

at finding that his lord's nephew from beyond the sea was able to speak the language like a native. First Dick asked the nature of the country and the places at which they would halt on their way; then he inquired what force the Rajah could put into the field, and was somewhat disappointed to hear that he kept up but a hundred horsemen, including those who served as an escort.

"You see, Sahib, there is no occasion for soldiers. Now that the whites are the masters, they do the fighting for us. When the Rajah's father was a young man, he could put two thousand men under arms, and he joined at the siege of Trichinopoly with twelve hundred. But now there is no longer need for an army; there is no one to fight. Some of the young men grumble, but the old ones rejoice at the change. Formerly they had to go to the plough with their spears and their swords beside them, because they never knew when marauders from the hills might sweep down; besides, when there was war, they might be called away for weeks, while the crops were wasting upon the ground. As to the younger men who grumble, I say to them, 'If you are tired of a peaceful life, go and enlist in a Company's regiment;' and every year some of them do so. In other ways the change is good. Now that the Rajah has no longer to keep up an army, he is not obliged to squeeze the cultivators; therefore they pay but a light rent for their lands, and the Rajah is far better off than his father was; so that on all sides there is content and prosperity. But even now the fear of Mysore has not quite died out."

"My position, Margaret," the Rajah said, after Dick had left the room, "is a very precarious one. When Hyder Ali marched down here, eight years ago, he swept the whole country from the foot of the hills to the sea coast. My father would have been glad to stand neutral, but was, of course, bound to go with the English, as the Nabob of Arcot, his

nominal sovereign, went with them. His sympathies were, of course, with your people, but most of the chiefs were at heart in favour of Hyder; it was not that they loved him, or preferred the rule of Mysore to that of Madras. But at that time Madras was governed by imbeciles; its Council was composed entirely of timid and irresolute men. It was clear to all that before any force capable of withstanding him could be put in the field, the whole country beyond reach of the guns of the forts at Madras would be at the mercy of Hyder. What that mercy was, had been shown elsewhere. Whole populations had been either massacred or carried off as slaves. Therefore, when the storm was clearly about to burst, almost all of them sent secret messages to Hyder, to assure him that their sympathies were with him, and that they would gladly hail him as ruler of the Carnatic.

"My father was in no way inclined to take such a step. His marriage with an English woman, the white blood in my veins, and his long-known partiality for the English, would have marked him for certain destruction; and as soon as he received news that Hyder's troops were in movement, he rode with me to Madras. At that time his force was comparatively large, and he took three hundred men down with us. He had allowed all who preferred it to remain behind; and some four hundred stayed to look after their families. Most of the population took to the hills, and as Hyder's forces were too much occupied to spend time in scouring the ghauts in search of fugitives, when there was so much loot and so many captives ready to their hands on the plains, the fugitives for the most part remained there in safety. The palace was burnt, the town sacked and partly destroyed, and some fifteen hundred of our people who had remained in their homes, killed or carried off.

"My father did some service with our horse, and I fought by his side. We were with Colonel Baillie's force when it was destroyed, after for two days resisting the whole

of Hyder Ali's army. Being mounted, we escaped, and reached Madras in safety, after losing half our number. But all that I can tell you about some other day.

"When peace was made and Hyder retired, we returned home, rebuilt the palace, and restored the town. But if Tippoo follows his father's example and sweeps down from the hills, there will be nothing for it but to fly again. Tippoo commanded one of the divisions of Hyder's army last time, and showed much skill and energy, and has, since he came to the throne, been a scourge to his neighbours in the north. So far as I can see, Madras will be found as unprepared as it was last time; and although the chiefs of Vellore, Arcot, Conjeveram, and other places may be better disposed towards the English than they were before—for the Carnatic had a terrible lesson last time—they will not dare to lift a finger against him until they see a large British force assembled.

"So you see, sister, your position will be a very precarious one at Tripataly, and it is likely that at any time we may be obliged to seek refuge here. The trouble may come soon, or it may not come for a year; but, sooner or later, I regard it as certain that Tippoo will strive to obtain what his father failed to gain—the mastership of the Carnatic. Indeed, he makes no secret of his intention to become lord of the whole of southern India. The Nizam, his neighbour in the north, fears his power, and could offer but a feeble resistance, were Tippoo once master of the south and west coast. The Mah-rattas can always be bought over, especially if there is a prospect of plunder. He relies, too, upon aid from France; for although the French, since the capture of Pondicherry, have themselves lost all chance of obtaining India, they would gladly aid in any enterprise that would bring about the fall of English predominance here.

"There are, too, considerable bodies of French troops in the pay of the Nizam, and these would at any rate force their master to remain neutral in a struggle between the English and

Tippoo. However, it will be quite unnecessary that you should resume our garb, or that Dick should dress in the same fashion. Did I intend to remain at Tripataly, I should not wish to draw the attention of my neighbours to the fact that I had English relations resident with me. Of course, every one knows that I am half English myself, but that is an old story now. They would, however, be reminded of it, and Tippoo would hear of it, and would use it as a pretext for attacking and plundering us. But as I have decided to come down here, there is no reason why you should not dress in European fashion."

"We would remain here, brother," Mrs. Holland said, "rather than bring danger upon you. Dick could learn the ways of the country here as well as with you, and could start on his search without going to Tripataly."

"Not at all, Margaret. Whether you are with me or not, I shall have to leave Tripataly when Tippoo advances, and your presence will not in any way affect my plans. My wife and sons must travel with me, and one woman and boy, more or less, will make no difference. At present this scheme of yours seems to me to border on madness. But we need not discuss that now; I shall at any rate be very glad to have you both with me. The English side of me has been altogether in the background since you went away; and though I keep up many of the customs our mother introduced, I have almost forgotten the tongue, though I force myself to speak it sometimes with my boys, as I am sure that in the long run the English will become the sole masters of southern India, and it will be a great advantage to them to speak the language. However, I have many other things to see about, and the companionship of Dick will benefit them greatly. You know what it always is out here. The sons of a rajah are spoilt early by every one giving way to them and their being allowed to do just as they like; naturally they get into habits of indolence and self-indulgence, and never have occasion to exert

themselves or to obtain the strength and activity that make our mother's countrymen irresistible in battle. They have been taught to shoot and to ride, but they know little else, and I am sure it will do them an immense deal of good to have Dick with them for a time. If nothing comes of this search for your husband, I hope you will take up your residence permanently at Tripataly. You have nothing to go back to England for, and Dick, with his knowledge of both languages, should be able to find good employment in the Company's service."

"Thank you greatly, brother. If, as you say, my quest should come to nothing, I would gladly settle down in my old home. Dick's inclinations at present turn to the sea, but I have no doubt that what you say is true, and that there may be far more advantageous openings for him out here. However, that is a matter for us to talk over in the future."

The Rajah stayed four days at Madras. Every morning the carriage came at nine o'clock to fetch Mrs. Holland, who spent several hours with her brother, and was then driven back to the hotel, while Dick wandered about with Rajbullub, through the native town, asking questions innumerable, observing closely the different costumes and turbans, and learning to know at once the district, trade, or caste, from the colour or fashion of the turban and other little signs.

The shops were an endless source of amusement to him, and he somewhat surprised his companion by his desire to learn the names of all the little articles and trinkets, even of the various kinds of grain. Dick, in fact, was continuing his preparations for his work. He knew that ignorance of any trifling detail which would, as a matter of course, be known to every native, would excite more surprise and suspicion than would be caused by a serious blunder in other matters, and he wrote down in a note-book every scrap of information he obtained, so as to learn it by heart at his leisure. Rajbullub was much surprised at the lad's interest in all these little matters, which,

as it seemed to him, were not worth a thought on the part of his lord's nephew.

"You will never have to buy these things, Sahib," he said; "why should you trouble about them?"

"I am going to be over here some time, Rajbullub, and it is just as well to learn as much as one can. If I were to stroll into the market in Tripataly, and had a fancy to buy any trifle, the country people would laugh in my face were I ignorant of its name."

His companion shook his head.

"They would not expect any white sahib to know such things," he said. "If he wants to buy anything, the white sahib points to it and asks, How much? Then, whether it is a brass iota, or a silver trinket, or a file, or a bunch of fruit, the native says a price four times as much as he would ask any one else. Then the sahib offers him half, and after protesting many times that the sum is impossible, the dealer accepts it, and both parties are well satisfied. If you have seen anything that you want to buy, Sahib, tell me, and I will go and get it for you; then you will not be cheated."

The start for Tripataly was made at daybreak. Dick and his mother drove in an open carriage that had been hired for the journey; the Rajah rode beside it or cantered on ahead; his escort followed the vehicle. The luggage had been sent off two days before, by cart.

The country as far as Arcot was flat; but everything was interesting to Dick, and when they arrived at the city, where they were to stop for the night at the house the Rajah had occupied on his way down, he sallied out, as soon as their meal was over, to inspect the fort and walls. He had, during his outward voyage, eagerly studied the history of Clive's military exploits, and the campaigns by which that portion of India had been wrested from the French; and he was eager to visit the fort whose memorable defence by Clive had first turned the scale in favour of the British. These had previously been

regarded by the natives as a far less warlike people than the French, who were expected to drive them, in a very short time, out of the country."

Rajbullub was able to point out to him every spot associated with the stirring events of that time.

"'Tis forty-six years back, and I was but a boy of twelve; but six years later I was here, for our rajah was on the side of the English, although Tripataly was, and is now, under the Nabob of Arcot. But my lord had many causes of complaint against him, and when he declared for the French, our lord, who was not then a rajah, although chief of a considerable district, threw in his lot with the English, and when they triumphed, was appointed rajah by them; and Tripataly was made almost wholly independent of the Nabob of Arcot. At one time a force of our men was here with four companies of white troops, when it was thought that Dupleix was likely to march against us, and I was with that force and so learned all about the fighting here."

The next day the party arrived, late in the evening, at Tripataly. A large number of men with torches received them in front of the palace, and on entering, Mrs. Holland was warmly received by the Rajah's wife, who carried her off at once to her apartments, which she did not leave afterwards, as she was greatly fatigued by the two long days of travel. Dick, on the contrary, although he had dozed in the carriage for the last two or three hours of the journey, woke up thoroughly as they neared Tripataly. As soon as they entered the house, the Rajah called his two sons, handsome, dark-faced lads of twelve and thirteen.

"This is your cousin, boys," he said. "You must look after him and see that he has everything he wants, and make his stay as pleasant as you can."

Although a little awed by the, to them, tall figure, they evinced neither shyness nor awkwardness, but, advancing to Dick, held out their hands one after the other with grave cour-

tesy. Their faces both brightened as he said in their own language,—

"I hope we shall be great friends, cousins. I am older and bigger than you are, but everything is new and strange to me, and I shall have to depend upon you to teach me everything."

"We did not think that you would be able to talk to us," the elder, whose name was Doast Assud, said, smiling. "We have been wondering how we should make you understand. Many of the white officers, who come here sometimes, speak our language, but none of them as well as you do."

"You see, they only learn it after they come out here, while I learnt it from my mother, who has talked to me in it since I was quite a little boy; so it comes as naturally to me as to you."

In a few minutes supper was announced. The two boys sat down with their father and Dick, and the meal was served in English fashion. Dick had already become accustomed to the white-robed servants at the hotel at Madras, and everything seemed to him pleasant and home-like.

"To-morrow, Dick," his uncle said, "you must have your first lesson in riding."

The two boys looked up in surprise. They had been accustomed to horses from their earliest remembrance, and it seemed to them incredible that their tall cousin should require to be taught. Dick smiled at their look of astonishment.

"It is not with us in England as it is here," he said. "Boys who live in the country learn to ride, but in London, which is a very great town, with nothing but houses for miles and miles everywhere, few people keep horses to ride. The streets are so crowded with vehicles of all sorts, and with people on foot, that it is no pleasure to ride in them, and every one who can afford it goes about in a carriage. Those who cannot, go in hired vehicles, or on foot. You would hardly see a person on horseback once in a week."

"I do not like walking," Doast said gravely.

"Well, you see, you have no occasion to walk, as you always have your horses; besides, the weather here is very hot. But in England it is colder, and walking is a pleasure. I have walked over twenty miles a day many times, not because I had to do it, but as a day's pleasure with a friend."

"Can you shoot, cousin?"

"No," Dick laughed. "There is nothing to shoot at. There are no wild beasts in England, and no game birds anywhere near London."

Dick saw at once that he had descended many steps in his cousins' estimation.

"Then what can you find to do?" the younger boy asked.

"Oh, there is plenty to do," Dick said. "In the first place, there is school; that takes the best part of the day. Then there are all sorts of games. Then I used to take lessons in sword-exercise, and did all sorts of things to improve my muscles and to make me strong. Then, on holidays, three or four of us would go for a long walk, and sometimes we went out on the river in a boat; and every morning early we used to go for a swim. Oh, I can tell you, there was plenty to do and I was busy from morning till night. But I want very much to learn to shoot, both with gun and pistol, as well as to ride."

"We have got English guns and pistols," Doast said. "We will lend them to you; we have a place where we practise. Our father says every one ought to be able to shoot, don't you, father?"

The Rajah nodded.

"Every one out here ought to, Doast, because, you see, every man here may be called upon to fight, and every one carries arms. But it is different in England; nobody fights there, except those who go into the army, and nobody carries weapons."

"What! not swords, pistols, and daggers, father?" Doast exclaimed, in surprise; for to him it seemed that arms were as necessary a part of attire as a turban, and much more necessary

than shoes. "But when people are attacked by marauders, or two chiefs quarrel with each other, what can they do if they have no arms?"

"There are no marauders and no chiefs," Dick laughed. "In the old times, hundreds of years ago, there were nobles who could call out all their tenants and retainers to fight their battles, and in those days people carried swords as they do here. There are nobles still, but they have no longer any power to call out any one, and if they quarrel they have to go before a court for the matter to be decided, just as every one else does."

This seemed to Doast a very unsatisfactory state of things, and he looked to his father for an explanation.

"It is as your cousin says, Doast. You have been down with me to Madras, and you have seen that, except the officers in the army, none of the Europeans carry arms. It is the same in England. England is a great island, and as they have many ships of war, no enemy can land there. There is one king over the whole country, and there are written laws by which every one, high and low alike, is governed. So you see, no one has to carry arms: all disputes are settled by the law, and there is peace everywhere; for as nothing would be settled by fighting, and the law would punish any one, however much in the right he might be, who fought, there is no occasion at all for weapons. It is a good plan, for you see no one, however rich, can tyrannise over others; and were the greatest noble to kill the poorest peasant, the law would hang him just the same as it would hang a peasant who killed a lord. And now, boys, you had better be off to bed. Your cousin has had a long day of it, and I have no doubt he will be glad to do so. To-morrow we will begin to teach him to ride and to shoot, and I have no doubt that he will be ready, in return, to teach you a great deal about his country."

The boys got up. But Doast paused to ask his father one last question.

"But how is it, father, if the English never carry weapons and never fight, that they are such brave soldiers? For have they not conquered all our princes and rajahs, and have even beaten Tippoo Sahib and made him give them much of his country?"

"The answer would be a great deal too long to be given to-night, Doast. You had better ask your cousin about it in the morning."

CHAPTER IV

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

THE next morning Dick was up early, eager to investigate the palace, of which he had seen little the night before. The house was large and handsome, the Rajah having added to it gradually every year. On passing the doors, the great hall was at once entered; its roof, of elaborately carved stone, was supported by two rows of pillars with sculptured capitals. The floor was made of inlaid marble, and at one end was raised a foot above the general level. Here stood a stone chair on which the Rajah sat when he adjudicated upon disputes among his people, heard petitions, and gave audiences; while the massive door on the left-hand side gave entrance to the private apartments. These were all small in comparison with the entrance hall. The walls were lined with marble slabs, richly carved, and were dimly lighted by windows, generally high up in the walls, which were of great thickness. The marble floors were covered with thick rugs, and each room had its divan, with soft cushions and rich shawls and covers. The room in which they had supped the night before was the only exception. This had been specially furnished and decorated in English fashion. The windows here were low and afforded a view over the garden. Next to it were several apartments, all fitted

with divans, but with low windows and a bright outlook; they could be darkened during the heat of the day by shutters. With the exception of these windows, the others throughout the house contained no glass, the light entering through innumerable holes that formed a filigree work in the thin slabs of stone that filled the orifices.

The grounds round the palace were thickly planted with trees, which constituted a grove rather than a garden, according to Dick's English notions. This was, indeed, the great object of the planter, and numerous fountains added to the effect of the overhanging foliage. Dick wandered about, delighted. Early as it was, men with water-skins were at work among the clumps of flowers and shrubs that covered the ground wherever there was a break among the trees. Here and there were small pavilions whose roofs of sculptured stone were supported by shafts of marble. The foliage of shrubs and trees alike was new to Dick, and the whole scene delighted him. Half-an-hour later his two cousins joined him.

"We wondered what had become of you," Doast said, "and should not have found you if Rajbullub had not told us that he saw you come out here. Come in now; coffee is ready. We always have coffee the first thing, except in very hot weather, when we have fruit sherbet. After that we ride or shoot till the sun gets hot, and then come in to the morning meal at ten.

On going in, Dick found that his mother and the raneé were both up, and they all sat down to what Dick considered a breakfast, consisting of coffee and a variety of fruit and bread. One or two dishes of meat were also handed round, but were taken away untouched.

"Now come out to the stables, Dick," the Rajah said. "Anwar, the officer who commanded the escort, will meet us there. He will be your instructor."

The stables were large. The horses were fastened to rings along each side, and were not, as in England, separated from