

longed for a cup. It seems to me funny to drink anything hot. I have never tasted anything but water that I can remember, until you gave me that wine yesterday."

"It is very nice and very refreshing. There is another drink that is coming into fashion; it is called tea. I have tasted it a few times, but I don't like it as well as coffee, and it is much more expensive."

"The sultan says that all the English get drunk, and there used to be pictures of them on the walls. They used to make me so angry."

"I don't say that no English get drunk, Annie, because there is no doubt that some do; but it is very far from being true of the great proportion of them. Tippoo only says it to excite the people against us, because, now that he has made them all Mohammedans, they cannot drink wine—at any rate, openly. When I bought these two bottles, the trader made a great mystery over it, and if I had not given him a sign he understood, and which made him believe that I was a Hindoo and not a Mussulman, he would not have admitted that he kept it at all. He did say so at first, for I have no doubt he thought that as I was an officer of the Palace it was a snare, and that if he had admitted he had wine I should have reported him, and it would have served as an excuse for his being fined and perhaps having all his goods confiscated. When I made the sign that an old Hindoo had taught me, his manner changed directly, and he took me to the back of his little shop and produced the wine. I told him I wanted it for medicine and that was quite true, for I thought it was a drug you were very likely to need on your journey."

"How much farther have we to ride?" she asked, after a pause.

"Only about thirty-five miles—that is to say, it is only that distance to the frontier. There is a road that is rather more direct, but it passes through Oussoor, a large town, which we had better avoid. It is not more than fifty miles from the

frontier to Tripataly, but once across the line we can take matters easily and stop whenever you get tired."

"It will be all very strange to me, Dick. I sha'n't mind it as long as you are with me, but it will be dreadful when you go. I am afraid your mother won't like me. You see, I know nothing of English ways, and I am oh! so ignorant. I cannot even read, at least, very little. One of the girls used to teach me from a book she had when she was carried off; it was a Bible—she used to tell me stories out of it. But one day they found it, and she was beaten very much for venturing to have it; I am afraid I have quite forgotten even my letters; but she and the other girls used to teach me about religion, and told me I must never forget that I was a Christian, whatever they might do to me, and I was to say my prayers every night after I lay down and every morning before I got up. Of course I have always done it."

"You need not be afraid of my mother, Annie. She is very kind, and I am sure she will take to you very much and will be very glad that I have brought you to Tripataly, for, you see, she has no girls of her own. She will teach you to read and write, and if we go back to England I daresay you will go to school for a time, so as to learn things like other girls."

"I can work very nicely," she said; "the ladies of the harem all used to say that."

"Well, you will find that very useful, no doubt."

"And what else is there to learn?" she asked.

"No end of things, Annie—at least, there are no end of things for boys to learn; I do not know anything about girls. But of course you will have to get to know something of history and geography."

"What is geography, Dick?"

"Well, geography is where countries and places are. For instance, you know something of the geography of India without ever having learnt it. You know that Madras and the Carnatic lie to the east, and Travancore to the south-west,

and Malabar to the west, and the Mahratta country and the Nizam's dominions to the north. Well, that is the geography of this part of the country—that and the names of the towns and rivers. In the same way there are a lot of nations in Europe, and you want to know all about them, and where they lie with respect to each other, and the names of their principal towns. Then there are America, and Africa, and Asia, and all the countries in them. If you don't know about these things, you can't follow what people are talking about."

"And did you like learning geography, Dick?" she asked, a little anxiously.

"Well no, I can't say that I did, Annie. I think I used to hate geography; it was very hard to remember where all the places were, and what rivers they stood on. I know very little about it now, except the principal towns and places. But then, I never was very fond of learning anything; I was a very stupid boy at school."

"Oh, I am sure you could not have been that, Dick," she said confidently.

"I was indeed, Annie. I think the only thing I could do well was fighting. I was a beggar to fight—not because I used to quarrel with fellows, but because it made me hard and tough, and my mother thought that it would make me more fit to carry out this search for my father."

"What did you fight with—swords?" Annie asked.

Dick laughed.

"No, no, Annie, when we quarrel in England we fight with our fists."

"What is a fist? I never heard of that weapon."

"That is a fist, Annie. You see, it is hard enough to knock a fellow down, though it does not very often do that; but it hurts him a bit without doing him any harm, except that it may black his eyes or puff up his face for a day or two—and no boy minds that. It accustoms one to bear pain, and is a splendid thing for teaching a boy to keep his temper, and I

believe it is one reason why the English make such good soldiers. It is a sort of science, you see, and one learns it just as people here learn to be good swordsmen. I had lessons when I was twelve years old from a little man who used to be a champion light-weight—that is, a man of not more than a certain weight.”

Annie looked doubtful for a minute, and then exclaimed, “Ah, yes, I understand now. That is how it is you came to our help so quickly and bravely, when the tiger burst in.”

“I daresay it had something to do with it,” Dick said, with a smile. “There is no doubt that boxing, as we call it, does make you quick. There is not much time to waste in thinking how you are to stop a blow, and to return it at the same moment. One gets into the habit of deciding at once what is the best thing to be done; and I have no doubt that I should not have seen at once that one must cut through the netting, run to the window, jump on to Surajah’s shoulders, and fire at the tiger, unless I had been sharpened up by boxing. I only say I suppose that, because there were no doubt hundreds of men looking on who had pluck enough to face the tiger, and who would have gladly done the thing that we did if the idea had occurred to them. The idea did not occur to them, you see, and I have no doubt that it was just owing to that boxing that I thought of it. So you see, Annie, it was in a way the fights I had with boys at Shadwell—which is the part of London where I lived—that saved you, and perhaps half a dozen ladies of the sultan’s harem, from being killed by that tiger.

“Now I should advise you to walk about the wood for at least an hour, to get rid of your stiffness. The longer you walk the better. When you have tired yourself come back here; by that time I daresay you will be ready for another sleep. We will start about three o’clock, and shall cross the frontier before it gets quite dark. Once across, we can camp comfortably where we like, or put up at a village, if we should

light upon one. I should not go far away from here,” he went on, as the girl at once rose and prepared to start. “Very likely the wood may get thick farther in, and you might lose your way, or come across a snake; so I should not go far out of sight. The great thing is to keep moving. It is getting broad daylight now.”

As soon as Annie had started, Dick lay down.

“I feel dog-tired, Surajah. This right arm of mine is so stiff that I can hardly lift it. I did not feel it at the time, and her weight was nothing, but I certainly feel it now.”

“You have a good sleep, Dick. Ibrahim and I will keep watch by turns.”

“I don’t think there is any occasion for that,” Dick said. “No one is likely to come into the wood.”

“Not very likely,” Surajah agreed; “but a body of travellers might turn in here for a halt in the middle of the day, and it would look strange were they to find two of the Palace officers, and their attendants, all fast asleep.”

“They would only think we came in for a rest a short time before they did,” Dick said drowsily. “Still, if you don’t mind, perhaps it would be best.”

In two minutes Dick was sound asleep.

“Now, Ibrahim, you lie down,” Surajah said. “I will call you in three hours.”

In half-an-hour Annie returned. She looked pitifully at Dick, and then seated herself by Surajah.

“He must be tired,” she said. “It was too bad of me, letting him carry me like that all night. I thought so, over and over again, when he believed I was fast asleep, but I knew that it was of no use asking him to let me ride for a bit. You don’t mind my sitting here for a little, do you? I am going away again presently; I only came back so soon because I thought he might wonder what had become of me if I did not. I could have gone on walking for a long time. It was very hard work at first, for my back ached dreadfully, and every

step hurt me so, it was as much as I could do to keep on walking; but gradually it got better, and at last I had a long run, and after that I scarcely felt it. How long have you known him, Surajah?" and she nodded towards Dick.

"It is about two years and a half since he came to Tripataly, and I have seen a great deal of him ever since. I love him very much; he is always the same; he never seems to get angry, and is kind to every one."

"Did he fight when he was with the army?"

"Not much. He was one of the general's own officers, and used to ride with the others behind him. He fought in the battle before Seringapatam, for the general and every one else had to fight then."

"How is it you come to be always with him?" she asked.

"It first began when we went out on a scouting expedition together, before the English army went up the ghauts. We volunteered to find out, if we could, which way the sultan's army was going. We went through a good deal of danger together, and some hard fighting, and the Sahib was pleased with me; and since then we have always been together."

"Tell me about that, Surajah?"

Surajah related the story of their capture and escape, of their making their way through the fort, and the subsequent pursuit, and their defence of the ruined hut. Annie listened almost breathlessly.

"How I should like to have been with you," she said, when he finished. "At least, I think I should have liked it. I should have been dreadfully in the way, but I could have sat down in the hut and loaded the guns while you were both fighting. You could have shown me how to do it. How brave of you both to have fought fifty or sixty men!"

"It was not so very brave," Surajah said. "We knew we should be killed if they took us; there is nothing brave in doing your best when you know that. But it was not so much the fighting as arranging things, and he did all that, and I only

carried out his orders. He always seemed to know exactly what was best to be done, and it was entirely his doing our getting through the fort, and taking to the hut, and making the loop-holes, and blocking up the windows, just as it was his doing entirely that we killed that tiger. Whatever he says is sure to be right, and when he tells me to do a thing I do it directly, for I trust him entirely, and there is no need for me to think at all. If he had told me to go up to the sultan and shoot him in the middle of his officers, I should have done it, though they would have cut me in pieces a minute afterwards."

"I will go away again now," Annie said, getting up. "He told me to keep on walking about, and he would not like it if he were to wake up and find me sitting here."

And she got up and strolled away again. By the time she returned Surajah had lain down to sleep, and Ibrahim was on watch. Annie was by this time tired enough to be ready for sleep again, and, wrapping herself in a rug, she lay down at a short distance from the others. It was two o'clock when she awoke, and she sprang to her feet as she saw Dick and Surajah standing by the fire, talking.

"I was going to wake you soon," Dick said, as she joined them, "for we must have another meal before we start. I hope you feel all the better after your walk and sleep?"

"Ever so much better. I scarcely feel stiff at all, and shall be ready to ride as soon as you like. How do you feel, Dick?"

"Oh, I am all right, Annie. I was all right before, though I did feel I wanted a sleep badly; and you see I have been having a long one, for I only woke up ten minutes ago. I own, though, that I should like a good wash. I don't suppose I can look dirty through this stain, but I certainly feel so."

"There is a pool," she said, "a few hundred yards away there, on the right. I found it the second time I went away, and I did enjoy a wash."

"I thought you were looking wonderfully tidy," Dick said, smiling. "Well, I will go there at once. I shall feel a new man after a bath."

"I will come with you," Surajah said—for he had learned to speak a good deal of English during his companionship with Dick.

They returned in half-an-hour. Ibrahim had warmed up some of the chupatties over the ashes, and they all thoroughly enjoyed their meal. The horses were saddled, and were taken to the pool for a good drink. Then Annie was helped into her saddle, and they started again. They rode at a canter to Anicull, their badges of office securing them from any questioning from the soldiers at the guard-houses when they entered and left the town.

"I don't know whether there is any post established at the frontier," Dick said, as Annie, who had ridden behind with Ibrahim as they passed through the town, took her place again between him and Surajah. "I have no fear that they will be erecting a fort, for after our capturing Bangalore and the hill-fortresses they will know very well that nothing they could build on the flat would be of the slightest use in stopping an army advancing by this line. Still, there may be a guard placed there. How do you think we had better get past, Surajah? We have still got the order to the governors of forts, and it is likely enough that the officer in charge may not be able to read. Very few of those we met before were able to do so; the sight of the sultan's seal at the bottom was quite enough for them, and I should think it would suffice to pass us here. Still, it would look suspicious our leaving the country altogether, and we must give some explanation if they ask us."

"I might say that we are charged with a mission to the English commander at Kistnagherry."

"That might do, Surajah; the fort is only eight or ten miles on the other side of the frontier, and we might very well be

sent on some message. A complaint of some of the villagers that their rights have not been respected as agreed by the treaty, or that they have been robbed by men from this side of the frontier—there are plenty of things about which Tippoo might be sending a message to Kistnagherry. The worst of it is that Tippoo has not given us a mission, and I do hate your having to say what is not true."

Surajah was not so particular, and he replied,—

"Well, he has given us a mission to visit the hill-forts, and as Kistnagherry is a hill-fort it is not a very great stretch to include it."

Dick laughed.

"That is ingenious, Surajah. Anyhow I don't see any better excuse for crossing the frontier, and so we must make the best of it; but I hope we sha'n't be asked at all."

"I think if I say we are going to Kistnagherry, and then show Tippoo's order and seal, that will be sufficient; and the story will be quite true, for we shall go by Kistnagherry, as the road passes close to the fortress."

"Yes, that will be quite true, Surajah, and the officers are not likely to ask any further questions. How are you getting on, Annie?"

"Oh, much better than I did yesterday," she said. "I would much rather not halt until we are across the frontier. I am getting accustomed to the motion now, and am not at all afraid of falling off. I daresay I shall be rather stiff when we halt, but that will not matter then."

The sun was just setting when they arrived at a newly erected house, round which ten or twelve tents were arranged. An officer came out of the house as they approached. He salaamed on seeing two officials of the Palace, wearing the emblems of the rank of colonels. Surajah returned the usual Moslem salutation.

"We are going to Kistnagherry," he said. "Here is the sultan's order."

The officer glanced at the seal, placed it to his forehead, and then stood aside.

"Will you return to-night, my lord? I ask that I may give orders to the sentries."

"No; there is no chance of our being able to be back before morning."

He touched his horse, and then trotted on again. Not a word was spoken until they had gone a few hundred yards, and then Dick checked his horse, and, as Annie came alongside, held out his hand and said,—

"Thank God, Annie, that we have got you safely back on to English territory."

CHAPTER XVII

BACK AT TRIPATALY

ANNIE'S lips moved as Dick announced that they had crossed the Mysore boundary, but no sound came from them. He saw her eyes close, and she reeled in the saddle.

"Hold her, Surajah," Dick exclaimed, "or she will fall."

Leaning over, Surajah caught her by the shoulder, and Dick, leaping to the ground, stopped her horse, and, lifting her from the saddle, seated her upon a bank and supported her.

"Some water, Surajah," he exclaimed. Surajah poured a little water from the skin into the hollow of Dick's hand, and the latter sprinkled the girl's face with it.

"I have not fainted," she murmured, opening her eyes, "but I turned giddy. I shall be better directly."

"Drink a little wine," Dick said. Surajah poured some into a cup, but with an effort she sat up and pushed it from her.

"There is nothing the matter," she said, "only, only——" and she burst suddenly into a passion of sobbing. The spirit

that she had shown so long as there was danger, had deserted her now that the peril had passed and she was safe.

Dick looked at her helplessly. A girl in tears was a creature wholly beyond his experience, and he had no idea what he ought to do in such an emergency. He therefore adopted what was doubtless the best course, had he but known it, of letting her alone. After a time the violence of her crying abated, and only short sobs broke from her as she sat with her face hidden in her hands.

"That is right, Annie," he said, putting his hand on her shoulder. "It is quite natural for you to cry after the excitement and fatigue you have gone through. You have been very brave, and have not said a word of complaint to-day about your fatigue, although you must be desperately tired. Now try and pull yourself together. It is getting dark already and we ought to be moving on to Ryacotta, which cannot be much more than a mile away. You shall ride in front of me when we get there."

"I would rather not," she said, getting up with a painful effort. "I am awfully foolish, and I am so sorry that I broke down, but I felt so delighted that I could not help it. You said we could camp safely when we once got across the frontier. Would you mind doing so? for I don't think I could go much farther."

"Certainly we can camp," Dick said cheerfully. "But we must get a little bit farther from that post we passed. If they were to see a fire here they would be sure to suspect something. I see a clump of trees a quarter of a mile on; we can make our camp there, and I would rather do that myself than go on to Ryacotta, where our appearance in the Mysore uniform would excite a stir, and we should have no end of questions to answer. But I am sure that you are not fit to walk even that distance. Now, I will lift you on my saddle and you can sit sideways. There, I will walk by your side and you can put your hand to my shoulder to steady yourself. Surajah