

The heavy roar of the Viceroy's artillery announced that the battle had begun. The cannonade proved so destructive that Clive ordered his men to take shelter in a mango grove. This movement was greeted by the enemy with exultant yells; they thought the Company's troops were retreating. Fiercer and fiercer became the attack, thicker and thicker the hail of shell which tore through the grove. But the missiles passed over the heads of the English and did little harm, while from their concealed position Clive's gunners were able to rake the closely-packed masses of the enemy with terrible effect. The Viceroy's only faithful general was swept from his horse by a cannon ball. They bore his broken body into the royal tent, and the brave warrior expired before his master's eyes. The terrors of despair were upon Siráj-ud-Daulá. He cast his turban before Mír Jafar and prayed him to avenge the fallen general's fate. Bowing low to hide the traitor's smile, Mír Jafar suggested a retreat to the entrenchments. "Stay!" exclaimed another officer indignantly, "to do what you say would be madness, and fatal to us all!" The wretched Nabob, torn with doubts and frantic with fear, placed all reliance on the chief of his army. He gave the order for retreat.

Clive, watching the huge army opposed to them, saw it suddenly break into two portions. To his unbounded astonishment and delight one of these began to beat a hurried retreat, the other remained

stationary. Instantly he recognised the position of affairs. Mír Jafar had drawn off his wing of the army; it was the Viceroy's force retreating. Clive felt that the moment for advance had come. The enemy's lines were carried; their mighty host was soon in full retreat. Like a mountain avalanche sweeping all before it, these unruly hordes fled in panic from the field. The few Frenchmen who tried gallantly to rally them were carried away in that mad rush. The British pressed on in hot pursuit. On the swiftest dromedary he possessed the vanquished prince rode terror-stricken across the plains, nor paused to draw rein until the great gates of his capital had clanged noisily behind him.

A few days later Clive stood in the Viceroy's palace at Murshidábád, an actor in a solemn pageant. It was the installation of Mír Jafar to the Nabobship of Bengal. To him came Omichund, smiles on his lips and flattering phrases on his tongue. He was awaiting his promised reward. Clive thought it time to undeceive the crafty Bengalee. "Omichund," said he, "the red paper is a trick; you are to have nothing." The Hindú turned pale, staggered, and fell fainting to the floor. When he recovered consciousness it was found that the shock had unhinged his mind. He died an imbecile eighteen months later. For his unhappy fate it is difficult to feel much pity. He would not have scrupled to sacrifice any number of victims upon the altar of his greed. That his schemes should have been thwarted and his cunning overreached is surely a matter for deep and profound thankfulness.

Clive was taken into the treasure-house of the Nabob. On either side of him were heaped ingots of gold and silver. Coins of every country were piled ceiling high. Diamonds and rubies glittered on every hand. He was invited to help himself to what he would. He contented himself with about a quarter of a million sterling. Years afterwards, when he was charged before the House of Commons with over-greed, the founder of our Indian Empire exclaimed indignantly, "When I recollect entering the Nabob's treasury at Murshidábád, with heaps of gold and silver to the right and left, and these crowned with jewels, by God! at this moment do I stand astonished at my own moderation."

A few days after Mír Jafar's triumphal entry into the capital news came to hand of the capture of Siráj-ud-Daulá. The wretched prince, who had fled secretly from his palace as soon as he had heard of his enemy's approach, was found skulking in a garden, where his boatmen, exhausted by rowing, had been compelled to land him. By a curious irony of fate his capturer was a fakir, whose ears had been cut off some thirteen months before by the young Viceroy's orders. From him no mercy was to be expected. With every mark of insult and ignominy the wretched prisoner was dragged back to the capital, and hustled like a common felon into Mír Jafar's presence.

In the palace in which he had once reigned supreme Siráj-ud-Daulá flung himself weeping at the feet of his conqueror. Wildly he besought that his life should be spared.

Mír Jafar himself was inclined to mercy, but

Meerum his son, a callous young brute of sixteen, insisted on his instant execution. Siráj-ud-Daulá was led away into a distant dungeon. It was after midnight, but for the wretched captive there was to be no sleep that night, save the one from which there is no awakening. Presently came the jingle of weapons and the heavy tramp of feet along the passage. Then the door was thrown violently open, and armed ruffians crowded into the cell. Guessing their dreadful purpose, the ex-Viceroy burst into an agony of lamentation ; but, recovering himself, prayed that he might be allowed to make his ablutions and say his prayers. His executioners were in no mood for delay. Seizing a pot of water that stood near they threw it over their victim's head ; poignards and swords completed the deadly work.

Next day the mangled remains were drawn through the city, and exposed to the gaze of the populace. With awe and consternation was this grim procession beheld, but there was no tumult or disorder. So perished Siráj-ud-Daulá in the twentieth year of his age. Few who have died so young have left behind them such a record of villainy.

And that is how Britain became the dominant power in India's richest province.

CHAPTER IX

UNSETTLED TIMES

That the French were playing a losing game there could be no manner of doubt. The genius of Dupleix no longer availed them; and although the wise and valiant Marquis de Bussy did much to strengthen his countrymen's power in the Deccan, he—as the great arch-schemer before him—was fated to be superseded by another. That other was Count Arthur de Lally, Baron de Tollendal. An Irishman by birth, a too fond allegiance to the banished House of Stuart had driven his family to seek refuge at the French Court. The youthful exile took service in the far-famed Irish Brigade. At nineteen he commanded a company. At twenty-five, for his successful execution of a delicate mission, he was rewarded with a colonelcy. The young officer, with his handsome face and gallant bearing, won great favour from King Louis. It was not long before he became a person of great influence at Court; and when the crisis in the East became acute, it was he who was chosen to restore to their former proud position the wavering fortunes of the French. Thus at the age of sixty-five we find him styled Lieutenant-General

of the East. Supreme command over all the French troops in India was his, and strictly was he charged by his royal master to plant the flag of the lilies supreme in the peninsula.

Advancing years had dimmed nothing of the general's fire and prowess. Towards England he bore a bitter hatred—the hatred that an exile feels for the power which has robbed him of the land of his birth. Fierce, impetuous, and headstrong was the Compte de Lally, and it was not long before the rumblings of discontent were heard amongst his men. They did not like his imperious commands; they grumbled openly at his passion for hard work. His Hindú allies liked him still less, for Lally in his ignorance of native ways had made their high-caste natives work like galley-slaves. He had forced their sacred Brahmins to become mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. He had desecrated their idols, and blown their priests from the mouths of his guns. Little wonder then if the name of Frenchman grew by degrees to stink in the native nostrils.

To the bold leader, accustomed to command the finest troops in France, his new task was a heart-breaking one. The ignorance and incompetence of his officers aroused him to fierce anger. The obstinacy of the Council at Pondicherry caused him to choke with rage and indignation. "Let them delay in sending me supplies and money," he cried once in a frenzy of impatience, "and I will harness them to waggons and flog them like mules!" The Irish soldiers alone proved worthy of their general. They fought with all the gallantry of their

race, and performed prodigies of valour. Lally himself was always seen sword in hand where danger was greatest. But for all his bravery he could not turn the balance in favour of the French.

It was at Wandewash that the final blow was struck. On its blood-stained field the French power in India received its death-thrust. Long and bitter had been the struggle for supremacy, much blood had been shed in the contest; but this fateful February morning of the year 1760 saw the question decided once and for all.

Outside the battered fortress of Wandewash, Lally and his men lay encamped. The place had been taken from them by the English, and the French were making preparation to win it back. The general took council with his engineers. How anxiously was the situation discussed; how cunningly their plans of attack evolved! Alas! for their hopes. Even as they sat debating, spies came running in with ominous tidings. A British army was fast approaching them—at their head the valiant and renowned Eyre Coote! Lally, too proud to retreat, prepared to give the newcomers battle. Nearly equal in point of numbers, the two armies stood grimly fronting one another across the plain. The French leader commenced the fight in person, by sweeping impetuously upon the British ranks at the head of his European cavalry. But the Gallic horsemen could not face the terrific fusilade that greeted them; they wavered, wheeled round, and galloped back to safety. The wrathful Lally had no option but to follow. Fierce and keen grew the conflict, but

the Irish exile was betrayed by his own men. His Maráthá cavalry, three thousand strong, stubbornly refused to advance a step. The other portions of his army offered little or no resistance. Lally's own corps, indeed, covered itself with glory, but this small handful of Irishmen was left to do battle against the whole British force. Attacked from all sides at once and struggling against overwhelming odds, they fought till the field was soaked with their blood; and the tiny remnant of heroes who still survived that awful onslaught were swept away by the sheer weight of opposing numbers.

Thus was the French power in India broken for ever; thus Lally fell. Pondicherry, in spite of the Irish general's brilliant and heroic defence, was the next to yield,—not, however, before it was necessary; for the French soldiers, maddened by their leader's long resistance, were clamouring to serve him as they had already served their commissary—by cutting him to pieces!

Whenever a great disaster overtakes a nation some one must be held responsible—some one must be the unhappy butt of a people's unreasoning anger. Not always does the blame fall on the right shoulders, but so long as it falls somewhere, and falls heavily, the populace's smouldering resentment is appeased. It was only natural that the French Court should select Lally as the scapegoat for their failure in the East. On his return to France he was seized and thrown into a dungeon of the Bastille, there to be barbarously and infamously tortured again and again. At the end of four years he was taken before a bench

of judges, stripped of the ribands and crosses his bravery had won him, and subjected to a rigid examination.

"Is this," exclaimed the white-haired veteran, "is this France's reward for forty years of faithful service?"

It was only part of it. The full measure of her favours was only apparent two days later when, gagged and bound and thrown on a hurdle, Count de Lally, Irish gentleman and soldier of fortune, was borne to the place of his death. It was the dusk of early dawn. Few were bestirring. Hurriedly, almost privately, were the preparations for the execution made. An axe glittered in the air, a dull thud was followed by a headsman's raucous cry, and a brave warrior had gone beyond the reach of earthly tribunals.

La Bourdonnais, Dupleix, Lally—three great men who had spent their lives in the service of their country. See how their country rewarded them!

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Let us turn our eyes once again to Bengal, so recently the scene of British triumph. It is not, alas! with pride that we can look back upon the subsequent doings of our countrymen. A month after his brilliant victory of Plassey, Clive had sailed for England, there to be received with honour and acclamation. The long roll of Irish peers was enriched by an illustrious name; the "daring in war" became the Baron of Plassey. But with Clive no longer at the head of affairs, the government of Bengal became a government of tyranny and

oppression. A horrible mania swept over the Council—the mania of wanting to get rich quickly. The Company's servants were miserably underpaid. It was easy for an unscrupulous man to become wealthy at the expenses of the shrinking natives. We may grieve over but we cannot wholly wonder at the shocking abuse of power and authority which now became universal in Bengal.

So bad, indeed, grew the state of affairs that the Directors decided to send out Clive to India for the third time. Full powers were accorded him to straighten out the tangled reins of government. Once again the great statesman traversed the heaving waste of waters. It must have been a sore disappointment to him to see his life's work brought to nought by the cupidity of those placed in authority, but not until he actually arrived in Calcutta did he realise to the full the true position of affairs. Then, indeed, his grief and indignation overflowed. "Alas!" ran a despairing letter to a friend, "how is the English name sunk! I could not avoid paying the tribute of a few tears to the departed and lost fame of the British nation—irrecoverably so, I fear."

It was a dramatic meeting when Clive intimated to the Council his intentions to carry out drastic and far-reaching reforms. His speech was listened to in gloomy silence. When it was over one of the members, whose ill-deeds were notorious, made some show of opposition. The new Governor turned on him with flashing eyes. "Do you dare to dispute our authority?" he demanded, haughtily. Staggered by the question, the man collapsed sulkily into his seat,

while the faces of those assembled round the board grew long and pale.

No one knew better than Clive the extreme difficulty of his task. To evolve order out of the chaos which prevailed seemed almost hopeless, but the iron courage and inflexible will overbore all opposition. When eighteen months later Clive left India for the last time, he had laid the coping stone to his great and brilliant work in India. The private trading of the Company's servants was rigorously suppressed, the receiving of native bribes forbidden, and the whole government placed upon a sounder and firmer basis. It may be imagined that Clive's rigid ideas of right and wrong were by no means pleasing to his fellow-countrymen in Bengal; but like wise men they submitted to the inevitable.

Here is an instance of Clive's method of dealing with difficult problems. A special allowance made after Plassey to the English force was ordered by the Directors to be discontinued. The officers determined to resist tooth and nail this curtailment of what they deemed their rights. A secret league was formed; two hundred officers bound themselves under an oath of secrecy to resign their commissions on June 1. This they thought would surely induce the zealous reformer to give way; they little knew Clive if they imagined he would yield to bluff or intimidation.

The plot leaked out. On April 28 it was brought to the ears of Clive who, realising the danger, determined to suppress the conspiracy at all hazards. "I must see the bayonets levelled at my throat," he cried, "before I can be induced to give way!"

Greatly to their surprise, the officers found their resignations immediately accepted. This they had by no means reckoned on, and it did not please them to see a number of commissions given to deserving non-commissioned officers and men. Their consternation was still greater when they beheld their leaders arrested and shipped off to England. The rest were sent down to Calcutta pending inquiries. What might have been a formidable mutiny was thus quickly nipped in the bud. One can imagine what might have happened had a less courageous man been at the head of affairs.

But Clive was never vindictive. Although the ringleaders met with severe punishment, the younger officers were treated with great leniency and kindness. Many who regretted their hasty resignations were reinstated in the service. It was reported to Clive that two of the conspirators had openly threatened to assassinate him. "Bah!" was his reply, "the officers are Englishmen, not assassins."

Before passing on to other affairs, let us consider for a moment the great work Clive had done in Bengal. How unenviable was the lot of the British settlers in 1757. Their factories at Calcutta were a heap of smoking ruins; they themselves were exiles who trembled at the shadow of a tyrant's rod. Ruin, and worse, stared them in the face. Ten years later we find these same outcasts sitting in the seats of government. The Company had become sovereign rulers over twenty-five millions of people, with revenues totalling nearly half that of England. More than this, the foundations of a great Empire

had been well and truly laid—an Empire capable of infinite expansion. Never forget that this wonderful change in affairs was mainly owing to the valour and foresight of one man—Clive "the Avenger," "the Daring in War."

Alas, for the fair hopes of the Company. Three years after Clive left India, Bengal was struggling in the grip of famine. A third of its inhabitants perished of want, trade became disorganised, revenues remained uncollected. It is difficult to imagine the fearful sufferings of the people during this terrible time. "Tender and delicate women," we are told, "whose veils had never been lifted before the public gaze came forth from those inner chambers in which Eastern jealousy had kept watch over their beauty, and threw themselves before the passers-by, imploring a handful of rice for their children. The Húglí every day rolled down thousands of corpses close to the porticoes and gardens of the English conquerors, and the very streets of Calcutta were blocked up by the dying and the dead." Do we not know what acute distress prevails when a famine visits India nowadays? What it must have been when relief funds were unknown, railways unheard of, and government in the hands of a trading company whose chief and ultimate aim was the amassing of wealth, passes comprehension.

As a result of this calamity, the prosperity of the Company melted away. By 1773 they were virtually bankrupt, and had to appeal to the government for aid. This led to a Parliamentary inquiry into Indian affairs. It led also to a bitter and envenomed attack upon the administration of Clive.

Like all great men, the founder of our Indian Empire had many enemies, who by foul-mouthed abuse sought to stir up public feeling against him. The disastrous famine and the tales of native misery which began to reach England were powerful weapons in their hands. Clive had acquired a considerable fortune; he owned estates in several counties, his household vied with royalty in extravagant splendour, his attire was costly and magnificent. It was rumoured that his riches were the result of extortion and oppression, that his gold pieces were stained with the blood of the innocent. No tale was too wild or too improbable to be believed. In the eyes of many he became a veritable monster of iniquity who had battened upon the sufferings of a downtrodden nation.

In due course the matter came before Parliament. An exciting debate took place, and heated speeches were delivered upon both sides of the House. Many searching criticisms were levelled against Clive, and to these the great statesman made a spirited and dignified reply. Happily his listeners were for the most part sane and sober men, and the vote of censure was ultimately rejected without a division. Furthermore, it was affirmed unanimously "that Robert, Lord Clive, did at the same time render great and meritorious services to his country." Not among the least of Clive's victories can the result of this debate be accounted.

But in spite of his triumphant acquittal, the indignity of his treatment rankled deeply in Clive's heart. The ordeal through which he had passed

proved too great for an already shattered constitution. A prey to fits of melancholy and a victim of intense physical suffering, the last days of the great warrior-statesman were shrouded with gloom. Of his tragic end it is impossible to write even now without emotion. On November 22, 1774, he died by his own hand. This time the pistol did not refuse to do its deadly office. Clive had accomplished his life's work—who shall deny that he was entitled to his rest?

The year before Clive's death saw an important change in the administration of India. The grave scandals which the Parliamentary inquiry had brought to light had convinced the government that some drastic step was necessary. The Company had become far too powerful; they ruled over vast provinces with sovereign rights, they intrigued with kings, and made and unmade princes as best suited the policy of the moment. And all this on their own authority, without any reference to the Crown. It was essential that the government should have some voice in the matter. So in 1773 Lord North introduced his famous Regulating Bill which, in spite of fierce and bitter opposition on the part of the Directors, duly passed into law. By this Act it was decreed that the Governor-General in India should be nominated by Parliament; he was to hold office for five years, and to have a casting vote in a new Council of four members. In addition to this a Supreme Court of Justice was established for Calcutta, with a Lord Chief Justice and four other judges who, with the aid

of a British jury, were empowered to try all offences.

But let us turn from the uninviting atmosphere of English political squabbles to observe how things had prospered in the east. The mantle of Clive had fallen upon worthy shoulders. While the Empire-founder was eating out his heart in his stately Berkeley Square mansion, another was ably carrying on the great work he had begun. Warren Hastings had commenced life as a writer in the Company's service. In due time he became a member of Council at Calcutta; but while others around him abandoned themselves to extortion and wrong-doing, young Hastings steered a difficult but unsullied course. It was on Clive's advice the Company appointed him Governor of Bengal in 1772. They could not have made a better choice.

The name of Warren Hastings will be for ever associated with what has been called the Rohilla Bargain—one of the few stains upon an otherwise brilliant career. To the north-east of Delhi, in the fertile valley of the Ramgunga, lived a brave and warlike people. Of fair complexion and stalwart build, they were worthy descendants of the fierce adventurers who had flocked through the northern passes a century before to lay their swords at the feet of the Moghul rulers, and to be rewarded by the grant of a large tract of rich and well-watered pasture-land. When the last great Emperor had sunk into his grave and anarchy and confusion reigned throughout the land, this colony of Afghan warriors became practically an independent state.

No longer did they thirst for bloodshed, but happy and contented in their new-found home, pursued the golden arts of peace.

So might they have continued to this day but for the jealousy and greed of their powerful neighbour Oudh. Shujá-ud-Daulá, Nabob of this great principality, beheld the growing prosperity of the Rohillas with distrust, and longed to add their fertile acres to his own dominions. Alone he could not hope to do it—that he knew well; there was but one army in India capable of reducing so courageous a race. Would the English come to his assistance?

It may well be that Hastings shrank from the idea of exterminating a harmless and peaceable people. But his position was a difficult one. From the Directors at home the cry for money came with a wearisome monotony. "Govern the people well," cried they, "but at any rate send us money." It did not occur to them that these commands were contradictory, that the only possible way of raising money was by taxation, and that the natives were already groaning under more than they could bear. They were very honest and worthy gentlemen, no doubt; but they did not know the condition of the country, and little realised the dilemma in which their constant demands placed the new Governor of Bengal.

This, then, was the situation which Hastings had to face. On the one hand were the clamouring Directors; on the other a plausible and powerful Nabob with an alleged grievance and with whom it was essential to keep on the best of terms. "Lend me your army," said in effect this budding Alexander,

"and I will pay you four hundred thousand pounds sterling and defray the cost of the troops whilst in my service." It was an offer that at such a time could not be lightly disregarded. The bargain was struck.

Great was the consternation of the poor Rohillas when they heard how they were thus summarily to be disposed of. In vain they pleaded with their inexorable foes, offering a large ransom to be allowed to remain in peace. It was no use. Their valiant chieftain realised the extremity in which they were placed and resolved not to give in without a struggle. The finest fighting blood in India coursed through the veins of his people; and it was determined to defend their lives and their liberties until there should be no man left able to wield a sword.

Northwards marched a British brigade. On the 23rd of April 1774 a great battle took place. The Rohillas, forty thousand strong, fought with the utmost valour, but they could not hope to prevail against the highly trained troops opposed to them. "The enemy," remarked Colonel Champion who commanded on that occasion, "gave proof of a good share of military knowledge." It was otherwise with the Nabob of Oudh. Whilst the battle fiercely raged, he kept himself and his troops at a discreet distance. The British were left to do all the work themselves. It was not long, however, before the flower of the Rohilla army had fallen; two thousand of their dead encumbered the field of conflict, and a fierce bayonet charge put their

wavering ranks to flight. Then it was the doughty Nabob let loose his rabble hordes to plunder and destroy. The white troops looked on grimly whilst their allies looted the Rohilla encampment, but they were powerless to interfere. "We have had all the honour of the day," was Champion's wrathful exclamation, "and these banditti the profit."

Alas, for the fair valley of Rohilkhand. Alas, for the hundred thousand homeless wanderers who fled from the fire and the sword of the savage Nabob to pestilential and fever-laden jungles—the haunt of the tiger and the jackal. It was surely an ill day for England when her troops consented to become the paid mercenaries of a relentless despot!

Not many months after this, a ship put out from England carrying on board three of the members of Council appointed by North's Regulating Act. It is possible that had Hastings known the trouble certain of these gentlemen were to cause him he would have wished them cast away in some remote and desolate island, there to remain until he had accomplished the great task which lay before him. But that was not to be.

CHAPTER X

GOVERNOR *VERSUS* COUNCIL

THE 19th of October 1774 is a memorable date in Indian annals. On that day, to the thundering salute of seventeen guns, an English ship sailed up the Húglí and deposited on the landing-stage at Calcutta several very eminent persons: none other, indeed, than the new judges, whom Parliament, in its wisdom, had chosen to purify the founts of eastern justice, and three of the new Councillors. The fourth, Barwell by name, was already in Bengal and was an able and experienced servant of the Company.

Unfortunately for themselves — more unfortunately for Hastings—the newcomers entertained very exalted opinions of their office. Of India, its peoples, customs, manners, and conditions, they knew nothing. This, however, did not prevent them from forming strong views upon the subject. It was, thought they, a country given over to corruption, oppression, and vice; to them belonged the noble task of setting things to rights. Wherefore, it was agreed, Warren Hastings, in allowing them a salute of only seventeen guns, had been guilty of a grave discourtesy. Surely the benevolent saviours of a downtrodden race were

entitled to at least twenty-one! Crimson with wrath the little group strode majestically down the gangway. As they stepped on shore an inquisitive crowd quickly flocked around them, and for the first time the new dignitaries beheld the people they were called upon to govern. Can you not imagine the admixture of compassion and contempt with which they regarded them? One of the judges, noticing a peculiarity in native garb, turned to a colleague in horror and bewilderment. "How terrible," he gasped, "is the plight of this unhappy people! Do you not actually see them walking about bare-legged and bare-footed? Our court, brother, was certainly not established before its time. I trust we shall not have been six months in the country before these victims of oppression are comfortably provided with shoes and stockings!"

On the day following this auspicious event, Hastings dissolved by proclamation the existing government, and took his seat at the head of the Council Board, the first Governor-General of India.

It was a difficult, well-nigh an impossible, task that lay before him. The three new Councillors were his avowed opponents; they had pledged themselves to carry out crude and ill-considered reforms; they constituted a majority of the Board. Before very long the Governor-General found himself a mere cipher. The control of affairs had passed out of his hands into those of his subordinates. Rumours of his impending fall swiftly flew from mouth to mouth. Few there were who did not regard him as a ruined man. A weaker than he would have thrown

up the unequal struggle in despair; Hastings was built of sterner stuff.

Never, perhaps, has the warfare of words been more bitterly, more determinedly waged than in this little Council chamber at Calcutta. Let us try to conjure up the scene and consider for a moment what manner of men these were who took part in such rancorous controversy.

Pale of countenance, thoughtful, even mild of expression, yet grim and indomitable of purpose, sits Warren Hastings. A deep scholar, a profound thinker, steeped to the finger-tips in the knowledge of the east and its ways, he eyes his newly-arrived colleagues with little favour. What can they know, thinks he, of the vast problems constantly engaging his attention? On one side is Barwell, his friend and ally; on the other the triumphant majority consisting of Philip Francis, General Clavering, and Colonel Monson.

A study of the notorious correspondence known as the *Letters of Junius* will yield a very fair idea of what Philip Francis, their reputed author, was like. Macaulay has summed up his character admirably well. "He was," wrote the great essayist, "clearly a man not destitute of real patriotism and magnanimity, a man whose vices were not of a sordid kind. But he must also have been a man in the highest degree arrogant and insolent; a man prone to malevolence, and prone to the error of mistaking his malevolence for public virtue." If this indeed be a true picture of the man who now became Hastings's inveterate foe, their fierce and

headstrong rivalry, culminating in the historic duel, is easy to understand.

To trace their quarrel from its source it is necessary to go back a few years. When Lord Clive left India for the last time he had established in Bengal a system of double government by which, although the British were the real masters, the administration of the country was left in the hands of native ministers. There was also a Nabob, an infant son of the egregious Mír Jafar, who lived in regal magnificence and was treated with all courtesy and respect; but since he possessed no more authority in affairs of state than the meanest of his household, he does not figure very prominently in the story. At the time of its conception Clive's scheme was hailed as a masterpiece of ingenuity. It served its immediate purpose well enough, but after the lapse of a few years the system became unworkable. The Company made up their mind to abolish it. They decided to take the entire responsibilities of government upon themselves, and on Hastings fell the task of carrying out the revolution.

In the fair city of Murshidábád, Muhammad Raza Khán, the minister whom Clive had chosen to rule Bengal, lived in lordly state. Great, indeed, was his power; for to no one but the British was he responsible for his doings. Other wealthy natives, who had hoped that Clive's choice would fall on them, regarded his position with covetous eyes. But by none was he more envied than by the Brahmin Nanda Kumár, a great noble who added to his immense riches and vast influence a whole-souled

capacity for intrigue and mendacity which could be excelled by no man. For was he not a Bengalee —that ever servile race, who make up for lack of courage and manliness by an overwhelming talent for deceit, falsehood, and chicanery? His agents were everywhere; even in London the Directors felt his power. For in the dark recesses of Nanda Kumár's mind lurked the design to oust his rival from his high position, and over the fallen body to grasp the reins of state. Unwearyingly, pitilessly, he pursued his deep-laid scheme. By every means an unscrupulous ingenuity could devise the authority of the minister was weakened and undermined. It was not only a duel between individuals; it was the rivalry of race and of creed. Raza Khán was a Persian and a Mussulman; his opponent a Hindú of the purest caste

Of this silent struggle for place Warren Hastings was an interested spectator. To him the Brahmin's mind was like a shallow stream, the pebbly bed of which is plainly visible beneath the waters; to others, probably, it was as a still unfathomable lake, whose depths merely mirrored the faces of those who looked therein. For to very few men is it given to read the mind of a high-born Hindú priest. It is a literature no alphabet will teach; an art to which no path of learning leads. You may well imagine that Hastings, with his knowledge of Nanda Kumár's character, was very loath to entrust him with a position of responsibility. Nevertheless, when it came to a question of deposing Raza Khán, he saw that the Brahmin's cupidity might be turned to good account.

His vindictive accusations, however lightly based, would serve as a pretext for the minister's arrest. The truth of them could be thrashed out afterwards.

One night Raza Khán awoke to find his palace surrounded by British troops. Calmly and with dignity he submitted to arrest. The fatalism of the east forbade any emotional display. Nor was he the only one whom Hastings found it necessary to remove. The government of Behar had been entrusted to a valiant chief named Shitáb Rái. A brave man this, who had served the English well and faithfully, and had shed his life's blood on their behalf. It may seem to us hard that his valour and fidelity should be rewarded with deposition and arrest; but under the circumstances Hastings had no alternative course. Before a British government could be set up, native rule had to come to an end, and with the rule, the rulers.

After a weary wait of many months, the fallen ministers were brought face to face with their accusers. Against Shitáb Rái no charges could be sustained; a brief hearing ended in his honourable acquittal. But his lofty and intrepid spirit had received a grievous wound, which not even the humble apology tendered, nor the marks of honour showered on him, could ever wholly salve. A short while after his release he died—many say of a broken heart.

With Muhammad Raza Khán it was otherwise. With eyes glinting with evil passions and countenance aglow with malicious triumph, Nanda Kumár poured forth a hot torrent of eloquent abuse and

poisonous accusation against his old-time rival. His lean body shook with hatred as he dilated on the unhappy Persian's sins. Charges so serious, backed with such rancour and skill, were not easily got rid of; Raza Khán had some difficulty in establishing his innocence. In the end it was decided that the charges had not been made out, and the ex-minister received his freedom.

Already the Brahmin beheld himself raised to exalted rank. Not for nothing had been his scheming and toiling, his perversion and perjury! His enemy, although at liberty, was no longer in power; for the vacant throne he himself was the only possible claimant. How he must have rejoiced at the fair prospect which lay before him! Yet in his cunning he had overreached himself. The post of Minister was abolished, and Nanda Kumár found himself no better off than before! It is easy to picture his malignant rage when he discovered how he had been duped and made the unconscious tool of the Governor of Bengal? Henceforward Warren Hastings became the butt of his most deadly malice.

Thus it was that Philip Francis found a powerful ally. Both were working for the Governor's downfall; the Englishman, no doubt, with creditable, if sadly mistaken, motives, the Hindú craving only for revenge. What Nanda Kumár could do in the case of Muhammad Raza Khán, he could do with no less skill in that of Warren Hastings. He set to work and drew up an extraordinary document, wherein were tabulated charges of the most serious nature against the Governor-General. This literary

curiosity he presented with great solemnity to his friend Francis. Here was a weapon indeed! It would be a slippery fish, thought they, who should elude such a finely-drawn network of circumstantial lies.

Armed with this ingenious concoction, Philip Francis betook himself to the Council Chamber, and proceeded, with much gusto, to read it aloud to the assembled members. More furiously than ever broke out the discordant elements of party strife. White with indignation, Hastings brushed aside the charges, and denounced the Brahmin in terms of bitter contempt. Nanda Kumár wished to be admitted to the Chamber in support of his allegations. Such a suggestion the Governor refused for a moment to entertain. The Council, he declared, had no right to sit in judgment on their President; they could be neither fair nor impartial in their ruling. In addition to which, it would be beneath his dignity to be confronted by such a creature as Nanda Kumár.

By virtue of their majority, Francis and his friends carried their point: they insisted that the Brahmin should be heard. Warren Hastings rose from the table in disgust, declared the meeting at an end, and left the room, followed by Barwell, his sole supporter. The others, thus left to their own devices, voted themselves a Council, heard Nanda Kumár at length, and affirmed to their own satisfaction that his absurd charges had been fully made out. Solemnly was it decided that Hastings had received bribes to the extent of nearly forty thousand pounds—a sum that, in the opinion of the truculent trio, he ought immediately to refund.

Once again the astute Bengalee had triumphed. He became the most courted man in the province. To his daily receptions flocked the wealthiest of his countrymen, eager—after the manner of their kind—to assist him in the fabrication of evidence even more preposterous than the first. But it was a dangerous thing to arouse the enmity of a man so determined, so powerful, as Warren Hastings. This the Brahmin was shortly to learn to his cost.

It will be remembered that in Bengal there was a power quite independent of the Council—a power over which Francis and his colleagues had no control. This was the newly established Supreme Court of Justice. By a curious coincidence, Sir Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice, happened to be an old school-fellow of Hastings. Whether he now came to the rescue of the Governor-General in order to curry favour with his official superior, or because he was anxious to do his erstwhile class-mate a good turn, it is difficult to say. But from the character of the man, the former would seem to be the more probable motive.

With dramatic suddenness were the tables turned. Nanda Kumár's glory came to a sudden and an ignominious end. Seized in the law's relentless clutches, the luckless Brahmin, to the consternation of himself, the fury of Francis, and the unbounded astonishment of everybody else, was swiftly and forcibly deposited between the four walls of the Calcutta state gaol. The real reason for his arrest was, of course, obvious; the actual charge was that he had forged a bond some six years previously.

Now began a bitter duel between the Judges and the Council—or, to be more exact, that portion of it represented by the triple alliance. The choler of the latter knew no bounds. That their favourite protégé should be treated with such scant ceremony bordered on the scandalous, it was nothing short of a personal insult to themselves. They demanded the prisoner's instant release on bail. Curtly the Judges refused to deliver up their prey. Their imperious messages being unavailing, the irate Councillors consoled themselves by heaping honours on Nanda Kumár's family. When in due time the captive was brought to trial, it was discovered that his prosecutor was an unassuming native. After a lengthy and impartial hearing, a jury of Englishmen brought in a verdict of guilty. Upon Sir Elijah Impey devolved the duty of passing sentence.

In the eyes of the Brahmin's countrymen forgery was by no means a serious crime. That Nanda Kumár was guilty in this particular instance of counterfeiting a bond there can be little doubt; it is highly probable that in the course of an eventful career he had forged dozens. But under English law the offence was much graver; the punishment was death. Elijah Impey sentenced the prisoner to be hanged.

With horror and dismay was this—to them—utterly barbarous and incomprehensible sentence received by the Hindús. By their laws no Brahmin could be put to death. Such an act would be an impious desecration of their sacred priesthood. The Muhammadans, on the other hand, were openly

exultant; they rejoiced to see the enemy of their beloved Raza Khán brought to an untimely end. No one, however, dreamed for a moment that the sentence would be carried out; yet the days passed and no reprieve came; and the captive in his cell grew pale and anxious, waiting for the tidings that should tell him that he was free. He waited in vain. In spite of the frantic efforts of Francis, the denunciations of Monson, and the threats of Clavering (who declared that Nanda Kumár should be rescued even though it were at the foot of the gallows), preparations for the execution went quietly and steadily forward.

It is curious with what stoical indifference an Oriental can meet death. The reason for such sublime courage on the part of men, who in other things are often the most despicable cowards, must surely be found in their religion. For the Hindú has a wonderful creed. Through many millions, it may be, of previous existences he has woven his "Karma"—his mantle of Fate. Why should he fear death?—he who has died countless times in the remote past, who will live and die again, and yet again—what man knoweth how often?—in the distant future. For by such steps only is the mystic Wheel of Life completed, the blessed Nirvana reached, and the eternal oneness with the Universe attained.

With stately dignity Nanda Kumár mounted the scaffold. Calmly he gave the signal, the trap dropped, and motionless as a bronze idol the white-robed figure of the Brahmin hung from the fatal

noose. With loud cries of woe and horror the assembled Hindús rushed headlong from the scene, to cleanse themselves from this polluting spectacle in the sacred waters of the Húglí. They had received a lesson they were not likely to forget. Never again, during Hastings' long administration, did the natives presume to bring accusations against him. Truly, as Francis wrote, "after the death of Nuncomar, the Governor, I believe, is well assured that no man who regards his own safety will venture to stand forth as his accuser."

A dark day was now dawning for the British Empire. Heavy war-clouds had drifted across the sky. The American Colonies, rebellious and disloyal, had declared their independence, and fallen from Empire as a rotten branch from a tree. France, ever eager to take advantage of England's embarrassments, had declared war. The south of India was seething with unrest. Sivaji's Maráthás, grown into a mighty power, like a giant octopus, stretched forth colossal tentacles over all parts of the peninsula. Berar was theirs and the vast central provinces; Indore, Gwalior, and Baroda owned their sway. Even Delhi, the stately city of the Moghuls, had not escaped. The feeble descendant of Aurangzebe was a prisoner in his palace. But no longer were the Maráthás bound together under one head. Powerful chiefs had arisen amongst them and established themselves as rulers of separate states. Nominally, they belonged to one Empire, over which the heir of the house of Sivaji pretended to rule. In reality, however, the latter had little power. He

was but a puny princeling, and his chief minister, or Peshwá, guided the helm of state.

It so happened that Hastings found it necessary to embark on a war with the Maráthás. He was now supreme in the Council. The death of Monson had rendered the parties numerically equal; and the casting vote possessed by the Governor-General enabled him to command a majority. But deceived by the promises of Francis, who declared that he would do nothing to interfere with the conduct of the Maráthá war, Hastings allowed Barwell to depart for England. It was a disastrous step. No sooner had the Governor's ally sailed than Francis's behaviour became more arrogant and offensive than ever.

Under this fresh provocation Hastings' sorely tried patience gave way. He accused Francis of being without honour in both public and private life. "You leave me," answered his adversary, "no alternative but to demand personal satisfaction for the affronts you have offered me."

At half past five in the morning of August 17, 1780, the two men set out with their seconds for the place of the duel. With some difficulty a suitable site was found. Weapons were loaded, and the combatants took their stand at fourteen paces distant. It was agreed that both should fire together as nearly as could be. Thrice Francis raised his pistol and took careful aim at his great opponent; the third time he pressed the trigger, but the powder was damp and the pistol missed fire. With all chivalry Hastings lowered his weapon and waited for the other to reload. Once again with faces grim and

stern the two men confronted each other. Francis fired first, and missed; a second later the report of Hastings' pistol rang out. His aim was surer. The other reeled, staggered, and fell heavily, muttering thickly that he was a dead man. "Good God, I hope not!" cried the alarmed Governor. Quickly a sheet was brought which Hastings bound tenderly around his adversary's wound, and the stricken man was carried from the field to a neighbouring house.

Fortunately the wound was not mortal. It served, however, to cure Francis of his affection for the Council Chamber at Calcutta, and shortly afterwards he returned to England, there to carry on with unceasing activity his campaign against the Governor-General.

Duel between Warren Hastings and Philip Francis

CHAPTER XI

HOW HASTINGS RAISED MONEY FOR THE WARS

From this time onward Warren Hastings had no more trouble with unruly Councillors. But there were other and even more serious difficulties to contend with. Funds were getting low; money was urgently required. Happily the Governor was possessed of a fertile and inventive mind. On more than one occasion the depleted government coffers had been filled through his ingenuity; now he spread his map before him and sought long and anxiously for some hidden stream of wealth to tap.

On the banks of the mighty Ganges a forest of domes and cupolas, tapering spires, and lofty pinnacles proclaims afar the existence of a noble town. It is indeed one of the proudest cities of Asia, rich and populous, famed for its wonderful silks, its crowded bazaars and market-places, its schools of learning, and its many shrines and temples. But not on these things alone depends its high renown. It has other and far greater claims upon the love and veneration of every pious Hindú throughout the globe. For this is none other than Benares, the great Sacred City of India, resorted to

annually by innumerable pilgrims and devotees of the Sakyamunic faith, many of whom come from remote provinces for no other purpose than to die in a spot so sanctified. It was on this city that the roving eye of Warren Hastings chanced finally to rest.

Over Benares and the surrounding district ruled a Hindú prince named Chait Singh. He was a tributary of the British; annually large sums of money found their way from the princely treasure-chamber into the Company's cash-box at Calcutta. Warren Hastings raised the amount of tribute by £50,000, and for two years this extra sum was unwillingly paid. The third time it was asked for the Rajah began to wriggle. He sent Hastings a present of £20,000 to induce him to forgo his demands. But the Governor-General had a soul above bribery. The £20,000 was paid into the Company's treasury, and the disappointed Chait Singh received a polite hint to pay up cheerfully, or to put up with the consequences. Still the Rajah haggled. Hastings determined to take strong measures. It had come to light that the ruler of Benares had been engaged in treasonable correspondence with England's enemies. It was desirable to teach him that the British were not to be trifled with. A fine of £10,000 was imposed for the delay, and the Rajah was furthermore commanded to raise a body of cavalry for the Company's service.

With this request Chait Singh was by no means anxious to comply. But to save further trouble he scoured the streets of his city for a thousand of its

choicest vagabonds. Half of these were mounted on the sorriest of steeds; the remainder were furnished with the most antiquated of matchlocks. From his palace windows the Rajah gleefully surveyed this unwarlike creation of his parsimonious soul. Was it not indeed a clever plan? Shortly afterwards Hastings received a bland message to the effect that the pick of the Rajah's army awaited the Governor-General's pleasure.

This generous offer was treated with disdain; the English Governor set out in person for the Sacred City. He was resolved to make Chait Singh pay dearly for his sins; and the threatened Prince paled in alarm when he heard of his coming. In a desperate effort to make amends he offered to pay the Company the sum of £200,000. Hastings replied that nothing less than half a million would be accepted. The Rajah was in despair, and rode forth in haste to greet his most unwelcome visitor.

Sixty miles from Benares the meeting took place. With the deepest humility Chait Singh removed his turban and placed it in the Governor's lap, an eastern symbol of the deepest submission and respect. But Hastings was not now to be conciliated with blandishments. With cold dignity he acknowledged these overtures and rode on towards his destination. On his arrival Chait Singh was taken severely to task; once again he shuffled, prevaricated, and made excuses. But the Governor-General was in no mood to traverse the tortuous paths of eastern diplomacy. He had not journeyed all the way from Calcutta to see a Rajah wriggle, no

matter how agile the performance. It was money he wanted, not pious protestations and empty promises. So serenely indifferent to the fact that he was accompanied only by a slender bodyguard of Sepoys, he caused the aggrieved prince to be arrested and placed in captivity.

That such an indignity should be put upon their sovereign aroused his loyal subjects to passionate anger. An immense multitude gathered round the palace. Ominous scowls were bent upon the daring strangers; swords glittered, and fierce imprecations arose on every side. The spark thus fanned became a furnace; the tumult developed into a massacre. Bravely the British officers strove to quell the uproar. One by one they fell, fighting grimly to the last, the victims of overwhelming odds. Many of the Sepoys shared their hapless fate. In the confusion which arose the Rajah's guards became neglectful of their charge, and a rope made of the knotted turbans of his attendants enabled the royal captive to lower himself from a window into a tiny boat, which bore him swiftly away to the opposite shore of the Ganges.

Through all this wild commotion Hastings sat calm and unperturbed. Although only a mere handful of men stood between him and the raging mob outside, no sign of fear disturbed his placid countenance. To the messages of apology and grief which came from the escaped Rajah he did not deign to reply. Quietly he busied himself writing despatches: one to his wife to assure her of his safety; another to an envoy engaged in delicate negotiations

with the Maráthás; others to commanders of British troops. But how were these missives to be sent? Who should bear them through the armed rabble even now clamouring around the building? Hastings thought of a happy expedient. It is the custom of natives of India to wear massive gold earrings. These are removed when travelling for fear of robbers, and to prevent the orifices from closing, quills or slender rolls of paper are inserted in their place. The brave messengers who volunteered the task carried the letters in their ears!

The news of the riot at Benares spread rapidly. Soon the whole province was aflame. The entire population took up arms to avenge the insult upon their ruler, and Rajah Chait Singh, who, after all, was only human, began hastily to reconsider his position. His attitude towards the British underwent a sudden change. Instead of humble supplication there was the pride of outraged dignity; tearful apologies gave way to arrogant demands and bombastic utterance. Matters were moving rapidly to a climax. To the neighbouring Rajahs Chait Singh issued a vigorous call to arms.

"My fields," he wrote, "are cultivated, my villages full of inhabitants, my country is a garden, and my subjects are happy. My capital is the resort of the principal merchants of India, from the security I have given to property. The treasures from the Maráthás, the Jauts, the Sikhs, and the most distants parts of India are deposited here. The widows and orphans convey here their property, and reside without fear of rapacity or avarice. The traveller, from one end of

my country to the other, lays down his burden and sleeps in security; but look at the provinces of the Company. There, famine and misery stalk hand in hand through uncultivated fields and deserted villages. There you meet with nothing but aged men, who are unable to transport themselves away, or robbers watching to waylay the helpless. . . . Not content with my treasures, they have thirsted after my honour also. They have demanded a sum of me which it is out of my power to pay. They want the plunder of my country; they demand my fort, the deposit of my honour and my family, whom they would turn helpless into the world. Arm yourselves, my friends, let us join to repel these rapacious strangers. It is the cause of all. When your honour is lost, of what value is life? Come, my friends, and join me! These plunderers have not yet so reduced me but I have support and provision for your troops."

This stirring message, none the less noteworthy because so much of it was true, produced a great effect. Very soon the Rajah had an immense army at his disposal. But—none too soon—British troops were hastening to the scene, eager to rescue their beloved Governor from his perilous position. For all his fine words, Chait Singh proved himself no hero when it came to the pinch. Hardly had the enemy's guns boomed out their first message of defiance than the Rajah and his mighty hordes fled in confusion from the field. Rapidly were the forts and fastnesses of his province stormed. Soon all the country was in the hands of the British, and its luckless ruler fled never to return.

Thus was another fair and fertile domain added to the Company's possessions, and with it a sum of £200,000 a year in revenue. Hastings had set out to obtain funds, and his purpose had been fulfilled. But it was a sore disappointment to him that the Rajah's treasure, with which he had confidently hoped to fill the government exchequer, fell into the hands of the looting soldiery. No ready money had as yet been actually obtained, and funds were urgently required. From what quarter were they to come?

The cowardly Nabob of Oudh, who had plundered so cruelly the fair country of the Rohillas, was dead. His son and successor was, if possible, even less of a man than his father. Indolent and profligate, a lover of dissipation and vice, he had allowed the sceptre wielded by his sires to slip gradually from his feeble fingers into those of the Company. Neighbouring princes beheld with scorn this puny weakling. Dearly would they have liked to loose their armed hordes upon his province and seize his rich acres for themselves. Enemies there were also much nearer his throne than these. Many of his subjects were tired of his vicious rule and would cordially have welcomed another claimant to the crown. But in Oudh there was a force which frightened these would-be vultures from their prey—a force feared and respected through all the land of India. For well the Nabob knew that his safety was dependent entirely on the Company; yearly he paid and maintained an English brigade to defend his kingdom from aggressors.

Times, however, grew hard. Princely extravagance had swallowed up the rich revenues of the

country, and the cost of maintaining the English soldiers began to weigh heavily, and yet more heavily, upon the royal purse. At length the Nabob declared that he could bear the strain no longer. The engagement he had entered into must be revoked.

But a bargain once made is not so easily broken. More especially is this so when the other party to it happens to hold the whip hand, and Warren Hastings was far from inclined to relinquish an arrangement at once so convenient and profitable. Shaking the dust of the Sacred City from his feet, he now set out for Lucknow, the beautiful capital of the Nabob's dominions. With true eastern courtesy the impoverished prince set out to meet his guest; in a tiny fortress on the beetling rock of Chunar the two exchanged the ceremonious greetings of the Orient.

It was the object of Hastings to obtain more money; it was that of the Nabob to pay less. Clearly the situation was impossible. One or other, it would seem, was bound to yield. In this case, however, there was a third alternative: if the money could be obtained from some one else, both parties surely would be satisfied!

The defunct Nabob, besides leaving behind him at his death a degenerate son and a colossal fortune, bade also a tender adieu to his mother and his wife. These ladies, known as the Begums or Princesses of Oudh, were fabulously rich. The vast treasure of the Nabob was in their hands—rumour estimated it at no less than three million pounds sterling—while an enormous rent-roll brought annually a princely income to their coffers. The Company, thought Hastings,

needed this money far more urgently than they. But what pretext was there for depriving them of it?

It must be borne in mind that the Begums had little real right to their great riches. The treasure left by the late Nabob properly belonged to the state; the Begums had claimed it by virtue of a will which they never produced and which, it is probable, never existed. More than once the young prince had tried to wrest the treasure from his aged relatives, but without success. The two old ladies had applied to the British government for protection and the Council had upheld their very doubtful rights. Now, however, things were different. It was whispered that the Oudh Begums had been concerned in the recent uprising at Benares. An English officer, who had long been in the service of the Nabob, came forward and swore an affidavit to this effect. It was difficult for Warren Hastings—even had he desired to do so—to resist the conclusion that the princesses had been in active conspiracy against the British. This, added to the distressing lack of funds to carry on the wars in the Deccan,—funds which were absolutely essential if England were to remain supreme in the peninsula,—decided him in his course of action. He put his hand to an agreement whereby the Begums were to be deprived of their property which was to be handed over to the British in payment of the Nabob's debts. But the matter was not so simple as it appeared.

Back in his own country and freed from the glamour of the Governor's commanding personality, the Nabob became chicken-hearted. Long he delayed

in carrying out his share of the bargain, and Hastings had to send many sharp and stern epistles before a move was made. To confiscate the lands of the Begums was a comparatively easy task; to seize their treasure was another matter altogether. Frantically the two old ladies clung to their hoarded millions. Threats and persuasion were alike useless. There was nothing for it but to use force. The palace in which the Begums lived—the "Beautiful Residence" as it was called—was surrounded by armed guards. While the princesses fled shrieking to an inner room, their two confidential ministers, who had charge of the household, were seized and placed under arrest. What followed is not pleasant reading to lovers of British honour: it is only fair to Hastings to say that he himself was quite unaware of the distressing details of the crime that was now enacted.

It was actually resolved to work upon the feelings of the Begums by ill-treating these two old men. They were imprisoned, kept without food, and their tottering limbs loaded with needless irons. To their credit, be it said, they still remained true to their trust; not even the fiendish ingenuity of eastern tortures would induce them to yield the whereabouts of the treasure. The princesses themselves were in not much better plight. Their palace was blockaded, and food allowed to enter only in such scanty quantities that they and their attendants were in danger of being starved to death. For many months this state of affairs continued, until at length the miserable Begums were induced to part with over a

million pounds. Then, and not till then, the two old servants were released from their dismal cell. It is said that the scene that occurred when these faithful ministers staggered out into the fresh air of freedom was touching in the extreme. "I wish," wrote an officer who witnessed the liberation of the captives to Hastings, "you had been present at the enlargement of the prisoners, the quivering lips, with the tears of joy stealing down the poor men's cheeks, was a scene truly affecting. If the prayers of these poor men will avail, you will at the last trump be translated to the happiest regions in heaven!" It is easy to imagine the bitter smile with which the Governor read this last ingenuous sentence.

Although this affair of the Oudh Begums may appear to us harsh and unnecessarily severe, we must not be too hasty in apportioning blame. Remember that the money, to which the Begums clung so tenaciously, was never rightfully their own. Remember also the terrible predicament in which Warren Hastings was placed: wars threatening on every side, our Indian conquests in deadly peril of being lost, and an empty treasury. Never, during his long and honourable career, did Hastings act from selfish considerations; the safety of the Empire was his first care throughout, and this no other man could have preserved so well and so disinterestedly. It was a black period in English history. All over the world the mother-country had lost portions of her blood-bought empire. Only in India did she still remain serene and triumphant, and it was entirely owing to the genius and foresight of the Governor-

General that this was so. Warren Hastings' reign was now nearly over. But before we follow him over the water to England, let us briefly review the course events had taken in the Deccan. In that ever-shifting kaleidescope of warring powers, where Maráthás and Muhammadans and British engaged in ceaseless conflict, many strange happenings had occurred. Among the native chiefs a new leader had arisen, terrible in his might, who threatened to put all other rivals in the shade. This was the great Haidar Alí, Rajah of Mysore, the fiercest and most daring soldier of his time. With a huge army, backed by the strongest artillery then in India, commanded by over four hundred French and European officers, he rushed from his native highlands to scatter death and destruction among the peaceful villages of the lowland plain. Against Madras he marched, and the merchants of that ill-defended town wrung hopeless hands over their losses. In the night-time, looking out from the city walls, they could see for miles around the sky reddened with the flames of burning villages. A British army of nearly four thousand men was surrounded and destroyed, a few hundreds alone escaping to fret out their lives in the dungeons of Mysore. Among these wretched captives, who were chained together two by two in their dismal prison, was Sir David Baird, a Scottish officer, noted for his irascible temperament. "I am sorry," remarked, with Spartan calm, his aged mother on hearing of her son's sad fate, "I am sorry for the man who's chained to our Davie!"

It was now that the courage and skill of the Governor-General won their most notable victory. The weak and incapable Governor of Fort St. George was suspended; money and men were despatched hastily southwards. To gallant Eyre Coote was entrusted the command of the expedition. It was a difficult task that lay before him, for matters were looking woefully black for the British. Their Empire in Southern India was all but in ruins; many forts had fallen, and only a few strongholds were now left to them. The French were preparing a great expedition with which they hoped once again to make a bid for eastern supremacy. Fortunate, indeed, was it for England that in the life and death struggle now to be enacted they had a Governor-General so able and so courageous.

The campaign was rich in opportunity for deeds of desperate valour. But none distinguished themselves more in this respect than a young English officer named Lieutenant Flint. The native Governor of Wandewash lay under suspicion of treachery, he was justly suspected by the English of meditating the surrender of the fort to Haidar Alí. So it came about that a hundred men, with Flint at their head, were sent to take possession of the fort. As they approached the massive building, messengers from the treacherous Governor barred their path. "Come no farther," they cried, "another step and the guns from the fort will destroy you!"

"Tell your master," replied the young lieutenant, "that I am the bearer of a highly important letter from His Highness the Nabob. It is imperative that

I should deliver it into his hands alone. I pray, therefore, that I, with a few of my men, may be admitted into the fort for this purpose."

To this request the Governor refused at first to listen. Eventually, he consented to receive the letter in the space which lay between the outer and the inner barrier of the fort. Accompanied only by four faithful Sepoys, Lieutenant Flint went forward on his perilous venture. He found the Governor sitting cross-legged on a luxurious carpet. Around him stood his chief officers, while thirty swordsmen, glittering weapons in hand, acted as his personal guard. Farther behind a company of soldiers, fierce of aspect, with white teeth and gleaming eyes, bent suspicious glances upon the fearless strangers.

"Where is your letter?" demanded the Governor. The lieutenant was obliged to confess that he had not got one.

"But I have," said he, "the order of Sir Eyre Coote, who is acting in concert with the Nabob."

The Governor cared little for the orders of the British general; angrily he told the young officer to begone, and rose to depart into the fort. But before he could gain his feet, Lieutenant Flint had thrown himself forward and seized him by the throat; simultaneously the four Sepoys levelled their weapons at his breast.

"Raise a hand for rescue," cried the Englishman, "and you die."

At this moment the remainder of the British detachment rushed into the fort, and within a few minutes Wandewash was won.

Haidar Alí, to whom on this very day the place was to have been surrendered, strained every nerve to obtain possession of it. Bravely the lieutenant held out, but it was not until his last cartridge had been expended that the fort and its heroic defenders were relieved.

A few months previously another officer had covered himself with glory by wresting from the Maráthás the well-nigh impregnable fortress of Gwalior. From Bengal the valiant Captain Popham had set out on a perilous march through Central India. His success was phenomenal, and a series of brilliant military feats did much to restore the credit of British arms. But his crowning triumph was yet to come. The commencement of the rainy season found the intrepid officer encamped at the foot of this famous "Gibraltar of the East." It was indeed an imposing spectacle that met his eye. On the summit of a stupendous rock, scarped all around, the mighty fortress stood, its massive ramparts and Saracenic battlements and towers giving an impression of tremendous strength. To gain it by assault seemed hopeless in the extreme; even the doughty Eyre Coote had said that any such attempt would be an act of madness. But Popham had set this "glorious object," as he termed it, before him, and was resolved, come what may, to accomplish it.

For two months he lay about the fortress, maturing his bold plan with the utmost secrecy. At length, however, the fateful night arrived when he determined to put all to the hazard. With their feet wrapped in cotton, the storming party, led by

Captain Bruce, silently ascended to the base of the scarped rock. By means of scaling ladders they mounted the first defence, a solid wall of smooth rock, sixteen feet high. Then a steep ascent of forty feet was climbed, and a wall thirty feet in height loomed before them. With the aid of ropes this obstacle in its turn was successfully negotiated, and the heroic company found themselves standing within the precincts of the famous stronghold. Not long was their presence undiscovered, and musket shots and warlike cries speedily awoke the echoes of the night. But the garrison were unprepared, and their resistance soon gave way before the fierce onslaught of our soldiers. Ere the dawn of another day the Union Jack, proudly floating from the topmost turret of the castle, had proclaimed to the world a notable triumph of British arms.

In the south Sir Eyre Coote was conducting a vigorous campaign. But skilful general as he was, he allowed himself to be drawn into a very awkward trap. His small force of only eight thousand men, encamped on the sea coast at Cuddalore, found itself hemmed in between two powerful enemies. Behind them on the hills was the immense army of Mysore; on the sea lay anchored a squadron of French battleships. But for the cowardice of the French admiral matters might have gone very hard for the British. In vain Haidar Alí prayed the admiral to stand by and assist him; never before had there been such an opportunity of annihilating the British troops. For some inexplicable reason Count d'Orves refused to fight, and the angry

Rajah beheld the French ships sail slowly out of sight.

Haidar Alí had still much the better position. Yet his mighty hosts, outnumbering the British by twenty-five to one, were of no avail against the desperate courage of their adversaries. Amid the sand-heaps of Port-Novo, Eyre Coote won a glorious victory; and over ten thousand of the enemy were left lifeless on the field.

Happily, the end was near. Haidar Alí died shortly afterwards, with his dying breath entreating his son to make terms with the British, while the Peace of Versailles in 1783 brought to an end our warfare with the French.

Warren Hastings had accomplished his life's work—how well, let history testify! Alas, that all his noble efforts should have been so basely rewarded! We know the history of his impeachment by the Commons; and how, sacrificed by Pitt and maligned by Francis, he was made the butt for the greatest orators in England to hurl their bitterest and most impassioned rhetoric against. We know, too, how the famous trial dragged out a length of seven weary years before the end was reached, and the great Governor-General received his verdict of acquittal. There is no need to enter here into that sad and disgraceful episode. In spite of the ingratitude of his contemporaries, England to-day is proud to acclaim Warren Hastings among the greatest of her sons.

CHAPTER XII

OF MYSORE, MARÁTHÁS, AND MUTINY

It must not be thought that because the fierce old warrior Haidar Alí was in his grave, and peace had been declared with his successor, our trouble with the kingdom of Mysore was now ended. Far, indeed, was this from being the case. Tipú Sultán, the "Tiger of Mysore," upon whose swarthy brow now glittered the royal diadem, had inherited every whit the warlike spirit of his father. Towards his pale-faced conquerors—who came from over those seas which Haidar Alí had sorrowfully admitted he "could not dry up"—he bore a bitter and undying hatred. Woe betide any English prisoners who fell into his relentless clutches! If his royal sire had chastised them with whips, he assuredly lashed them with scorpions. An English general, who had been captured ere peace was declared, was murdered by having boiling lead poured down his throat; his unhappy wife went mad with horror on beholding the outrage. Other wretched captives were left to die in lingering agony, chained to the corpses of their friends. Some, we are told, had their throats cut slowly and by degrees; others, bound hand and foot,

had their jaws wrenched open to receive the poison which their tormentors poured gleefully down their throats. With such a monster as this upon the throne of Mysore it was not to be expected that the peace would prove of very long duration.

For several years waited Tipú, "the Tiger," ere he decided that the time had come to embark on another struggle with his foes. Then he made an artful attempt to win the favour of the French. Alone in his private closet, he and Bertrand de Molleville, the civil administrator of France in India, conferred anxiously together for many hours. Shortly afterwards this same Bertrand de Molleville sailed on a secret mission to the Court of King Louis; nor sailed he empty-handed, for in his baggage were divers gifts which the Sultán had reluctantly parted with, hoping thereby to gain the goodwill of the genial French monarch. Duly the ambassador arrived at Versailles. Before a brilliant court he opened his precious bales, and laughter lurked on the lips of the fair ladies and gay gallants when they beheld the Rajah's presents laid out to their view. Tipú Sultán had been none too generous in his offerings. For the king there were some gold gauze and crimson silk stuffs, together with an aigrette of bad diamonds—flat, yellow, and ill-set. The share that fell to the beautiful Marie Antoinette was even more niggardly; three bottles partially filled with essences, a box of perfumed powder-balls, some scented matches—and the tale was told.

"Aha!" laughed King Louis, "what can I do with all this trumpery? It seems only fit to dress

dolls! But you have little girls who may be pleased with such: give it all to them."

"But the diamonds, sire?" faltered the embarrassed Bertrand.

"Oh, they are mighty fine!" jeered the amused monarch. "Perhaps you would like them placed among the jewels of the crown? But you may take them too, and wear them in your hat if you like!"

But before Tipú had time to learn how fared his embassy to France, his fierce impatience had fanned the smouldering embers of hostility to flame. A native ally of the British, the Rajah of Travancore, was signalled out for attack, and Lord Cornwallis, the new Governor-General, wisely decided to declare war against the common enemy. It was Tipú's first object to break through the Lines of Travancore,—a double line of works consisting of a thick plantation supported by a rampart with bastions,—which defended that country from invasion; but in the attempt to do so his troops were hurled back with terrible slaughter, and even he himself had a narrow escape from being hacked to pieces. So enraged was the Sultán by this unexpected defeat that he swore by a mighty oath that he would never quit it until he had forced the Lines. Fortunate was it for us that he did so, for he was compelled to remain before them for three months, and thus gave us time to make preparations for the conflict.

The Governor-General, who took command in person, directed his first movement against the strong fort of Bangalore. Outside the massive gate which gave entrance to the stronghold a terrible struggle

took place. A hail of musket shot from some turrets on the wall littered the ground with dead and dying, and gallant Colonel Moorhouse, one of the most accomplished officers in India, fell with four mortal wounds. But undismayed by their comrades' fate the British charged again and again to the attack. At length the mighty gate was all but in pieces. A tiny officer named Lieutenant Aire wriggled a passage through it, sword in hand. "Bravo, Aire!" cried the jovial General Meadows. "Now, Whiskers," —this to the grenadiers,—"try if you can follow and support the little gentleman." Lusty cheers greeted the general's words, and the brave fellows rushed tumultuously through the opening. Ere long the fort was gained, and the daring venture was amply repaid by the vast quantities of ammunition and military stores which fell into the hands of the British—things of which they were sorely in need.

Great was Tipú's rage when he heard that his fort had fallen. The brilliant rapidity of the British movements reduced him to a kind of stupor; angry despair took possession of his soul. His revenge was cruel and horrible. Nineteen English boys were prisoners at Mysore. These the Sultán ordered to be brought into his presence. Unconscious of the doom in store for them, but guessing instinctively from the "Tiger's" ferocious aspect that something was amiss, the little lads huddled together before the throne. The Sultán gave a signal and two swarthy Abyssinian slaves pounced upon one of the trembling group. One ebony giant seized his head, the other his body, and these they twisted in opposite directions

until, by slow dislocation of the vertebræ, the child was killed. Each of the others shared the same fate, and not until nineteen small corpses strewed the floor of his apartment did Tipú Sultán consider that he had in any way wiped out the memory of his defeat.

The campaign against Mysore was fraught with great hardships to the British. Over wild mountain passes and through dense forests they had to force their way, often in sad distress for lack of provisions, and pestered at every step by the fierce troops of the implacable Sultán. Sometimes the enemy would loosen huge boulders of granite, and these, hurtling like an avalanche down the mountain side, would sweep many of our men away to instant death. Yet, in spite of all difficulties, they grimly persisted in the fight; fort after fort was taken, until at last Tipú found himself hemmed in on all sides in his inland capital at Seringapatam; while the hardy Maráthás, now allies of England, were pillaging and laying waste his dominions. On the 23rd of February 1793 Tipú called together a great council of all his nobles and officers, and it was reluctantly agreed to accept terms. By these the "Tiger" was compelled to surrender half his territories, pay a war indemnity of 3,300,000 rupees, release all his prisoners, and deliver up his two sons as hostages for the due observance of the treaty.

Three days later an excited crowd of soldiers and citizens looked down from the ramparts of Seringapatam upon a picturesque and touching ceremony. From the interior of the fort a loud fanfare of trumpets rang out, and the eager chatter

of the spectators was hushed to attentive silence. Then the massive gate rolled back, and out of the great archway emerged a small and pathetic procession. First came a number of Brahmins, stately and dignified in their spotless robes. Closely behind marched seven standard-bearers, their green banneroles fluttering in the breeze; these were followed by a hundred pikemen, whose weapons, inlaid with silver, glittered and shone in the brilliant sunshine. Then came into view two elephants, richly caparisoned, upon whose mighty backs in howdahs, richly chased with silver, sat the two young hostages. As they appeared the cannon of Seringapatam thundered forth a royal salute, while from the British lines boomed back an answering greeting. A squadron of horse and two hundred Sepoys brought up the rear.

Surrounded by his staff and colonels of regiments, Lord Cornwallis received the two children at the entrance of his tent. The elder was ten years of age, the younger only two; but for all their tender years the little princes comported themselves with grave politeness and attention. Sitting one on either side of Cornwallis, they were formally surrendered to the English by the principal minister of Tipú.

"These children," said he, lowly bowing, "were this morning the sons of my master, the Sultán; their situation is now changed, and they must look up to your Lordship as their father."

How strange it must have been to see the venerable Governor-General, veteran of a hundred fights, trying to win the confidences of his tiny hostages! One can picture the grim old soldier

as he lays aside for a moment the mantle of authority and assumes the rôle of father and protector; while his two young charges, clad in flowing robes of white muslin, crimson turbans, and strings of costly gems, gaze at him, fearless and wondering. Happily Lord Cornwallis knew the way to reach the hearts of children, and the two little princes were quickly reconciled to their lot. But alone on a solitary bastion of his capital the fierce Sultán of Mysore was shedding tears of bitter anguish over his captive sons; and as he gazed yearningly towards the British tents, which now sheltered the only beings his savage nature had ever learned to love, fresh schemes for future vengeance and terrible reprisals arose in his embittered and sorrow-stricken heart.

It was left to the Marquess Wellesley—he of the iron hand—to bring about the final downfall of Tipú. Once again the Mysore Sultán had been negotiating with the French, and the Governor of Mauritius had posted up proclamations on the walls of his capital calling for volunteers to assist the cause of Tipú. Even the great Napoleon, who was now shaking continents with the thunder of his armies, had addressed a letter to the "most magnificent Sultan, our greatest friend Tippoo Sahib," in which he expressed himself "full of the desire of relieving him from the iron yoke of England." The new Governor-General was not unaware of these amenities,—a copy of the Mauritius proclamation had indeed found its way on to his study table,—and he decided that the time had come once and for all to crush the power of Tipú.

But before taking any decisive action Lord Wellesley deemed it wise to try negotiations. The Sultán received these in frivolous mood; and when, in reply to one of his letters, the Governor-General was handed an evasive and delicately sarcastic epistle, alluding to himself as "the prince, in station like Jeemscheid, with angels as his guards, with troops numerous as the sun illuminating the world, the heaven of empire and dominion, the luminary giving splendour to the Universe, the firmament of glory and power, the sultan of the sea and the land, the king of Room (be his empire perpetual!)"—and more in the same strain—he came to the unavoidable conclusion that by stern measures alone would satisfaction be ever obtained.

On the 22nd February 1799 war was formally declared. Once again British troops marched towards Mysore. Slowly but surely was Tipú Sultán, stubbornly contesting every foot of the way, driven backwards towards his capital; ensconced therein, with his enemies all around him, he gave himself over to melancholy and gloom. "We have arrived at our last stage," said he to a council of his nobles; "what is your determination?" "To die along with you," came the loyal response. "So be it," said Tipú, and forthwith prepared for the worst.

Day after day, with dogged persistence, the guns kept pounding away at the mighty ramparts. By April 4 a breach had been made wide enough to admit our men. The following day was selected for the attack.

You will remember that among the wretched captives of Haidar Alí had been Sir David Baird. For four years he had endured unspeakable agonies in the dungeons of Mysore; then the treaty of Seringapatam gave him his release. He it was to whom was now allotted the honour of leading the storming party, and the memory of his awful experience must have filled his heart with a fierce determination to get even with his foes. "You must persevere to the last extremity," said General Harris, who was in command, thinking anxiously of the starving condition of his troops. "Success is necessary to our existence."

Breathless with excitement, the storming party crouched low in the trenches waiting the signal for attack. Rose at length the gaunt figure of Sir David, who, with sword waving above his head, shouted his encouragements to the expectant men. "Come, my brave fellows!" cried he in thrilling tones, "follow me, and prove yourselves worthy of the name of British soldiers."

Unmindful of the hail of bullets which came whizzing around and about them, the men charged gallantly to the attack. On they went, losing comrades at every stride, across the river, up the steep bank opposite, up at length to the very walls themselves. Instantly the breach became choked with struggling men—the red line of attackers striving to force their way to its summit—while the swarthy defenders battled desperately for life. From hand to hand passed the British colours, as each successive standard-bearer fell to rise no more; at length they

were seized by a Scottish sergeant named Grahame, who, fighting valiantly, succeeded in affixing them to the summit of the breach. "Huzza, success to 'Lieutenant' Grahame!" cried he, joyfully anticipating his promotion. At that moment a bullet struck him and he fell forward dead. But the breach was won! There was still a deep ditch to be crossed before the inner ramparts could be gained. On these were crowded the excited soldiery of Mysore, and in the midst, Tipú himself, fantastically attired, stood firing coolly at his advancing foes from guns which were hastily loaded and handed to him by his attendants. His courage availed him little. Soon staggering back,—the crimson stain on his white jacket showing where a bullet had found its mark,—he mounted his horse, and tried to make his way towards the palace. Once again he was wounded, and yet again; then his horse was shot under him, and he fell weak and dizzy to the ground. So he lay alone, the soldiers hurrying past him thinking only of their own safety and caring little for their master's hapless plight. At length came one more greedy than the rest. He espied the richly-jewelled belt of the fallen Sultán, and strove to wrest it from its place. Then the fierce spirit of the Tiger flickered up in one last despairing effort; drawing his sword he slashed blindly at the would-be robber. The same instant he fell back with a bullet through his brain. So perished the proud Sultán of Mysore! A few hours afterwards Colonel Arthur Wellesley, the future "Iron Duke," found the royal corpse, divested of jacket and turban, sword and belt,

beneath a ghastly heap of his dead and dying subjects.

The funeral of the dead Sultán was an impressive ceremony; it almost seemed as if the very elements had conspired to do honour to his obsequies. In the stately mausoleum of the Lál Bágh, by the side of his father Haidar Alí, the body of the slaughtered chieftain was reverently laid to rest. The heavy clouds, which had been gathering thickly overhead, gave an air of darkness and depression to the scene, and in their deep-toned mutterings and rumblings one might almost detect a voice of sorrow and despair. Then stepped forward the chief Kázi to perform the last solemn rites over the corpse, and as he did so the lowering storm broke forth in wild stupendous fury. The sad wailings of the mourners died away to silence, and frightened looks were turned heavenwards where crashed and thundered the devil's orchestra in its tribute to the dead. Out of the sable low-hanging clouds vivid streaks of lightning, writhing and twisting like fiery serpents, darted towards their prey. Terrified, the natives broke and ran, but many were stricken down, and rows of scorched and blackened victims bore witness to the storm-fiend's sacrifice to the memory of the terrible prince.

"Surely," said the people, "this is a sign that has come to us. No longer shall we be a free nation; for the rule of our Sultáns has passed away, and the power of the British is upon us."

The story of the Marquess of Wellesley's brilliant administration in India is essentially one of wars and

conquests. During the whole period he reigned as Governor-General, the iron hand of British rule was being surely and relentlessly extended in all parts of the peninsula. For a long while the Maráthás had been pursuing a similar policy. Upon the ruins of the old Moghul Empire they aimed at founding great and powerful Hindú kingdoms. Their efforts had met with phenomenal success, and the mighty chieftains of the Maráthá Confederacy were, without doubt, the greatest power in the land. It was inevitable that the two forces should clash. There was no room for rival competitors in the struggle for supremacy. One or the other had to yield. And thus it came about that August 3, 1803, saw the commencement of a memorable war.

On the famous field of Assaye General Arthur Wellesley, with four thousand five hundred men, found himself confronted by the two great Maráthá chieftains, Scindia of Gwalior and the Gaekwar of Baroda. Their army outnumbered his by more than ten to one, yet the lion-hearted leader decided to give them instant battle. It is said that the enemy thought him mad for daring to assail them with so small a force; but Wellesley knew what determination and discipline could effect when skilfully led against a huge and unwieldy foe. Nevertheless, the Maráthá artillery put in some murderous work. As the British advanced to the attack a terrible cannonade greeted them, and the ground was quickly strewed with the dead and the dying. The general decided to leave his guns behind, and at the head of the gallant first line he bore resolutely down

upon the foe. For very shame the Maráthás held their ground, eyeing in fascinated bewilderment the splendid courage of the tiny band. But soon the sharp flashing sabres were amongst them, cutting and thrusting with irresistible effect, and the first line of the enemy turned and fled. Nor did the second line make amends for their comrades' inglorious flight. Soon they also were in retreat, and with joyful cheers the British raced after the panic-stricken fugitives.

But the battle was not yet won. As cavalry and infantry were eagerly pursuing the retiring Maráthás, the sound of a heavy cannonade in their rear made them pause and turn. Then they realised how they had been tricked. When our men swept through the enemy's first line, many of the artillerymen had flung themselves under their guns, feigning death. Immediately the British had passed, however, the gunners leapt to their feet and opened fire upon the pursuing troops. Simultaneously several of the retreating battalions faced about and opened fire. It seemed as if we were caught in a trap. But Wellesley, who was everywhere at once, saw the danger, and made a desperate effort to win back the guns. Fiercely the struggle raged. The brave gunners stuck grimly to their task, but nothing could withstand the dogged persistence of the British attacks. Ere long the guns were ours.

A dramatic incident marked the close of the conflict. Gallant Colonel Maxwell, who, at the head of the 19th Dragoons, was driving the Maráthá infantry *pêle-mêle* before him, was seen to halt and

throw up his arms. A stray musket ball had shot him dead. His men, mistaking the death-agony of their leader for a signal to fall back, wheeled round and galloped up the line of the enemy's fire. Not for some minutes did they discover their mistake, and then, fiercely desirous to redeem their honour, they formed themselves up for one of the most desperate cavalry charges ever chronicled in the history of warfare. Its effect was irresistible: the Maráthás scattered in all directions upon the far-stretching plain, and the battle of Assaye had been fought and won. Not yet, however, did the fierce Scindia admit defeat. The fall of his great fortress of Aligarh and the loss of Delhi found him despairing but still defiant. As has been sung by countless lusty throats in the famous old "Song of the Soubahdar"—

> But Agra, Delhi, Allyghar, and Coel's deeds were vain,
> Without the crowning victory upon Laswaree's plain;
> The flower of Scindia's chivalry,—the Invincible Brigade,—
> To make one furious struggle yet, were for the strife arrayed.

And at Laswari—as it is now spelled—the fate of Scindia was sealed. In spite of the gallant resistance of his men, who fought, as the English general afterwards wrote, "like devils, or rather heroes," and pluckily stood their ground while our dragoons charged again and again through their ranks, he was compelled at length to yield, and shortly afterwards he signed a treaty ceding enormous tracts of his territories to the British.

There still remained to be reckoned with the

most powerful chieftain of all the Maráthá Confederacy. Rallying the Rajputs, the Rohillas, and the Sikhs to his standard, the great Holkar of Indore resolved to make a mighty effort to roll back the giant wave of British conquest sweeping so swiftly towards his lands. His method of warfare was marked with caution and restraint. Whereas his brother chiefs had been content to fight in the open plain and to risk their fortunes in a fixed battle, Holkar cunningly retreated before the slow-moving British troops, hoping thus to lure them on to their ultimate destruction. How disastrously they fell into the trap!

It was the rainy season, when fighting becomes practically impossible. Yet, carrying with him no stock of provisions, and neglecting to secure his communications over the many rivers he crossed, Colonel Monson, with only five battalions of Sepoys and three thousand irregular cavalry, pushed onwards in a fatuous attempt to follow up Holkar's retreating army. On they went, and ever onward, while the rains fell incessantly and the roads became mere mud tracks and well-nigh impossible for the native carts, crowded with the wives and children of the Sepoys (who always accompany their lords and masters during a campaign), to traverse. Then their provisions gave out. Worn out and dispirited the English commander found himself confronted by two terrible alternatives. He was, almost literally, between the devil and the deep sea. In front of him lay the giant army of Holkar, by no means reluctant for a conflict, to attack which meant almost

certain death. In his rear the rivers, flooded and unfordable, presented a grave obstacle to retreat. Which course should he take? Would it be wiser to go forward and snatch at their only chance of survival—small as it might be—which lay in a victory over the Maráthás? Or should he retire? Not invariably is discretion the better part of valour; at times it is fatal.

Painfully the little force retraced their steps. After them the joyful Holkar hurled derisive and insulting messages. "Fight," said the proud chieftain, "or surrender." But the British did neither of these things. Wet, hungry, and cold, they plodded doggedly onwards through the heavy mud. Their guns, sinking deep in the yielding soil, had to be spiked and abandoned; their ammunition they were forced to destroy. It was not to be expected that the foe would leave them unmolested. Stragglers met with short shrift at the hands of the fierce Maráthá cavalry, while the wounded were slain, and women and children seized and carried off under the very eyes of the helpless and grief-stricken Sepoys. At the last the toil-worn soldiers, nearly dropping from fatigue and want of sleep, formed themselves into a square, and upon them, yelling and thundering, the steel-shirted Maráthá horsemen came charging down. By hundreds they dropped, fighting grimly to the end, while the survivors, broken and demoralised, fled to Agra, whither Holkar dared not follow them.

"Alas!" wrote the gallant Duke, when he heard of the disaster, "I have lost five battalions and six companies, the flower of the army, and

how they are to be replaced at this day God only knows."

Not long, however, was Holkar allowed to enjoy his triumph. The blood of the British had been fired to boiling point by the misfortunes of their comrades, while every now and then the arrival in camp of some wretched prisoner, who had contrived to escape from the Maráthás' clutches, minus his nose, ears, and arms, would add fresh fuel to their wrath. From pillar to post was the great Holkar chivied, allowed never to rest; for an avenging army was hot on his track, and blood alone would wipe out the wrongs he had committed. Once, in the guise of a fakir, the fierce chieftain had to flee to Scindia for succour; on another occasion, at the head of a few followers, he was pursued across the sandy wastes of the Punjáb up to the wild frontier of the brave and warlike Afghans. Peace came at length. The Directors in London had wearied of the warlike policy of their Governor-General. They did not realise that to stand still was to recede, and that unless the great empire which was lying open to the British were seized and held, others would surely possess themselves of it. So they sent the aged Cornwallis out a second time, and told him to make an end of the brilliant campaigns of his predecessor. But Cornwallis was fast failing in health, and died shortly after his appointment, so it was left to his successor in office to carry out the pacific policy of the Company.

For a brief period of two years the title of Governor-General was held by Sir John Barlow, who

at the time of Cornwallis's death was the senior member of Council. His reign, though otherwise undistinguished, is rendered memorable by the outbreak of a serious mutiny among the Sepoys. It was at Vellore that the disturbance occurred. In this fort, not a hundred miles from Madras, the family of the deceased Tipú Sultán had been allotted apartments. In almost regal state they lived—as was befitting in the kinsmen of the great Tiger; but watchful eyes were always upon them, for who knew at what time they might not seek to fan to flame the smouldering passions of their countrymen? So the fort was garrisoned by three hundred and seventy European troops and one thousand Sepoys, under the command of doughty Colonel Fancourt.

The Sepoys, sensitive on the subject of their caste and their religion, had an idea that it was the wish of their white masters to break asunder the links of creed and of custom which bound them to their own people so that they might grow to be all of one faith and race, debarred for ever from the privileges of their birth. Any circumstance which tended to justify them in this belief was naturally looked upon with the greatest suspicion. Thus it came about that when the authorities, desirous of creating a uniform appearance among the native troops, issued sundry drastic commands anent their dress and toilet, the indignation of the Sepoys became acute.

What were the dreadful regulations that were to cause so much misery and bloodshed? The Sepoys were ordered to dress alike, to shave their beards and trim their moustaches, and wear no caste marks. To

our Western minds there is nothing very harsh about this. But the list is not complete. There was yet another grievance, and one with which we cannot withhold a certain sneaking sympathy. For it was solemnly decreed that the soldiers should lay aside their turbans and adorn themselves with the tall glazed abominations of the Europeans — direct ancestors of our present-day top-hats.

"Ugh!" muttered the disgusted natives, as they surveyed their new head-gear, "surely none but an infidel would wear a thing like that! It is some wicked design of our masters to make Christians of us."

Nightly the Sepoys secretly foregathered to discuss their wrongs. From time to time rumours of these meetings and of the discontent which prevailed reached the officers' ears. Unhappily, however, they were ignored. Not until the thunder cloud had actually burst did the British realise the depth of feeling their ill-considered regulations had provoked among the native troops.

The 10th of July 1806 was the day chosen for revolt. Let us try to conjure up the scene. It is three o'clock in the morning, and all within the fort is quiet and still. Suddenly the doors of the native barracks swing open and, looking pale and ghostly in the uncertain light of dawn, the fifteen hundred Sepoys steal cautiously out in the open. Silently they tip-toe across to the European barracks; the wheels of the six-pounder they are dragging with them are heavily muffled, and no sound is heard as they place the gun in position beneath the gateway and point

its muzzle inwards. In front of the windows they halt and raise their muskets to their shoulders. There is a momentary pause, and then a signal, and a terrific crash of musketry arouses the slumbering inmates to their peril. Many have been shot in their sleep; the rest rush out in their night attire to seek the cause of the tumult. The six-pounder in the gateway bars their egress, while through the shattered windows volley after volley is poured with terrible effect. Behind their beds and scanty furniture the unarmed men vainly try to screen themselves. Ere long eighty-two of their number lie dead, while ninety-one more are wounded, and the fury of their assailants grows in intensity as the red stream of blood flows sluggishly out into the courtyard. With the officers things fare but little better. Over the threshold of his house Colonel Fancourt lies with a bullet through his heart, Colonel M'Kerras is stark and stiff on the parade ground, and thirteen others have been pitilessly massacred. A few contrive to cut their way out, sword in hand, and reach the privates' barracks, where a terrible scene of carnage meets their eyes. Eventually the surviving officers and men, nearly all of whom are wounded, manage to escape to the ramparts, where they crouch desperately, waiting for the inevitable finish. Above them floats the standard of the once-great Tipú—with its saffron sun and tiger stripes upon an emerald ground,—and as they behold it their cheeks blanch with apprehension, for what untold atrocities have not been committed beneath that sinister flag!

At Arcot, nine miles away, the continuous

booming of the Vellore cannon has aroused the garrison to wonder. Presently a messenger rides breathlessly into the fort and gasps out an incoherent tale of the morning's ghastly doings. Instantly a body of horse is marshalled, and a squadron of the 19th Dragoons and a troop of native cavalry gallop furiously to the rescue. So hard do they ride that the fortress walls soon loom before them, and the little company on the ramparts greets their arrival with loud cheers. The first and second gates are passed in safety, and the third, strongly barred, impedes their way. Without a moment's hesitation Sergeant Brady lets himself down by a rope from the ramparts and unbars the gate. The fourth and last gate, stoutly fastened, has still to be passed, and as they clamour before it the dying shrieks and yells which come from the interior of the fort send the men mad with rage. Quickly guns are brought up and the gate blown to pieces; then Colonel Rollo Gillespie, at the head of his dragoons, dashes into the fort. The air is full of clouds of dust, dimly through which are seen the flashing blades of the British as they cut down the Sepoys on every hand.

"The scene that presented itself," wrote Captain Young, one of the rescuers, "after all was over, no pen can depict, no language describe; it was one sheet of blood, and never do I wish to see the human form so mangled and mutilated." But what chiefly aroused the young officer's indignation were the bodies of the European women and children lying about in all directions, for in their blind lust for blood the Sepoys had spared neither age nor sex—all were butchered indiscriminatingly.

The mutineers were severely punished. Four hundred had been slain by Gillespie and his men; the rest were tried by court-martial and either shot or punished according to their guilt. The number of the regiment was erased from the army list.

The final picture of this terrible tragedy is as impressive as any of its predecessors. Once more it is early dawn. Stern-faced and grim behind the guns stand the men of the battery, waiting the word of command. To the mouth of each gun is fastened a mutineer. "Fire!" cries a voice—there is a loud explosion, and the ringleaders of the rebellious Sepoys have been blown unceremoniously into eternity.

CHAPTER XIII

THE UNSHEATHED SWORD

It is easier to take up the sword than to relinquish it. Ever since the Company had become a territorial power, it had found itself engaged in almost perpetual warfare. If you can imagine a pebble, cast suddenly into a pool, viewing with astonishment the commotion occasioned by its advent, you will have some idea of the state of mind with which the Directors regarded their bellicose and bewildering achievements in the East. They were no heroes—these worthy burgesses—no mappers-out of Alexandrian conquests. They were simple traders who looked upon India as a business rather than as an empire. True, in their quest for commerce, the ledger had ever been accompanied by the sword, but the primary purpose of the weapon was defence. And, wonderful to relate, this primitive passion for self-protection had made them the masters of millions.

You will understand, then, how it was the Company—with an eye chiefly to its money-bags—looked severely askance at the ceaseless campaigns waged by their warlike servants. They were so very expensive! The delighted astonishment which

filled their hearts when they heard of the exploits of Clive gave way to vague feelings of alarm when, under the daring statesmanship of Warren Hastings, the empire began to arise from its foundations in solid and tangible shape. Then came the terrible Wellesley who, disregarding the Directors' plaintive appeals for peace, wielded the sword with a brilliancy and vigour that left them mute and gasping. The disastrous retreat of Monson, however, gave them an opportunity to recall the gallant Marquess and to replace him by more docile administrators. Cornwallis, Barlow, and the Earl of Minto succeeded in rapid succession to the Governor-Generalship. Their policy was peace—the sort of peace that a small boy patches up with a still smaller adversary when he feels the cold eye of the headmaster to be upon him. Circumstances demand more haste than dignity in its accomplishment.

Albeit, when in the autumn of 1813 Lord Minto sailed home to the mother-country, he was firmly convinced that he had left India in a state of profound tranquillity. Not so much as a speck of dust obscured the spotless horizon of our empire. Need it be said that this was gladsome tidings to his successor? For the Earl of Moira (afterwards first Marquess of Hastings) had ever been a lover of peace. In far-away Westminster his fiery eloquence had hotly denounced what he considered to be the needless warfares of Warren Hastings and of Wellesley. His lordship, in insular ignorance, had considered them both wicked and wasteful. He was all for the Company minding its own affairs and not interfering with its native neighbours.

With a Governor-General animated by such noble and altruistic motives, you might suppose that the Indian peninsula would allow itself to be rocked peacefully to sleep like a baby in its cradle. Had an era of peace really dawned? Would the Company be able to beat its swords into ploughshares and adopt the olive-branch as the permanent hall-mark of its intentions? Alas for the vanity of human hopes! As soon as the Marquess of Hastings arrived at Calcutta the scales dropped from his eyes. He saw that to sway any sceptre less sharp or less terrible than the sword would be to sway no sceptre at all. Peace, indeed, was too remote to be worth straining the eyes to look for. As well essay to give to the ocean the placid restfulness of the millpond as attempt to initiate the warring tribes of Hindustan into the virtues of brotherly love and good fellowship.

Besides being a valiant soldier the new Governor-General was an eminently sensible man. He recognised that for every step the Company took another became necessary. It must either advance or be extinguished. So he set out to run the empire on the very lines that for years he had so scathingly condemned. Reluctantly, maybe, but unflinchingly he drew his blade. Nor was it returned to the scabbard until he had carried out a policy every whit as warlike as his predecessors!

It is almost impossible to describe the awful misery which warfare entails upon a country. Can you imagine an England, with every county a separate nation, and all perpetually quarrelling, invading each other's territories, and cutting each other's

throats? Enlarge this picture many times and you will have some idea of the condition of India. But there was an added terror. Among the hills and valleys lurked terrible bands of robbers—men who revelled in cruelty and bloodshed, and whose sole business in life was to kill and destroy. They were the natural outcome of the anarchy that for so many years had dominated the land. There was no central authority whose business it was to suppress them; for the fighting powers were too much occupied in their own concerns to saddle themselves with outside responsibilities.

Lord Hastings decided that the time had come to stamp these vermin out of the country. By force alone could order be evolved out of the universal chaos which prevailed. But before he could obtain leave to attack the robbers the Governor-General found himself plunged into warfare with a bold mountain race which, snug in its fancied security, openly defied the British government. "How was it likely," cried they derisively, "that the Company's soldiers should storm the mountain fastnesses constructed by the hand of God?"

The Ghúrkas numbered only twelve thousand fighting men, but their prowess was renowned throughout the peninsula. Had they not dared to set the pale-faced conquerors at defiance, swooping down upon their villages, carrying off their cattle, even demanding tribute from their subjects? The British could not afford to be flouted in this manner. They told the bold invaders to keep within their own territory, or to beware of the consequences. But

the Ghúrkas were little troubled by the warning. Hot blood ran in their veins and haughty words were bandied by their chiefs. There was no alternative but to declare war.

Along the southern slopes of the Himálayas, backed by peaks covered with perpetual snow and shut in from the lowlands by dense and impenetrable forests, lies the country of Nepál. This was the home of the Ghúrkas, and the difficulties encountered by our men in reaching it were terrible. Failure was written large over the opening of the campaign. Before the stone walls of Kalanga fell brave General Gillespie—the saviour of Vellore—with his last breath cheering his men onwards to a fruitless attack. But the fort fell at length—though not until all but seventy of its six hundred heroic defenders were killed. The British, who had anticipated that a very short while would serve to bring the Ghúrkas to their senses, found themselves grievously out of their reckoning.

On one occasion a small party of troops, looking for the enemy's outworks, fell in with a band of Ghúrkas. Fiercely the tribesmen yelled and brandished their swords. Then their leader stepped forward and challenged the English commander to single combat. Nothing loath, Captain Showers took up the gage, and midway between the rival forces the two combatants confronted each other. There was a clash of swords, a few glittering passes, and the snow was crimsoned by the Ghúrka leader's life-blood.

The British Sepoys raised a joyful shout. But

their triumph was short-lived. As the English captain turned to rejoin his company a bullet laid him low. The frightened Sepoys turned to flee. After them charged the fierce Ghúrkas, slaying right and left, and not until the guns of a fortress were turned upon them did they relinquish the chase.

Wearily the war dragged to its close. At last the Ghúrkas were compelled to sue for peace, and a treaty was drawn up by which large tracts of territory were ceded to the British. But it took some little time to send the treaty to the Governor-General for his approval and signature, and during the interval that elapsed the Ghúrkas plucked up fresh courage. When, in due course, the treaty returned from Calcutta they refused to sign it. The war-party, politely explained their chieftain, had now regained the ascendency; he was really very sorry, but the fight must be continued.

Once again Sir David Ochterlony took the field. Through the vast and dreary forests, which the Ghúrkas believed to have been planted by their divinities for the special protection of Nepál, the Scottish general led his men. It was a melancholy march, for so gloomy is this far-stretching wilderness that no living creature—save perhaps the ubiquitous insect—is to be found within it: and the troops uttered cries of joy when at length they emerged from the depressing shadow of the mighty trees to find fresh air and sunlight and an open sky. In front of them lay the mountains. How were they to be traversed, for the enemy held the passes, and to storm them would mean great sacrifice of life?

David Ochterlony stared thoughtfully at the mountains and wondered how he was to get to the other side. He would have accounted it bad generalship to throw away his men in the passes. Was there no other way? None was known—not even to the Ghúrkas themselves—but Ochterlony determined to find one. He sent forth his trusty quartermaster to explore.

Through many dried-up watercourses Lieutenant Pickersgill picked his way. But the secret of the mountains lay not with them. Each led to a hopeless *cul-de-sac* from which the perplexed officer was obliged to retrace his steps. Then he met with a party of smugglers—cheerful and picturesque villains—who hinted that for a consideration they would provide a key to the problem. There was the chink of money passing from hand to hand, and the delighted lieutenant made his way back to camp with the announcement that the difficulty was solved.

In single file—Sir David Ochterlony leading at the head of the Royal Irish Fusiliers—the British troops began their hazardous climb. The way lay through a deep ravine, enclosed by rugged and precipitous sides, and rendered dark and eerie with overhanging trees. At intervals the zigzag course emerged into the cold clear rays of moonlight, and above them, mysterious and chilly, towered stupendous peaks and pinnacles. Then the mantle of darkness would again enshroud them, and with difficulty could each man distinguish the blurred outlines of his comrade in front.

It was, in sooth, a highly dangerous journey;

and had an enemy appeared the British would have run an excellent chance of annihilation. Fortunately no foe was near. Can you not imagine the anxiety of Sir David as he led his men through the desolate and unknown pass? Once when he was brought to a halt by an almost perpendicular ledge of rock which seemed entirely to block the way he turned angrily to Lieutenant Pickersgill and charged him with having deceived him. "You have risked the destruction of my whole army!" he cried bitterly. But with the aid of his officers' sashes the irate general was hoisted over the obstacle, and he turned and apologised to the lieutenant for his hasty words.

At length the end of the defile was reached and the British found themselves in the open country. Some distance away the Ghúrkas were patiently watching the passes. They wondered what had become of their cowardly foe. Great was their astonishment when they found themselves suddenly attacked in the rear! Some fierce fighting ensued, but the campaign came to a speedy end. The Rajah of Nepál sent a messenger to state that the war-party had fallen from power and the pacificists were again predominant. So he had no longer any objection to signing the despised treaty and making peace.

"Peace!" was Ochterlony's grim retort: "has your master the effrontery to offer me peace, when he has nothing to give but what I choose to leave him. . . . Your master deserves to have Khatmandoo burned to the ground for his insolence; but fall down and ask mercy in his name, as the Ghúrka ambassador asks favours of the Emperor of China."

The ambassador fell abjectly on to his knees and expressed the utmost penitence. A fresh treaty was drawn up and signed, and the East India Company complacently added another rich domain to its fast-growing empire. Shortly afterwards the army of the Celestial Kingdom arrived on the other side of the Himálayas; for the Ghúrkas had been imploring their mighty neighbour for help. But the war was over. For some time the Celestial troops waited for developments upon their side of the snowy mountain peaks, and then, nothing happening, they struck their tents and marched stolidly back into the interior of their fair and flowery land.

In 1816, after a long and tedious delay, the Marquess of Hastings obtained permission to make war upon the robber tribes, chief of whom were the notorious Pindárís. Yearly these wild banditti rode forth from the valleys of the Narbadá to plunder and destroy. Across the fair province of Rájputána, eastward and southward they roamed, and woe betide the hapless villages that lay upon their track. When some breathless messenger brought in tidings of the robbers' imminent approach, the unarmed peasantry would flee terror-stricken from their homes to seek a precarious hiding-place within the jungle. Some hours later, when the tribesmen had wreaked their will and departed, they would creep cautiously back. What a mournful sight would meet their view! Where but a few hours previously had stood a peaceful and happy village, nothing but ruin and desolation would be seen. All that could not be carried off would be burned or destroyed, and the

unhappy villagers would find themselves homeless and ruined.

It not infrequently happened that the villagers found themselves surrounded and unable to escape. Then each man would gather his wives and children into his fragile hut and take a last farewell before applying a torch to the leaf-thatched roof and perishing with his family in the flames. All that the Pindárís would find upon their arrival would be the smouldering embers of their victims' fiery graves. Better death a thousand times than to suffer the robbers' fiendish cruelties!

The Governor-General determined to give the bandits no chance to escape. The largest army the Company had yet raised in India was assembled to destroy them. Slowly a glittering ring of steel gathered around the Pindárís' haunts, and the desperate efforts of the robbers to break through it were without avail. Their hour had come, their Nemesis had overtaken them! The majority were either killed or captured, while the rest, broken up into insignificant bands, were dispersed throughout the peninsula. The day of the lawless freebooters was over for ever.

It seemed as if we should never leave off fighting the Maráthás. Like the many-headed dragon of the fairy tale, no sooner had one ugly head been chopped off than another grew in its place. This time it was the Peshwá, the acknowledged head of the great Confederacy, that caused the trouble. He longed to break his engagements with the Company and stand forth, free and unchallenged, the supreme head

of a mighty nation. Alone he could accomplish nothing, and his brother chieftains, still staggering under the sledge-hammer blows of Wellesley, were one and all dominated by the Company. The crafty Peshwá cast an eye around the Commonwealth and alighted upon Baroda. Was it possible to seduce the Gáekwár of this powerful state from his allegiance to the British? Unfortunately for his hopes the prince in question happened to be imbecile, and Colonel Walker, the Company's Resident at his Court, kept a very vigilant eye upon British interests. Clearly it was difficult to negotiate where an Englishman held sway. So it came about that the Prime Minister of Baroda was invited to the Peshwá's capital, and it was hoped that the visitor would prove a pliant tool in the Maráthá chieftain's hands.

It so happened that the minister was a very holy Brahmin, and, therefore, exceedingly wise. He had a shrewd suspicion of what lay in the Peshwá's mind, and was not at all anxious to put his head in the lion's mouth; so he demurred and hung back until the British Resident consented to guarantee his safety. Then, nothing loath, he set out for Poona, where he received a cordial welcome, much feasting, and not a little flattery.

It is not easy to hoodwink a Brahmin. The Peshwá found all his cajolery to be in vain; for the minister steadfastly refused to turn traitor or lend an ear to the warlike intrigues of his host. Not unnaturally the latter was very much wroth. "This miserable Brahmin," thought he, "has listened complacently to all my secrets, and will doubtless reveal

them to the accursed British as soon as he gets back to Baroda! How shall his lips be sealed?" Then spoke Trimbakji, his favourite: "Do the lips of the dead babble secrets? Let not the dog return to Baroda alive!"

Now to kill a Brahmin even legally is a very serious crime—as we saw when the luckless Nanda Kumár was hanged—but to shed his blood is simply indescribably wicked. Yet the villainous Trimbakji shrank not even from this. On a day the Hindús regard as holy the Peshwá and his favourite persuaded their guest to make an excursion to a famous temple, there to offer up supplications and thank-offerings to the gods. The Brahmin, thinking, no doubt, that this was a very proper thing to do, obediently departed to the sacred shrine. On his way back he was surrounded by a gang of cut-throats, the hirelings of Trimbakji. There was no chance of escape; they hewed him into pieces with their knives. The blood of the murdered minister cried out to the British for vengeance!

It blossomed into war. Trimbakji was put into prison, but effected a romantic escape. A Maráthá groom took service with the officer who was guarding the fortress. The stable was situated directly under the captive's window, and it was noticed that when attending to his master's steed the groom would chant weird snatches of Maráthá war-songs. By this means he seems to have communicated to the imprisoned favourite—as Blondel sang of old to Richard Cœur de Lion—for one dark night in December 1816 Trimbakji mysteriously disappeared,

together with the commandant's horse. Nor was the singing groom ever seen again.

Every war exacts its toll of heroes, and in this brief contest with the Peshwá were performed many noble deeds. Even to-day when the Sepoys are gathered round the camp-fire at night, chattering together of exploits performed in long-ago campaigns, they will recall reverently and in awe-struck whispers the tale that has come down to them from their grandfathers of Staunton Sáhib's wonderful defence. It happened like this. The Peshwá had fled from his capital and had flung himself with an army of twenty-six thousand men upon a tiny British force. Sustaining a severe defeat, he was obliged to retreat southwards to Poona. Reinforcements arrived, and he again sallied out, only to be rebuffed and once more forced to retreat. Meanwhile Colonel Staunton was marching hastily southwards to assist in holding Poona. Quite unawares he led his men into a trap. Early one morning, after a long night's journey, they found themselves surrounded by the entire Maráthá army, composed principally of Arab mercenaries, and thirty thousand strong. It seemed as though Staunton and his little band of eight hundred men were doomed to destruction.

A tiny village lay before them, and they had just time to gain the shelter of its rude mud-walls ere the enemy hurled themselves against them. Though their numbers were small, the hearts of the defenders were brave and valiant. For all their fierce courage the Arabs could not sweep the British from their posts. All during the day the fight went on. The

terrible noonday sun blazed down pitilessly upon the gallant but exhausted defenders. There was no water to cool their parched throats, no food to sustain their ebbing strength, and their eyes were dull and heavy for want of needful sleep. Like the waves of the sea the dauntless Arabs hurled themselves upon the frail mud-walls. How long could the fight continue? Sooner or later those cruel billows must surely sweep away such puny obstacles and overwhelm the weary men behind them.

Slowly the hours rolled by, and the golden ball sank low in the western heavens. The shadows of dusk were quivering over the plain. With heavy hearts the British looked out through the gathering gloom upon the packed masses of the enemy. Night meant certain death, for an assault under cover of darkness would be impossible to withstand. Their position was perilous in the extreme. Of their eight officers, five were either killed or wounded, while nearly three hundred of the men lay dead or disabled. Little wonder, then, if the cheery words of Staunton, as he strove to sustain the spirits of his men, belied an anxious heart.

The enemy did not cease from their efforts. Time after time, with hoarse shouts and gleaming swords, they rushed to the attack. At length they succeeded in capturing a gun, and the dead and dying strewn around it were brutally hacked to pieces. Near by, mortally wounded, lay Lieutenant Pattinson, a sturdy young giant six feet seven inches in height. They told him that the gun was taken, and the news inspired him to a deed of heroic

grandeur. With a dying effort he struggled to his feet, seized a musket by the muzzle, and calling on the grenadiers to follow him, rushed right into the middle of the foe. With herculean blows he strewed them right and left. Then a second ball went through his mighty frame and the lieutenant fell, never again to rise. But his purpose had been achieved; the gun was recaptured; and the Maráthás, finding it of no avail to waste their strength upon the tiny garrison, sullenly retired from the field.

Not long afterwards they were hunted down and dispersed. The Peshwá, deprived of his throne, was fain to content himself with an enormous pension, and never again was the Company troubled by his vagaries.

The outbreak of the Peshwá had sent a wave of unrest through the neighbouring states. In Nágpur was a fierce Maráthá chieftain eager to try conclusions with the British. For that purpose he assembled a great army and busily prepared for war. His challenge was accepted, and a force of fourteen thousand men marched into his dominions. Upon two peaks of a range of hills outside the city they pitched their camp. Soon the Maráthás were swarming around the hills. A fierce battle took place; the enemy opened a murderous fire, and charging impetuously up the slopes placed the British in a hazardous position.

Upon one of the peaks was posted Captain Fitzgerald at the head of three troops of Bengal cavalry. The gallant officer looked impatiently down upon the Maráthás beneath him. Repeatedly he begged to be

Lieutenant Pattinson recaptures the gun

allowed to charge them, but the desired permission was withheld. At length the enemy hemmed him in on every side, and two guns were brought to bear on his position. Shot fell thick and fast into their midst; the men clamoured to be led against their foes. But still the order to charge was not forthcoming. Once again the restless Irishman sent an urgent message to his chief. "Tell him to charge at his peril!" snapped out that officer, in angry tones.

"At my peril be it! We'll charge them, by heaven!" shouted Fitzgerald to his men. "*Deen, Deen!*" came back the ready response from the Mussulmans behind him. It indicated that they were prepared for death or victory. With exultant shouts and waving swords they charged tumultuously into the midst of the foe. Backwards reeled the Maráthá horse, throwing into confusion those behind. Nothing could withstand that fierce onward rush of Fitzgerald and his men. The enemy were routed and driven from the hill, and shortly afterward their headstrong chieftain surrendered. Thus the Company obtained control over a formidable military power, and her growing empire was further expanded by the accession of Berar and the rich lands adjacent to the Narbadá.

Thus also did Hastings of the peaceful heart and warlike hand carry out the policy of his illustrious predecessors.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GOLDEN KING

Alompra the Hunter was a mighty man. He is one of the chief of Burma's national heroes. When, in the middle of the eighteenth century, his country lay groaning beneath the yoke of Pegu, he gathered together a band of brave and resolute men who swore by a brave oath never to sheath sword until they had recovered for their land its former freedom; and so successful was the enterprise that not only were the invaders overthrown, but their very territories were annexed to the Burmese crown. Under the inspiriting rule of Alompra Burma took her place among the conquering nations of the East. To the north, east and south her armies marched; on every side her dominions were extended and enlarged. The small neighbouring states were the first to fall; then Siam was overrun and humiliated, and the invading hosts of China outwitted and lured to their destruction.

Before Alompra the Hunter died he founded a new dynasty. He sat in the seat of the Golden Kings. The sword which had carried him to power was wielded no less vigorously by his successors, and

ere many years had passed other territories were added to the fast-growing empire. Among these was Arakan, a state which is situated between Burma and the Bay of Bengal. It is not good to be conquered by a semi-barbarous race; very unenviable was the plight of the poor Arakanese. So hard, indeed, became their lot, that in 1798 they fled, to the number of thirty thousand, across the intervening river into the neighbouring British district of Chittagong. It was a terrible journey; the narrow forest paths were littered with the bodies of aged men and frail women and little children who were unable to keep up with the rest of the fugitives. The British officials were far from enthusiastic in their welcome of these uninvited guests. But what could they do? It would have been an act of barbarity to deliver up the helpless refugees to their savage oppressors. So they were allowed to settle in the country. Nevertheless this gave great offence to the Burmese. The Golden King haughtily demanded that his escaped subjects should be handed over to the executioner. Woe betide the British if they should refuse his request! Their Bengal possessions would be taken from them, their armies destroyed, and their rulers visited with sundry severe pains and penalties.

From this it will be seen that his Burmese majesty had a very good opinion of himself. A few years previously he had, indeed, been good enough to offer to sweep the great Napoleon from the globe, and his astonishment knew no bounds when the generous proposal met with a polite refusal. From the king to the beggar-boy the whole nation was imbued

with the same spirit. Their military successes had turned their heads; they thought themselves invincible. "The English," declared their Royal Council, "have conquered the black foreigners, the people of castes, who have puny frames and no courage. They have never fought with so strong and brave a people as the Burmese, skilled in the use of the spear and the sword."

When a nation is anxious for war it is not difficult to find a pretext. In this case it took the form of a small muddy islet which is situated at the mouth of the river dividing Arakan from the district of Chittagong. For many years the island had been occupied by the British; but the Burmese now asserted that from time immemorial it had belonged to them. One dark night in September 1823 they landed a thousand of their yellow-skinned warriors and routed the small Sepoy guard. Promptly the British protested against the outrage. "The island," loftily declared the Governor of Arakan, "was never under the authority either of the Moors or the British; the stockade thereon has consequently been destroyed, in pursuance of the commands of the Great Lord of the Seas and Earth. If you want tranquillity, be quiet."

Although Lord Amherst, the Governor-General, was very anxious for tranquillity, he was by no means disposed to be quiet. The British flag had been insulted! But instead of taking instant action to vindicate its honour, he endeavoured to stave off war by a series of courteously worded requests for an apology. The Burmese took this for a sign of

weakness. They became more than ever convinced that the British were afraid to fight them. At Ava, the capital, a Grand Council of State was held, and it was enthusiastically resolved upon to invade Bengal. The fiery Bandoola—the most famous general in all Burma—delivered an eloquent denunciation of the British. From that moment, quoth he, Bengal was taken from under the British dominion. "Henceforward," he concluded, "it was become in fact what it has ever been in right—a province of the Golden King. The Bandoola has said and sworn it!"

So war was declared.

At the mouth of the Irawaddy in the district of Pegu the valiant Alompra had founded the city of Rangoon. It became the chief port of the Burman Empire. The British deluded themselves into the belief that if they could seize and hold this city, the Burmese government would be dismayed into surrender. So it came about that early in May 1824 a fleet sailed boldly up the spacious estuary of the Irawaddy and dropped anchor before the threatened town. Great was the amazement of the chief magistrate of Rangoon when he beheld the strange vessels. Promptly he gave his orders: "English ships have brought foreign soldiers to the mouth of the river. They are my prisoners; cut me some thousand span of ropes to bind them!"

Unhappily, the magistrate found within the walls of his city white men who could be taken captive without any awkward preliminaries. For there were several British merchants resident in Rangoon, who,

together with some American missionaries and a sprinkling of European adventurers, were immediately placed under arrest. Centuries of education in the refinements of torture have given the Burmese a national taste for cruelty. They love to gloat over the sufferings of their victims. On this occasion they left nothing undone that would add to the misery of their prisoners. Stripped nearly naked, and bound so tightly that their thongs caused them untold agonies, they were placed in a row inside the courtyard of the prison. The floor was strewn with sand to imbibe their blood. It was arranged that the prisoners should be put to death immediately the British began to bombard the town. The unhappy captives went through a long agony of suspense. In front of them strutted their executioners, pirouetting gleefully and uttering uncouth cries of joy. Some would stop ostentatiously to sharpen their knives; others would seize hold of an intended victim to prod him in the neck or to finger his spine with the critical air of a butcher examining a prize ox.

At length the guns boomed forth. It was the signal for death! The prisoners closed their eyes, expecting every moment to feel the knife at their throats. Horrible shouts smote upon their ears; it seemed as if the gaolers were working themselves up into a frenzy so as to ensure an effective rendering of their duties. Presently the clamour died away and all was still. The prisoners opened their eyes and gazed wonderingly upon an empty courtyard. Nowhere could they see a sign of their executioners—all had fled panic-stricken from the scene. Even their

deep-rooted love of killing had been for the moment forgotten; wild, ungovernable fear reigned in its place. The sight of shells whizzing over their heads proved to be altogether too much for them.

A general stampede took place. Each citizen —from the chief magistrate downwards—seized as much of his worldly possessions as he could carry, and fled for refuge into the jungles and forests of the interior. A landing-party from the ships found the town deserted. None had stayed to give them welcome, save in the prison courtyard, where a score or so of bound and tortured forms waited eagerly for deliverance. But four, when their bonds were cut, babbled strange and meaningless words and looked up at their rescuers with eyes from which the light of reason had for ever departed.

Eleven thousand British soldiers took up their residence in Rangoon. The first step in the campaign had been taken—the step from which so much was hoped. Yet, in spite of the rosy forecasts of the tacticians, Rangoon proved to be of no use—save as a burying-ground for our best and our bravest. The occupation of Burma's premier port proved, in fine, to be a miserable mistake.

An empty stomach knows very few illusions. Our officers realised their blunder simultaneously with the compulsory tightening of their waist-belts. The natives, from whom they had confidently expected to obtain provisions, had vanished; the surrounding districts were empty and deserted. So the army became entirely dependent on Calcutta for its supplies; and since the scanty stores which reached

them from that town were invariably unfit to eat, the distress became acute. The country abounded in cattle; yet hundreds of men starved to death on a diet of putrescent meat and biscuits rotten with maggots. The reason for this may not at once be obvious—on the face of it, it sounds a little absurd. But the fact remains that the British government strictly forbade any interference with the kine. It was thought that their transportation into succulent ribs and sirloins might seriously offend native susceptibilities. Now, to respect the whims and prejudices of other nations is a very wise and excellent thing; yet one may, perhaps, be permitted to wonder whether at times it is not possible to carry the spirit of toleration beyond the border-line of reason!

Hardly had our troops ensconced themselves in Rangoon when the rainy season set in. Immediately the country became a swamp, from which arose noxious and malaria-laden vapours. Fever, dysentry, and death stalked through the stricken camp. Scarcely a fourth of the once noble army remained fit for active service. All hopes of being able to sail up the Irawaddy into the romantic and mysterious interior were at once dispelled; the river had become a raging torrent. To advance by land was equally impossible. Truly here was a sorry plight!

Meanwhile a British force had invaded Burma from the north. It was to them an entirely unknown country; and they fared but little better than their comrades at Rangoon. Through pathless forests and fever-laden jungles they had to force their way. Many died of fever and disease. Sometimes in the

"Through pathless forests and fever-laden jungles"

course of their march they came across deep quagmires into which hundreds of their bullocks, elephants, and camels would sink, or become so imbedded in the mire as to be unable to move. Everywhere the force found its way impeded by giant stockades of interlaced trees and bamboos. Behind these crouched the Burmese soldiers, firing with antiquated guns upon the invaders. Against such defences artillery was useless. The British commanders would attempt to carry the position at the point of the bayonet, often losing heavily in the contest; it would have been better had they tried to expel the enemy by means of shells and rockets. The Burmese fought with hoes and spades rather than with muskets and swords. Each man, as he advanced, would dig a deep hole in the ground in which to shelter, and thus protected would fire complacently at the advancing foe until prompted by discretion to seek a more distant refuge.

For two long years the war dragged on. Twenty thousand British soldiers had found their last home in Burma, while fourteen millions sterling had been expended on the contest. At length the Burmese became so demoralised that they were glad to sue for peace. On the 3rd January 1826 a treaty was signed. Assam, Arakan, and Tenasserim became the undisputed property of Great Britain, while the sum of one million sterling was paid to her as a war indemnity.

For the first time in its history the Company had undertaken a war outside the confines of India. It did not enhance their prestige. Vague rumours of

British disaster and loss had from time to time reached the ears of their native subjects, and a wave of restlessness and dissatisfaction swept over the country. Affairs came to a head at Bhartpur, where a powerful prince openly defied the Company by deposing his infant cousin and seizing the throne for himself.

Eager to avenge this insult to the British flag, gallant Sir David Ochterlony led forth his men to the attack. To him came a note from the Governor-General. It was none too pleasantly worded, and Ochterlony found himself severely rebuked for his impetuosity. Poor Sir David! He was a born fighter, and could not understand the halting policy of his political chiefs. To the Governor-General he despatched an angry and characteristically indiscreet reply; his resignation soon followed, and two months later, in July 1825, he died of a broken heart.

Lord Amherst had weighty reasons for his hesitation. Bhartpur was the strongest fortress in all India. Four times during the Maráthá wars Lord Lake had attempted to storm it. On each occasion he had been repulsed with heavy slaughter. The news of the British failures had spread rapidly throughout India. Here at last was a place which the invincible white Sáhibs could not conquer! Even they, then, had their limitations! Remote mountain chieftains caught up the cry and tossed it derisively at the British envoys. "Conquer Bhartpur," cried they, "before you attempt to conquer us!"

Again to besiege Bhartpur would be a very serious undertaking. The British government could not afford to suffer a fifth defeat. Nevertheless,

circumstances so forced Lord Amherst's hand that he was obliged to take the field. The Christmas of 1825 saw twenty-five thousand men gathered around the fortress. Theirs it was to do or to die; for the eyes of all India were upon them, and to fail in their task would be to strike a crushing blow at the foundations of our empire.

Picture to yourself an immense circular ditch, fifty-five feet deep and one hundred and fifty feet broad. From the edge of this rise walls of massive thickness, extending five miles in circumference. They are built of clay, but centuries of exposure to the blazing sun have made them hard as adamant; while they are supported and strengthened by beams and logs of prodigious size. Nine gateways and thirty-five lofty bastions lent an imposing air to the structure. One of the latter was a grim relic of Lord Lake's failures. They called it the "bastion of victory," and it was built—said the natives—of the bones of the British who had fallen before the walls.

The siege commenced. For nearly a month one hundred and thirty heavy guns raked the defences with their fire. In vain, however, was the effort; the sun-dried walls were proof against the heaviest shells. So it was decided to try the effect of mining. Under the main battery of the fortress a mine was driven and filled with ten thousand pounds of powder; the fuse was lit, and the besiegers drew back into safety. There were a few minutes of breathless suspense. Upon the doomed bastion could be seen the forms of hundreds of native soldiers who were gazing curiously towards the British lines. Suddenly a mighty roar

was heard: the whole bastion rose slowly into the air, and amid a cloud of fire and smoke could be seen the flying limbs and bodies of the Bhartpur soldiery. Many of the British were killed by falling fragments of iron and timber. But a breach had been made, and through it the storming parties charged tumultuously into the fort. Ere many hours had passed the Union Jack was floating bravely over the mightiest fort in all India. Bhartpur's tale of renown was over for ever; the defences were razed pitilessly to the ground, and the stronghold, that so long and so successfully had mocked at the flower of England's armies, was numbered among the things of the past.

The princes and nobles of India received a much-needed lesson. They learned that, however disastrously their white conquerors may have fared on foreign soil, here in India the Company still remained supreme.

Over a quarter of a century elapsed before the British ventured to send another army into Burma. In 1852 a second war broke out, which resulted in the addition of much territory to our Eastern Empire; while in 1886, owing to the cruelties of King Theebaw, the whole of Upper Burma was annexed to the British Crown.

CHAPTER XV

THE VALLEY OF DEATH

In a bleak mountain range in remote Thibet a mighty world river has its birth. In the "Mansion of the Gods" it rises; between far-sundered banks it flows —a noble stream—for nearly two thousand miles to meet the distant ocean. The Indus is its name; and those who are versed in the sacred poetry of the Hindús will tell you how cherished is its fame—how glorious its story. But with these we have nothing to do. To the empire-building Britons in the early part of the nineteenth century the river had quite another interest; it separated the known from the unknown; it was a natural boundary beyond which their flag had never yet been borne. And the story of their first excursion into those unknown lands is the most sad—the most disastrous—in the history of our Empire.

Between the Indus and the Company's dominions lay the large and powerful kingdom of the Punjáb, which was ruled over by an aged Sikh king. Farther west still, beyond the sacred river, stretched the land of Afghanistan, bare, desolate, and forbidding, a country of mountains and snow. Afghanistan was

the home of fierce and hardy men. For many centuries a stream of needy adventurers had poured through the rugged passes on to the fertile plains of India. They became the natural rulers of the indolent dwellers in the lowlands. Two imperial dynasties had sprung from their virile stock; the entire continent was studded with the principalities and kingdoms established by their enterprise. But the time had come for the tables to be turned; for the invaders to become the invaded, and for the mountains which had sent forth so many armies to victory to be occupied by the pale-faced conquerors of the south.

The ruler of the Punjáb had but a single eye. Small-pox had robbed him of its fellow in early childhood. An unimpressionable Englishman once described him as the most forbidding human being he had ever seen. But in spite of his physical defects, Ranjít Singh, the famed Lion of Lahore, exercised a wonderful fascination over all he came in contact with. On a certain day in the year 1809 a dejected and weary-looking prince came to his brilliant Court. He was Sháh Shujá, the exiled king of the Afghans, seeking assistance to recover his lost throne. In his bosom he bore a precious stone—the rarest gem in all the world—the famous Koh-i-núr. No other jewel could compare with it in size or in lustre. There was—said the natives—only one other thing in existence capable of emitting such brilliant rays, and that was the solitary orb of the Maharajah Ranjít Singh!

When the Lion of Lahore beheld the glittering

bauble he greatly longed to possess it; for His Highness was of a covetous disposition, and loved much to store up treasure. Every day he made a point of adding a sum of money to his treasure-chamber. Sometimes at the evening durbar, when he sat silent and moody, the courtiers would inquire solicitously what ailed their sovereign. "Alas!" was the reply, "it is near sunset and not a rupee has been sent to the treasury to-day." "Maharaj," twenty devoted voices would exclaim, "my money is yours!" Then the brow of the royal miser would relax, and smiling benignly on all around, he would request the owners of the voices to affix their signatures to notes of hand, which next day they would be obliged punctually to honour. Perhaps, in course of time, the courtiers learned wisdom by experience, and ceased to inquire too diligently concerning the whys and wherefores of their master's melancholy. But of this we have no record.

Sháh Shujá returned to Afghanistan with an army of Sikh warriors, but without the Koh-i-núr—that was the price he paid for them. He found the throne occupied by Dost Muhammad Khán, a rugged and valiant soldier. Once again he was defeated and driven from his kingdom. Meanwhile the crafty Ranjít Singh had not been idle. While the rival kings were fighting out their claims, he had marched an army into Pesháwar, a fertile province of the Afghans, and had added it to his own dominions. This little military exploit is worthy of notice. It was the cause of all our Afghanistan troubles.

Let us take a brief survey of the political situa-

tion at this period. The latter part of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries had seen a great increase in Russian dominion. They had extended their boundaries in every direction. More especially had they drawn nearer towards the East, and in Persia they had acquired considerable influence. Now Persia is by no means remote from India, and the Company were not at all disposed to allow Russian influence to approach any nearer to their own territories. It was necessary, then, to keep between the sphere of Russian influence and the Company's possessions a state friendly to the British. In other words, Afghanistan, the buffer state between Persia and India, must be ruled over by a monarch whose love for the English could only be excelled by his hatred for all things Russian.

To win the favour of the Afghan king was the task allotted to Lieutenant Alexander Burnes in 1836. Burnes was a clever and gallant young fellow, and he speedily won the royal favour. As a matter of fact, Dost Muhammad was anxious for nothing so much as to be on good terms with the British. But one thing still rankled deeply in his heart—he longed to recover possession of his lost province. When first Pesháwar was taken a gallant effort had been made to regain it. The Afghan king pronounced a holy war. From the hills and valleys of their native country the wild tribesmen flocked to their leader's standard. But for all their enthusiasm and spirit, the effort ended in disaster. By the mighty hosts of the Punjáb the Afghans were hurled violently back into

their own mountain fastnesses, and Peshāwar still remained under the "Lion's" paw.

Then it was that Dost Muhammad bethought himself of his English friends. Surely the powerful Company would intercede on his behalf with Ranjít Singh! Otherwise, of what use their friendship? Unhappily, Lord Auckland, the Governor-General, was a man ill-suited for his post. He was firmly convinced that Dost Muhammad was a villain of the deepest dye, and regarded his overtures with great suspicion. So that when Dost Muhammad prayed him to extend a helping hand to the Afghans in their difficulties, Lord Auckland sent a curt and supercilious reply. Ranjít Singh, quoth the Governor-General, had long been the firm and ancient ally of the British; his conduct had been generous in the extreme; and the Afghans should consider themselves fortunate to have been let off so lightly.

Nothing is less persuasive than a sneer. To a proud and headstrong nation like the Afghans, these words of Lord Auckland were a national insult. But Dost Muhammad had more than one string to his bow. Britain's new rival in the East had long been courting his favour. To please the British, Dost Muhammad had long refused to receive the Russian envoy; but now he summoned him to his Court.

Meanwhile Russia had made a bold attempt to extend her influence, using Persia as her cat's-paw. To the north-west of Afghanistan lies the little principality of Herát. It occupies a position of great strategical importance: it is the gateway to

Afghanistan and to India. In the month of July 1837 the Shah of Persia, with fifty thousand troops, set out to subdue it. This was to be the prelude to other and greater conquests. The Shah boasted airily of the ease with which he would march through Afghanistan, conquer the Punjáb, and extend his triumphant progress even to the city of Delhi itself. Great was the sensation in India when the news became known. From mouth to mouth the tidings ran: Russian intrigue had triumphed; Russian generals were leading a Russian army into India! The princes and chieftains of India whispered darkly together. The Company, said they, was about to receive its death-blow.

On 23rd November the King of Persia pitched his camp before the capital of the threatened state. To unlock the "gateway of Afghanistan" he had brought a mighty key—a key of polished steel—which glittered in a myriad points of light far away to the remote distances of the plain. Herát was in no condition to withstand a siege. Her king was a choice specimen of the Oriental voluptuary; her Prime Minister was a villain. Such fortifications as the town possessed were crumbling to pieces, and a vigorous assault would have carried them at the first attempt. But, fortunately for the citizens of Herát, they had in their midst a young Englishman of high courage and rare martial genius, and he it was who now came to their rescue.

Lieutenant Eldred Pottinger had arrived in the city a few days before the commencement of the siege. Disguised as a descendant of the Prophet, he

had been sent by his uncle to makes researches in Central Asia. Like all true Britons, he was filled with great glee by the prospect of the coming struggle, and he resolved to take an active share in it. The king and his minister were only too pleased to accept his services. Speedily he became the chief director of operations.

The presence of such a gallant young leader inspired the garrison with great enthusiasm. For five months they succeeded in rebuffing the repeated assaults of the enemy. The Sháh began to weary of the business. He realised that his great expedition was not destined to write the glorious page in history he had hoped for it; and guided by the sage counsel and admonitions of the British ambassador, he prepared to consider terms of peace.

Unhappily, however, for the Persian monarch, his evil genius was at hand. In great haste the Russian minister set out for the camp. With specious argument, backed up by a goodly supply of gold, he revived the royal courage, and persuaded the Sháh to make another effort. The siege went on. Fresh vigour was infused into the attacks. On the 24th June, under the direction of Russian engineers, five simultaneous assaults were made in different quarters of the city. Four of these were gallantly repulsed; at the fifth the Persians succeeded in making a breach.

Then it was that the courage of the valiant Herátees began to droop. The Prime Minister, filled with dismay, seated himself at some distance from the scene of action, and began to bemoan his fate.

It seemed as though the brave defence had been all in vain, that the city was about to be lost. Once again the young lieutenant saved the situation. Running up to the despairing minister, he shook him violently to and fro, bawling the while carefully selected insults into his ear; then, seizing his arm, he dragged him forcibly back to the breach. The astonished vizier ceased his lamentations; fresh courage animated his ignoble soul. Upon his own troops, as they drew back from the keen Persian swords, he fell like a madman, invoking them with fierce cries to defend their city. The effect was magical. With shouts of patriotic fervour the garrison rushed tumultuously to the breach, and the bewildered Persians, panic-stricken in the moment of victory, turned to flee from the city walls. Nearly two thousand of their number were slain, amongst whom was a Russian general. Herát was saved; and the siege thenceforward resolved itself into a blockade.

Shortly afterwards a British envoy arrived in the Persian camp. He asked the Sháh whether it would not be advisable to retire from Herát; he hinted delicately at the presence of British warships in the Persian Gulf.

"The fact is," interpolated the King, "that if I do not leave Herát there will be war."

"There is war," gravely replied the Englishman. "Everything depends on Your Majesty's answer. God preserve Your Majesty!"

The Persians returned dejectedly to their own country. Rudely had their dreams of conquest been

dispelled. Let us remember that this decisive check to Persian ambition was chiefly brought about by the courage and enterprise of an Anglo-Saxon youth, whose gallant exploit deserves to rank with the greatest deeds in our Empire history. Long may the memory of Lieutenant Eldred Pottinger live to stimulate the ardour and courage of his countrymen!

Let us now return to Afghanistan, where we left the valiant Dost Muhammad and the Russian envoy closeted together in secret conference. Greatly was the soul of the Governor-General perturbed when he heard of the meeting. At all costs must the crafty Russians be thwarted! It would be a disaster, indeed, if Britain's great rival were to form an alliance with the Afghans. But how could it be prevented? Long and earnestly was the situation pondered over by Lord Auckland and his advisers; then they evolved a great and mighty plot.

Of course the cunning old Lion of Lahore had a finger in the pie. The unfortunate Sháh Shujá was also implicated. For the British had determined to play a game of king-making. Since Dost Muhammad was—as they devoutly believed—a traitor and a villain, he must be removed from the throne in order to make room for a more virtuous and—what was of far greater importance—a more amenable sovereign. To this description they imagined that the exiled Afghan king answered admirably. In reality, Sháh Shujá was a poor, weakly, depraved creature, cordially detested by his former subjects. In the official mind of the British he was a worthy and amiable monarch who

had been greatly wronged, and who was now about to be restored to his throne amid the rapturous plaudits of his people. What he was in their private judgment does not greatly matter.

On the 1st of October 1838 a proclamation was issued from Simla. It announced that the Supreme Council were assembling a British force for service beyond the Indus, in order "to gain for the British nation in Central Asia that legitimate influence which an interchange of benefits would naturally produce." It went on to say that "His Majesty Shujá-úl-Múlk will enter Afghanistan surrounded by his own troops, and will be supported against foreign interference and factious opposition by a British army. The Governor-General confidently hopes that the Sháh will be speedily replaced on his throne by his own subjects and adherents, and when he shall be secured in power and the independence and integrity of Afghanistan established, the British army will be withdrawn."

On the banks of the river Sutlej all the pomp and ceremony of warfare was arrayed. There the Governor-General had a cordial meeting with his "firm and ancient ally." The Lion of Lahore was now bowed and infirm with age, his feet were tottering on the brink of the grave; but his spirit still retained the fiery ardour of youth, and his single orb glittered with all its accustomed brilliancy. It was quite a gay assembly. Sunburnt British troopers and swarthy Sikh warriors mingled amicably together. Showy pageants, mirthful revels, and feats of mimic war were the order of the day.

In December 1838 the army began its march. The main division was under the command of Sir Willoughby Cotton, and consisted of nine thousand five hundred picked men, thirty thousand camels, and thirty-eight thousand camp-followers. There was a second division of five thousand six hundred men from Bombay led by Sir John Keane. The political part of the enterprise was entrusted to Sir William Macnaghten, who was officially styled "Envoy and Minister at the Court of Sháh Shujá."

It was a long and disastrous journey. The cattle died by hundreds, and camels fell in scores by the roadside to await a lingering and thirsty death. Around the camp hovered a tribe of fierce free-booters who seized every opportunity to pillage and to steal. Through terrific mountain gorges and up mighty precipices the army climbed. Provisions ran woefully short, and the troops became surly and mutinous. Immense were the difficulties experienced in conveying the batteries and field-pieces over such mountainous country; but the famished and weary soldiers managed to overcome all obstacles, and at length the land of promise lay before them.

Kandahár was entered without opposition. Ghazní's mighty fort—the proudest stronghold in all Afghanistan—fell after a terrific struggle. Dost Muhammad was in dismay. Calling his officers together, he raised the sacred Koran in his hand, and adjured them in ringing tones to make one bold stand like brave men and true believers.

"You have eaten of my salt," said he, "these

thirteen years; grant me but one request in return. Stand by the brother of Futtah Khán while he executes one last charge against the Feringee dogs: in that onset he will fall; then make your own terms with Sháh Shujá."

But the nobles were weary and dispirited; they had no fight left in them; and Dost Muhammad, finding the struggle hopeless, fled away to the wild mountainous region of the Hindú Kush. Then began a thrilling chase. The valiant Outram and a small body of cavalry started in hot pursuit. For six days they pressed closely upon the fugitive's track, sometimes gaining rapidly upon him, sometimes baffled and foiled by their agile and elusive quarry. Neither by day nor by night did they rest; forward, ever forward, was the cry; and the rugged mountain gorges echoed incessantly with the clatter of horses' hoofs and the shouts of the pursuers. It was a long chase and a stern one; but it accomplished nothing. Bribed heavily with gold, the Afghan guides led Outram and his men astray; and the dethroned king succeeded in placing himself beyond pursuit.

On August 7, 1839, the British troops reached Kábul. On that day the long-exiled Sháh Shujá was restored to the throne of his fathers. Through the narrow streets of the capital a magnificent cavalcade wended its way. Let us try to conjure up the scene. The citizens stand huddled together on their thresholds; dark and forbidding are their faces, low and sullen their conversation. A fanfare of trumpets is heard, and half in anger, half in curiosity, they turn and peer in the direction whence the sound proceeds.

Suddenly a procession comes into view. First march the Sepoys, big, bearded men, but looking worn and jaded with their arduous service. Bronzed and stalwart British officers ride by their side. A regiment of cavalry jingles past, and the hoarse muttering of the onlookers rises in volume, sinister and threatening, resolving itself ultimately into loud-uttered curses and maledictions against the hated foreigners. There is a short pause : then the central figure in the pageant appears. Upon a snow-white charger, gay with jewelled trappings, a single horseman rides. From head to foot he is robed in glittering gems ; rubies and diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, and opals sparkle brilliantly from every part of his attire. It is the Sháh Shujá himself. Fine feathers make fine birds, and the Sháh's resplendent robes convert him for a moment into a truly regal and magnificent figure. Yet, watching him closely, one might perceive him from time to time glance timorously around. He is looking for signs of welcome, of glad recognition, upon his people's faces ; hoping against hope, perhaps, that after all he may receive a glad and rapturous welcome. But no signs of joy appear ; the townsmen scowl savagely at him beneath their heavy brows ; and louder and still more loud rises the note of anger—persistent, pitiless, and above all prophetic.

Into the great palace of the Bala Hissar the procession passed. The king has come to his own again. For how long can he keep it ?

Thus, metaphorically speaking, did the British encamp upon a volcano. For it did not require a

very profound intellect to discern that the king they had placed upon the throne could be kept there by force alone. The promised withdrawal of the British from Afghanistan seemed to be indeed remote.

During the winter of 1839 a force of ten thousand soldiers remained in Afghanistan. All was quiet. But away in the distant mountains lurked the real king—the king of the people's choice. Not yet had we heard the last of Dost Muhammad.

It was not long, however, before the dethroned monarch wearied of his enforced exile. He resolved to make another bid for liberty. Emerging from his retreat, he gathered together a small army and moved determinedly towards the capital. A tremor of unrest ran through the British garrison. What was in store for them? Was there going to be a great popular uprising? In the valley of the Purwandurra Dost Muhammad came face to face with the British troops. Boldly he resolved to give them battle, and with stirring words addressed his ill-armed rabble.

"In the name of God and the Prophet, aid me," he cried, "to drive these accursed infidels from the land of the Faithful!"

Hoarse cries of rage drowned his speech. The Afghans needed no incentive to attack; patriotic fervour was glowing in their hearts. Like devils they fought that day, and, at length, the British fled beaten from the field.

The following afternoon, whilst taking a ride, Sir William Macnaghten received the disastrous news. A moment later a horseman galloped up to him. "The Amir is at hand!" cried he. "The Amir—

what Amir?" asked the puzzled envoy. "Dost Muhammad Khán," was the reply. Another horseman rode up, a grey-bearded man of powerful build, with piercing eyes and a sharp acquiline nose. It was indeed the Dost. Dismounting from his horse, he seized the envoy's stirrup and bowed low before him. He was tired of his exile, he said, and although he had just defeated the British, he felt it would be useless to struggle any longer against such a powerful foe. Chatting cordially together, the Englishman and the Afghan rode back to the cantonments. You may imagine with what joy Sir William accepted the surrender of his most dangerous antagonist!

The royal captive was sent to the Governor-General. "I hope," wrote Macnaghten, "he will be treated with liberality. His case is not parallel with that of the Sháh. The Sháh had no claim on us; we had no hand in depriving him of his kingdom, whereas we ejected the Dost, who never offended us, in support of our policy, of which he is the victim." The ex-king received a generous pension, and at Government House, where he was always a welcome guest, he whiled away his captivity by playing chess with an English lady.

Peacefully the British army settled down to its life in Afghanistan. The officers sent to India for their wives; while to their houses came the haughty Afghan nobles, bearing with them gifts of melons, grapes, and peaches. The British thought themselves perfectly secure. The fierce scowls and bitter imprecations of the people they dominated passed unheeded. They were living in a fool's paradise.

Suddenly the storm burst. On November 2, 1841, an insurrection broke out at Kábul. The house of Sir Alexander Burnes was surrounded by an armed mob. Too late Burnes realised the peril of his position. Hastily sending a message for succour to Macnaghten, he stepped out on to the balcony to pacify the mob. But the voice, once so powerful in swaying Afghan hearts, now fell upon deaf ears. The crowd was calling for his blood. "Sikander Burnes, Sikander Burnes," they roared; "give us Sikander Burnes!" In vain he pleaded with them; in vain he offered large sums for his own life and that of his brother: the only reply was the patter of bullets around his head and the hoarse cries of the infuriated crowd.

At length a native of Kashmir entered the house; he swore on the Koran to lead the Englishmen to a place of safety if the guard would cease firing on the mob. Disguised as natives, Sir Alexander Burnes and his brother stepped out into the garden.

"Ha," screamed their treacherous guide, "this is Sikander"—Sir Alexander—"Burnes!"

Immediately the knives of the infuriated Afghans were sheathed in the Englishmen's hearts.

From the King's palace came forth the Sepoy guard of His Majesty Sháh Shujá, but they were powerless to quell the tumult. The King himself was beside himself with fear; he gave and countermanded orders with tremulous volubility. An iron hand and a cool brain would have easily quelled the riot. Alas, that both were so conspicuously wanting!

It was singularly unfortunate that the commander-in-chief of the British troops—then encamped outside the city—was a broken and infirm old man. Disease and age had played havoc with the spirit of General Elphinstone; he was utterly incapable of dealing with the situation. The insurrection in the capital speedily developed into a national uprising. The cantonments were fiercely assailed. It was not long before the gross mismanagement of the commanding officers had rendered the British position untenable. There was nothing to do but to make peace with the enemy and to evacuate the country.

Negotiations were opened up; a long and stormy debate took place between the British envoy and the insurgent chiefs. Their leader affirmed haughtily that since the Afghans had beaten the British, they had a right to dictate terms of capitulation. He demanded the surrender of the whole army, with its arms, ammunition, and treasure.

"The British," quoth Macnaghten, "prefer death to dishonour." So saying, he stalked from the room.

But it was obvious that terms must be made somehow. Daily the distress of the British was becoming more acute. They could obtain neither fuel nor provisions; to remain where they were was impossible; death in its most sinister guise stared them in the face. Oh, that a Clive or a Wellesley had been there! Those brave leaders would never have abandoned themselves to lethargy and despair. They would have cut their way out of the country

at the sword's point—to win death perhaps—but keeping the grand old flag flying free and unsullied to the end.

A new figure now appeared upon the scene in the person of Akbar Khán, a son of the captive king. Daring, clever, and unscrupulous, he at once became leader of the rebels. With him Sir William Macnaghten essayed to negotiate, but his overtures were received with hauteur and contempt. Nevertheless, by dint of much wrangling a treaty was at length drawn up. Dost Muhammad was to be restored to the throne, and the British army was to be allowed to march in safety out of Afghanistan. But before the terms of the treaty could be carried out Akbar Khán set a trap. Privately approaching the British envoy, he suggested that they should enter into a secret alliance; that Sháh Shujá should be kept on the throne as nominal king, and that he himself should become chief minister of state.

Macnaghten saw the schemes of the British—the schemes for which he had worked so earnestly and so well—about to fall to the ground. The Afghan campaign was to end in disaster and disgrace. Britain would stand humiliated before the world—the laughing-stock of nations. And here was a chance of escape! If he agreed to Akbar Khán's proposals, the British would gain a little breathing-space. In the next few weeks anything might happen: we might once more gain the ascendency. So, in direct violation of the treaty he had just signed, he grasped like a drowning man at the straw held out to him, and accepted the Afghan's

terms. A conference was arranged for the next morning.

When the English commanders heard of the scheme, they shook their heads gravely. "It is a plot," said they; "you must not go out to meet him."

"Let me alone for that, dangerous though it be," replied the dauntless envoy. "If it succeed, it is worth all risks. . . . At any rate, I would rather die a thousand deaths than live the last six weeks over again!"

The fateful morning dawned. Accompanied by three officers and a bodyguard of sixteen, Sir William rode forth to the trysting-place. On the deep-lying snow Akbar Khán had spread some horse-cloths, and upon these he awaited the envoy's approach. A group of fierce Afghan warriors, all armed to the teeth, surrounded him. Sir William dismounted from his horse and exchanged haughty salutations with the prince. Suddenly a signal was given: the three officers were seized and bound upon the saddles of Afghan horsemen, who immediately galloped off towards the city. Captain Trevor fell off the overburdened steed, and was brutally hacked to pieces by the sharp, heavy knives of the Afghans. Meanwhile Akbar Khán had advanced towards Sir William and seized him by the wrist. "For God's sake!" exclaimed the startled envoy, struggling desperately to free himself. Enraged by this resistance, the treacherous prince drew a pistol and fired. Sir William tottered and fell, but hardly had his body touched the ground than a dozen Afghans rushed forward to mangle and to mutilate the corpse.

An act of dastardly perfidy had been committed: an ambassador—whose life is sacred amongst all nations—had been decoyed into an ambush and slain!

One might suppose that the effect of this barbarous murder would have been to infuse a little spirit into the British army; that they would have resolved at all costs to avenge their wrongs. But alas! the British had by this time lost all sense of dignity. They heard of the envoy's assassination with apathy and indifference. Far from deciding to settle their disputes with the sword, they embraced with eagerness the humiliating terms now held out to them; they agreed to surrender their war-chest, their guns, their spare arms, and to retreat from the country. On January 6, 1842, the army began its march. There were four thousand five hundred fighting men and eleven thousand camp-followers, amongst whom were many women and children. The country was covered with deep snow. The cold was intense. Before them loomed lofty mountain peaks of dazzling whiteness, which had to be traversed before safety could be gained.

It was not an army that struggled across those snow-clad plains, but a disorganised mass of fugitives. They had been promised a safe escort out of the country, but no escort was forthcoming. Around them hovered incessantly the fierce Afghan tribesmen, who made periodical raids upon the baggage, cutting down all who opposed them. When darkness fell, and the long, freezing nights closed in upon them, the army had to bivouac on the snow. Men,

The retreat from Afghanistan, 1842

women, and children, horses and camels, clustered confusedly together, lacking food and fuel, and without even the barest apology for a shelter. The way lay through the terrible Khurd Kábul Pass. This is a deep ravine enclosed by precipitous rocks—a gorge of unutterable gloom, for even the fierce rays of the noontide sun are unable to penetrate to its murky depths. Through this valley of death the helpless crowd of fugitives pressed wildly. The heights above were lined with Afghan warriors. They were no mean marksmen, these swarthy dwellers in the hills. Over three thousand corpses were left behind in the pass to testify to their skill.

A wild and sinister figure appeared upon the scene. Akbar Khán had come to gloat over the sufferings of the British. Like a vulture greedy for its prey, he hovered above them on the mountain-tops. "To protect you from the fierce robbers am I come!" quoth he, and a malignant smile accompanied his words. "Better be preyed on by the robbers," muttered his victims, "than left to the tender mercies of Akbar Khán!" But the Afghan prince came forward with a proposal.

"Let me escort all your women and children to a place of safety," he said. The Englishmen shuddered at the horrible alternative which confronted them. Certain was it that the women could not survive their hardships another night; but how could they be entrusted to the treacherous Afghan? The British leaders were torn with conflicting emotions; eventually they decided to accept the prince's offer. Among the women sent over to

Abkar Khán's camp was poor Lady Macnaghten. Imagine her feelings on finding herself in the power of her husband's murderer!

The march was resumed. To the unceasing accompaniment of musketry fire, the remnant of a once noble army struggled wearily onward. Nearly all the Sepoys had perished. Hope was dead in every breast; despair writ large on every countenance. Occasionally a little spirit would flicker up in the hearts of the fast-dwindling band, and turning desperately upon their tormentors they would sweep them from their path.

Once again Akbar Khán presented himself. He demanded the surrender of General Elphinstone and two of the principal officers as hostages; and carrying them away in triumph to Kábul, he left the rest of the army to the vengeance of the hillsmen. The army without a general toiled hopelessly forward. They entered the narrow and tortuous Jagdalak Pass, only to find it barricaded against them. It was a death-trap; in that gloomy ravine the remnant of an army was finally extinguished. A mere handful of fugitives managed to escape and to struggle onwards towards Jalálábád, where lay a British garrison—and safety. Six of them managed to get within sixteen miles of the town; then straggling marauders accounted for five of their number.

From the ramparts of Jalálábád the garrison looked out towards the bleak mountain passes. Suddenly they saw a solitary horseman appear, reeling in his saddle like a drunken man; his body was covered with wounds, his hand still clutched

desperately at a broken sword. The officers at Jalálábád boasted a prophet among their number. He had persistently foretold disaster for the army in Afghanistan. "You'll see," were his words, "not a soul will escape from Kábul but one man, and he will come to tell us that the rest are destroyed."

"Ha! did I not tell you so?" exclaimed the prophet of evil when he beheld the rider. "Here comes the messenger!"

The faces of the men around grew pale; their blood ran cold within them. They sent out a cavalry escort to meet the horseman. He was Dr. Brydon, a Scottish medical officer. The garrison clustered anxiously around as he fell exhausted from the saddle. In broken words he told the mournful tale. Out of the fifteen thousand men who had composed Elphinstone's once magnificent force he alone had survived. Stark and cold in the bleak Afghan valleys an army slept its eternal sleep.

A few words will serve to tell the rest of the story. The culminating point in the tragedy had been reached; thenceforward it is all recovery. A new Governor-General was sent out to replace the unfortunate Lord Auckland, who was crushed with horror and despair. Lord Ellenborough, the new-comer, was a man of brilliant qualities and showy attainments. He loved the pomp and glitter of Eastern Courts; he delighted to issue fine-sounding and bombastic proclamations. It was announced that the British were to be withdrawn from Afghanistan, not because we were unable to maintain our position there, but because it had at last dawned upon us

that our policy of king-making was far from being an unqualified success. But first of all the Afghans had to be taught a lesson. The honour of British arms must be vindicated "by the infliction of some signal and decisive blow upon the Afghans which may make it appear to them, and to our own subjects, and to our allies, that we have the power of inflicting punishments upon those who commit atrocities and violate their faith."

Another British army invaded Afghanistan. They found their way strewn thick with the bodies of their slaughtered countrymen, and the indignation of the soldiers on beholding their comrades' mangled corpses broke forth tumultuously. Once again the British flag floated over the royal palace at Kábul. The Grand Bazaar was blown up; part of the city was given up to plunder and pillage.

Then it was that Lord Ellenborough drew up his famous "song of triumph"—as the Iron Duke termed it. By a dramatic coincidence it was dated the 1st of October 1842—exactly four years after Lord Auckland's proclamation of war:—

"Disasters unparalleled in their extent, unless by the errors in which they originated, and by the treachery by which they were completed, have in one short campaign been avenged upon every scene of past misfortune; and repeated victories in the field . . . have again attached the opinion of invincibility to the British rule.

"The British army in possession of Afghanistan will now be withdrawn to the Satledge. The Governor-General will leave it to the Afghans themselves to

create a government amidst the anarchy which is the consequence of their crimes.

"Content with the limits nature appears to have assigned to its empire, the Government of India will devote all its efforts to the establishment and maintenance of general peace, to the protection of the Sovereigns and Chiefs its allies, and to the prosperity and happiness of its own faithful subjects.

"The rivers of the Punjáb and the Indus, and the mountain passes, and the barbarous tribes of Afghanistan, will be placed between a British army and an enemy approaching from the west—if, indeed, such an enemy there can be—and no longer between the army and its supplies."

The throne of Afghanistan was now vacant. The unfortunate prince whom we had rescued from obscurity to set upon a tottering pedestal had come to a miserable end. Sháh Shujá had been dragged from his palace and assassinated; his body was thrown contemptuously into a ditch. According to promise Dost Muhammad was restored to his kingdom. Before leaving India he had an interview with the Governor-General, who asked him his opinion of the English after all he had seen of them.

"I have been struck," replied the King, "with the magnitude of your power and your resources, with your ships, your arsenals, and your armies; but what I cannot understand, is, why the rulers of so vast and flourishing an Empire should have gone across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country."

Two other events of great importance must be briefly chronicled in this chapter before passing on to the tragic tale of the Mutiny: the one was the annexation of Sind; the other, the conquest of the Punjáb. The first-named was a semi-independent state lying at the mouth of the Indus. For the purpose of opening up the river for commerce it was highly desirable that the Company should add this province to their dominions. "We have no right to seize Sind," wrote gallant Sir Charles Napier, who had charge of the expedition, "yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, and humane piece of rascality it will be." The complete success of the enterprise inspired Sir Charles to his famous punning despatch: "Peccavi" ("I have Sind").

The conquest of the Punjáb was a more arduous task. In 1839 the great Ranjít Singh had died. During his lifetime he had been very careful to keep on good terms with the British; he had witnessed their brilliant military feats in all parts of the peninsula, and had trembled for his own throne. On one occasion a map of India was shown to him. He inspected it carefully but with a puzzled expression.

"What are all those red circles?" he asked.

"They mark the dominion of the Feringees," was the reply. Ranjít kicked the map away wrathfully.

"It will all be red soon," he cried.

Ranjít Singh's successor was not nearly so worldly-wise. He had a huge army at his command, and the soldiers hungered for an outlet to their energies.

They finally solved the question by invading British territory. A terrific struggle took place.

Never before had our Indian troops been called upon to meet so fierce and resolute a foe. Four great battles were fought, in which both sides displayed the utmost gallantry. But in the end the British prevailed, and on February 18, 1846, a treaty was signed, by which much territory was ceded by the Sikhs and a heavy war indemnity paid. The famous Koh-i-núr was also surrendered, and presented to Queen Victoria. Two years later the Sikhs again rebelled. This time the British determined to do the job more thoroughly. "If the Sikhs want war," declared the Governor-General, "they shall have it with a vengeance!" A great conflict followed; once again our arms triumphed; and on March 30, 1849, the whole of the Punjáb was formally annexed.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW THE SEPOYS GAVE THEMSELVES UP TO THE DEVIL

"The reign of the British Raj shall be a hundred years." So ran the prophecy. How it originated—whether Hindú or Mussulman first uttered it—no man knew. Mysterious and authorless, it had taken root among the people; to remote distances of the sacred land it had been borne, as it were, upon the wings of the wind, and all classes of the native community confidently awaited its fulfilment. Plassey, said they, had been fought in 1757; the centenary of this glorious victory should see the downfall of their white rulers. To the native mind there was nothing improbable in such a proposition. The history of India from its very earliest days had been a grim record of invasions and conquests, of transient empires and of short-lived dynasties. Why should it be otherwise with the British? What peculiar virtue was in their sceptre that they should endure whilst others passed away? To this conundrum the intelligent Hindú could find no satisfactory answer—save in the ancient prophecy; and dreamily repeating these mystic syllables to

himself, he was wont to await the future with philosophic calm.

The cycle of years was accomplished. Dawned the year that was to see the end of British rule. And certainly if ever a year were propitious for the loss of our Indian Empire it was the ill-fated 1857. A multitude of disintegrating influences were at work. All over the country were murmurs of a vague unrest. It was an era of change. The old order was passing away and in its place the ideas and civilisation of the West were slowly taking root. Railways were beginning to link city with city; the telegraph now flashed its messages over the whole peninsula. It is not altogether to be wondered at if the natives regarded such changes with suspicion. They were more than content to live and to die as their fathers had lived and died before them. For it was their great fear that with the customs of the West would come also the religions. They had a horror of being turned into Christians in spite of themselves, so to speak. And so they had come to regard every change and innovation as an insidious device to lure them from their creed.

Yet we must not forget that the great Mutiny, when it came, was a purely military revolt. The native princes stood loyally by us; the people remained wonderfully calm. What it might have developed into had things gone otherwise it is difficult to say, but certain it is that amongst races so widely separated by language and by creed there could be no united action. The nations of Europe have far more in common with each

other than have the dwellers in the provinces of India.

Why did the Sepoys revolt? What was the reason of their mad and fanatical outburst? Perhaps the blind old King of Delhi supplied the most convincing answer to this query when he remarked, "I don't know; I suppose my people gave themselves up to the devil!" There were, however, other influences at work. Let us remember that the Sepoy, or native soldier, is arrogant and superstitious to a degree. He has countless whims and prejudices connected with his religion, and upon these we were constantly stepping with heavy-footed directness. Discontent had long been spreading in their ranks. They had conquered India for the British, was their cry; why should they not conquer it for themselves? From a certain point of view this argument was not without reason. Thanks to the almost criminal neglect of the military authorities, the Indian army had been reduced to perilously weak proportions: in the whole of India there were only thirty-eight thousand white soldiers as compared with two hundred thousand highly trained Sepoys, while in Bengal there were scarcely any white troops at all. Discipline had been allowed to grow ominously lax. For many months mutiny had been in the air. From village to village had passed the mysterious chupatti—a small cake of unleavened bread—together with the sinister message, "Sub lal hojaega" ("Everything will become red"). What precisely was meant by these chupatties nobody knew. To the headman of each village

they were sent, and he was enjoined to prepare a similar cake and to forward it to the nearest hamlet. Our officers smiled scornfully at what they considered a silly and superstitious practice. But it was evident that some strange secret was in their midst, of which they were entirely in ignorance. The mine had been prepared and made ready; the tiniest spark would cause it to explode. That spark was supplied by the affair of the greased cartridges.

But it is not within the province of this book to set forth a detailed analysis of the various causes which led up to and produced the great Mutiny. From the vague phantasmagoria of events previous to the outbreak, three pictures stand out vividly. Like the solemn preliminary chords of an orchestra announcing its theme before plunging into a tornado of passionate harmonies, they seem to give us a striking insight into what the Mutiny was, and how it originated.

The first scene shows us the banqueting chamber of the East India Company in London. A great feast is in progress. It is a farewell dinner to the newly appointed Governor-General before he sets sail for the East. The superstitious may derive a melancholy satisfaction from the fact that Charles John, Viscount Canning, was the thirteenth holder of this illustrious office; yet few men have added more lustre to the British name in India.

The feast is drawing to an end, the familiar toasts have been duly honoured, and the new Governor-General rises to address the company. It is a wise and statesmanlike speech, but one sentence stands

out from all others by reason of the emphasis and prophetic fervour with which it is uttered: "I wish," says Lord Canning, "for a peaceful term of office; but I cannot forget that in the sky of India, serene as it is, a small cloud may arise, no larger than a man's hand, but which, growing larger and larger, may at last threaten to burst and overwhelm us with ruin."

A note, ominous in its intensity, has been struck. Almost it seems as if the highly strung, sensitive soul of the Governor-General has heard from afar the low whispers of coming storm.

Such, then, is our first picture. "The Prophecy" might be its title. But the banqueting chamber with its lights and glittering splendour quickly fades away, and in its stead a massive edifice, built after the Oriental manner, arises before us. It is the Artillery Arsenal at Dumdum, near Calcutta. Here cartridges are busily being manufactured for the new Enfield rifle. For the old infantry musket, "Brown Bess" of glorious memory, has had its day; an improved firearm with a grooved bore is to take its place. The new weapon requires a lubricated cartridge, and hundreds of native workmen are being employed in their manufacture.

It is a hot and oppressive day. One of the workmen, a Hindú of low caste, leaves his task in order to quench his thirst. He sees a Sepoy standing near and addresses him. "Give me, I pray you," he says, "a draught of water from your *lotah*" (drinking vessel). But the man addressed is a Brahmin of the highest class. He looks with contempt upon the workman. "Nay," is his reply; "shall I let my *lotah*

be defiled by the lips of one of your lowly caste?" The other flushes angrily. "You think too much of your caste," he sneers. "But wait a little: the Sáhib-logue will soon make high and low caste on an equality; cartridges smeared with beef fat and hog's lard are being made up in the magazine, which all Sepoys will be compelled to use." The Brahmin listens dumfounded. Horror and dismay, for the moment, root him to the ground. Then with a wild cry of anger he hastens to inform his comrades. Beef fat and hog's lard! Was there ever a more villainous mixture! To both Hindú and Muhammadan it is equally obnoxious. For to the Hindú all cattle are sacred; while the Muhammadan regards the pig with loathing and disgust. Like wildfire the news spreads. From station to station flies the rumour; and at night the Sepoys hold secret meetings to discuss the coming evil. For if these cartridges come into general use, every Sepoy, be he Hindú or Mussulman, will be inevitably defiled. "It is another plot," cry the excited soldiery, "to break down the sacred barriers of caste, and to make us all infidels!"

The cloud, "small as a man's hand," is already darkening the heavens.

The third picture is dated three months later. The scene is the parade ground at Barrackpur, where the men of the 34th Native Infantry are clustered confusedly together in various stages of undress. All are in a state of intense excitement, for an extraordinary incident is going forward. About thirty yards in front of the quarter-guard, which, unlike the rest of the regiment, is drawn up in regular order, struts

and swaggers a drunken Sepoy. His name, Mungul Pandy, is destined to achieve notoriety, for every mutinous Sepoy was henceforward dubbed a "Pandy."

"Come out you blackguards," he screams shrilly; "turn out all of you, the English are upon us. Through biting these cartridges we shall all be made infidels!"

A ripple of excitement goes through the Sepoy ranks and the packed masses sway convulsively to and fro. Suddenly an English adjutant gallops on to the parade ground. He rides straight at Mungul Pandy, who, steadying himself with an effort, raises his musket and fires. Horse and rider crash headlong to the ground, but it is the steed alone that has been hit. The rider struggles dizzily to his feet, only to be cut down by the mutineer's sword. Now a sergeant appears, red-faced and panting, for he has been running two miles along a dusty road. He, in his turn, is laid low by Pandy's blade. With what excitement do the Sepoys view the conflict! Two British officers lie bleeding in the dust, struck down by a comrade's sword. Their emotion is too deep for words.

But the news of the revolt has spread. Other officers are hastening to the scene. The colonel, not much of a man in a crisis, blinks at Pandy through his glasses, and orders the quarter-guard to arrest him. Not a man stirs—they are all in sympathy with the mutineer; and the bewildered officer retires to report the matter to his superior. But the valiant General Hearsey is already here. Riding on to the parade ground, with his two sons behind him as aides, he takes in the situation at a glance. Mungul Pandy

raises his weapon at his approach. "Have a care, general," somebody calls, "his musket is loaded." "Damn his musket!" is the laconic reply, and the intrepid warrior rides resolutely forward, telling his son to put the beggar to death somehow if he himself should fall. The officer of the quarter-guard finds himself confronted by the cocked pistol and gleaming eyes of the general. It is a potent argument. Discipline instinctively reasserts itself before that terrible gaze, and the guard steps forward as one man. Mungul Pandy looks despairingly around, at the stern, inexorable face of the general, at his quailing comrades, and recognises that the game is up. A quick movement of his musket, a hurried thrusting of his naked toe into the trigger, and he falls self-shot. Seven days later, having partially recovered of his wound, he was hanged.

The pictures vanish; the prelude is ended; and the grim story of the Mutiny is still before us. We have heard the solemn warning of the statesman, we have marked the uprising of the cloud and its rapid obscuring of the heavens. Slow, heavy raindrops have begun to fall, but the storm is not yet. Banks of inky vapour are still piling themselves on the horizon, the atmosphere grows steadily in gloom and oppression, and all nature seems to hold its breath to await the coming outburst. Fortunate, indeed, was it for us that the Mutiny did not break out simultaneously all over the country. The Sepoys had planned a general uprising for 31st May, but owing to the impatience of several regiments this date was anticipated in a number of cases. So that

instead of one tremendous explosion there were, so to speak, a series of minor ones; and terrible as these were in their effect, they were not nearly so destructive. The Military Authorities had time, after the first outbreak, to disband and disarm many suspected regiments, and thus were able to avert not a few, otherwise inevitable, calamities. This policy of nipping rebellion in the bud might have been rendered much more effective. But there were many officers who still placed implicit trust in the men they commanded. Whatever other regiments might mutiny, their men, said they, would ever remain loyal. Alas for such misplaced devotion! The very officers who so persistently shut their eyes to the coming storm were usually the first to fall beneath the vengeful daggers of their beloved Sepoys. Thus were many lives wasted, many dreadful tragedies enacted, which a little prudence, a little foresight, would have most surely prevented.

It was at Meerut that the first real mutiny occurred. There, eighty-five men of the 3rd Native Cavalry resolutely declined even to touch the cartridges served out to them, and this in spite of the fact that the cartridges were of the old and familiar pattern. They were tried by court-martial and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. A few days later a painful ceremony took place. In front of the whole military force of the station the men were publicly degraded. Their badges and medals, records of long and faithful service in the past, were torn off, their uniforms stripped from them, and heavy irons were riveted on to their limbs.

To the Sepoys, who looked on, these disgraced and manacled men were so many heroes and martyrs; they were sacrificing themselves for their customs and their creed. Around the camp-fires that night there was much whispering and muttering. Their comrades' unhappy fate had fired the Sepoys' blood; they thirsted for immediate vengeance. How could they wait until the thirty-first to mutiny while the eighty-five "martyrs" were languishing in gaol? Was not the morrow Sunday? Would not the white Sáhibs go unarmed to church? What a glorious opportunity to murder them all!

It is to be wondered if the men who on that historic Sabbath evening sounded the call to church parade knew that they were ringing in a great and terrible mutiny. For no sooner had the bells aroused the echoes with their peaceful chimes than the 3rd Native Cavalry arose in open revolt. With brandished swords and loud exultant cries they rode tumultuously toward the gaol. Quickly the doors were battered in, and the eighty-five prisoners triumphantly liberated. Meanwhile the 11th and 20th Native Infantry regiments fell into rank. "For God's sake, sir," gasped a scared-looking European sergeant to Colonel Finnis, "fly! the men have mutinied!" Fortunately the commandant of the 11th was built of sterner stuff. Instead of taking the sergeant's advice, he made a resolute attempt to calm the excited Sepoys. Other officers joined him, and for the space of an hour this handful of brave men kept the regiment steady. But the shadows of evening were perceptibly lengthening.

What would happen when darkness fell? Finnis left his own regiment to go to the assistance of the officers of the 20th. Plainly it was impossible to keep the men in hand much longer. As he leaned forward to address them a fresh tremor of excitement convulsed the ranks. There were savage calls from the rear, while the men in front fingered their muskets ominously. Suddenly an irregular volley rang out upon the still night air; a zigzag sheet of flame leapt from the Sepoys' guns, and valiant Colonel Finnis fell dying to the ground. The Mutiny had claimed its first victim.

That night pandemonium reigned. It seemed as if all the devils in hell had broken loose in Meerut. The miserable white residents were dragged from their hiding-places, chased and chivied along the streets, and barbarously mutilated and slain. Neither age nor sex was spared. The city was turned into a shambles. It was a truly piteous and tragic spectacle that the sun arose upon next morning. The whole of Meerut was a study in black and red—black where the raging fires had scorched and charred the dwellings; red where the blood of murdered Englishmen, their wives and their little ones, had stained it a ghastly hue.

And, oh, the pity of it! It is terrible to think how easily the Mutiny might have been suppressed. Meerut was the only station in India where the white soldiers actually outnumbered the Sepoys. Yet during the whole of that dreadful night, with the shrieks of our dying countrymen ringing constantly in our ears, we did nothing. How incredible

it seems! While the European residents were being butchered, General Hewitt, the only man who had the power to save them, sat inert. The general was equally indolent next day. He made no attempt to punish the mutineers. He permitted them to march away triumphantly to Delhi. And yet he had ample means at his disposal to scatter them like chaff before the wind.

In the royal palace at Delhi the last descendant of the great Moghul emperors lived in lonely state. This aged pensioner of the British—broken, feeble, and infirm—was now made the puppet of the mutineers. They came galloping up the streets of the city and clamoured at the palace gates. "We have slain all the English at Meerut," they yelled. "We have come to fight for the Faith." Upon a long pole they brandished a pale and bloody head—it was that of Mr. Fraser, the Commissioner at Delhi. The old king hesitated and hung back, then he yielded to their cries. The corpse of a dead dynasty had been galvanised into a ghastly semblance of life!

There were no white troops in Delhi. The garrison consisted of three Sepoy regiments, who quickly joined the mutineers. Many of the British officers and residents were murdered, a few escaped to take refuge on the historic Ridge outside the city. The most heroic incident of the day was the blowing up of the great powder magazine. It was garrisoned by Lieutenant Willoughby and eight European soldiers. Let us try to conjure up the scene. As soon as the news of the revolt reaches them, the gallant nine

close and barricade the gates. Ten pieces of artillery are placed to command the enemy's approach. In the name of the King of Delhi they are summoned to surrender. Grimly they refuse. Then ensues a fierce assault upon the walls which the tiny band defend with desperate courage. One by one they fall, and the swarming hordes outside cannot be kept for ever at bay. Already they are breaking in upon them. But the enemy shall not seize the magazine—that at all events is certain; Lieutenant Willoughby waves his hand, and a soldier named Scully, who is standing with a lighted port-fire in his hand, acts fearlessly upon the signal. He touches a fuse with the flame, and lo! a terrific explosion rends the air. The great magazine has been blown into a million fragments.

Hundreds of the enemy were slain, but by some miracle Lieutenants Willoughby and Forrest escaped. Scorched and blackened they managed to make their way to the survivors on the Ridge. History records no more sublime instance of courage and self-sacrifice than this feat of the dauntless nine.

Outbreaks of mutiny at the various military centres were now fast occurring. Let us turn to Cawnpur, where the saddest scenes in all the grim drama of the Mutiny were enacted. The station was in charge of Sir Hugh Wheeler, a gallant soldier, but seriously handicapped by age. No longer did the fiery blood of youth run in his veins; the caution and timidity which comes with advanced years now impaired his faculty for command. Thus several fatal mistakes were made which a younger and

more far-seeing man would most certainly have avoided.

There were four Sepoy regiments stationed at Cawnpur with a mere handful of Englishmen to control them. But it was not the Sepoys alone that the British had most cause to dread. Not far from the city stood a fair and stately palace, the residence of a wealthy native prince. Náná Sáhib was the adopted son of the last Peshwá of the Maráthás. The liberal pension which he had enjoyed during his father's lifetime had ceased on the Peshwá's death; and for this reason the Náná's heart was black with hatred against the British. Outwardly, however, he was all smiles and fair words, and so implicitly did Wheeler trust him that when the Mutiny occurred he made over the treasury to his safe-keeping. General Wheeler was, alas! most weakly credulous. For long he refused to believe that mutiny was threatening; and when he could no longer shut his eyes to the truth, he devised an extraordinary scheme for the safeguarding of his countrymen.

Upon the open plain, some six miles distant from the city, he caused some slender mud walls to be erected. Two fragile buildings were put up within the enclosure, and ten light guns mounted to defend it. This entrenchment was designed as a refuge if the danger should come. The Náná's minister beheld the building of the shelter with polite amusement.

"What do you call that place you are making out on the plain?" he inquired of an officer. "You ought to call it the 'Fort of Despair.'"

"No, no," was the Englishman's plucky retort; "we'll call it the 'Fort of Victory.'"

Had General Wheeler so chosen, he could have occupied a "Fort of Victory" far worthier the name. For the magazine at Cawnpur was a large and massive enclosure, excellently adapted for defence. It was richly supplied with guns; it contained an almost inexhaustible supply of ammunition. Yet, for some wholly unaccountable reason, the general preferred to neglect this stronghold for the miserable mud erection on the plains.

And so the ill-fated white garrison, consisting of four hundred and sixty-five men, seventy of whom were invalids, with two hundred women and as many children, crept out of the city to take shelter within this wretched travesty of a fort. They did not even take the trouble to blow up the magazine. The great store of guns and ammunition was left behind for their enemies to use against them!

On the night of 4th June came the long-expected revolt. The Sepoys rushed wildly to seize the magazine and to pillage the treasury. In spite of the gallant efforts of their officers to bring them to reason, they plunged headlong into a fierce carnival of blood. Murder, naked and unashamed, stalked abroad through the streets of the city. Trembling families who had neglected to take refuge in Wheeler's mud fort were dragged from their hiding-places and put to shameful deaths. When the mad orgie was over, the Sepoys gathered up their plunder and marched off, with drums beating and colours flying, to Delhi. Would that they had been allowed

to reach their destination! It was, however, no part of Náná Sáhib's scheme to accompany the mutineers to Delhi. He was convinced that the sands of British rule were fast running out. He was determined to raise up for himself a mighty princedom at Cawnpur. But before he could accomplish this a few preliminaries were necessary. The entire European garrison must be wholly exterminated, and all symbols of their authority utterly destroyed. So with bribes and cajolery the Sepoys were persuaded to return. They were promised a gorgeous feast of blood.

Náná Sáhib appears to have been an authority on the etiquette of murder. His most fiendish cruelties were invariably graced with the airy politeness of a master of deportment. Now, with a quaint formality, he informed the white troops that he was about to attack their position. The garrison set their teeth grimly and waited for him to begin.

Around the frail mud-walls which enclosed the immortal garrison the Sepoys gathered with relentless determination. They had been paid to do their work thoroughly and well. There was no limit to the guns which they were able to bring to bear on the position; had they not the whole of the magazine at their disposal! So began a tornado of shot and shell, which lasted without cessation for twenty-one days. The shells tore through the defences as if they had been paper. There was no cover, no pretence of shelter, from the constant hail of lead. Around the well, which constituted the garrison's sole water-supply, the Sepoy shot fell

thickest. To attempt to draw water from it meant almost certain death. Yet, during the long siege, there was never a lack of volunteers for the perilous task, but scarcely a drop of water was drunk but was stained with a hero's blood.

How the British defended their position so long is a source of perpetual wonder. But the garrison was made up of no ordinary men. It was largely composed of officers of the mutinous regiments—men who were accustomed to face danger and death in their most sinister forms. They were now fighting for their Queen, their country, and their womenkind—all that life held most dear—and they fought as never men have fought before or since. There were also eighty Sepoys included in the garrison. For wheresoever the Mutiny broke forth there was always to be found a small band of loyal soldiers—a faithful few, who, hearkening not to the fiery words of the agitator, attached themselves with renewed fidelity to their white masters.

We will not dwell too long upon the story of the siege. Who shall describe the unutterable sufferings of the women during this period? It is well for man that he is a fighting animal, for the zest of conflict will sustain him in his bitterest hours. But with women it is otherwise. They cannot participate in the martial ardour of the men. Here, at Cawnpur, they could only cluster miserably together, to suffer in silence the dull agony of suspense, until such time as the death of their loved ones should render life both meaningless and void. There were infants born during those terrible days. Poor children! Un-

happy mothers! What must their agonies have been!

How eagerly the garrison looked out for the help that never came! The days lengthened into weeks, but from the outside world came no tidings of succour or encouragement. Still the siege went on, still with heroic fortitude the British clung to their blood-stained patch of earth. But the end could not be long delayed. Food supplies were entirely exhausted; half the garrison were dead; many were wounded and sick; all were unspeakably weary. Then it was that Nánâ Sáhib made his devilish offer. He was, said he, tired of the stubborn conflict. He bitterly deplored the inconvenience which the British had sustained. He offered all those who were willing to lay down their arms a safe passage down the river to Allahábád, and ventured politely to congratulate them that their sufferings were now over.

The men would have liked to fight on to the bitter end. But there were the women and children to be considered. Death for all was inevitable if the defence were prolonged. Much as they distrusted the Náná, there was, nevertheless, a slender chance of escape if they accepted his offer. So it was agreed that the British were to be allowed to march out under arms, with sixty rounds of ammunition to each man, that carriages were to be provided for the wounded, the women, and the children, and that boats duly stocked with food were to be supplied for the journey.

Let us try to picture briefly to ourselves the last act of the drama.

On top of a tiny Hindú temple abutting on the banks of the Ganges sits Tántia Topi, Prime Minister to His Highness the Náná. The date is the 27th of June 1857. The minister casts a complacent eye upon the elaborate preparations he has made, and then, turning, gazes expectantly towards the distant plain. Presently a cloud of dust becomes visible. Ere long it resolves itself into the semblance of marching men and swinging palanquins. The garrison of four hundred and sixty-five souls has begun its last momentous journey. There is no military precision in their advance. The men, jaded and ill, stumble along anyhow. Nor is there music to stir their blood and quicken their steps. No sound is heard save the cries of the native bearers as they groan in monotonous cadence with each swing of the palanquins. A vast multitude has gathered to watch the march down to the river—a concourse of silent spectres who await, motionless and impassive, the tragedy's culminating scene. Presently the procession reaches the river-side, where forty ungainly, straw-roofed boats are moored. With difficulty the wounded are carried on board, the women and children take their places, and the men scramble in after them. Thus far Tántia Topi has watched the embarkation in silence. Then he turns and gives a signal.

Suddenly the shrill note of a bugle rings out on the morning air. Ere its last echoes have died away the river-side scene has undergone a swift and terrible change. The thatched roofs of the boats are blazing furiously, while from the rebel soldiers,

"The thatched roofs of the boats blazing furiously"

concealed in the thick undergrowth, comes a murderous storm of bullets. Náná Sáhib is accomplishing by treachery what force has failed to effect. Many of the unhappy fugitives are struck dead by the flying shot, some try to escape by swimming, some stand resolutely and return the enemy's fire. Three of the boats manage to push out into midstream, and drift slowly with the tide. Two are carried by the currents over to the opposite shore, where a horde of Sepoys are waiting to massacre the crews. The third continues its perilous course down-stream under a constant hail of lead. Meanwhile the Sepoys have ceased their fire, and all who have survived the massacre—one hundred and twenty-five in number—are roughly dragged ashore.

The fate of General Wheeler has been vividly described by a native witness—a half-caste Christian woman :—

"General Wheeler," she said, "came last in a palkee. They carried him into the water near the boat. I stood close by. He said, 'Carry me a little farther towards the boat.' But a trooper said, 'No, get out here!' As the general got out of the palkee, head foremost, the trooper gave him a cut with his sword through the neck, and he fell into the water. My son was killed near him. I saw it, alas! alas! Some were stabbed with bayonets, others cut down. Little infants were torn in pieces. We saw it, we did! and tell you only what we saw. Other children were stabbed and thrown into the river. The schoolgirls were burnt to death. I saw their clothes and hair catch fire."

But what became of the single drifting boat? It had neither oars nor food; the flying bullets had smashed its rudder. But by a curious chance it contained all the choicest spirits of the garrison, and it now set off on one of the strangest and most thrilling voyages that have ever been chronicled. There is no space here to recount its wild adventures and hairbreadth escapes. Only four out of the hundred passengers survived to tell the story. The rest, after enduring incredible hardships, fell again into the cruel clutches of Náná Sáhib, for whose prisoners there was only one fate—and that was death.

The prisoners, who consisted entirely of women and children, were triumphantly inspected by Náná Sáhib and locked up in a gloomy chamber. There they were kept for several weeks, during which time their numbers were swelled, by the arrival of fresh prisoners, to a total of two hundred and eighteen in all. The Náná was in no hurry to slaughter them, but the near approach of the valiant Havelock with an avenging force hastened his action. On 15th July the edict went forth for massacre. First the men—six in all, including a small boy, proud for the moment to be numbered with the "men"—were called out and shot. Then the Náná commanded the Sepoys to shoot through the windows into the closely packed masses of women. But even the Sepoys—hardened as they were to the Náná's atrocities—could not bring themselves to murder the women in cold blood. They contented themselves with firing a single volley over their heads. Other instruments

were quickly found. Five brutal-looking natives—each armed with a glittering tulwar—entered the crowded chamber, closing the door carefully behind them. To the listeners outside came the sound of low wailings, of running feet, and the dull thuds of the butchers' swords. Presently the door opened, and one of the murderers came forth brandishing a broken sword. Quickly borrowing a fresh blade, he resumed his ghastly task. A few minutes later he reappeared, again for the purpose of providing himself with another sword. And so the work of carnage went on. To picture the terrible scene within the room baffles the imagination. The mind instinctively recoils from a scene at once so hideous and appalling. It was dark when the five men—their garments dripping red with their victims' blood—crept shamefacedly from the chamber of horrors. They locked the door behind them, and went to report to the Náná that his will had been accomplished.

Next morning the bodies were taken out, stripped, and thrown into a well. In many the spark of life still lingered, but living and dead were remorselessly cast together into the pit. To-day the figure of an angel in marble keeps guard over this terrible spot. On the pedestal the following inscription may be read :—

Sacred to the perpetual memory of the great company of Christian people, chiefly women and children, who, near this spot, were cruelly massacred by the followers of the rebel Náná Doondoo Punth, of Bithoor, and cast, the dying and the dead, into the well below, on the 15th day of July, 1857.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE END OF THE COMPANY

FORTY-FIVE miles from Cawnpur another desperate siege was being conducted. At Lucknow, one of the most beautiful cities in India, a handful of Englishmen were holding out gallantly against the fierce hordes of Sepoys who hemmed them in on every side. They had, however, one great advantage over their comrades at Cawnpur; Sir Henry Lawrence, their commandant, was a wise and far-seeing soldier. It was a Sepoy saying that "when Lawrence Sáhib had looked once down to the ground, and once up to the sky, and stroked his beard, he knew what to do." So it came about that while the Mutiny had taken other British officers completely by surprise, the outbreak at Lucknow found Lawrence with all his plans matured. For weeks past he had been working silently and secretly to guard against revolt. The Residency building, together with the cluster of houses and gardens surrounding it, was well stored with provisions and ammunition. Earthworks were thrown up, batteries placed in position, and the external walls of the houses pierced with loopholes. Yet so quietly were these preparations carried on,

that the Sepoy regiments in the city were blissfully unconscious that the British were making ready to defend themselves. During May and June Lucknow was seething with excitement. Tales came to the native ears of their comrades' successes at Meerut, at Delhi, and at many other places where the standard of rebellion had been hoisted and the white rulers put to painful deaths. The Sepoys were all agog to share in the glory of conquest, yet during these two long months the iron will of Lawrence kept the city from revolt. One day a Hindú noble came to him with a suggestion. "Why," said he, "do you not collect a number of monkeys within the Residency? Let them be tended and fed by high-caste Brahmins. Then surely will the gods look with favour upon Englishmen, and you will be well beloved of the people."

"Your advice is good," replied Lawrence with imperturbable gravity. "Come, I will show you my monkeys." He led the way to a newly completed battery, and laid his hand on an eighteen-pounder gun. "See!" he said, "here is one of my monkeys; that"—pointing to a pile of shot—"is his food; and this"—turning to a sentry who stood at attention close by—"is the man who feeds them. Now go and tell your friends of my monkeys!"

On 30th May came the most exciting moment of that period of suspense. Lawrence had been informed by an officer of his staff that the firing of the nine o'clock gun that night would be the signal for revolt. After taking all possible precautions, the general sat down with his staff to dinner. Nine

o'clock came, and with it the report of the gun. For a moment the silence was deathlike, then Lawrence smilingly addressed his informant. "Your friends are not punctual," he said. Even as he spoke the sharp crackle of musketry was heard, followed instantly by a loud shouting and uproar. The meal was left unfinished, and upon the Residency steps Lawrence and his officers waited for their horses to be brought round to them. Out of the darkness leapt red tongues of fire where houses had been set alight; the roar of the angry mob was plainly audible. Suddenly the sound of running feet was heard, and a body of Sepoys emerged from the gloom. It was the Residency guard, known to be disloyal. They drew up in line, facing the Residency steps, while the native officer inquired if the men should load. "Yes, let them load," replied Lawrence quietly. A few thrilling moments passed while the men obeyed the order. Then came the crisis. The entire staff at Lucknow stood at the mercy of a body of mutinous Sepoys! A single volley from their muskets and all would have perished. Yet none of the officers turned a hair during this trying ordeal. It was their iron composure alone that saved their lives; for after a few moments of terrible suspense, the troops wheeled off again into the darkness.

It was not until a month later that the siege of the Residency commenced. On 30th June tidings arrived that the mutinous regiments from Eastern Oudh were marching on to Lucknow. Lawrence resolved to strike first, and sallied out to meet the rebels. The enemy were found to be overwhelmingly

"See," he said, "here is one of my monkeys"

strong. They advanced to the attack with a regularity worthy of a field-day on parade. They executed their manœuvres with mathematical precision. One wonders with what emotions the white officers beheld such martial prowess on the part of men whom they themselves had taught to fight. Only too well had the Sepoys remembered their lessons; and after some stiff fighting the British were driven back with heavy loss. The same night all the Europeans were gathered into the Residency, which was now closed for the siege. A building called the Mutchee Bhawan, which had been heavily fortified for the purpose of overawing the city, had to be abandoned. It was blown up with all the ammunition it contained, while the garrison, after lighting the fuse, crept out under cover of darkness to take refuge in the Residency. By some oversight a private of the 32nd, wrapped in drunken slumber, was left behind in the doomed building. He was, of course, blown up in the gigantic explosion which followed. Next morning the sentries were surprised to see a naked Irishman, blacked and begrimed with smoke, hammering lustily at the Residency gates. "Arrah, then, open your —— gates!" he was shouting. The strange visitor proved to be none other than the drunken private, who by some miracle had escaped with a whole skin!

About three thousand souls were collected together within the Residency. The fighting force consisted of nine hundred white troops and seven hundred loyal Sepoys, while there were besides some six hundred European women and children and seven hundred

native servants and non-combatants. The brave Lawrence, who had taken such able measures for the defence of those committed to his care, did not live to conduct the defence. On the first day of the siege an eight-inch shell burst in the room where he was sitting, but he escaped unharmed. They urged him to change his quarters. "I do not think," was his laughing rejoinder, "that the enemy have a gunner good enough to put a second shot through that same window." Nevertheless, after much pressure he consented to change as soon as he could make arrangements for moving his papers.

Next evening, while Lawrence was lying on his bed in this same room, another shell rushed through the window and exploded with a terrific uproar. Two other officers in the room escaped uninjured; Lawrence himself was hit. "Sir Henry, are you hurt?" called out Colonel Wilson, unable to see through the blinding smoke. Thrice he thus called: then came the mournful answer, "I am killed." The wounded general lingered in agony for thirty-six hours, during which time he gave careful instructions as to how the defence was to be carried on. No detail, however small, had escaped his marvellous foresight. "Let every man die at his post, but never make terms," he whispered with dying breath. Of his officers he took a tender farewell, and joined with them in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Just as he was slipping into eternity, he roused himself to frame his own immortal epitaph. "Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty. May God have mercy on him."

Let us leave the brave garrison to their task. The story of the siege of Lucknow is one of the most enthralling in our annals. No one can read an account of those desperate months, of that gallant and heroic combat against overwhelming odds, without feeling something more courageous, something more proud of our great and glorious heritage of empire. Look we now farther afield. How had India withstood the shocks of this terrible series of outbreaks? What were we doing to stamp out the Mutiny?

During the first fortnight in June nearly every native regiment from Delhi to Benares had broken into open revolt. From Allahábád came a grim tale of misplaced confidence and its inevitable results. Here where the Jumna mingles its waters with the stately Ganges stood a mighty fort. In strategical importance it was second only to Delhi itself; its arsenal was one of the largest in India, and in the city which lay around it dwelt over seventy thousand fanatical natives. Yet there were no European troops in Allahábád. With the exception of the magazine staff the entire garrison was composed of Sikh and Sepoy regiments. Colonel Simpson, who was in command, had a pathetic faith in the fidelity of his men. Other regiments might mutiny wholesale, but his gallant heroes would remain true to the end. At evening parade on 6th June he paid a glowing tribute to their loyalty, and read to them the formal thanks of the Governor-General for their offer to fight the mutineers. Within four hours of this little ceremony seventeen officers and many women and children were lying weltering in their blood, while the gallant

colonel himself had to run the gauntlet of his cherished Sepoys' musketry fire before, faint and wounded, he succeeded in reaching the fort.

But even the fort was a very precarious shelter. The gates were held by a company of Sepoys eager to open them to their revolted comrades. Inside the building were a number of highly excited Sikhs, trembling on the verge of mutiny. If they should join forces with the Sepoys at the gates, then all was lost indeed. It was Lieutenant Brayser who saved the situation. He was a born leader of men, an officer of wonderful daring, famous for his swordsmanship and athletic prowess. He seized a red-hot poker and flourished it menacingly over the powder magazine. Turning to the turbulent soldiery, he swore by all the calendar of Sikh deities that he would blow the entire regiment to Hades if they did not instantly obey his orders. The startled Sikhs obediently fell into line. With loaded muskets they were marched down to the gates, and the Sepoys, who had held them, were driven from the fort. A brave and clever feat to overcome the mutinous Sepoys with a regiment of semi-mutinous Sikhs!

The garrison had not to wait long for relief. Fierce Colonel Neill, who at the head of his famous "Lambs"—as the 1st Madras Fusiliers was satirically nicknamed—had just succeeded in suppressing a mutiny at Benares, now marched to the relief of Allahábád. So arduous was the journey that many of the "Lambs" fell dead of sunstroke on the way. Neill himself was only kept up by having buckets of water constantly poured over his head. But at length

their destination was reached, the fort relieved, and the city recaptured. Fearful atrocities had been committed upon the white residents in the city. One unfortunate lady was, it is said, boiled alive in melted butter. Little children were tossed from bayonet to bayonet, while all Europeans, irrespective of age or sex, were horribly mutilated and slain. The wrath of Neill was terrible to behold. He punished the mutineers without mercy, and every rebel caught was relentlessly strung up on the gallows.

In connection with this outbreak a peculiarly touching story is told. There were at Allahábád eight boy cadets, newly arrived from England, and not yet passed to their regiments. Over their youthful minds the glamour of military life had cast a powerful spell; in thrilling whispers they would speak of the wonderful adventures which lay before them and the gallant deeds that each should perform. Alas for their hopes! The mutineers, into whose hands they fell, rudely cut short their dreams of martial glories. Seven had their throats cut like sheep. The eighth, who had been left for dead, managed to crawl away and conceal himself in a ravine. For four days he lay hidden, suffering untold agonies from his wounds. Then he was discovered by some Sepoys and carried back a prisoner to their lines. Inside the hut into which he was thrust he found a Christian catechist. The poor man had formerly been a Muhammadan, and the Sepoys were torturing him to make him give up his new faith. The diabolical devices of his gaolers had sorely shaken the catechist's resolution, and had it not been for the

arrival of the young ensign he would assuredly have given way. The brave English boy did his utmost to sustain his wretched companion's courage. "Don't deny Christ! Never deny Christ!" he urged. From whatever dreadful fate the Sepoys may have planned for them the prisoners were rescued by Colonel Neill, but four days after his release the gallant little ensign died of his wounds.

It was a dictum of the gallant Hardinge that if India were ever in danger and Havelock were put in command of an army, it would be saved. It is probable that this saying occurred to Sir Patrick Campbell when he was seeking a leader for the relieving force that had been collected at Calcutta. At all events he sent a hasty summons to the veteran soldier and introduced him to the Governor-General with the words, "Your Excellency, I have brought you the man." Sir Henry Havelock was then in his sixty-third year. He was a little man, white-bearded and stern of feature, with a passion for religion. He was fond of delivering lengthy harangues to his men—who were known as "Havelock's Saints"—and would often pray earnestly with them. But Havelock was above all a soldier, and in spite of the adverse criticisms that were passed upon his appointment (when he was called "an old fossil dug up and only fit to be turned into fireclay"), he succeeded in covering his name with undying glory.

It may well be that Hardinge never anticipated that the army with which Havelock was to "save India" would number only fifteen hundred men.

Yet such was the sum total of the troops under his command. But they were all trained fighters and full of indomitable courage. It was 7th July before the little force set out from Allahábád to march to the relief of Cawnpur. At first the ground was wet and swampy—at times they had to march breast-deep through seas of slush—but after the first three days the rains ceased and the fierce scorching rays of the sun beat down upon them. At Fatehpur the huge army of Tántia Topi swept down to surprise them. But it was the Sepoys who were the most surprised. They had little suspected that the tired and toil-worn sáhibs would fight with such energy and valour; and within ten minutes the great mass of rebels were flying for their lives. From the Náná's point of view this reverse was distinctly unfortunate. He had only recently proclaimed that the British had "all been destroyed and sent to hell by the pious and sagacious troops who were firm to their religion," and it was annoying to be so forcibly reminded that "all the yellow-faced and narrow-minded people" were by no means yet extinct.

Not yet was the way to Cawnpur won. The enemy appeared to have adopted for their motto the old couplet :—

> That same man, that rennith awaie
> Maie again fight, an other daie ;

for, in spite of frequent defeats, they continued stubbornly to oppose the British advance. The news of the Náná's perfidy was known to Havelock. He had heard of the ghastly massacre on the river-

banks; he knew that some two hundred women and children were waiting to be rescued from the clutches of the traitor prince. "Think," said he to his men, "of our women and the little ones in the power of those devils incarnate!" The "Saints" needed no further incitement. They burned to avenge their fallen countrymen, and to deliver the trembling captives from their bonds. And so, recking little of their slender numbers, of the terrible heat, or of their intense weariness, they strode valiantly on their way, scattering the Sepoys like chaff before them, and striking chill fear into the heart of his treacherous Highness the Náná Doondoo Punth of Bithoor.

They arrived at Cawnpur to find that all was over. A Highlander discovered by chance the chamber in which the women and children had been done to death, and staggered out pale and inarticulate with horror at the sight he had seen. The floor of the room was covered inches deep with blood. The walls were splashed with crimson and covered with sword-cuts, while all around were strewn mournful relics of the murdered dead. Long locks of hair, severed by the assassins' blades, children's pinafores, broken combs, and the scattered leaves of books were reverently picked up and preserved. But perhaps the most pathetic memento of all was a cluster of childish curls tied together and inscribed "Ned's hair, with love." The fierce Neill, terrible in his rage, forced a number of high-caste Brahmins to clean up a portion of the blood-stained floor. Men were set over them with whips to see that they did not shirk their task. The Brahmins, thus ceremoni-

ally defiled, were afterwards hanged and buried in a ditch; but it is satisfactory to know that the commander-in-chief on hearing of the circumstance promptly forbade such a very un-English method of punishment.

What became of Náná Sáhib? That is a question to which no answer can be returned. He fled from his stately palace to become a wanderer and a fugitive, and all trace of him was lost. Occasionally a sensational paragraph will appear in the papers announcing "The Reappearance of Náná Sáhib," but hitherto investigation has shown such reports to be fictitious. Nobody knows where and how the Náná died, or whether, broken and bent with age, he still lingers on in some remote and lonely hiding-place; but if it be true that "the evil that men do lives after them," then surely the memory of Náná Sáhib will be handed down in horror to perpetuity.

The fate of Lucknow still trembled in the balance. Would Havelock and his "Saints" arrive in time to prevent a repetition of the Cawnpur tragedy? It was a momentous question. On 25th July the valiant little general set out to rescue the beleagured garrison. Lucknow was only forty-five miles away, and the dull booming of the enemy's guns, as they poured their incessant fire into the Residency, could be plainly heard. Yet two long months were to elapse before Havelock should reach the sorely pressed city. The first attempt to break through the enemy's lines ended in failure. The English general lost so many men and expended so much ammunition that he judged it prudent to fall back on Cawnpur and await

reinforcements. On 4th August another valiant effort was made, but an outbreak of cholera among our soldiers necessitated another retreat. It was not till 16th September that the relieving force was again ready to march. And then their gallant leader suffered a grievous disappointment—General Outram was sent to supersede him! Havelock had set his heart on rescuing Lucknow. It would have been cruel indeed if, after all his gallant efforts to attain this object, another should reap the honour. But Outram was a brave and chivalrous gentleman. He has been called the "Bayard of India," for all the characteristics of that famous knight were to be found in him, and the Chevalier's motto, "Without fear and without reproach," became him well. Generously he waived his right to assume the chief command. "The Major-General," he wrote, "in gratitude for and admiration of the brilliant deed of arms achieved by Brigadier-General Havelock and his gallant troops, will cheerfully waive his rank in favour of that officer on this occasion, and will accompany the force to Lucknow in his civil capacity as Chief Commissioner of Oudh, tendering his military services to Brigadier-General Havelock as a volunteer. On the relief of Lucknow the Major-General will resume his position at the head of the forces."

On the 19th of September Havelock's army, which now numbered three thousand men, crossed the Ganges. Rain was falling in torrents, but the spirits of the gallant company were in nowise damped. They drove the mutineers before them like sheep, and Outram, who carried no weapon but

a gold-headed malacca cane, amused himself by aiming vigorous blows upon the backs of the flying enemy. At Alambágh the rebels prepared to make a desperate stand. But the impetuous charge of the British, who came galloping in magnificent fashion to the attack, was not to be resisted. Twelve thousand Sepoys were soon in desperate flight, and within the short space of ten minutes a notable victory had been gained. At early dawn of 25th September the troops were drawn up for the final venture. "Fall out, all you men who are footsore or sick," cried the sergeants to their companies, many adding, "And all you fellows whose heart isn't good as well!" Needless to say no chicken-hearts were numbered among that valiant band!

The Charbágh Bridge was the scene of a terrible conflict. Upon this narrow crossing the enemy had concentrated all their strength, and were grimly determined to hold it to the end. But at all costs the bridge had to be taken. Desperately the British flung themselves on their foes. In that tremendous struggle many heroic souls were slain—more than one gallant officer fell to fight no more. Outram received a bullet through his arm, but it did not cause him any great concern. Smilingly he asked a brother officer to tie his handkerchief above the wound. But at length the bridge was won. It was the gallant Madras Fusiliers who led the way, and very soon the entire army had crossed the dearly bought strip of roadway.

An even more perilous passage lay before them. To reach the Bailey Guard of the Residency a long

and narrow street had to be traversed. The houses on each side were loopholed and crowded with Sepoys, while upon the flat roofs hundreds of dusky marksmen crouched. All were ready to pour a withering fire upon our troops the instant they should advance. It was a path of glory that could lead nowhere but to the grave for many of our gallant soldiers, but Havelock was all agog to push forward. "There is the street," he cried; "we see the worst. We shall be slated, but we can push through and get it over." Outram, whose brain was cooler, objected to this course. He counselled a halt until the next morning, when the street could be taken gradually and by degrees. But the fiery ardour of his colleague at length overcame his scruples, and almost angrily he called upon Havelock to lead on the troops "in God's name."

With lusty cheers the troops rushed up the narrow street. It was about three-quarters of a mile long. From the houses, the roofs, and the cross-streets a terrific storm of shot tore through their devoted ranks. The brave Neill was shot dead by a Sepoy, who, leaning forward from a window, almost touched the general's head with his musket-barrel. With dogged pluck the British soldiers pushed on their fiery way. Then a great shout of exultation arose. The gallant Highlanders, who led the van, had espied dimly through the curling wreaths of smoke the battered entrance to the Bailey Guard. Their goal in sight, the men pushed on with fresh vigour. Outram, mounted on a huge Australian charger, was the first to scramble through the breach. With

what joy did the heroic garrison welcome their deliverers! Above the dull roaring of the enemy's guns arose the sound of loud and ringing cheers, which were taken up and repeated again and again by the jubilant inmates of the Residency. Ladies waved their handkerchiefs and tossed smiling kisses to the toil-worn soldiers, while the children—all sadly thin and pallid—joined with no less enthusiasm in the general welcome. The brave and simple-hearted Highlanders were filled with astonishment to find that the little ones were still alive. They picked them up in their arms, kissing them tenderly, and passing them from hand to hand, while down their rough-bearded faces rolled tears of thankfulness and joy.

But although the gallant Havelock had come to Lucknow, the Residency was not yet relieved. It was only reinforced. The British were powerless to scatter the great masses of Sepoys encamped round the city. They dared not leave the protection of their fortifications to seek a safer refuge. There was nothing to do but to extend the defences and wait until further relief could come to them.

Meanwhile a great and illustrious soldier had arrived in India. Sir Colin Campbell, the veteran of a hundred fights, had been sent from England to assume the chief command. His first task was to re-organise the military system of the Presidency. This accomplished, he set out to rescue the Lucknow garrison. On 9th November the Commander-in-Chief led an army of five thousand men and thirty guns out of Cawnpur. The next day a weary-looking and

travel-stained man—to all appearances a native soldier—was brought to the general's tent. He turned out to be an Irishman—Kavanagh by name—who with wonderful daring had picked his way through the sixty thousand vigilant Sepoy troops surrounding Lucknow, meeting with many thrilling adventures during his perilous journey. From Outram he brought despatches and detailed plans of the besieged city, which proved to be of great assistance. "Lucknow" Kavanagh, as he was afterwards called, received the Victoria Cross as a reward for his courageous exploit.

The relieving force did not advance to the Residency by the same blood-stained path up which Havelock's men had charged. "The desperate street-fighting," wrote Colin Campbell, "so gallantly conducted by Sir James Outram and General Havelock—the only course open to them—must, if possible, be avoided in future." A circuitous route through the suburbs was adopted. Nevertheless, the way was full of perils. It was no easy task to lead a small army of five thousand men through the midst of fifteen times that number of fierce and determined rebels. Before the Secundrabágh—a large, heavily fortified square, held by no less than four Sepoy regiments—an extraordinary scene was witnessed. For about three-quarters of an hour our gunners pounded the heavy brick walls with shot. Meanwhile the enemy's bullets fell thickly about our men, and it was with difficulty that the infantry could be restrained from charging. At length a breach about three feet square was made, and scarcely

waiting for the order to charge, three regiments made an impetuous dash towards the walls. It was a glorious race to death. Men of many nationalities—Highlanders and Sikhs, Rájputs and Patháns—fiercely competed for the honour of being the first to enter the deadly breach. Whether it was a Highlander or a Sikh who first leapt through the tiny opening it is impossible to say—even eye-witnesses differ on the point—but it was a leap into eternity. The Sepoys shot him dead as he sprang in amongst them. It is curious to find that in this race of swift-footed brawny men one of the first to enter the breach should have been a tiny drummer boy of the 93rd. Lord Roberts tells us how he found his dead body just inside the breach—"a pretty, innocent-looking, fair-haired lad, not more than fourteen years of age."

The Sepoys inside the Secundrabágh defended themselves with the desperation born of despair. For two hours the fight raged. The slaughter was immense. Of the garrison, numbering over two thousand, not one man lived to tell the tale. All were slain, either by bullet or the bayonet, until there was nothing left of them but "a heaving, surging mass of dead and dying, inextricably entangled."

But at length, after much hard fighting, Colin Campbell managed to force his way through to the Residency. Sir James Outram and Havelock came out to greet their deliverer, and on the sloping ground in front of the mess-house the three great heroes met. Unhappily there is no record of what was said at that historic meeting. But perhaps, after all, the remarks passed by those brave leaders

as they shook hands amidst a hail of whistling bullets would have been by no means inappropriate in a London drawing-room!

It was decided to abandon Lucknow to the Sepoys. The gallant garrison crept out from the defences which they had held so long and so bravely, and commenced a hazardous march through the enemy's lines to Cawnpur. So skilfully was the retreat conducted that not a single casualty occurred. The natives were completely deceived, and kept up a bombardment of the Residency long after the last soldier had left it. But one sad incident occurred that cast a profound gloom over both officers and men. As the valiant Havelock was being carried out of the Residency his soul passed away to its rest. In the beautiful garden of the Alambágh he lies buried, while over his head rises a stately obelisk to tell the passing stranger that the ground whereon he standeth is holy, for the dust of one of the bravest and saintliest of England's warlike sons lies resting near at hand.

Let us return to Delhi. We left this great city in the hands of the rebels—an aged and timid Emperor at their head. The historic capital of the Moghuls at once became the centre of conspiracy, the heart and brains of the great revolt. To win it back at all costs was the task that lay before the British, for the eyes of all India were upon the struggle, and tremendous issues hung on the result. It was a flash of true strategical genius that caused the Commander-in-Chief to march upon the city as

soon as the news of its capture became known. Delhi was too strongly fortified to be taken by a small force of three thousand European soldiers. But the British were able to take up their position upon the famous Ridge, and from this point of vantage could keep a watchful eye upon the enemy's movements. In spite of incessant assaults, the European troops stubbornly held their ground, and for several long months the Union Jack floated proud and menacing from the flagstaff on the Ridge—a perpetual reminder to the Sepoys of the enduring might of Britain and of the stern retribution which awaited her foes.

News of the mutineers' success had spread far and wide. With great joy was it hailed by the fierce tribesmen of Afghanistan, who imagined that their chance had come for revenge. "Hear the news from Delhi," they would cry, throwing their turbans at the Amir's feet. "See the difficulties the Feringhees are in. Why don't you lead us on to take advantage of their weakness, and win back Pesháwar?" But Dost Muhammad remained true to the treaty he had signed. He loyally refused to lead an army against his quondam foes and present allies. Fortunate indeed was this. Had Afghanistan risen up against us, the Punjáb, together with all our territories north of Bengal, would assuredly have been lost.

Even as it was, the task of keeping the Punjáb quiet during the troublous day of the Mutiny was one of enormous difficulty. Happily, however, the men at the head of affairs in the "land of the five rivers" were representative of all that is best and greatest in

our nation's character. John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner, Neville Chamberlain, the Commandant of the Punjáb frontier force, Herbert Edwardes, Commissioner of Pesháwar, and John Nicholson, his Deputy, all were men of exceptional wisdom and bravery. But perhaps the most remarkable of that distinguished group was Nicholson. An Irishman of majestic presence and overwhelming personality, he was loved and venerated to a quite remarkable degree by the fierce Sikh soldiery, who regarded him as the very incarnation of the God of War. A certain frontier tribe went so far as openly to adopt him as their deity, much—it need hardly be added—to that "deity's" disgust. But when eventually the gallant Nicholson fell fighting for his country, his worshippers came to the conclusion that the best way to please their dead "guru" would be to adopt his own religion, and shortly afterwards the entire tribe was baptized into the Christian faith.

The younger brother of the saviour of Lucknow was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet, and it was owing to the prompt action taken by Lawrence and his colleagues that the Mutiny—so far as the Punjáb was concerned—was frustrated and outpaced. There were a great number of Sepoy regiments in the province. All were known to be disloyal. But before they had time to mutiny, they found themselves disarmed and disbanded. Having thus summarily disposed of the existing Indian army, John Lawrence proceeded to create another. The warlike Sikhs and the fierce little Ghúrka tribesmen were excellent material to draw upon, and never

did soldiers fight more gallantly than those whom Lawrence now enrolled in his battalions.

But since the recapture of Delhi was our chief aim, Lawrence despatched every man he could spare towards the Moghul capital. So anxious, indeed, was he to see this hot-bed of mutiny stormed and taken, that at one time he wished to give up the entire North-West Provinces to further the object. But this would have been a disastrous course, and Lord Canning promptly forbade it. "Hold on to Pesháwar to the last," telegraphed the Governor-General from Calcutta. "Give up everything," wrote Nicholson, "but Pesháwar, Lahore, and Múltán." So Lawrence held on grimly to the Punjáb. He had only four thousand European troops to aid him in the task; the rest of his army had marched eastwards to reinforce the garrison on the Ridge. Even the famous Movable Column—which had been organised by Lawrence immediately on the outbreak of the Mutiny, and had performed much brilliant and effective service—was sent to Delhi. The daring Nicholson was in command, and the revolted Sepoys fled like sheep before the terror of his name.

By slow degrees the army on the Ridge grew in size and in strength. Loyal native princes had sent their quota of men, while from England reinforcements were fast arriving. By the beginning of September the force before Delhi numbered fifteen thousand men. Cholera, however, had fiercely ravaged the camp, and nearly a fifth of that number were sick in hospital. Nevertheless, it was evident

that the hour had come for the long-postponed attack on the city. There was nothing to be gained by delay. Yet General Wilson, who was in chief command, hesitated long before he gave the order for assault. He was ill and nervous, and spoke despairingly of giving up the siege and of withdrawing his guns from the Ridge. But the gallant officers who served under him were not so timorous; by dint of vigorous expostulation they succeeded in screwing up their chief's courage to the sticking point. In grim earnest was the bombardment of the city begun. On 13th September, under cover of darkness, four engineer officers crept out to examine the breaches that had been made by the guns. They returned, reporting them practicable; and orders for the assault were at once given.

It was three o'clock in the morning. The curtain of night had fallen gently upon a warring world, and all nature lay hushed in peaceful slumber. But the lustrous stars, wheeling their fiery courses in the brilliant eastern sky, looked down upon a scene of intense and silent activity. Four columns, each numbering about a thousand men, were making ready to dash fiercely upon the city. The service for the day had just been read, and the wonderful words of the lesson were ringing in the soldiers' ears as they gazed upon the stately towers and minarets of the city, looming ghostlike before them through the star-lit gloom: "Woe to the bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery. . . . Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Preparations went busily forward. One by one the stars grew pale and died before the cold, grey light of the coming dawn. Slowly the sun rose over the eastern hills until at length — a great ball of molten gold—it leapt clear of the horizon. Then it was that Nicholson, sitting on horseback, calm and immovable before Column 1, raised his hand with a stately gesture. It was the signal for assault! A great shout, sharp and fierce and menacing, broke from the men's throats, and the four columns moved swiftly towards the city. Then the enemy made reply. From every point their guns broke into flame, and thick and fierce the shell and shot swept through our ranks. Onwards the stormers rushed, losing comrades at every stride, but with every nerve intent upon their goal. Nicholson's column found their breach, scrambled speedily over the intervening ditch, and fought their way at the bayonet's point into the city. The second column was equally successful in its attack. Column 3 was unable to find a breach, so made an extraordinarily bold attack upon the Kashmir Gate. While the rest of the column waited under cover, a small band of heroes ran towards the gate. Fiercely the enemy opened fire upon them; but undismayed by the thickly flying bullets, the gallant men pursued their daring task. The first section consisted of a dozen sappers led by Lieutenant Home. Each man carried a bag containing twenty-five pounds of gunpowder. In single file they crossed the beam which spanned the ditch, flung down their bags before the gate, and leapt into the ditch for cover. Then the

firing-party came racing up. Sergeant Carmichael laid the train. Lieutenant Salkeld, who carried the port-fire, fell shot through the leg and arm. As he dropped helpless, he handed the match to Corporal Burgess, who was shot dead as he attempted to fire the train. Carmichael now seized the port-fire, and succeeded in lighting the fuse, falling back in his turn mortally wounded. A second later the powder exploded with deafening roar, and the little wicket in the gate was blown to fragments. Thrice was the advance sounded by the buglers in the ditch, and the storming-parties came rushing to the attack. Speedily they clambered through the wicket, and found themselves within the Sacred City. In front of a church just inside the gate the three columns met, breathless but exultant. But what had become of Column 4? Unable to find a breach and lacking the guns to make one, they found themselves obliged to retire before the murderous fire of the enemy. But Delhi had been entered! The British flag was flying within the city walls; and after some stiff fighting—in which the gallant Nicholson fell—the entire city was wrested from the rebels.

In the tomb of Humáyún—a stately white marble building some six miles from Delhi—the last of the Moghul emperors had sought a refuge. As he crouched despairingly within this shelter, there came to his ears the thundering tread of horses' feet. Presently a small force galloped furiously up to the entrance of the tomb. At their head was Hodson of Hodson's Horse, the most daring cavalry leader of his day. Unheeding

the hordes of armed and turbulent natives who flocked around the building, and caring nothing for the fanatical attendants who guarded the Emperor's person, he seized the unhappy monarch and carried him off a prisoner to Delhi. Then he returned to fetch the Emperor's three sons—monsters of iniquity—who had been responsible for many fiendish cruelties. As Hodson was bringing his prisoners back to the capital the attitude of the huge mob became so threatening that he feared a rescue might be attempted. He determined to execute the princes there and then, and seizing a musket from one of his men he shot them dead with his own hand. Hodson has been greatly criticised for this action. But there can be little doubt that the princes richly deserved their fate.

With the fall of Delhi the back of the Mutiny was broken. Lucknow was soon afterwards recaptured, and the contest resolved itself into the hunting down of isolated parties of rebels. In Central India Sir Hugh Rose carried out a series of brilliant operations, defeating the brave queen of Jhánsi, who had espoused the mutineers' cause, and utterly destroying the huge hosts of Tántia Topi. Peace at length was restored. In a singular manner was the native prophecy fulfilled. The historic East India Company, which for a hundred years had controlled the destinies of India, came to an end. The government passed from the Company to the Crown, and on the 1st November 1858 Queen Victoria issued her famous Proclamation to the Chiefs and Princes of India:—

"We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India that all treaties, engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honourable East India Company, are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained, and We look for a like observance on their part. . . . We hold ourselves bound to the Natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations by the Blessing of God we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil."

Farewell, then, to the historic Company! Never before in the world's history has a single company of merchants attained to such power and responsibility as was theirs. They produced mighty statesmen, daring warriors, and great administrators. They wielded their immense power with wisdom, forbearance, and discretion. And in the dusty minutes of their transactions will be found chronicled the most glorious and enthralling pages in all our Empire story.

CHAPTER XVIII

EPILOGUE

HALF a century has passed since the Great Mutiny was brought to a close. It has been a period of peace, of unexampled progress, and of great educational enlightenment. It says much for the efficacy of the British Raj that during the last fifty years no foreign foe has set foot on Indian soil, that no armies have met in the shock of conflict upon the plains of Bengal, Hindustan, or the Deccan, where formerly so many wars were waged, and so many momentous contests decided. The peasant and the cultivator may till their land and rear their kine in peace, secure from the devastating influence of war. Even their great enemy, "Famine," which in the past has been allowed to work its will unhindered, is now checked and rendered less terrible in its consequences by the unceasing vigilance of a strong and sympathetic government. The ravages of plague are being steadily decreased. So that the intelligent native, recognising the great benefits that have been brought to his country by British rule, has no longing to exchange it for Anarchy—its inevitable alternative. Albeit, we must not lose

sight of the fact that both in this country and in India the agitator exists; that there are men who, either through ignorance or to gratify some selfish aim, would wish to see the present form of government overthrown. But this class of person has existed since the beginning of all governments; both Clive and Warren Hastings knew him well, and it does not do to take him very seriously. So long as he is kept within proper limits he serves a very useful and necessary purpose—though perhaps hardly the one he imagines.

Of course during the last fifty years there have been wars; but they have been waged either beyond the boundaries of India Proper, as in Afghanistan and Burma, or with small and unimportant frontier tribes. Nor must we forget that that frontier is never stationary. As the years roll by, fresh tracts of land are being added to, fresh tribes of hillmen brought under, the dominion of the British Crown. A picturesque example of such a conquest occurred in 1864, when an Englishman, Ashley Eden by name, set forth with a few white companions and an escort of one hundred Sepoys on a delicate and hazardous mission. His destination was the country of Bhután, and his task was to bring the rulers of that wild and lawless district to reason. For the Bhutánese had long been a thorn in the side of the Indian Government. They are of a race distinct from all others in Hindustan—a mixture of Chinese and Tartars—and, as yet, the tide of western civilisation—or, indeed, of any civilisation at all worthy the name—had failed to reach their bleak and inaccessible

land. The Eighth Commandment was by them more honoured in the breach than in the observance; many villages had been despoiled of cattle and other property in the course of their freebooting raids; and it became necessary to impress upon the populace the seemliness of restricting their depredations to districts outside the sphere of British rule.

The country of Bhután lies to the north of Assam and Bengal, shut in by the snow-peaked Himálayas. The *Imperial Gazetteer* of India describes it as "a succession of lofty and rugged mountains abounding in picturesque and sublime scenery. The prospect between abrupt and lofty prominences is inconceivably grand; hills clothed to their very summit with trees, dark and deep glens, and the high tops of the mountains lost in the clouds constitute altogether a scene of extraordinary magnificence and sublimity."

So it was not a very easy route that Ashley Eden had to traverse. Nor was it rendered smoother by the action of the fierce native chiefs who barred the envoy's path at many points, nor allowed him to proceed until heavy bribes had been extorted. At length, after many hardships, Punákha, the capital, was reached. There the envoy was treated with scant courtesy. In open durbar he was flouted by the arrogant nobles of the Bhután court; insults and abuse were showered freely upon him; and under pain of imprisonment he was forced to sign a treaty ceding large tracts of territory to the Bhutánese. Ashley Eden was careful to add that

he signed "under protest." Under cover of night the envoy and his companions managed to escape from this inhospitable land, and made their way back to India, where they told their tale. Of course the absurd treaty was instantly repudiated. Three months later, on the failure of the rulers of Bhután to tender their submission, war was declared. Fiercely the Bhutánese strove to stay the path of the invader. Their weapons were wild and barbaric, comprising matchlocks and catapults, swords, spears, slings, and barbed arrows, but they wielded them with great effect. But after the Bhutánese had sustained several reverses, the Deb Rajah (or "Divine King") began to consider the advisability of coming to an agreement with his foes. To Brigadier Dunsford he sent a long letter, which concluded in the following remarkable terms:—

"If you wish for peace, do not disturb our peasantry: it will be best for you to go back to your own country without doing any harm to ours. But if you will take possession of my country, which is small, without fighting, and attach it to your own, which is large, I shall send the divine force of twelve gods, *as per margin*, who are very ferocious ghosts. Of this force seven thousand stop at Chamoorchee, five thousand at Dhurma, nine thousand at Buxa, and twelve thousand at Dhalim Dooar. You have done great injury to our country and should not repeat it."

Undismayed by the "ferocious ghosts" the force pushed on its way. But before the campaign was concluded and peace declared a lot of stiff

fighting had taken place. Eventually, however, the Bhutánese were forced to capitulate, and a large and fertile territory was annexed by us.

But the chief centre of interest from the military and strategical point of view now lies in the North-West Frontier. We are continually having to wage "little wars" against the sturdy mountain tribesmen, and in the bleak passes which lead to Afghanistan many heroic deeds have been performed, many gallant lives lost, for the sacred cause of Empire. The steady and persistent advance of Russia towards our Indian possessions has been the cause of grave apprehensions on the part of our statesmen. One of the greatest living military authorities has, indeed, given it as his opinion that a Russian war is inevitable, and that it is only a matter of time before the two great white Asiatic powers meet in a deadly struggle for existence. Be that as it may, it is certain that the Romance of our Indian Empire lies not only in the past; the future holds forth prospects of problems to be faced more difficult than any we have hitherto encountered. And in that day, when Britain rallies her sons from over the seas to join forces with their loyal foster-brothers in India against a common foe, we may be sure that opportunities will not be wanting for the performance of as gallant actions as have ever been chronicled of the mighty heroes of old. Let us hope that the Empire will never lack warriors willing to fight and to die for the great heritage which our fore-fathers have bequeathed to us.

The last scene in our story is laid at Delhi. The

date is New Year's Day 1877. In this beautiful old city the reigning princes and nobles have assembled. From all parts of the peninsula are they come, over many diverse peoples they hold sway, but they have now met together for a common purpose, linked each to each by the common bond of loyalty. For Queen Victoria has assumed the title of "Empress of India," and it is to render homage to their imperial mistress that the mighty chieftains of India have travelled in splendid state to Delhi.

What a magnificent and dramatic spectacle it must have been! The stately figure of Lord Lytton seated on the Viceregal throne, before him in a great and glittering semi-circle a brilliant throng, gorgeous with jewels, and bedecked with all the insignia of royalty and exalted station! Here are the governors and lieutenant-governors of provinces, with great crimson standards fluttering lazily above them. There, where the green banners are waving, the proud Mussulmans are assembled, while yonder pink and yellow flags denote the position of the pious Hindús. More than one hundred thousand persons are assembled on the grounds, and the brightness and variety of their costumes give the scene the radiance of a rainbow and the glory of a garden gay with many-coloured flowers. As the haughty Khán of Kelat stalked to his place, he cast upon each chieftain as he passed a glance of cold disdain. "Sáhib," said he to his English guide, "there is not a man among them!" "But," asked the Englishman, "have you ever seen such a durbar before?" The Khán turned and eyed his questioner with hauteur. "No; neither

have you, Sáhib," was his response; "thus it is not strange that I have not."

When all were assembled, and the Viceroy had taken his seat, the chief herald—whose gigantic figure and gorgeous tabard gave him a very imposing appearance—read aloud the Empress's Proclamation. It declared that Her Majesty, under the powers granted to her by Parliament, had been pleased to assume the imperial title. Immediately twelve silver trumpets sounded a jubilant flourish; then the artillery thundered forth their salvos of three guns at once. The Viceroy now made a long and eloquent speech, at the conclusion of which he read aloud a telegraphic message from his royal mistress.

"We, Victoria, by the grace of God, Empress of India, and through our Viceroy, to all our officers, civil and military, and to all princes, chiefs, and peoples now at Delhi assembled, send our Royal and Imperial greeting, and assure them of the deep interest and earnest affection with which we regard the people of our Indian Empire. We have witnessed with heartfelt satisfaction the reception they have accorded to our beloved son, and have been touched by the evidence of their loyalty and attachment to our House and Throne.

"We trust the present occasion may tend to unite in bonds of yet closer affection ourselves and our subjects, that from the highest to the humblest all may feel that under our rule the great principles of liberty, equity, and justice are secured to them, and that to promote their happiness, to add to their

prosperity, and advance their welfare, are the ever-present aims and objects of our Empire."

With great cheering was this message received. Many great native princes arose to offer their congratulations. Among them was the mighty Scindia:—

"Shah in Shah Padishah, be happy!" quoth he. "The princes of India bless you, and pray that your sovereignty and power may remain steadfast for ever."

Then spoke His Excellency Sir Salar Jung on behalf of the Nizam:—

"I am desired by His Highness the Nizam to request your Excellency to convey to Her Majesty, on the part of himself and the chiefs of India, the expression of their hearty congratulations upon her assumption of the title of the Empress of India, and to assure her that they pray for her long life, and for the enduring prosperity of her Empire, both in India and Britain."

With such inspiring sentiments as these let us bring our tale to a close. When we consider that they were uttered by the great hereditary princes of a country which but three short centuries before was entirely unknown to the nation to whose representative they were addressed, we must marvel at the tremendous revolution they denoted. How little could those brave merchants of the famous old Company have guessed, when they set out in their frail cockle-shells to discover a new and mysterious world, that the enterprise would one day be crowned with such glorious results? Truly the whirligig of time brings about many changes!

"Tipu himself stood firing coolly at his advancing foes"