

retained of the number, calculated at 200,000, of natives carried off from the countries overrun by Hyder's troops. Only 2000 were released. More British would doubtless have been freed had it not been for the scandalous cowardice of the three men sent up as British commissioners to Tippoo. They were treated with the greatest insult and contempt by him, and, in fear of their lives, were too glad to accept the prisoners he chose to hand over, without troubling themselves in the slightest about the rest, whom they basely deserted and left to their fate."

CHAPTER V

WAR DECLARED

"THAT gives you a general idea, Dick, of the war with Tippoo. I saw little of the events after the battle of Porto Novo, as my father was taken ill soon after, and died at Madras. Seeing that there was no probability whatever of the English driving Hyder back until they had much larger forces and a much better system of management, I remained in Madras until peace was made; then I came back here, rebuilt the palace, and have since been occupied in trying to restore the prosperity of my poor people. It is, I feel, a useless task, for it is certain that ere long the English will again be engaged with Mysore, and if they are, it is well-nigh certain that Tippoo's hordes will again sweep down from the hills and carry ruin and desolation everywhere.

"He would, as Hyder had, have the advantage on his side at the beginning of the war. He has a score of passes to choose from, and can descend on to the plain by any one he may select. And even were there a force here capable of giving battle to the whole Mysorean army, it could not watch all

the passes, as to do so the army would have to be broken up into a dozen commands. Tippoo will therefore again be able to ravage the plains for weeks, perhaps, before the English can force him to give battle. But there is no army at present in existence of sufficient strength to meet him. The Madras force would have to wait until reinforcements arrived from Calcutta. It was bad before, but it will be worse now. Hyder, no doubt, slaughtered many, but he was not cruel by nature. He carried off enormous quantities of people, with their flocks and herds, but he did this to enrich Mysore with their labour, and did not treat them with unnecessary cruelty.

"Tippoo, on the other hand, is a human tiger; he delights in torturing his victims, and slays his prisoners from pure love of bloodshed. He is proud of the title of 'Tiger'; his footstool is a tiger's head, and the uniforms of his infantry are a sort of imitation of a tiger's stripes. He has military talent, and showed great judgment in command of his division—indeed, most of the successes gained during the last war were his work. Since then he has laboured incessantly to improve his army; numbers of regiments have been raised, composed of the captives carried off from here and from the west coast. They are drilled in European fashion by the English captives he still holds in his hands."

"But why, Uncle, instead of giving time to Tippoo to come down here, should we not march up the passes and compel him to keep his army up there to defend Seringapatam?"

"Because, Dick, in the first place, there is not an army strong enough to do so; but even were there a force of fifty thousand men at Madras, they could not take the offensive in time. An English army cannot move without a great train to carry ammunition, stores and provisions; and to get such a train together would be the work of months. As I have been telling you, during the three years the last war lasted, the Madras authorities were never able to collect such a train, and the consequence was that their army was unable to

go more than two or three days' march from the city. On the other hand, Tippoo could any day order that three days' supply of rice or grain should be served out to each soldier, and could set out on his march the following morning, as, from the moment he reached the plains, his cavalry would have the whole of the resources of the country at their mercy."

"I see, Uncle. Then, if war broke out, you would at once go to Madras again?"

"There would be nothing else to do, Dick. I should send everything of value down there as soon as I saw that war was inevitable. The traders here have already begun to prepare; the shops are half empty, for they have not replaced goods they have sold, and a very few hours would suffice for everything worth taking to be cleared out of the town. The country round here is comparatively uninhabited, and but a small portion of it tilled, so great was the number carried off by Hyder. Next time they will take to the hills at once, and I believe that many have already stored up grain in hiding-places there. This time it may be hoped that a few weeks, or months at most, may see Tippoo driven back, and for that time the peasants can manage to exist in the hills. No doubt the richer sort, who have large flocks of goats, and many cattle, will, as soon as danger threatens, drive them down to Madras, where they are sure to fetch good prices for the use of the army. I have already told all men who have bullock-carts and teams, that they can, if forced to leave home, earn a good living by taking service in the English transport train. I hope, therefore, that the results will not be so disastrous as before. The town may be burnt down again, but unless they blow up my palace, they can do little harm to it. When I rebuilt it, seeing the possibility of another war, I would not have any wood whatever used in its construction. Therefore, when the hangings are taken down, and the furniture from these rooms cleared out, there will be nothing to burn, and they are not likely to waste powder in blowing it up. As to

the town, I warned the people who returned that it might be again destroyed before long, and therefore there has been no solid building. The houses have all been lightly run up with wood, which is plentiful enough in the hills, and no great harm, therefore, will be done if it is again burnt down. The pagoda and palace are the only stone buildings in it. They did some harm to the former last time by firing shot at it for a day or two, and, as you can see for yourself, no attempt has since been made to repair it, and I do not suppose they will trouble to damage it further. So you see, Dick, we are prepared for the worst."

"Will you fight again, as you did last time, Uncle?"

"I do not know, Dick. I show my loyalty to the English rule by repairing to the capital; but my force is too small to render much service. You see, my revenues have greatly diminished, and I cannot afford to keep up so large a force as my father could. Fortunately, his savings had been considerable, and from these I was able to build this palace and to succour my people, and have still enough to keep up my establishment here, without pressing the cultivators of the soil for taxes. This year is the first that I have drawn any revenue from that source; but, at any rate, I am not disposed to keep up a force which, while it would be insufficient to be of any great value in a war like this, would be a heavy tax on my purse."

"Even the force you have, must be that, Uncle."

"Not so much as you would think, Dick, with your English notions. The pay here is very small—so small that it would seem to you impossible for a man to live on it; and yet many of these men have wives and families. All of them have patches of land that they cultivate, only twenty, who are changed once a month, being kept on duty. They are necessary; for I should have but little respect from my people, and less still from other rajahs, did I not have sentries at the gates, and a guard ready to turn out in honour of any visitor who

might arrive, to say nothing of an escort of half a dozen men when I ride through the country. Of course, all can be called out whenever. I want them, as, for example, when I rode to Madras to meet you. The men think themselves well off upon the pay of three rupees a month, as they are practically only on duty two months each year, and have the rest of the time to cultivate their fields. Therefore, with the pay of the officers, my troop only costs me about four hundred rupees a month, which is, you know, equivalent to forty English pounds; so that you cannot call it an expensive army, even if it is kept for show rather than use."

"No, indeed, Uncle! It seems ridiculous that a troop of a hundred men can be kept up for five hundred pounds a year."

"Of course the men have some little privileges, Dick. They pay no rent or taxes for their lands; this is a great thing for them, and really costs me nothing, as there is so much land lying uncultivated. Then, when too old for service, they have a pension of two rupees a month for life, and on that, and what little land they can cultivate, they are comparatively comfortable."

"Well, it does not seem to me, Uncle, that soldiering is a good trade in this country."

"I don't know that it is a good trade, in the money way, anywhere. After all, the pay out here is quite as high, in comparison with the ordinary rate of earning of a peasant, as it is in England. It is never the pay that tempts soldiers: among young men there are always great numbers who prefer the life to that of a peasant working steadily from daylight to dark, and I don't know that I altogether blame them."

"Then you think, Uncle, there is no doubt whatever that there will be war?"

"Not a shadow of doubt, Dick—indeed, it may be said to have begun already; and, like the last, it is largely due to the incapacity of the government of Madras."

"I have just received a message from Arcot," the Rajah said, two months later, "and I must go over and see the Nabob."

"I thought," Mrs. Holland said, "that Tripataly was no longer subject to him. I understood that our father was made independent of Arcot?"

"No, Margaret, not exactly that. The Nabob had involved himself in very heavy debts during the great struggle. The Company had done something to help him, but were unable to take all his debts on their shoulders; and indeed, there was no reason why they should have done so, for although during most of the war he was their ally, he was fighting on his own behalf, and not on theirs. In the war with Hyder it was different. He was then quite under English influence, and, indeed, could scarcely be termed independent. And as he suffered terribly—his lands were wasted, his towns besieged, and his people driven off into slavery—the Company are at present engaged in negotiations for assisting him to pay his debts, which are very heavy. It was before you left, when the Nabob was much pressed for money and had at that time no claim on the Company, that our father bought of him a perpetual commutation of tribute, taxes, and other monies and subsidies, payable by Tripataly; thus I am no longer tributary to Arcot. Nevertheless, this forms a portion of the Nabob's territories, and I cannot act as if I were an independent prince.

"I could not make a treaty with Mysore on my own account, and it is clear that neither Arcot nor the English could allow me to do so, for in that case Mysore could erect fortresses here, and could use Tripataly as an advanced post on the plain; therefore I am still subject to the Nabob, and could be called upon for military service by him. Indeed, that is one of the reasons why, even if I could afford it, I should not care to keep up a force of any strength. As it is, my troop is too small to be worth summoning. The Nabob has remon-

strated with me more than once, but since the war with Hyder I have had a good excuse, namely, that the population has so decreased that my lands lie untilled, and it would be impossible for me to raise a larger force. I have, however, agreed that, in case of a fresh war, I will raise an additional hundred cavalry.

"I expect it is in relation to this that he has sent for me to Arcot. We know that the English are bound by their treaty with Travancore to declare war. They ought in honour to have done it long ago, but they were unprepared. Now that they are nearly ready, they may do so at any time, and indeed the Nabob may have learned that fighting has begun. The look-out is bad. The government of Madras is just as weak and as short-sighted as it was during Hyder's war. There is but one comfort, and that is that Lord Cornwallis at Calcutta has far greater power than his predecessors, and as he is an experienced soldier, and is said to be an energetic man, he may bring up reinforcements from Calcutta without loss of time, and also set the troops of Bombay in motion. I expect that, as before, things will go badly at first, but hope that this time we shall end by giving Mysore so heavy a lesson that she will be powerless for mischief in future."

"And release all the captives," Mrs. Holland exclaimed, clasping her hands.

"I sincerely trust so, Margaret," her brother said gravely; "but, after what happened last time, we must not be sanguine. Scattered about as they may be in the scores of little hill-forts that dot the whole country, we can, unhappily, never be sure that all are delivered, when we have only the word of a treacherous tyrant like Tippoo. We know that last time he kept back hundreds of prisoners, among whom, as we may hope, was your husband, and it may be that, however completely he may be defeated, he may yet retain some of them, knowing full well it is impossible that all these hill-forts and their dungeons can be searched. However, doubtless if an English

army marches to Seringapatam, many will be recovered, though we have reason to fear that many will, as before, be murdered before our arrival."

When the Rajah returned from Arcot on the following day, he brought back the news that General Meadows had moved to the frontier at Caroor, fifty miles beyond Trichinopoly, and that the war was really about to begin.

"You know," he said, "how matters stand up to now. Tippoo, after making peace with the Nizam and the Mahrattas, with whom he had been engaged in hostilities for some time, turned his attention to the western coast, where Coorg and Malabar had risen in rebellion. After, as usual, perpetrating horrible atrocities, and after sending a large proportion of the population as slaves to Mysore, he marched against Travancore. Now, Travancore was specially mentioned in the treaty of Mangalore as one of the allies of the English, with whom Tippoo bound himself not to make war; and had he not been prepared to fight the English he would not have attacked their ally. The excuse for attacking Travancore was that some of the fugitives from Coorg and Malabar had taken refuge there.

"Seeing that Tippoo was bent upon hostilities, Lord Cornwallis and his council at Calcutta directed, as I learnt from an official at Madras, the authorities there to begin at once to make preparations for war. Instead of doing so, Mr. Holland, the governor, gave the Rajah the shameful and cowardly advice to withdraw his protection from the fugitives. The Rajah refused to comply with such counsel, and after some months spent in negotiations, Tippoo attacked the wall that runs along the northern frontier of Travancore. That was about six months ago. Yes, it was on the 28th of December—so it is just six months. His troops, fourteen thousand strong, made their way without difficulty through a breach, but they were suddenly attacked by a small body of Travancore men. A panic seized them; they rushed back to

the breach, and in the wild struggle to pass through it, no less than two thousand were either killed or crushed to death.

“It was nearly three months before Tippoo renewed his attack. The lines were weak, and his army so strong that resistance was impossible. A breach, three-quarters of a mile in length, was made in the wall, and marching through this he devastated Travancore from end to end. His unaccountable delay before assaulting the position has been of great advantage to us. Had he attacked us at once, instead of wasting his time before Travancore, he would have found the Carnatic as defenceless and as completely at his mercy as Hyder did. He would still have done so had it depended upon Madras, but as the authorities here did nothing, Lord Cornwallis took the matter into his own hands. He was about to come here himself, when General Meadows, formerly Governor of Bombay, arrived, invested by the Company with the offices of both governor and of commander-in-chief.

“He landed here late in February, and at once set to work, to prepare for war. Lord Cornwallis sent from Calcutta a large amount of money, stores, and ammunition, and a battalion of artillerymen. The Sepoys objected to travel by sea, as their caste rules forbade them to do so, and he therefore sent off six battalions of infantry by land, and the Nabob tells me they are expected to arrive in four or five weeks’ time. The Nabob of Arcot and the Rajah of Tanjore, both of whom are very heavily in debt to the government, are ordered, during the continuance of the war, to place their revenues at its disposal, a liberal allowance being made to them both for their personal expenses. Tippoo is still in Travancore—at least, he was there ten days ago, and has been endeavouring to negotiate. The Nabob tells me he believes that the object of General Meadows in advancing from Trichinopoly to Caroor, is to push on to Coimbatore, where he will, if he arrives before Tippoo, cut him off from his return to his capital; and as

Meadows has a force of fifteen thousand men, he ought to be able to crush the tyrant at a blow.

“I fear, however, there is little chance of this. The Mysore troops move with great rapidity, and as soon as Tippoo hears that the English army is marching towards Caroor, he is sure to take the alarm, and by this time has probably passed Coimbatore on his way back. With all his faults, Tippoo is a good general, and the Nabob’s opinion—and I quite agree with him—is that, as soon as he regains the table-land of Mysore, he will take advantage of the English army being far away to the south, and will pour down through the passes into this part of the Carnatic, which is at present absolutely defenceless. This being the case, I shall at once get ready to leave for Madras, and shall move as soon as I learn for certain that Tippoo has slipped past the English.

“The Nabob has called upon me to join him with my little body of cavalry, and as soon as the news comes that Tippoo is descending the passes, I shall either join him or the English army. That will be a matter to decide afterwards.”

“You will take me with you, of course, Uncle!” Dick asked eagerly.

“Certainly, Dick; if you are old enough to undertake the really perilous adventure of going up in disguise to Mysore, you are certainly old enough to ride with me. Besides, we may hope that this time the war is not going to be as one-sided as it was the last time, and that we may end by reaching Seringapatam; in which case we may rescue your father, if he is still alive, very much more easily than it could be managed in the way you propose.”

The news that the English army had marched to Caroor, and that there was no force left to prevent the Mysoreans from pouring down from the hills, spread quickly, and when Dick went out with the two boys into the town, groups of people were talking earnestly in the streets. Some of them came up, and asked respectfully if there was any later news.

"Nothing later than you have heard," Dick said.

"The Rajah is not going away yet, Sahib?"

"No; he will not leave unless he hears that Tippoo has returned with his army to Seringapatam. Then he will go at once, for the sultan might come down through the passes at any moment, and can get here a fortnight before the English army can return from Caroor."

"Yes; it will be no use waiting here to be eaten up, Sahib. Do you think Conjeveram would be safe? Because it is easy to go down there by boat."

"I should think so. Hyder could not take it last time, and the English army is much stronger than it was then. Besides, there will be six thousand men arriving from Bengal in a month's time, so I should think there is no fear of Conjeveram being taken."

"It is little trouble getting there," the trader said, "but it is a long journey to Madras. We could go down with our families and goods in two days in a boat; but there would not be boats enough for all, and it will be best, therefore, that some should go at once, for if all wait until there is news that Tippoo is coming, many will not be able to get away in time."

"No, not in boats," Dick agreed; "but in three days a bullock-cart would get you there."

Next day several of the shops containing the most valuable goods were shut up, and day by day the number remaining open grew smaller.

"It is as I expected," the Rajah said one morning, as he came into the room where the family was sitting. "A messenger has just come in from the Nabob with the news that sickness broke out among the army as soon as they arrived at Caroor, and in twenty-four hours a thousand men were in hospital. This delayed the movement, and when they arrived at Coimbatore they were too late: Tippoo and his army had already passed, moving by forced marches back to Mysore. Finish your packing, ladies; we will start at daybreak to-

morrow morning. I secured three boats four days ago, and have been holding them in readiness. Rajbullub will go in charge of you; there is not the least fear of Tippoo being here for another fortnight at the earliest. I shall ride with the troop; Dick and the boys will go with me. We shall meet you at Conjeveram. I have already arranged with some of our people, who have gone on in their bullock-carts with their belongings, and will unload them there, to be in readiness to take our goods on to Madras, so there will be no delay in getting forward."

By nightfall the apartments were completely dismantled. The furniture was all stowed away in a vault which the Rajah had had constructed for the purpose, when the palace was rebuilt. Access was obtained to it through the floor in one of the private apartments. The floor was of tessellated marble, but some ten squares of it lifted up in a mass, forming together a trap-door, from which steps led down into the vault. When the block was lowered again, the fit was so accurate that, after sweeping a little dust over the joint, the opening was quite imperceptible to any one not aware of the hiding-place. The cushions of the divans were taken down here, as well as the furniture, and all the less valuable carpets, rugs and hangings, while the costlier articles were rolled up into bales for transport.

The silver cups and other valuables were packed in boxes, and were, during the night, carried by coolies down to the boats, over which a guard was placed until morning. Provisions for the journey down the river were also placed on board. The palace was astir long before daybreak. The cushions that had been slept on during the night were carried down to the boats, the boxes of wearing apparel closed and fastened, and a hasty meal was taken. The sun was just rising when they started. One boat had been fitted up with a bower of green boughs, for the use of the two ladies and their four attendants; the other two carried the baggage. After seeing