

find him. What do you think, Surajah? Ought we to give it up?"

"Why should we?" Surajah replied stoutly. "I think you are right, and that we are destined to find your father. There is no hurry. We have not been anything like so long a time as we expected to be, and Fortune has, as you say, befriended us wonderfully. We are well off here; we have positions of honour. For myself, I could wish for nothing better."

"Well, at any rate we will wait for a time," Dick said; "we may be sent to Savandroog again, and if so I will not leave the place until I find out from the governor whether he has still a prisoner, and if so, manage to obtain a sight of him."

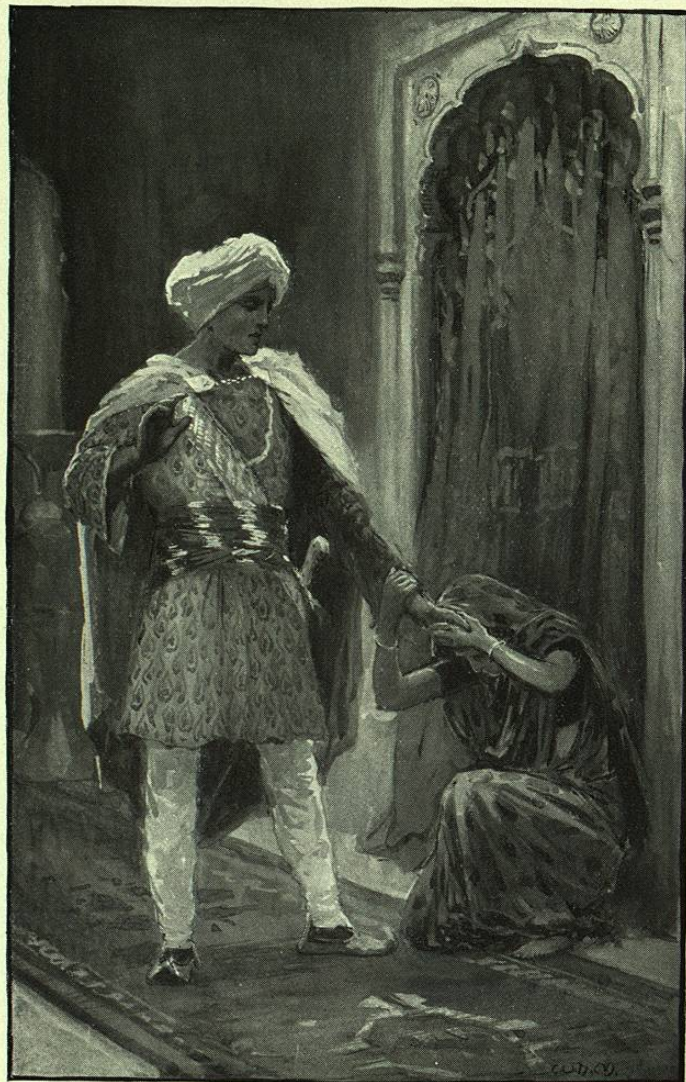
The next day Dick was informed by the chamberlain that the officer who was in charge of the wild beasts had fallen into disgrace, and that the sultan had appointed him to the charge. Dick was well pleased in some respects. The work would suit him much better than examining stores and seeing that the servants of the Palace did their duty; but, on the other hand, it lessened his chance of being sent to Savandroog again. However, there was no choice in the matter, and Surajah cheered him by saying,—

"You must not mind, Dick. Has not everything turned out for the best? And you may be sure that this will turn out so also."

It was indeed but two days later that Dick congratulated himself upon the change, for Surajah was sent by Tippoo with an order for the execution of four English prisoners. Dick knew nothing of the matter until Surajah, on his return, told him that he had been obliged to stop and see the orders carried out, by poison being forced down the unfortunate officers' throats.

"It was horrible," he said, with tears in his eyes.

"Horrible!" Dick repeated. "Thank God I have been put



THE WHITE SLAVE-GIRL THANKS DICK FOR SAVING HER LIFE.



to other work, for I feel that I could not have done it. And yet to have refused to carry out the tyrant's orders would have meant death to us both, while it would not have saved the lives of these poor fellows. Anyhow, I would not have done it. As soon as I had received the order I would have come to you and we would have mounted and ridden off together, and taken our chance."

"Let us talk of something else," Surajah said. "Are the beasts all in good health?"

"As well as they can be when they are fed so badly and so miserably cooped up. I made a great row this morning, and have kept the men at work all day in cleaning out the places; they were all in a horrible state, and before I could get the work done I had to threaten to report the whole of them to Tippoo, and they knew what would come of that. I told Fazli last night that the beasts must have more flesh, and got an order from him that all the bones from the kitchens should be given to them."

That evening when Dick, on his way to the apartments of one of the officers, was going along a corridor that skirted the portion of the Palace occupied by the zenana, a figure came out suddenly from behind the drapery of a door, dropped on her knees beside him, and seizing his hand pressed it to her forehead. It was to all appearance an Indian girl in the dress of one of the attendants of the zenana.

"What is it, child?" he said. "You must have mistaken me for some one else."

"No Bahador," she said, "it is yourself I wanted to thank. One of the other attendants saw you go along this corridor some time ago, and ever since I have watched here of an evening, whenever I could get away unobserved, in hopes of seeing you. It was I, my lord, whom the tiger was standing over when you came to our rescue; I was not greatly hurt, for I was pushed down when the tiger burst in, and, save that it seized me with one of its paws, and tore my shoulder, I was



unhurt. Ever since I have been hoping that the time would come when I could thank you for saving my life."

"I am glad to have done so, child. But you had best retire into the zenana. It would not be good for you or me, were I found talking to you."

The girl rose to her feet submissively, and he now saw her face, which, in the dim light that burnt in the corridor, he had not hitherto noticed.

"Why," he exclaimed, with a start, "you are English!"

"Yes, Sahib; I was brought here eight years ago; I am fourteen now. There were other English girls here then, but they were all older than me, and have been given away to officers of the sultan. I am afraid I shall be too, ere long. I have dreaded it so much! But oh, Sahib, you are a favourite of the sultan; if he would but give me to you, I should not mind so much."

Dick was about to reply when he heard a distant foot-fall.

"Go in," he exclaimed. "Some one is coming. I will speak to you again in a day or two."

When he returned to his room, he told Surajah what had happened.

"It will, at any rate, give me a fresh interest here," he said. "It is terrible to think that a young English girl should be in Tippoo's power, and that he can give her, whenever he likes, to one of his creatures. Of course, according to our English notions, she is still but a young girl, but as your people out here marry when the girls are but of the age of this child, it is different altogether."

"She does not suspect that you are English?"

"No. As I told you, I had only just discovered that she was so when I heard a footstep in the distance. But I shall see her again to-morrow or next day."

"You will be running a great risk," Surajah said gravely.

"Not much risk, I think," Dick replied. "She is only a

little slave girl, and as the tiger was standing over her when I fired, no doubt I did save her life, and it would be natural enough that she would, on meeting me, speak to me and express her thanks."

"That would be a good excuse," Surajah agreed. "But a suspicious tyrant like Tippoo might well insist that this was only a pretence, and that the girl was really giving you a letter or message from one of the inmates of the zenana."

Dick was silent for a time. "I will be very careful," he said. "I must certainly see her again, and it seems to me at present that whatever risk there may be, I must try to save this poor girl from the fate that awaits her. I cannot conceal from myself that, however much I may refuse to admit it, the hopes of my finding and saving my father are faint indeed; and although this girl is nothing to me, I should feel that my mission had not been an entire failure if we could take her home with us and restore her to her friends.

"No, I don't think," he went on, in answer to a grave shake of Surajah's head, "that it would add to our danger in getting away. We know that if we try to escape and are caught, our lives will be forfeited in any case, and if she were disguised as a boy, we could travel with her without attracting any more observation than we should alone. She would not be missed for hours after she had left, and there would be no reason whatever for connecting her departure with ours. I don't say, Surajah, that I have made up my mind about it—of course it has all come fresh to me, and I have not had time to think it over in any way; still, it does seem to me that when the time for our leaving comes, whether we ride off openly as Tippoo's officers or whether we go off in disguise, there ought to be no very great difficulty in taking her away with us. You see that yourself, don't you?"

"I can't give any opinion about it at present," Surajah replied. "I do think that it will add to our difficulties, however we may go, but I don't say it cannot be managed."



"I should think not, Surajah, and it would be worth doing, however great the difficulties might be. Just think of the grief that her parents must feel at her loss, and the joy when she is restored to them. You see, it would be no great loss of time if we were obliged to take her down to Tripataly first, and then come back again to renew our search. It would take but a week going and returning, and now that the passes are all open to us, the difficulties would be nothing to what they were when we went back after our scouting expedition. Besides, at that time they were more vigilant all along the frontier than they will be now, because there was war between the two countries, and Tippoo was anxious that no news of his movements should be taken down. There is no talk of war now, for though Tippoo makes no disguise of his fury at his losses, especially at Coorg being taken from him, and is evidently bent upon fighting again, it will take a very long time to get his army into an efficient state, to repair his fortresses, to complete all the new works of defence he is getting up here, and to restore the confidence of his soldiers.

"I should think it will be fully four or five years before he is ready to fight again. At any rate, if we once get well away from here with the girl, we ought to have no difficulty in getting across the frontier; it would mean but a fortnight lost in the search for my father, and, anyhow, we are not making any progress that way as long as we stop here. The only drawback would be, so far as I can see, that we should lose the benefit of our official positions, but unless we happen to be sent off with orders to other hill-forts, that position will only hamper our movements; besides, we should still have our badges of office and Tippoo's official orders to the governors. Possibly the news that we had disappeared might reach the governors of some of the forts in this neighborhood, but it would not be likely to travel very far. His officers so frequently fall into disgrace, and are either killed or thrown to the tigers, that the fact of our being missing would scarce ex-

cite a remark, and those who heard of it would suppose that we had either been secretly made away with, or that, having learned that Tippoo was displeased with us, we had fled."

Surajah nodded. His confidence in his leader was complete, and he was always ready to follow unquestioningly.

"There is one thing, Surajah," Dick concluded: "this state of things cannot last much longer anyhow, for next time it might be me he ordered to see to the execution of an English prisoner, and that would mean that I should, as soon as I received the command, make a bolt for it. So you see our stay here, in any case, may not last many days. I would rather run any risks than carry out such an order."

Two evenings later, Dick went down the corridor at the same hour as that on which he had before met the English girl. She came out from behind the hangings at once when he passed.

"I knew you would come, Bahador!" she said joyfully. "I could see that you were as kind as you were brave, and would have pity upon a poor little white slave!"

"I have much that I want to say to you, child. This is not a good place for speaking; some one might come along at any moment. How long can you be away without fear of your absence being noticed?"

"Not long now," she said. "In the morning I am sent out on messages, and could meet you anywhere."

"Very well; I will remain in my room all the morning tomorrow, and if you do not come then, I will stay in next day."

"I will come," the girl said unhesitatingly.

He then gave her full instructions how to find his room, and made her repeat them to him, in order to be sure that she had them correctly.

"Do you know my companion by sight?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; I have seen him often."

"Well, either he or I will be standing at my door. It is as well that you should look carefully round before you enter, so as to be sure there is no one in the corridor, and that you



can slip in unobserved. You may be sure that I am asking you to come for no idle freak, but because I have something very important to say to you. I fancy I hear footsteps. Good-night."

Dick was sure that he and Surajah would both be at liberty next day, for Tippoo had that morning started for Bangalore, where a large number of men were at work repairing the fortifications and removing all signs of the British occupation from the fort and palace. He was likely to be away for at least a fortnight. As soon as Ibrahim had swept the room after their early breakfast, Dick gave him a number of small commissions to be executed in the town and told him that he should not require him again until it was time to bring up their meal from the kitchen. Then he and Surajah by turns watched at the door. An hour later Surajah, who was upon the watch, said, "The girl is coming."

There was no one else in sight, and when Surajah beckoned to her she hurried on, and, passing through the curtains at the door, entered the room. It had been arranged that Surajah should remain on watch, so that should by any chance one of the officials of their acquaintance come along, he might go out and talk with him in the corridor, and, on some excuse or other, prevent his entering the room, if he showed any intention of doing so.

"Now, in the first place," Dick said, as he led the girl to the divan and seated her there, "what is your name?"

"My name is Goorla."

"No; I mean your proper name?"

"My name used to be Annie—Annie Mansfield, Bahador."

"And my name is Dick Holland," he said, in English. She gave a start of surprise. "Yes, Annie, I am a countryman of yours."

She looked at him almost incredulously, and then an expression of aversion succeeded that of confidence in her face. She sprang from the divan and drew herself up indignantly.

"Please let me go," she said haughtily. "You have saved my life, but if you had saved it twenty times, I could not like a man who is a deserter!"

Dick had at first been speechless with astonishment at the girl's change of manner and at her reception of the news he had thought would have been very pleasant to her. As her last words threw a light upon the matter, he burst into a merry laugh.

"I am no deserter, Annie. Save my friend at the door and yourself, there is no one here who knows that I am English. Sit down again, and I will tell you how I come to be here. My father was the captain of an English ship. She was wrecked on the west coast, and he was seized and brought up here a prisoner, eight years ago. My mother, who is a daughter of the late Rajah of Tripataly, who married an English lady, taught me to speak Hindustani, so that when I got old enough I could come out here and try to find out if my father was still alive, and if so, to help him to escape. I had only just come up here with my friend, who is an officer of the Rajah's, when that affair with the tiger took place. Then, as you know, Tippoo made us both officers in the Palace. Of course, while we are here we can do nothing towards finding out about my father, and we should not have remained here much longer anyway, and may have to leave at any moment. Since you met me and I found that there was an English girl captive here, it has of course changed my plans, and I feel that I could not go away and leave you to the fate you told me of, and that if possible, I must take you away with me; that is, of course, if you are willing to go with us, and prepared to run a certain amount of risk.

"Do not take on so," he continued, as the girl threw herself on her knees, and, clinging to him, burst into a passion of tears. "Do not cry like that;" and, stooping down, he lifted her, and placed her in a corner of the divan. "There," he said, patting her on the shoulder as she sobbed almost



convulsively; "try and compose yourself. We may be disturbed at any moment, and may not have an opportunity of talking again, so we must make our arrangements, in readiness to leave suddenly. I may find it necessary to go at an hour's notice; you may, as you said, be given by Tippoo to one of his favourites at any time. Fortunately he has gone away for a fortnight, so we have, at any rate, that time before us to make our plans. Still, it is better that we should arrange now as much as we can."

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CHAPTER XV

ESCAPE

ANNIE MANSFIELD was not long before she mastered her emotions. She had learned to do so in a bitter school. Beaten for the slightest fault, or at the mere caprice of one of her many mistresses, she had learned to suffer pain without a tear, to assume a submissive attitude under the greatest provocation, to receive, without attempting to defend herself, punishment for faults she had not committed, and to preserve an appearance of cheerfulness when her heart seemed breaking at the hopelessness of any deliverance from her fate. For the last six months she had been specially unhappy, for when Seringapatam had been besieged she had hoped that when it was captured her countrymen would search the Palace and see that this time no English captive remained behind. Her disappointment, then, when she heard that peace had been made, and that the English army was to march away without even an attempt to see that the condition for the release of captives was faithfully carried out, had for a time completely crushed her, and all hope had forsaken her.

Thus, then, while she had been for a moment overwhelmed at finding that her preserver from the tiger was a countryman

in disguise, and that he was willing to make an attempt to rescue her, yet in a few minutes she stifled her sobs, hastily thrust back the hair that had fallen over her face, uncoiled herself from her crouching position in the angle of the divan, and rose to her feet.

"I can hardly believe it to be true," she said, in a low voice. "Oh, Sahib, do you really mean what you say? and are you willing to run the risk of taking me away with you?"

"Of course I am," Dick said heartily. "You don't suppose that an Englishman would be so base as to leave a young countrywoman in the hands of these wretches? I do not think that there is much risk in it. Of course you will have to disguise yourself, and there may be some hardships to go through, but once away from here we are not likely to be interfered with. You see, my friend and I are officers of the Palace, and no one would venture to question us, as we should be supposed to be travelling upon the sultan's business. There is peace at present, and although Tippoo may intend some day or other to fight again, everything is settling down quietly. Traders go about the country unquestioned; there is plenty of traffic on the roads from one town to another; and so long as your disguise is good enough to prevent your being recognised as a white, there is no greater danger in travelling in Mysore than there would be down in the Carnatic."

Annie stood before him with her fingers playing nervously with each other. Long trained in habits of implicit obedience, and to stand in an attitude of deep respect before her numerous mistresses, she was in ignorance whether she ought to speak or not. She had been but a child of six when she had been carried off; her remembrance of English manners had quite died out, and the habit of silent submission had become habitual to her. Dick was puzzled by her silence.

"Of course, Annie," he said, at last, "I don't want you to go with me if you would rather stay here, or if you are afraid of the risk of travelling."