



a favourite pet in Muslim households, and the queens thought this a figurative promise of kind treatment. The vow was kept; Haidar shut the wretched man in an iron cage, "like an inauspicious crow," says his Muslim biographer, and fed him upon rice and milk and bird-seed till he died.

For some years Haidar governed Mysore in the name of the helpless Raja, annexing weaker States, and harrying his neighbours, until the English agreed to unite with the Nizam and the Peshwa to suppress him as a public nuisance. They had undertaken more than they could effect, handicapped as they were by the treachery of the Nizam, who veered from side to side with the fortunes of war.

There were the usual blunders of the civil power, sometimes redeemed by the valour, pertinacity, and resourcefulness of the military chiefs, Colonel Wood and Colonel Smith. The latter having occupied Mulgabal, a fortress on the Mysore plateau, had left some of his own men to garrison it before going on to join Colonel Wood. In his absence the Madras Council substituted for his garrison a company of soldiers supplied by Mohammad Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic. Their commandant was bribed to yield the fortress to Haidar, and Colonel Wood, who



hurried to the spot, could recover no more than the lower fort. He never dreamed that Haidar and his army were close at hand, till they came down upon him, horse and foot.

Haidar's guns were well served, the English were heavily punished, and had been taken by surprise. They were falling back, when Captain Brooke, who had been left in command of the baggage guard, effected a diversion. Somehow or other, he hauled and pushed two guns to the top of one of the great rocks that lay scattered as if a giant had been amusing himself with throwing stones, and discharged them upon the enemy, while his men shouted "Smith! Smith!" at the top of their lungs. Haidar at once supposed that Colonel Smith had arrived, and drew back for a little while. Ere he found out his mistake, Wood had taken up a better position, and was able to drive back his cavalry when they returned.

The Madras President and Council had interfered in Smith's operations, had failed to supply him with anything that he needed, and had recalled him in punishment for the failures caused by their stupidity and neglect. It was therefore no more than they deserved, when, having reconquered most of what had been taken from him, Haidar slipped past their army, and arrived



at St Thomas's Mount, five miles from Madras. Of course they lost what little sense they had ever possessed, and made a treaty at his dictation, by which, amongst other stipulations, it was agreed that either party was bound to help the other in case of attack by a third power. Then Haidar marched back to Mysore, past the camp of the furious Colonel Smith, who was forbidden to attack him, having put the crowning touch to his audacity by affixing a most opprobrious caricature to the city gates.

It was not long before he claimed the fulfilment of the treaty. The Peshwa's army invaded Mysore, to claim arrears of tribute, and having surprised Haidar while he was holding a drinking-bout in his camp, cut his army to pieces. Seringatapam was besieged, and the Marathas had to be bought off with a very heavy indemnity. When Haidar appealed to Madras for help, Sir John Lindsay, the special ambassador appointed by Parliament to the Court of the Nawab of the Carnatic, refused to allow it, and made a treaty with the Marathas.

To his dying day, Haidar never forgot this breach of faith, and henceforth the object of his life was to be revenged. He increased his army, he engaged French officers to drill it, and maintained strict discipline with the aid of whip and



cudgel. He was now strong enough to brave the discontent of his soldiers, and by ingenious calculations, based on the difference between lunar and solar months, he robbed them of more than half their pay. "Towards the end of his reign he abandoned all consideration for any persons, however respectable, . . . he gave them the vilest abuse, and for the least fault put them to death." If the officer in charge of an expedition was dilatory or unsuccessful, he was abused for his failure; if successful, he was abused for his rashness in throwing away the lives of his men. "In fact, in all his life, Haidar was never known to praise any one." His spies were everywhere, and he himself would go out at night, muffled in a blanket, through street or camp, to learn what citizens and soldiers were doing. "His old servants, and the people of the towns in his territory, dared not speak a word to each other in the street. . . . Cutting off the nose and ears of any person in his territories was the commonest thing imaginable; and the killing a man there was thought no more of than the treading on an ant. No person of respectability ever left his house with an expectation to return safe to it."¹

The only person who went in no fear of him

¹ Mirza Ikbal.



was his senior wife, the mother of his son Tipu, and he frankly admitted to his intimates that he had not the courage to answer her, for she had "a long tongue and a high-sounding voice."

II.

"Viewing the number of Haidar's troops, the splendour of his equipment, and the pomp of his Court," says an admiring contemporary biographer, "the thorn of grief and jealousy penetrated the hearts of the Nizam and the Chief of the Marathas, and to break down the power of that nourisher of the poor and dispenser of benefits, they exerted their utmost endeavours." So they sent embassies to represent that "the blood-shedding English" were daily increasing in power, having taken possession of Bengal, "the mole on the cheek of Hind," and that it was necessary to expel these intruders, "and then they might reign in peace, and without the intermeddling of strangers." The reader of Indian history will be able to imagine how much peace would be found where the Marathas, the Nizam, and Haidar were left to their own devices unchecked.

Some years before, the Marathas had made overtures to Haidar, proposing a campaign for



the advantage of both, and he had then laid the matter before the Council of Madras, openly avowing his unwillingness to join in a scheme which was bound to increase the Maratha power to a dangerous extent. Unhappily Sir John Lindsay rejected his advances, and Haidar turned to a French alliance.

The power of the French had dwindled wofully since the time of Dupleix. But European officers and European-drilled troops, however few in number, were worth much in a campaign.

In 1778, war between France and England broke out once more, with the usual consequences in India. Pondicherry, which had been given back to the French by the Treaty of Paris, made a gallant defence for forty days before yielding to overwhelming odds. The Admiral of the French fleet, a more ineffectual creature than d'Ache, sailed away, and made no attempt to save Mahé, a little settlement which La Bourdonnais had won in battle for France. Haidar, who was in possession of all Malabar, except for the European settlements, intimated that he should consider an attack upon Mahé as an attack upon himself. Despite their former experience, the English made light of his enmity, and after taking Mahé, sent an embassy to present him with a rifle which could not be loaded,



and a saddle which, being made of pigskin, could not be touched by any Muslim without defilement.

Unpropitiated by these gifts, Haidar led out his army to war in the autumn of 1780; he had no help from the Nizam, who shut himself up in his capital, on pretence of sickness, or from the Marathas, who made their own bargain with the English. If France could have realised her opportunity, and sent a fleet and an army to co-operate with Haidar, England, then absorbed in the fight with her American colonies, must have lost Southern India. The Ministry of Louis XVI., true to the principles of economy which have lost great opportunities to other nations besides France, sent only a squadron and a regiment; even so, the combination with Mysore was nearly fatal to the English.

The Madras Council, lapped in an imbecile security, made no preparations, and had no idea that Haidar had passed through the Ghats, until they saw the smoke of the villages that he was burning round St Thomas's Mount. Then one party proposed that the commander-in-chief, Sir Hector Monro, should remain, to give them a majority in the Council, while Lord Macleod should lead the army—amounting to six thousand—without an hour's preparation, against the eighty thousand or more that followed Haidar.



Macleod flatly refused; he was ready to march out at the head of his regiment, but he would not command the army until it was properly formed and equipped for service. "I have been a great many years in the service," he warned them, "and I have always observed that when you despise your enemy, he generally gives you a d—d rap over the knuckles."

The rap came, some six weeks afterwards, at Perambakam, where Haidar surprised a detachment, under Colonel Baillie, marching to join Monro. Baillie stood his ground bravely, though all the odds were against him, and Haidar would have retreated but for the representations of a French officer, who, having discovered the position of the English ammunition, fired a shot from a heavy gun at the tumbrils, which exploded. "Seeing this opportunity, the brave horsemen of the household cavalry, on one of the flanks, like a thunder-cloud in the spring season, rushing and shouting, charged the broken troops in a body. . . . On the other flank, the Sillahdars, like the blazing lightning, fell on and destroyed the harvest of the array of their enemies, and dyed their blue swords red as the ruby in their blood."

Baillie formed his men into a square, and, without ammunition, repulsed thirteen attacks of



the enemy's squadrons, all the while under a devastating fire of cannon and rockets. At the end of an hour and a half, the English still held their ground, but the sepoy's had broken, and could do no more. Baillie tied his handkerchief to his sword, and waved it to and fro, ordering Captain David Baird, his second in command, to cease firing. Some of the sepoy's, bewildered and not understanding what was going on, still discharged their muskets, and Haidar's officers would not agree at first to give quarter. Then Baillie gave Baird the order to ground arms.

So soon as this was done, the Mysore cavalry, led by Tipu Sahib, Haidar's son, swooped down upon them, and slaughtered every man within their reach. Had it not been for the French officers, no Englishman would have survived the defeat. Doubtless in the long agony of captivity most of the two thousand English taken prisoners envied the seven hundred of their brothers-in-arms, and five thousand sepoy's, who lay dead upon the field, where Haidar sat enthroned, distributing rewards of five rupees for every European head that was laid before him.

Under a burning sun, without a drop of water, the wounded prisoners were borne in doolies, or in rough carts, to the various places where they were to be confined. Their wounds were crawling



with maggots, and "infected the air around"; they were half-starved, and almost naked. In one place where they halted, their guards took money from the country people who flocked to see the prisoners as if they had been wild beasts; and "indeed we were most miserable-looking creatures," records John Lindsay, one of the captives, a boy of nineteen.

David Baird, with two sabre wounds in his head, a ball in his thigh, and a pike-thrust in his arm, was sent with others to Seringatapam, where the official in charge of the prison served out irons weighing about nine pounds each pair. Captain Lucas, who spoke the language perfectly, represented that to fether Baird's leg, crippled by an open wound, would be to kill him. The gaoler was inexorable; "the Sirkar" (Government) had sent as many pairs of irons as there were prisoners, and they must be worn. "Then put two sets on me," said Lucas.

The gaoler relented so far as to send to the governor of the prison "to open the book of fate." The messenger came back to say that the book had been opened, and "the Captain's fate was good," so Baird escaped the irons for a short time.

Every one knows how, when it was told at Newbyth that Haidar's prisoners were fettered



together, two and two, Baird's mother, thinking of her restless, active son, exclaimed: "Heaven help the chiel that's tied to our Davie!" What is not so well known, perhaps, is that "it is one of the most remarkable and beautiful features of this dreadful captivity that every man during its continuation seemed more anxious for his fellow-sufferers than for himself; and that every opportunity was seized by the whole party to ameliorate the condition of those who were at times even worse off than themselves."

In a large house at some distance were confined over a hundred privates of the 73rd Highlanders, who, hearing through native servants of the miserable plight of Baird and the rest, picked out the soundest and most wholesome part of the food supplied to them, and contrived to smuggle it in to the officers' mess. The sepoy who had been taken with them, cruelly treated and kept at hard labour, in their turn saved a part of their own miserable rations to give to their white brothers-in-arms.

Crowded together, suffering from horrible diseases, getting news from outside only when their captors could taunt them with an English defeat, tortured by such hunger that the sternest self-control was needed to prevent them from snatching the scraps of food out of each other's hands,



the prisoners still kept up their hearts. The six books found among them—a volume of Smollett's 'History of England,' a volume of Pope, half of Johnson's Dictionary, a prayer-book, and Mrs Glass's Cookery—were taken from them every evening, "from the supposition that, with the assistance of books, in the night Europeans could do a great deal of mischief when left to themselves," but they manufactured cards, chess-boards, and other games to pass the long hours. Fettered as they were, when cheered by a dinner of stewed mutton, Lindsay and Baird had a wrestling match; Baird caught his foot in the chain of Lindsay's irons, and fell, scratching his face, while Lindsay narrowly escaped a thrashing from their surly Muslim gaoler, who insisted that the prisoners, being the property of Haidar, must not presume to injure themselves or each other.

Haidar continually tempted them with splendid offers: let them enter his service, and they should be taken from the prison to a palace, where they should receive three times the amount of their pay in the English army, and have as many horses, palkis, and wives as they desired. But the captives stayed in their prison, and as the fourth of June came round each year, they made what cheer they could with sherbet and plantains, and drank to the health of their king.



Many, including Lucas, were relieved by death. One Englishman who fell into Haidar's clutch, and survived to tell a grim story, was left chained to the dead body of his friend and fellow-captive while it rotted in the heat; but this extremity of cruelty seems to have been spared to the officers at Seringatapam.

They had a narrow escape when an unhappy man, who spoke the language of their gaolers, went out of his mind, and declared he had important secrets to reveal. He could have betrayed the few alleviations they had contrived or procured, and particularly the letters written with pens of fowl quills and ink made from the smoke of a lamp, and smuggled to other prisoners, one of which would have been the death-warrant of every man. Reasoning was useless, and his friends grimly debated whether it were not expedient to smother him in the night. Baird prevailed upon them to wait till the next morning, pointing out that the sudden death of a man who had promised to disclose secrets would certainly cause suspicion. Next day an official came to hold an inquiry. After much wild talk, the lunatic declared that his fellow-prisoners were in a conspiracy to murder him, and in proof of it, took from his pocket a piece of bread which he declared to be poisoned.

There was a general sensation, and the official



was obviously impressed. "The man is mad," quoth Baird, and seizing the bread swallowed it. As he was none the worse, the gaolers troubled no more about the revelations of the lunatic, and the captives were delivered from deadly peril.

Three years and eight months had dragged by, and all save Baird had renounced any hope of freedom, when one day the Brahman who doled out to the captives the sixpence a day out of which each man had to purchase food, clothing, and everything else that he required, came round with the gaoler, and ordered that Baird, Lindsay, and another should be freed from their irons and taken from the prison. Baird, who had been threatened with all manner of ill-usage, declined to stir until he knew for what purpose he was wanted, and Lindsay was equally resolute, until the gaoler replied that peace was proclaimed, and letters from home were waiting for them.

III.

While Haidar's captives were enduring their sorrows, many things happened in Southern India.

Warren Hastings, the first to bear the title of Governor-General, was then at Calcutta, and on



hearing of the disaster of Perambakam, he sent Eyre Coote to Madras. Clive's lieutenant was nearly sixty, and his health had broken under his labours, but his head was clear and his spirit high as in the days when he took Pondicherry. Ere he could arrive at Madras, Haidar had taken Arcot by assault, and was laying siege to the fortified places near—among them Wandiwash, where Lieutenant Flint held out with a courage and resourcefulness recognised in the warmest terms by Coote, but by no one else. The Court of Directors refused even to give the lieutenant a step in promotion.

As usual, Mohammad Ali was of little assistance to his friends the English. On arriving in Madras, Coote went to visit him and asked: "What have you done with your troops?" "Certain English gentlemen," replied the Nawab, "strongly insisted that one European or man of their country was equal to twenty men of this country, as had been often seen, and why should money be thrown away in employing such useless men? Relying on deceiving words like these, I have disbanded my troops."

The Muslim historian who tells this story asserts that "the General smiled"—which may or may not be true. He made short work with the repentant Nawab, who "hid the face of shame in the hood of patience," and took the horses out



of his stables and the stables of his sons and relations, and the carriage-oxen of the merchants and citizens, for the force that he contrived to raise.

Having collected an army, Coote marched southward, revictualling the fortified places as he went, and raising the siege of Wandiwash just as Flint's ammunition ran out. There was nearly such a disaster as was to make the name of Saratoga hateful to Englishmen two years later. A French fleet with a French regiment on board, was off the Coromandel coast, cutting his communications by sea; and Haidar, who had followed him closely, was between his army and the country inland. Madras, guarded by invalids, could do nothing to help him. Haidar, who perfectly understood the position, withstood all temptation to risk a battle. Let the French admiral merely remain where he was for a few days, and the last English army must be starved into surrender. "Never had France such an opportunity. It was an absolute certainty. Sir Eyre Coote saw it; Haidar Ali saw it; every man in the army saw it; every man in the fleet saw it, excepting one,"¹—and that one was the Admiral, who sailed back to the islands, having done nothing for France or France's allies.

In June 1782, Coote and Haidar encountered each other near Arni. Coote was very ill, his men

¹ Malleson.



were tired with a long march, he had Tipu before him and Haidar at his rear, and yet he contrived to avert disaster, and even to capture a gun. Four days afterwards Haidar led the English into an ambuscade, and they suffered severely. It was the last time that the two old enemies were to meet.

The decisive action was to take place not on land, but at sea. France, too late, had sent out a fleet under the Commandant de Suffren, the most distinguished captain in her navy, and he planned to surprise Trincomali, and succeeded, in spite of being hampered with incapable subordinates. To lose Trincomali would be fatal to the English in Southern India; they had no "half-way house" such as the French possessed in the Isles of France and Bourbon, and it was at Trincomali harbour that their ships went to refit. Sir Edward Hughes, the English admiral, sailed from Madras as quickly as he could on hearing that the French fleet was dangerously near Ceylon, and, the wind being against him, arrived just in time to see the French fleet lying in the bay, and the fleurs-de-lis waving from the forts.

Much against the wishes of his captains, Suffren decided to go out and fight Hughes. He knew that Bussy was on his way from France, and was expected daily to arrive in the land where his triumphs were still remembered. If Hughes could be cleared out of the way, there would be nothing



to prevent the French overrunning all India south of the Krishna. Moreover, he had ascertained that Hughes had only twelve ships to his fourteen.

So he weighed anchor and sailed away towards the English fleet, and his sulky captains formed line so badly that he signalled to them to reserve fire until they should be at close quarters. His signal was misunderstood as a command to open fire at once, and in a few minutes both fleets were hard at work. Still possessed with ill-temper, some of the French captains had manœuvred their ships so clumsily that only two were ready to support Suffren when his *Héros* bore down upon the English centre, where Hughes waited for him with five other vessels.

For an hour they fought hand to hand, and then Suffren could do no more against such odds, and signalled to two more of his fleet to come to his help. Neither obeyed.

At either end of the line, French and English were firing at long distances, without much display of skill on either side, rather to the advantage of the French. But after another half-hour, though in the meanwhile two other ships had come up to his rescue, the *Héros* was cruelly mangled. The hail of shot from the English ships brought down mainmast, fore-topmast, and mizzen-topmast, and the English cheered wildly, thinking that Suffren had struck his flag.



From his station on the poop, Suffren's voice was heard above all the hideous din of battle: "Bring flags! bring up all the flags that are below and cover my ship with them!"

The men leaped to do his bidding, and it was the turn of the English to feel distressed. Then Suffren was told that his ammunition had run out. But he still had powder, and continued to fire with that, in the hope of putting off the moment when, having spiked the guns, he would blow up his ship and those around her.

Then came a shift of wind, and the French vanguard came up to relieve the ships in the centre. Night fell, and the battle ceased before either side had prevailed, although the English were decidedly in evil plight. Both fleets anchored near the battle-field, too crippled and exhausted to fight more or to sail away. Next morning the French entered Trincomali, and the English steered for Madras.

The news of Suffren's capture of Trincomali came in time to cheer Haidar, who was dying of cancer. He also heard of the death of Eyre Coote, worn out by battles and marches, and, we are told, "sighed deeply, and said: 'He was a wise and an able man.'" In December 1782 "the lion-hearted Prince, whose disposition was mild as that of an antelope," according to his biographer, left a world in which "from morning till night he never remained a moment idle."



VII.

THE TIGER OF MYSORE—1782-1799

"The Nazarenes, on contemplating from the sea-shore the sagacity of our king, forget their own schemes and counsels.

"Owing to the justice of this king, the deer of the forest make their pillow of the lion and the tiger, and their mattress of the leopard and the panther."

—*Encomiastic Ode recited before Tipu Sultan.*



VII.

THE TIGER OF MYSORE—1782-1799.

It might truly be said of Haidar's son and successor that, where his father chastised men with whips, he chastised them with scorpions. Haidar was cruel as a matter of policy; Tipu from a beast-like love of cruelty. Haidar, as his story has shown, tried to keep faith with his enemies; Tipu betrayed even his friends, and took the first opportunity of murdering two nobles who had served his father most faithfully, their crime being that they were rich and powerful.

It is impossible to give the details of his cruelties. If some stories have been exaggerated by malice, his own memoirs and correspondence bear evidence against him. He was a vindictive persecutor of the Christians in his dominions, sixty thousand of whom he imprisoned at once. In a letter written to one of his officers, who was besieging a town, he orders that in case of an assault "every living creature in it, whether man



or woman, old or young, child, dog, cat, or anything else, must be put to the sword," with the exception of one man, probably reserved for a worse fate. In another letter he instructs an official to promise release to a culprit provided that he sends for his family, and having thus secured them all, to throw every member into prison. Elsewhere, he directs the crucifixion of an offender, and of his nephew, "if he should be more than twenty-five years of age," and the confinement of his family in irons. A third official is warned that if people should persist in coming to his house to transact business instead of going to the proper place, the Kacchari, "their ears and noses should be dispensed with." An order to one of his generals to cross a river, during a campaign against the Marathas, is thus worded: "You must leave the women and other rubbish, together with the superfluous baggage of your army, behind." When some of the Nizam's cavalry had been captured, he orders concisely, "Let the prisoners be strangled, and the horses be taken into government service."

His father had been "the lion"; he would be "the tiger." The tiger's stripe was stamped on the binding of his books, engraved on his plate and firearms, woven into his soldiers' uniforms, and formed the watermark of the paper that he



used. His throne stood upon a tiger, and tigers' heads of gold and jewels adorned the railing round it, and the tiger stripe gleamed in its pearl-fringed canopy, over which hovered a bird of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. His favourite toy was an organ in the shape of a tiger mauling a prostrate British soldier. "I would rather live two days as a tiger than two hundred years as a sheep," was his favourite saying.

Unhappily for Southern India, he was to have more than two days.

The French alliance did not profit him as much as he had intended. Bussy arrived, in the March after Haidar's death, but not the General who had held the Deccan in awe: this was an ill-tempered old man, who shut himself up in his tent all day, and would do nothing that interfered with his comfort. The English were trying to regain Fort St David; Suffren by a daring manœuvre succeeded in running his ships abreast of the fort, in the place just vacated by Hughes, without firing a shot. Hughes was driven back to Madras, and Suffren landed to urge Bussy to attack the English at once. All the advantages of position, numbers, and equipment were with him. Bussy would not exert himself. "Do you expect me to take my ships to beat the enemy on shore?" cried Suffren, as he went back to his fleet.



When at length Bussy ordered a sortie, it was a failure. Tipu's biographer says that "Time, at seeing the killed, shed showers of tears, and Mars, from fear at the blood shed by these valorous men, fled to the fifth heaven." The English troops were driven to retreat, but the Madras sepoy's formed up from the right and left, covering their backs with their own bodies, and drove back the French. The Colonel of one of the English regiments vowed that he could not understand why his men did not hold their ground, since all were tried men, having stood their trial at the Old Bailey.

Thanks to the Madras regiments, the French were repulsed with heavy loss, one of the prisoners being a sergeant in the regiment of Aquitaine, hereafter to be known as Charles John XIV. of Sweden, who always retained a grateful memory of the kindness of the English. A few days later came the news that preliminaries of peace had been signed between France and England. Suffren perforce went home, and was killed in a duel about four years later, thereby, in the opinion of experts, affecting the course of French and English naval history.

Tipu's memoirs records his fury with "Bussy, the worthless commander of the French, who, being in his dotage, had lost his wits—at least



two-thirds of them," when "the two accursed ones concluded an accommodation." He worked off his rage in an expedition to the Malabar coast, where a force sent from Bombay under General Matthews had lately captured Bednore and other places. Matthews was forced to surrender to him, on condition of being allowed to retire with all his army, and nevertheless was made prisoner, with most of his officers and men. Two were cut to pieces by Tipu's orders; Matthews and sixteen others died in captivity, and it was said in the bazaar at Seringatapam that their food had been poisoned.

At last the war was ended by a treaty which bound either side to restore the places captured by the other, and to surrender all prisoners. Thus it was that Baird and his companions were released. Tipu acted with his usual treachery, retaining a great part of those who had survived their captivity, and the Madras Council had not the courage to insist.

Both sides realised that the peace could not last, and sought to make alliances against the day of battle. In spite of his disappointment with Bussy, Tipu still craved French support, and he sent an embassy all the way to Paris to ask it. But too much was happening in France for Louis XVI. to have time to think of India, even



if his dull brain had been capable of grasping the issues at stake. Tipu gained nothing but empty promises in return for his embassy; Marie Antoinette gained some exquisitely fine muslin, such as only certain looms in India were capable of making, and when she drove on the last day of her life from the Conciergerie to the Place de la Révolution, she wore over her shoulders a fichu made from the gift of Tipu Sultan.

Tipu did not mean to wait for France's help, but to take what he could, whenever he saw an opportunity, and for the next year he was continually invading his neighbours' territories, or putting down rebellions in his own dominions. He now called himself Padishah, or King, and coined money without the name of Shah Alam upon it, some of which he sent to Delhi. This last proceeding was viewed as a piece of unexampled insolence, when even the Nizam stamped his coins with the titles of the Emperor. For some time the Madras Council, having burned their fingers severely, forbore to meddle with him, but when he attempted to seize the country of their faithful ally, the Raja of Travancore, desecrating temples and burning down towns and villages, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, after vainly trying remonstrance, determined upon war. He captured Bangalore, the second



town in Mysore, while Tipu fell back upon Seringatapam, and murdered the survivors of the English captives whom he had detained in defiance of the late treaty, lest they should tell tales. His capital was invested, and he was obliged to make another treaty, whereby he ceded half his dominions—including the province of Coorg, which he had subdued with fearful cruelty—delivered up all his prisoners, paid an indemnity, and gave over two of his sons as hostages for the fulfilment of all the conditions.

Again there was an interval of peace while Tipu plotted revenge. He ground down the wretched cultivators of Mysore, in order to raise the money for the indemnity, while he lost no opportunity of stirring up strife between the English, the Marathas, and the Nizam. Again he sought French help, sending an embassy to the Isle of France, to ask a fleet and an army to expel "the shameless, thieving, robbing English." There was a Jacobin Club among the Frenchmen employed in Mysore, and they planted a tree of liberty in the principal square of Seringatapam, vowing hatred to all kings, save "Citoyen Tipu, the ally of the French Republic," and singing "Amour sacré de la patrie." There was also a large French contingent in the Nizam's army, whose commandant, an ardent Jacobin, was



Tipu's friend. Revenge might be easy, if only a French expedition were sent from Egypt to India. The English knew it, and so did "Citizen Tipu," who had slept upon canvas ever since Cornwallis defeated him, vowing to lie upon his bed again when he should have set his foot on the necks of the English.

A new Governor-General, Lord Mornington (better known as Marquis Wellesley, and brother to the Duke of Wellington), was quick to act. The Nizam was obliged to disband his French contingent, and Tipu was required to renounce any French alliance. At first Tipu endorsed the Governor-General's letters—"No answer"; then he replied with protestations of friendship, and at the same time sent overtures to the French Directory. Offered the choice between peace and war, he chose war, and was utterly defeated.

He made his last stand within the walls of his capital. "Who can take Seringapatam?" he would say, and he thought to hold out there until the English were weary, or had work elsewhere found for them by the Marathas and others. But there was treachery within. Tipu was to reap the fruit of his cruelty and caprice, his habit of promoting men of low class, and putting down old servants of the state, his love of innovation, his self-confidence and arrogance. His own nobles were turning



against him, and it is said that some of them betrayed him to the English. Without was the man—now a General—who for more than three years had endured captivity in the prison near the palace, and had seen his friends suffer and die beside him.

It was the night of May 3rd, and the English engineers had reported to General Harris that the breach was nearly practicable. "We have but two days' rice in camp for the fighting men," said the Adjutant-General, "and if we do not succeed to-morrow, we must go."—"Either we succeed to-morrow," answered Baird, who had volunteered to lead the storming party, "or you never see me more."

Before daybreak the troops were in the trenches, and Baird, passing along them, had recognised some of his fellow-captives and bidden them be of good cheer, for they would soon have a chance to pay off old scores. Long hours dragged away before the preparations were complete; it was not till past one o'clock in the afternoon that Baird stepped out of the trenches, and waving his sword, called aloud, "Now, my brave fellows, follow me, and prove yourselves worthy of the name of British soldiers."

He led them over the Kaveri, by the ford marked out during the night by a lieutenant,



while the shot rained about him thick and fast, yet never touched him, and up to the breach, whence the British flag was waving in six minutes.

Meanwhile Tipu's astrologers were prophesying evil things, and the Sultan, forgetting his zeal for the religion of the Prophet, was making last desperate efforts to avert his doom, presenting an elephant to a Brahman, and dividing rupees and cloth among an assembly of poor men and women. Then he ordered his dinner to be brought, and had swallowed only a mouthful when the sounds of weeping and wailing arose without. He asked the cause, was told that one of his most trusted officers had been slain, and immediately left off eating and washed his hands, saying, "We also shall soon depart." Then he mounted his horse, and rode from his palace for the last time.

Baird had halted his column, to give them a little time to breathe, when a Muslim officer was brought to him, with news of twelve grenadiers of the 33rd who had lost their way and been taken prisoners in a night attack. They had been murdered, he said, in parties of three at a time, their heads twisted while their bodies were held fast, by order of Tipu.

As he marched to the palace, Baird vowed that, if the tale were true, Tipu should be handed over to the 33rd Regiment to be tried for murder.



But on second thoughts, he decided that the officer was lying for some private end—wherein he did him an injustice—and sent forward to offer protection to every one in the palace, including the Sultan, if an unconditional surrender were made at once.

The terror-stricken princes in the palace swore that they knew not where their father might be, and a search in every room except those of the zenana failed to produce him. He had been seen last upon the north rampart, firing upon the advancing columns with his own hands, while his attendants loaded for him, but no one could tell what had become of him.

At last an official of the palace admitted having heard a story that the Sultan had been wounded at a gateway in the north face of the fort.

It had chanced during the assault that part of the 12th Regiment, instead of going along the ramparts, as had been ordered, separated from the rest, and entered the body of the town. They advanced till they reached a postern gate, where they saw some of the enemy collected, and began firing on them from inside, while the rest of the regiment, having marched by the proper way and reached the other side of the gate, were firing from without. Caught on either side, the enemy had



vainly striven to escape, and the gateway was choked with dead and dying.

Dusk had fallen, and it was by the light of lanterns that Baird stood while the heap of slain was slowly turned over, until a corpse was dragged forth and laid before him. The countenance was in no way distorted, but had an expression of stern composure, the large dark eyes were open, under the arched eyebrows, and the body was still warm, so that at first the bystanders thought that the life was yet in him. The ornamented turban, the rich sword-belt, and the light-coloured jacket that Tipu had put on in the morning had been stripped from him, but he still wore the wide trousers of flowered chintz, and dark red sash, and the talisman bound on his right arm. With three wounds in his body, and one through his right temple, "the Tiger" had fallen, "in the lost battle, borne down by the flying."

Next day he was borne through the streets of Seringatapam, to be laid beside his father's mausoleum, with all due ceremony, while fearful claps of thunder pealed overhead.

Wellesley wrote to Pitt that he expected either to be hanged or rewarded for the capture of Seringatapam, and that he would be satisfied in either case, since to him "an English gallows seemed better than an Indian throne." As luck



would have it, Parliament chose to thank him, and he was made a Marquis in the peerage of Ireland. But General Harris, who had advanced the money from his own purse for equipping the Madras troops, was left for fourteen years with no reward but the consciousness of having saved the Presidency. It is one of the few pleasant things to be recorded of the Prince Regent that he made Harris a peer.

The rightful heir to the throne of Mysore—a baby of five years old—was restored, under British protection, to rule over a kingdom which exceeded in area that which Haidar Ali had seized, although both the English and the Nizam gained some accession of territory.

As for Tipu's sons, some were to give trouble in after years, but one survived till towards the close of the last century, "greatly respected as a Justice of Peace, and for his hospitality and charity."



VIII.

THE MARATHA CONFEDERACY—
1761-1782

“Though most of the men in the Maratha army are unendowed with the excellence of noble and illustrious birth, yet, as they undergo all sorts of toil and fatigue in prosecuting a guerilla warfare, they prove superior to the easy and effeminate troops of Hind. Their food consists chiefly of cakes, with a little butter and red pepper ; and hence it is that, owing to the irascibility of their tempers, gentleness is never met with in their dispositions.”

—TARIKH-I-IBRAHIM KHAN BAHADUR, 1786.



VIII.

THE MARATHA CONFEDERACY—

1761-1782.

A JANUARY day of 1761 was drawing towards evening, and on the plain of Panipat, where two hosts had been contending since noon, the sun's last rays were obscured by clouds of dust and smoke. Before the sudden darkness of night could cover them, "the gale of victory had blown over the flags" of one army, and the other broke and fled. Out of the press and the reek galloped little dark horsemen, shrilling "Har! har! Mahadeo!" their hands and faces stained yellow, one end of their turbans flying loose, and after them pressed large-boned hawk-faced men, whose shout was "Din! din!" Once more the Crescent had triumphed, on the plain where, sixteen hundred years before, Mahmud of Ghori had defeated the last Hindu King of Delhi.

For greater part of the first half of the eigh-



teenth century, it had been of little moment to any, save the faction who played with him, whether one puppet or another sat in the hall where the Peacock Throne once had stood, and called himself Padishah, King of Kings, and Shadow of God. But while Lally and Bussy were making their last campaign against the English in the south, the heir to these empty titles, hereafter to be known as Shah Alam, had suddenly evinced unusual strength of character by going into rebellion against his father. Incited by the Nawab of Oudh, who longed to see the English driven from the Bengal provinces, he led an invading army thither.

Beaten back by Clive, he returned in the following year, by which time his father, according to the frequent precedent for the nominal ruler of Delhi, had been assassinated by a Prime Minister. Clive had returned to England, but, happier than Dupleix, he left representatives who were not altogether unfit to carry on his work. One of these, Captain Knox, sent to the relief of Patna, crossed the river with seven hundred men, charged an army of thirty thousand, and after six hours' fighting, with the help of a Rajput ally, led the three hundred survivors of his force in triumph into the city, "covered with dust and blood," while what was left of the Moghul host fled away.



While Shah Alam wasted his time, and such resources as he possessed, in fruitless attempts upon Bengal, the Afghan Ahmad Shah Abdali, whose occupation for some years past had been to invade the Emperor's territory, was preparing to drive the Maratha Confederacy from Delhi. As Ahmad Shah had sacked the city twice, and the Marathas had sacked it after him, tearing down the silver ceiling of the Hall of Audience and flinging it into the melting-pot, either side knew that nothing worthy of their attention could be left within the red walls; but for many years the ruler of Delhi had been overlord of Hindustan, and the tradition was not forgotten. The Marathas, swollen with pride, thought that none could stand against them, and that they were to drive the northern invader before them, as they had driven the Moghul troops from the time of Aurangzib. Their leader, commonly known as "the Bhao," was cousin and representative of the Peshwa of Poona, who was Prime Minister to the *fainéant* Raja of Satara, and head of the Confederacy; with him were various others whose fathers had risen from guerilla chiefs to be the lords of towns and villages,—the sons of Sindhia, who had been the Peshwa's slipper-bearer—the Gaikwar, whose forefather was a cowherd, and Holkar, son of a goatherd, a calling esteemed by



his people lower than that of a shepherd. With Ahmad Shah were the Nawab of Oudh, always ready for evil, and the Rohillas, an Afghan tribe whose good qualities, if they had any, are not prominent in their history.

In their fortified camp at Panipat the Maratha host were safe from attack, but the Afghans blocked the approaches, and the last mouthful of food had been eaten in the dawn of that January morning before they came out to what, as they foreboded, would be the last battle that most of them were to see. At one time it seemed as if Ahmad Shah were to be the loser; then, at the crisis of the fight, Holkar and the Gaikwar rode from the field. The battle turned into a rout; thousands lay dead upon the plain, others were cut down as they fled, and their corpses lay strewn shoulder to shoulder from Panipat to Delhi.

Among those who hurried southward was a dark-skinned man of about thirty years old, upon a mare who "outstripped the cold winter's blast in speed." One by one, the friends and followers who fled with him were left behind, and he struggled on alone, while after him lumbered an Afghan trooper riding a heavy Turki charger. In vain did the Maratha urge his worn-out steed; she could do no more, and



whenever he looked over his shoulder, he saw the charger "shaking his ears and coming straight on." In a last desperate effort, he set the mare at a ditch; she fell, and as the rider struggled on the ground the Afghan stood over them. "This shall give you a mark to remember for years to come," he swore, dealing his enemy a blow in the leg; then he stripped the young man of his rich dress and accoutrements, and spitting contemptuously upon him, rode away with the mare, for which the owner had given twelve thousand rupees.

Helpless, half-naked, and in agony, the fugitive lay by the wayside. That morning he had ridden forth with his brothers to lead their clan to battle; now they were dead, and he, the last of Sindhia's race, was at the point to die.

The history of India must have been written differently but for a waterman who came along the road to Delhi, driving his bullock. Muslim though he was, he pitied the wounded man, lifted him upon the animal's broad back, and carried him off to a place of safety. Night had fallen on the plain, and "the glad sounds of the kettle-drums were reverberating from the army of Ahmad Shah."



II.

For some years after the battle of Panipat there was no longer even a semblance of empire at Delhi. Shah Alam, the rightful heir, was living in Bengal, under protection of the English; Ahmad Shah was so much exhausted by his victory that he withdrew from India with the remnants of his army. The great Maratha Confederacy had melted away like snow in harvest; the Bhao and many lesser chiefs were lying among the thirty-two mounds of corpses heaped on the stricken field. The Peshwa was dead of a broken heart, and his successor was a minor. All Sindhia's lawful heirs were dead, although there remained a son born out of wedlock, Madhaji, the wounded man whom the water-carrier had picked up by the wayside.

Among a race where purity of lineage is of the first importance, an illegitimate son is at even greater disadvantage than in the West, and Madhaji obtained the succession to his father's fiefs and commands merely because no other of his blood was left. He was handicapped, moreover, by his wound, which had lamed him for life, so that he could not rise from his seat without the help of two men. Yet, with all this against him,



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in a few years the slipper-bearer's unlawful son was to be the most formidable power of Hindustan.

His fief lay in the north of Malwa, the most fertile province of Hindustan.

“In Malwa land you are always fed,
One step water, the next bread,”

says a Hindu proverb. From his capital at Ujjain he could enter the country between Agra and Alwar, where the Jats, a Hindu tribe of “stout yeomen with strong administrative tendencies of a somewhat republican stamp,”¹ had established themselves, or the no-man's-land that by a polite fiction was supposed to belong to the Emperor of Delhi, or the deserts and mountain passes which alone were left to the Rajput princes. It was a good position, and Sindhia, having raised a strong body of cavalry, waited for the hour to use it to the best advantage.

His first opportunity for self-assertion came in a dispute with his overlord. Holkar died, four years after the battle of Panipat, to the regret of all his soldiers, whose shields he would fill with rupees when they had pleased him with some feat of arms; his only son had died before him, leaving a son by his wife Ahalya Bai, one of the family of Sindhia. Always weak and foolish, the lad

¹ H. G. Keene.



became actually insane during the eight months when he sat on his grandfather's throne, and in one of his paroxysms of rage, slew a man for an offence of which he was not guilty. "Beware how you kill me, for I will take vengeance upon you," the victim had warned him, but the prince took no heed. Too late the dead man's innocence was proved, and from that hour his vengeful ghost haunted the murderer.

Day after day and night after night did Ahalya Bai sit beside the bed where her son tossed and raved, praying to the gods whom she served devoutly from her youth up, or imploring mercy of the dead man's spirit that had taken possession of his slayer. "Release my son," she pleaded, "and I will build a temple to you, and settle lands upon your heirs for ever." But through dry lips the pitiless answer came, "He slew me innocent, and I will have his life."

It is possible that the end was hastened by some of the Brahmans whom the graceless youth had tormented by putting scorpions among the gifts that he was required to bestow on them. With him died Holkar's last male descendant; his sister, having married into another family, was considered to have foregone all claims upon the succession.

Holkar's Brahman prime minister now ap-



proached the Peshwa's uncle and regent, Raghonath Rao, whom the English—who were to have more than enough of him—called Raghoba. Let some male child be adopted as Holkar's successor, under the minister's guardianship; Ahalya Bai should be made to retire from public affairs—which were unbecoming a woman—with an ample provision for her needs, and Raghonath should receive a suitable reward for his consent to the arrangement.

But when the scheme was laid before Ahalya Bai, she turned in wrath upon the Brahman. If there were any adoption, she said, it was her right and her duty to make it, as wife and mother of the last of Holkar's blood: it was not for Raghonath to meddle, and no gift should be made to him with her leave.

Raghonath threatened to force her obedience, whereupon the princess advised him not to make war upon a woman, since it could not result in honour, and must bring disgrace upon him—and ordered bows and arrows to be hung in the howdah of her favourite elephant. Holkar's troops were ready to follow her to battle, while those of Raghonath were not eager to meet them. Raghonath called upon Madhaji Sindhia to join him, and Sindhia flatly refused. Ahalya was of his kin, and he had fought side by side with old Holkar in former days.



So the army mustered by Raghonath was employed in a raid upon Delhi territory, and for thirty years Ahalya Bai administered the Holkar dominions from Indore, which she changed from a village into the capital of her state. She appointed Takuji Holkar, of the same tribe but not the same family as her husband, to command her troops, and devoted herself to the government and to works of charity. Never once, we are told, was there so much as a dispute between them; he called her "mother," though she was the younger of the two, and to the last day of her life he behaved as a dutiful and affectionate son.

Rising at dawn to pray and read sacred books, holding her court every day, accessible to all classes of her subjects, inflexibly just, but refusing to use stern measures with evil-doers until conciliation had been tried in vain, Ahalya Bai was revered throughout India.

Long after her death men loved to tell how in the hot season the traveller on the road, and the weary oxen toiling in the field, would be refreshed with water sent by Ahalya Bai; how even the birds driven from the cultivator's land would find crops sown for them; how at every shrine of India, from the snows of Kedarnath to the babul-trees of Ramesvaram, pilgrims were shel-



tered in the rest-houses built by the saintly princess.

It was said that her fasts and prayers shortened her life; it is probable that she never recovered from the agony of beholding her only daughter become *sati*. Ahalya commanded as a sovereign, she pleaded as a mother, but the childless widow was determined to burn on her husband's pyre, and the mother stood to watch the sacrifice, "gnawing her hands in anguish."

There is a story that Raghonath's wife, as beautiful as she was wicked, once sent an attendant to the Court of Indore to report upon Ahalya Bai's appearance. "She has not beautiful features," said the woman on her return, "but a heavenly light is on her countenance."

To Sindhia and all of her own faith, the solitary woman, worn with fasts and toil, arrayed in the plain white robe that is the dress of the poorest Hindu widow, became something sacred, to be defended from all enemies. But enemies she had none; Muslims, to whom she showed kindness and tolerance, joined with Hindus in praying for her, and the common people believed her to be a divine incarnation, and worshipped at her tomb near Indore, long after she had "found freedom."



III.

One of the first enterprises in which Sindhia and the forces of Ahalya Bai acted in concert was the restoration of Shah Alam to the throne of Delhi.

The memory of the defeat at Panipat still rankled in Maratha breasts, and having collected his feudatory troops to the number of three hundred thousand, the Peshwa sent them northward. They began as usual by laying waste part of Rajputana, then occupied Delhi. The ruler there was son of the Afghan whom Ahmad Shah had appointed governor, and he fled at their approach. From Shah Jahan's palace in the Fort, Takuji Holkar invited Shah Alam to return to the throne of his fathers, under Maratha protection.

The Emperor rose to the bait. For a long time he had wearied of his mock Court at Allahabad, where the English officer in command of the brigade appointed to watch over his safety objected to the din of his kettle-drums. The English had refused all his requests to be taken back to Delhi; here were the Marathas offering to do it of their own accord, and he would pay all they asked and grant all they wanted. So, regardless of good advice and warnings from the Government of



Calcutta, Shah Alam was escorted by Sindhia to the Maratha camp, and on Christmas Day, 1771, he was enthroned at Delhi.

In the disorder of the next twelve months, Marathas, Moghuls, Rohillas, and Jats alternately fought and plotted with each other, to the distraction of the country and the despair of all who try to read the history of the period. Then the situation was complicated tenfold by the death of the young Peshwa, one of whose last acts had been to free his uncle Raghonath from the durance which had kept him from meddling in affairs of state. Raghonath was supposed to have an affection for the rightful heir, the Peshwa's younger brother, and for a few months after his accession they seemed to work in concert. Ere long, however, the uncle went too far, and was confined in the palace under his nephew's own eye.

Then an order written by Raghonath found its way to the commandant of infantry at Poona. Raghonath himself vowed that when it left his hands, it authorised the commandant to seize his nephew. But when it reached its destination, the word "seize" (dhurawe) had been altered into "kill" (marawe); it was always said, by her own people, that the writer was Anandi Bai, Raghonath's wife.

The Peshwa was sleeping in the heat of an



August afternoon, when he was roused by shouts and trampling; his infantry had mutinied for their arrears of pay, and had entered the palace. He fled to the rooms where Raghonath was confined, pursued by one of the officers who had received the order, and flinging himself into his uncle's arms, begged piteously for protection. From an inner chamber darted Anandi Bai, who tore the clinging hands asunder, and flung the youth to his murderers.

Raghonath, proclaimed Peshwa, soon found that all obstacles were not yet removed from his path. Among the least estimable of the late Peshwa's ministers was a certain deputy auditor and accountant, generally known as "Nana Farnavis," and he, discovering the widowed Rani's condition, removed her to a fortress under a strong guard, and proclaimed a Council of Regency. Lest any mistake should occur, however, he sent with her five other expectant mothers, which caused some natural doubt as to the parentage of the boy produced some three months later.

At any rate, he could be used against Raghonath, who, defeated by the child's partisans, made appeal to Sindhia and Holkar. Obtaining nothing from them—for Ahalya Bai, herself a widow, was not likely to take part against another widow—he proposed an English alliance, and promised in



exchange for British troops to cede to the Bombay Government the harbour of Bassein and the Island of Salsette, which commanded the port of Bombay.

The Portuguese had a title to both places, but this mattered little to Raghonath or to Governor Hornby, who, without consulting his superiors at Bengal, signed a treaty at Surat, took possession of island and harbour, and sent troops under Colonel Keating to conduct his ally back to Poona.

Then the storm burst. Warren Hastings, then at the head of affairs in Calcutta, though he disapproved of Hornby's action, would have been content to order that the Bombay Government should "get clear of the war as soon as they could with honour and safety." But he was overborne by other members of Council, who despatched a furious letter to Hornby, pronouncing the war "impolitic, dangerous, unauthorised, and unjust," and wrote to the Maratha chiefs disowning the action of the Bombay Government.

This step, though it lowered the prestige of Bombay, did not affect the policy of its Governor, who continued to carry on the war, on his own account, with great success. Keating defeated the troops of the Regency in several engagements, and drove them across the Nerbudda, into which they threw their guns as they fled.

Philip Francis had then the majority in the



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Calcutta Council, and being bent upon opposing Hastings in all things, sent an envoy to treat with the Regency, who arranged the Treaty of Purandhar, whereby the British forces were pledged to leave the field, and the Council acknowledged the child Peshwa, on condition of retaining Salsette.

Like the majority of treaties, this pleased no one concerned. The Regency objected to giving up Salsette; Raghonath protested that as he had not been consulted, he was not bound to disband his troops, and the Bombay Government ostentatiously harboured him at Surat. An appeal to the Court of Directors in England resulted in a despatch that practically set aside the Treaty of Purandhar.

Another campaign proved disastrous to the Bombay forces. The military member of Council at their head was an imbecile, the commander understood war only as observed in the course of a short experience in Germany. They dawdled, quarrelled, and when they found Sindhia's forces enveloping them, twenty miles from Poona, they lost their heads, burned their stores, threw their guns into a pond, and after two days' desultory fighting, sent envoys to treat for peace.

Sindhia's terms were hard—the surrender of Salsette and all that had been gained during the



last five years, and the abandonment of Raghonath, who with great tact "saved the face" of his allies by giving himself up without waiting to be surrendered. To gain time, the English agent pleaded that the Bombay Government had no power to make treaties unauthorised. "Then show me by what authority you broke the Treaty of Purandhar," retorted Sindhia.

Poorly as the English officers had figured, Sindhia had conceived from that time a deep respect for the English soldier. "What soldiers yours are!" he exclaimed, during the negotiations for peace. "Their line is like a red brick wall, and when one falls another steps into the gap. I hope one day to fight on the same side." Already it was crossing his mind that it would be an error in judgment to let Nana Farnavis become too powerful.

Accordingly, the next development was that Raghonath found himself again at large, and went back to British protection, carrying friendly messages from Sindhia. The Regency insisted that he should be given up, the English refused, and war began again.

The prospect was ugly for the English in India during the summer of 1780; Haidar Ali had proclaimed himself the ally of their enemies, the French, and had invaded the Carnatic; the



Council of Madras made no effort to oppose him. In Central India were rumours that once more the Marathas were forming a great confederacy, and would break the power of the English as they had broken that of Delhi. One man at least kept his head while the whole English dominion seemed toppling to its fall, and that man was Hastings.

One of the strongest fortresses in India was that of Gwalior, "a huge rock of sandstone, capped with basalt, one and a half miles long, rising from the plain like the hulk of a gigantic battleship."¹ In ages long ago, hermits and saints had dwelt in the caves with which the rock is honeycombed, but with the dawn of history kings and warriors had fortified it with scarp and wall, tower and bastion, until it was almost impregnable. Used as a state prison for royal captives by Akbar and the later Moghul emperors, it had been seized by the Rana of Gohad during the struggles of the moribund empire. Sindhia had taken it from the Rana; his men now garrisoned it, assured that no one could disturb them, and careless that three battalions under a certain Captain Popham were encamped within ten miles of them. For two months the little force had sat there, apparently waiting to be relieved as soon as the rains were over, and no one save Bruce, the engineer, knew

¹ A. H. Murray.



that Popham had any motive for gazing up where the exquisite blue and yellow tiles of Maun Singh's palace still gleam from the height.

It was a dark night in August when, acting upon information received through the Rana's spies, Popham took his men across the Chambal. Bruce was in command of an advance party, guided by the spies. Arrived at the rock, they lay in its shadow while the rounds passed overhead, then planted their scaling-ladders and ascended, their cotton-shod feet making no noise. A steep climb of forty yards brought them to the second wall, which was thirty feet high. The spies, who knew the place, secured rope-ladders, and in a few minutes the advance party were squatting down within the fort. Even when three of the sepoy "so far forgot themselves as to shoot some of the garrison who lay asleep near them," and thus gave the alarm, the Marathas had no stomach for fighting. Taken completely by surprise, they threw down their arms, and at sunrise the fortress was in Popham's hands. He had done what Sir Eyre Coote had pronounced it would be madness to attempt, when the project was discussed in the Bengal Council.

The effect upon British prestige was what Hastings had hoped when he resolved to divert Sindhia's attention by an attack upon his