

standing on the road that ran along the top of the high beach, the rest fell back, and the matter was arranged without difficulty. After a drive of twenty minutes, they stopped at a hotel.

"It is not like a hotel, mother," Dick remarked, as they drew up; "it is more like a gentleman's house, standing in its own park."

"Almost all the European houses are built so here, Dick, and it is much more pleasant than when they are packed together."

"Much nicer," Dick agreed. "If each house has a lot of ground like this, the place must cover a tremendous extent of country."

"It does, Dick; but as every one keeps horses and carriages, that does not matter much. Blacktown, as they call the native town, stands quite apart from the European quarter."

As soon as they were settled in their rooms, which seemed to Dick singularly bare and unfurnished, mother and son went out for a drive in one of the carriages belonging to the hotel. Dick had learned so much about India from her that, although extremely interested, he was scarcely surprised at the various scenes that met his eye, or at the bright and varied costumes of the natives. Many changes had taken place during the seventeen years that had elapsed since Mrs. Holland had left India. The town had increased greatly in size. All signs of the effects of the siege by the French, thirty years before, had been long since obliterated. Large and handsome government buildings had been erected, and evidences of wealth and prosperity were everywhere present.

CHAPTER III

THE RAJAH

"NOW, mother, let us talk over our plans," Dick said, as, after dinner, they seated themselves in two chairs in the veranda, at some little distance from the other guests at the hotel. "How are we going to begin?"

"In the first place, Dick, we shall to-morrow send out a messenger to Tripataly, to tell my brother of our arrival here."

"How far is it, mother?"

"It is about a hundred and twenty miles in a straight line, I think, but a good bit farther than that by the way we shall go."

"How shall we travel, mother?"

"I will make some inquiries to-morrow, but I think that the pleasantest way will be to drive from here to Conjeveram. I think that is about forty miles. There we can take a native boat, and go up the river Palar past Arcot and Vellore, to Vaniambaddy. From there it is only about fifteen miles to Tripataly. I shall tell my brother the way I propose going. Of course, if he thinks any other way will be better, we shall go by that."

"Are we going to travel as we are, mother, or in native dress?"

"That is a point that I have been thinking over, Dick; I will wait and ask my brother which he thinks will be the best. When out there I always dressed as a native, and never put on English clothes except at Madras. I used to come down here two or three times every year with my mother, and generally stayed for a fortnight or three weeks. During that time we always dressed in English fashion, as by so doing we could live at the hotel and take our meals at public tables without excit-

ing comment. My mother knew several families here, and liked getting back to English ways occasionally. Of course, I shall dress in Indian fashion while I stay at my brother's, so it is only the question of how we shall journey there, and I think I should prefer going as we are. We shall excite no special observation travelling as English, as it will only be supposed that we are on our way to pay a visit to some of our officers at Arcot. At Conjeveram, which is a large place, there is sure to be a hotel of some sort or other, for it is on the main road from Madras south. On the way up by water we shall of course sleep on board, and we shall go direct from the boat to Tripataly. However, we need not decide until we get an answer to my letter, for it will take a very short time to get the necessary dresses for us both. I think it most likely that my brother will send down one of his officers to meet us, or possibly may come down himself. You heard what they were all talking about at dinner, Dick?"

"Yes, mother, it was something about Tippoo attacking the Rajah of Travancore, but I did not pay much attention to it. I was looking at the servants in their curious dresses."

"It is very important, Dick, and will probably change all our plans. Travancore is in alliance with us, and every one thinks that Tippoo's attack on it will end in our being engaged in war with him. I was talking to the officer who sat next to me, and he told me that if there had been a capable man at the head of government here, war would have been declared as soon as the Sultan moved against Travancore. Now that General Meadows had been appointed governor and commander-in-chief, there was no doubt, he said, that an army would move against Tippoo in a very short time—that it was already being collected, and that a force was marching down here from Bengal. So you see, my boy, if this war really breaks out, the English may march to Seringapatam and compel Tippoo to give up all the captives he has in his hands."

"That would be splendid, mother."

"At any rate, Dick, as long as there is a hope of your father being rescued in that way, our plans must be put aside."

"Well, mother, that will be better in some respects, for of course if father is not rescued by our army I can try afterwards as we arranged. It would be an advantage in one way, as I should then be quite accustomed to the country and more fit to make my way about."

A week later an old officer arrived from Tripataly.

"Ah, Rajbullub," Mrs. Holland exclaimed, as he came up with a deep salaam, "I am indeed glad to see you again. I knew you were alive, for my brother mentioned you when he wrote last year."

Rajbullub was evidently greatly pleased at the recognition. "I think I should have known you, lady," he said; but eighteen years makes more changes in the young than in the old. Truly I am glad to see you again. There was great joy among us who knew you as a child, when the Rajah told us that you were here. He has sent me on to say that he will arrive to-morrow. I am to see to his apartments, and to have all in readiness. He intends to stay here some days before returning to Tripataly."

"Will he come to this hotel?"

"No, lady, he will take the house he always has when he is here; it is kept for the use of our princes when they come down to Madras. He bade me say that he hopes you will remain here, for that none of the rooms could be got ready at such a short notice; he has not written, for he hates writing, which is a thing that he has small occasion for. I was to tell you that his heart rejoiced at the thought of seeing you again, and that his love for you is as warm as it was when you were a boy and girl together."

"This is my son, Rajbullub. He has often heard me speak of you."

"Yes, indeed," Dick said warmly. "I heard how you saved her from being bitten by a cobra when she was a little girl."

"Ah! the young lord speaks our tongue," Rajbullub said, with great pleasure. "We wondered whether you would have taught it to him. If it had not been that you always wrote to my lord in our language, we should have thought that you yourself would surely have forgotten it after dwelling so long among the white sahibs."

"No, we always speak it when together, Rajbullub. I thought that he might some day come out here, and that he would find it very useful; and I, too, have been looking forward to returning for a time to the home where I was born."

There were many questions to ask about her brother, his wife and two sons; they were younger than Dick, for Mrs. Holland was three years senior to the Rajah. At last she said, "I will not detain you longer, Rajbullub. I know that you will have a great deal to do to get ready for my brother's coming. At what time will he arrive?"

"He hopes to be here by ten in the morning, before the heat of the day sets in."

"I shall, of course, be there to meet him."

"So he hoped, lady. He said that he would have come straight here first, but he thought it would be more pleasant for you to meet him in privacy."

"Assuredly it would," she agreed.

"I will bring a carriage for you here at nine o'clock, and take you and my young lord to the Rajah's house."

At the appointed time a handsome carriage and pair drove up to the door of the hotel, and in ten minutes Mrs. Holland and Dick alighted in the courtyard of a large house. Four native servants were at the door, and the old officer led the way to a spacious room. This was carpeted with handsome rugs; soft cushions were piled on the divan running round the room, the divan itself being covered with velvet and silk rugs; looking-glasses were ranged upon the walls; a handsome chandelier hung from the roof; draperies of gauze, lightly embroidered with gold, hung across the windows.

"Why, Rajbullub, you have done wonders—that is, if the house was unfurnished yesterday."

"It is simple," the Hindoo said. "My lord your brother, like other rajahs who use the house when they come down here, has a room upstairs in which are kept locked up everything required for furnishing the rooms he uses. Four of his servants came down here with me. We had but to call in sweepers to clear the house from dust and wash down the marble floors, and then everything was put into its place. The cook, who also came down, has hired assistants, and all will be ready for my lord when he arrives."

In half-an-hour one of the servants ran in and announced that the Rajah was in the courtyard. There was a great trampling of hoofs, and a minute later he ascended the stairs and was met by his sister and Dick at the door of the room. Mrs. Holland had attired herself handsomely, not so much for the sake of her brother, but that, as his sister, those with him would expect to see in her an English lady of position, and Dick thought that he had never seen her looking so well as when, in a dress of rich brocade, and with a flush of pleasure and expectation on her cheeks, she advanced to the door. She was still but a little over thirty-three years old, and although the long years of anxiety and sorrow had left their traces on her face, the rest and quiet of the sea voyage had done much to restore the fulness of her cheeks and to soften the outline of her figure. The Rajah, a young and handsome-looking man of thirty, ascended the stairs with an eagerness and speed that were somewhat at variance with Dick's preconceived ideas of the stateliness of an Eastern prince.

"My sister Margaret!" he exclaimed in English, and embraced her with a warmth that showed that his affection for her was unimpaired by the years that had passed since he last saw her. Then he stood with his hands on her shoulders, looking earnestly at her. "I know you again," he said; "you are changed, but I can recall your face well. You are wel-

come, Margaret, most welcome. And this is my nephew?" he went on, turning to Dick, and holding out both his hands to him. "You are taller than I expected—well-nigh as tall as I am. You are like your mother and my mother, and you are bold and active and strong, she writes me. My boys are longing to see you, and you will be most welcome at Tripataly. I have almost forgotten my English, Margaret"—and indeed he spoke with some difficulty, evidently choosing his words—"I should quite have forgotten it, had not I often had occasion to speak it with English officers. I see by your letters that you have not forgotten our tongue."

"Not in the least, Mortiz. I have for years spoken nothing else with Dick, and he speaks it as well as I do."

"That is good," the Rajah replied, in his own tongue, and in a tone of relief. "I was wondering how he would get on with us. Now let us sit down. We have so much to tell each other, and, moreover, I am ravenous for breakfast, as I have ridden forty miles since sunrise."

Breakfast was speedily served, the Rajah eating in English fashion.

"I cling to some of our mother's ways, you see, Margaret. As I have grown older I have become more English than I was. Naturally, as a boy of thirteen, as I was when you last saw me, I listened to the talk of those around me and was guided by their opinions a good deal. Among them there was a feeling of regret that our father had married an English woman, and I of course was ever trying my hardest to show that in riding, or the chase, or in exercises of any kind, I was as worthy to be the son of an Indian rajah as if I had no white blood in my veins. As I grew up I became wiser. I saw how great the English were, how steadily they extended their dominions, and how vastly better off were our people under their sway than they were in the days when every rajah made war against his neighbour, and the land never had rest. Then I grew proud of my English blood, and although I am to my

people Rajah of Tripataly, a native prince and lord of their destinies, keeping up the same state as my father, and ruling them in native fashion, in my inner house I have adopted many English ways. My wife has no rival in the zenana. I encourage her to go about as our mother did, to look after the affairs of the house, to sit at table with me, and to be my companion, and not a mere plaything; I am sure, Margaret, your stay with us will do her much good, and she will learn a great deal from you."

"You have heard no news since you last wrote, Mortiz?"

A slight cloud passed across the Rajah's animated face.

"None, Margaret. We have little news from beyond the mountains. Tippoo hates us who are the friends of the English as much as he hates the English themselves, so there is little communication between Mysore and the possessions of the Nabob of Arcot. We will talk later on of the plans you wrote of in your last letter to me."

"You do not think that they are hopeless, Mortiz?" Mrs. Holland asked anxiously.

"I would not say that they are hopeless," he said gently, "although it seems to me that, after all these years, the chances are slight indeed that your husband can be alive; and the peril and danger of the enterprise that, so far as I understood you, you intend your son to undertake, would be terrible indeed."

"We see that, Mortiz; Dick and I have talked it over a thousand times. But so long as there is but a shadow of a chance of his finding his father, he is ready to undertake the search. He is a boy in years, but he has been trained for the undertaking, and will, when the trial comes, bear himself as well as a man."

"Well, Margaret, I shall have plenty of opportunities for forming my own judgment, because of course he will stay with us a long time before he starts on the quest, and it will be better to say no more of this now. Now tell me about London. Is it so much a greater city than Madras?"

Mrs. Holland sighed. She saw by his manner that he was wholly opposed to her plan, and although she was quite prepared for opposition, she could not help feeling disappointed. However, she perceived that, as he said, it would be better to drop the subject for a time, and she accordingly put it aside and answered his questions.

"Madras is large—that is, it spreads over a wide extent; but if it were packed with houses as closely as they could stand, it would not approach London, in the number of its population."

"How is it that the English do not send more troops out here, Margaret?"

"Because they can raise troops here, and English soldiers cannot stand the heat as well as those born to it. Moreover, you must remember that at present England is at war, not only with France and half Europe, but also with America. She is also obliged to keep an army in Ireland, which is greatly disaffected. With all this on her hands she cannot send a large army so far across the seas, especially when her force here is sufficient for all that can be required of it."

"That is true," he said. "It is wonderful what they have done out here with such small forces. But they will have harder work, before they conquer all India—as I believe they will do—than they have yet encountered. In spite of Tippoo's vauntings, they will have Mysore before many years are over. The Sultan seems to have forgotten the lesson they taught him six or seven years back. But the next time will be the last, and Tippoo, tiger as he is, will meet the fate he seems bent on provoking. But beyond Mysore lies the Mahratta country, and the Mahrattas alone can put thirty thousand horsemen into the field. They are not like the people of Bengal, who have ever fallen, with scarce an attempt at resistance, under the yoke of one tyrant after another. The Mahrattas are a nation of warriors; they are plunderers if you will, but they are brave and fearless soldiers, and might, had they been

united, have had all India under their feet before the coming of the English. That chance has slipped from them. But when we—I say 'we,' you see, Margaret—meet them, it will be a desperate struggle indeed."

"We shall thrash them, Uncle," Dick broke in; "you will see that we shall beat them thoroughly."

The Rajah smiled at Dick's impetuosity.

"So you think English soldiers cannot be beaten, eh?"

"Well, Uncle, somehow they never do get beaten. I don't know how it is. I suppose that it is just obstinacy. Look how we thrashed the French here, and they were just as well drilled as our soldiers, and there were twice as many of them."

The Rajah nodded.

"One secret of our success, Dick, is that the English get on better with the natives here than the French do—I don't know why, except what I have heard from people who went through the war; they say that the French always seemed to look down on the natives, and treated even powerful allies with a sort of haughtiness that irritated them and made them ready to change sides at the first opportunity, while the British treated them pleasantly, so that there was a real friendship between them."

Dick, finding that the conversation now turned to the time when his mother and uncle were girl and boy together, left them and went downstairs. He found some twenty horses ranged in the courtyard, while their riders were sitting in the shade, several of them being engaged in cooking. These were the escort who had ridden with the Rajah from Tripataly—for no Indian prince would think of making a journey unless accompanied by a numerous retinue. Scarcely had he entered the yard than Rajbullub came up with the officer in command of the escort, a fine-looking specimen of a Hindoo soldier. He salaamed as Rajbullub presented him to Dick. The lad addressed him at once in his own tongue, and they were soon talking freely together. The officer was surprised