

HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

AT THE POINT OF THE
BAYONET: A TALE OF THE
MAHRATTA WAR

George Henty

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Содержание

Preface	5
Chapter 1: A Faithful Nurse	6
Chapter 2: A Strange Bringing Up	15
Chapter 3: A Change In Affairs	28
Chapter 4: A British Resident	37
Chapter 5: Down To Bombay	46
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	51

G. A. Henty

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Preface

The story of the war in which the power of the great Mahratta confederacy was broken is one of the most stirring pages of the campaigns which, begun by Clive, ended in the firm establishment of our great empire in the Indian Peninsula. When the struggle began, the Mahrattas were masters of no small portion of India; their territory comprising the whole country between Bombay and Delhi, and stretching down from Rajputana to Allahabad; while in the south they were lords of the district of Cuttack, thereby separating Madras from Calcutta. The jealousies of the great Mahratta leaders, Holkar and Scindia, who were constantly at war with each other, or with the Peishwa at Poona, greatly facilitated our operations; and enabled us, although at the cost of much blood, to free a large portion of India from a race that was a scourge—faithless, intriguing and crafty; cruel, and reckless of life. The Mahrattas, conquering race as they were, yet failed in the one virtue of courage. They could sweep the land with hordes of wild horsemen, could harry peaceful districts and tyrannize over the towns they conquered; but they were unable to make an effective stand against British bayonets and British sabres. They were a race of freebooters; and even the most sentimental humanitarian can feel no regret at the overthrow of a power that possessed no single claim to our admiration, and weighed like an incubus upon the peoples it oppressed. The history of the Mahrattas, as written by Grant Duff, whose account I have, throughout, followed, is one long record of perfidy, murder, and crime of all sorts.

Chapter 1: A Faithful Nurse

On a swell of ground, in the wild country extending from Bombay to the foot of the Ghauts, stood a small camp. In the centre was a large pavilion; the residence, for the time, of Major Lindsay, an officer whose charge was to keep the peace in the district. It was no easy matter. The inhabitants, wild and lawless, lived in small villages scattered about the rough country, for the most part covered with forest, and subject to depredations by the robber bands who had their strongholds among the hills. Major Lindsay had with him a party of twenty troopers, not for defence—there was little fear of attack by the natives of the Concan—but to add to his authority, to aid in the collection of the small tax paid by each community, and to deter the mountain robbers from descending on to the plain. He generally spent the cool season in going his rounds while, during the hot weather, his headquarters were at Bombay.

He had with him his wife and infant child. The child was some three months old, and was looked after by an ayah, who had been in Major Lindsay's service ten years; for three elder children had been born to him—all, however, dying from the effects of the climate before reaching the age of five. The ayah had nursed each, in succession, and had become greatly attached to the family, especially to her youngest charge. She had come to speak English well; but with the child she always talked in her native tongue, as the major saw the advantage it would prove to the boy, when he grew up, to be able to speak fluently one, at least, of the native languages.

The nurse was a Mahratta. She had been in the service of the British Resident at Poona and, when he was recalled, had entered that of Major Lindsay, at that time a captain who acted as secretary to the Resident.

A young officer from Bombay had just ridden out, to spend a day or two with the major, and was sitting with him at the entrance to the tent.

"The news from the army," he said, "is most unsatisfactory. As you know, to the astonishment of everyone Colonel Egerton was appointed to the command, in spite of the fact that he was so infirm as to be altogether unfit for active service; and Mostyn, our late Resident at Poona, and Carnac accompanied him as deputies of the Council."

"That is altogether a bad arrangement," the major said. "It has always been a great disadvantage for a general to be accompanied by civilians, with power to thwart his combinations. Against Mostyn's appointment no one could raise any objection as, having been for some years at Poona, he understands the Mahrattas, and indeed is much liked by them, so that in any negotiations he would have far more chance of success than a stranger; but Carnac is hot headed and obstinate, with a very high idea of his own importance, and it is certain that there will be difficulties between him and Egerton."

"I am sorry to say, Major, that these anticipations were very speedily verified. As you know, the advance party landed at Apte, on November 23rd, and seized the roads over the gorge; and on the 25th the main body disembarked at Panwell. No sooner had they got there than there was a quarrel between Egerton and Carnac. Most unfortunately Mostyn, who would have acted as mediator, was taken ill on the very day after landing, and was obliged to return to Bombay; and I hear there is hardly any chance of his recovery. The army did not reach the top of the Ghauts till the 23rd of December—instead of, at the latest, three days after landing—and actually spent eleven days before it arrived at Karlee, only eight miles in advance of the Bhore Ghauts. Of course this encouraged the enemy, and gave plenty of time for them to assemble and make all their arrangements and, when we last heard, they were harassing our march. For the past two days no news has arrived, and there seems to be little doubt that the Mahrattas have closed in round their rear, and cut off all communications."

"It is monstrous that they should march so slowly. The whole thing has been a hideous blunder, and the idea of encumbering a force of four thousand men with something like thirty thousand camp followers, and with a train of no less than nineteen thousand bullocks, to say nothing of other draught

animals, is the most preposterous thing I ever heard of. In fact, the whole thing has been grossly mismanaged.

"I don't say that the conduct of the Mahrattas has not for some time been doubtful, if not threatening. It is well known that the Governor General and the Council at Calcutta have most strongly disapproved of the whole conduct of the Council at Bombay. Indeed, no explanation has ever been given as to why they took up the cause of Rugoba, the scoundrel who grasped the crown; and who was privy to, if he did not instigate, the murder of his nephew, the young Peishwa.

"He was not unopposed, for Nana Furnuwees and Hurry Punt, two of the leading Mahratta ministers, formed a regency under Gunga Bye, the widow of the murdered Peishwa. While matters were undecided, the Bombay Council opened communications with Rugoba, who they thought was likely to be successful; and promised to assist him, if he would advance a considerable sum of money, and cede to the Company Salsette, the small islands contiguous to Bombay and Bassein, which had been captured from the Portuguese by the Mahrattas—an altogether inexcusable arrangement, as the Mahrattas were at peace with us, and Rugoba was not in a position to hand the islands over. That matter, however, was settled by sending an expedition, which captured Salsette and Tannah in 1775, four years ago. Since then Rugoba has become a fugitive and, without a shadow of reason, is making war against the whole force of the Mahratta confederacy; who, although divided amongst themselves and frequently engaged in the struggles for supremacy, have united against us—for they say that Scindia, Holkar, and Hurry Punt are in command of their army. To send four thousand men, of whom less than six hundred are Europeans, against the whole Mahratta power is a desperate step.

"I know we have fought and won against greater odds, many times in the history of India; but our forces have always been well led, marched with the smallest amount of baggage possible, and made up for inferiority in numbers by speed, activity, and dash. Here, on the contrary, we have a force hampered to an unheard-of degree by baggage and camp followers; with an invalid at its head, controlled by two civilians; and moving at a rate which, in itself, testifies to divided councils and utter incompetency on the part of its commander. It is almost impossible even to hope for success, under such conditions."

"The lookout is certainly bad," the younger officer agreed. "However, before now the fighting powers of the British soldier have made up for the blunders of his commanders; and we may hope that this will be the case, now."

"If a disaster happen," the major said, "we shall have the Mahrattas down at the gates of Bombay; and as soon as I hear a rumour of it—and news travels wonderfully fast among the natives—I shall return to the city."

"Oh, I don't think you need fear anything of that sort, Major! Besides, this is not on the direct line between the Ghauts and the city. And even if they find they cannot push on, I should say our force would be able to secure their retreat. The Mahratta horse will never be able to break our squares; but of course, in that case we should have to abandon all our baggage and baggage animals."

"I agree with you that the Mahrattas would doubtless hang on the skirts of our force, and follow them down the Bhore Ghaut, and so would not come anywhere near us; but they might detach flying parties to burn and plunder, as is their custom. Brave as they are, the Mahrattas do not fight for the love of fighting, but simply from the hope of plunder and of enlarging their territories.

"Well, we may hope, in a day or two, to hear that a battle has been fought, and that a victory has been won. Not that one victory would settle the matter, for the Mahratta force consists almost entirely of cavalry and, as we have only a handful, they would, if beaten, simply ride off and be ready to fight again, another day. If we had pushed on and occupied Poona, directly we landed—which should have been easy enough, if the baggage train had been left behind, for it is but forty miles from Panwell to the Mahratta capital—the position would have been altogether different. The Mahrattas would not have had time to collect their forces, and we should probably have met with no opposition and, once in Poona, could have held it against the whole Mahratta force. Besides, it is certain that some of the

chiefs, seeing that Rugoba was likely to be made Peishwa, would have come to the conclusion that it would be best for them to side with him.

"Of course, the baggage should all have been left at Panwell and, in that case, the force could have entered Poona three days after landing, instead of delaying from the 25th of November until today, the 7th of January; and even now, at their present rate of advance, they may be another fortnight before they arrive at Poona. I don't think there has been so disgraceful a business since we first put foot in India.

"At any rate, I shall send Mary and the child down to Bombay, tomorrow. It is all very well to have her with me, when everything is peaceable; but although I do not think there is any actual risk, it is as well that, in turbulent times like these, with nothing but a force under such incompetent leading between us and a powerful and active enemy, she should be safe at Bombay."

Just before daybreak, next morning, there was a sudden shout from one of the sentries; who had for the first time been posted round the camp. The warning was followed by a fierce rush, and a large body of horse and foot charged into the camp. The escort were, for the most part, killed as they issued from their tents. The major and his friend were shot down as they sallied out, sword in hand. The same fate befell Mrs. Lindsay.

Then the Mahrattas proceeded to loot the camp. The ayah had thrust the child underneath the wall of the tent, at the first alarm. A Mahratta seized her, and would have cut her down, had she not recognized him by the light of the lamp which hung from the tent ridge.

"Why, cousin Sufder," she exclaimed, "do you not know me?"

He loosed his hold, and stood back and gazed at her.

"Why, Soyera," he exclaimed, "is it you? It is more than ten years since I saw you!

"It is my cousin," he said to some of his companions who were standing round, "my mother's sister's child."

"Don't be alarmed," he went on, to the woman, "no one will harm you. I am one of the captains of this party."

"I must speak to you alone, Sufder."

She went outside the tent with him.

"You have nothing to fear," he said. "You shall go back with us to Jooneer. I have a house there, and you can stay with my wife. Besides, there are many of your people still alive."

"But that is not all, Sufder. I was ayah to the major and his wife—whom your people have just killed, and whom I loved dearly—and in my charge is their child. He is but a few months old, and I must take him with me."

"It is impossible," Sufder replied. "No white man, woman, or child would be safe in the Deccan, at present."

"No one would see his face," the woman said. "I would wrap him up, and will give out that he is my own child. As soon as we get up the Ghauts I would stain his face and skin, and no one would know that he was white. If you will not let me do it, tell your men to cut me down. I should not care to live, if the child were gone as well as his father and mother. You cannot tell how kind they were to me. You would not have me ungrateful, would you, Sufder?"

"Well, well," the man said good naturedly, though somewhat impatiently, "do as you like; but if any harm comes of it, mind it is not my fault."

Thankful for the permission, Soyera hurried round to the back of the tent, picked up the child and wrapped it in her robe; and then when, after firing the place, the Mahrattas retired, she fell in behind them, and followed them in the toilsome climb up the mountains, keeping so far behind that none questioned her. Once or twice Sufder dropped back to speak to her.

"It is a foolish trick of yours," he said, "and I fear that trouble will come of it."

"I don't see why it should," she replied. "The child will come to speak Mahratta and, when he is stained, none will guess that he is English. In time, I may be able to restore him to his own people."

The other shook his head.

"That is not likely," he said, "for before many weeks, we shall have driven them into the sea."

"Then he must remain a Mahratta," she said, "until he is able to make his way to join the English in Madras or Calcutta."

"You are an obstinate woman, and always have been so; else you would not have left your people to go to be servant among the whites. However, I will do what I can for you, for the sake of my mother's sister and of our kinship."

On the way up the hills Soyera stopped, several times, to pick berries. When they halted she went aside and pounded them, and then boiled them in some water in a lota—a copper vessel—Sufder lent her for the purpose, and dyed the child's head and body with it, producing a colour corresponding to her own.

The party, which was composed of men from several towns and villages, broke up the next morning.

"Have you money?" Sufder asked her, as she was about to start alone on her journey.

"Yes; my savings were all lodged for me, by Major Lindsay, with some merchants at Bombay; but I have twenty rupees sewn up in my garments."

"As to your savings, Soyera, you are not likely to see them again, for we shall make a clean sweep of Bombay. However, twenty rupees will be useful to you, and would keep you for three or four months, if you needed but, as you are going to my wife, you will not want them.

"Take this dagger. When you show it to her, she will know that you come from me; but mind, she is, like most women, given to gossip; therefore I warn you not to let her into the secret of this child's birth, for if you did so, half the town would know it in the course of a day or two.

"Now, I must go back with my men to join a party who are on their way to fight the English. I should have gone there direct, but met the others starting on this marauding expedition, which was so much to the taste of my men that I could not restrain them from joining. I shall see you at Jooneer, as soon as matters are finished with the English; then I shall, after staying a few days there, rejoin Scindia, in whose service I am."

Soyera started on her way. At the villages through which she passed, she was questioned as to where she came from; and replied that she had been living down near Bombay but, now that the English were going to fight the Mahrattas, she was coming home, having lost her husband a few months before.

As the road to Jooneer diverged widely from that to Poona, she was asked no questions about the war. All were confident that the defeat of the English was certain, now that Scindia and Holkar and the government of the Peishwa had laid aside their mutual jealousies, and had joined for the purpose of crushing the whites.

On arriving, after two days' journey, at Jooneer, she went to the address that Sufder had given her; but was coldly received by his wife.

"As it is Sufder's order, of course I must take you in," she said, "but when he returns, I shall tell him that I do not want another woman and child in the house. Why do you not go to your own people? As you are Sufder's cousin, you must be the sister of Ramdass. Why should you not go to him?"

"I will gladly do so, if you will tell me where he lives."

"He has a small farm. You must have passed it, as you came along. It is about a mile from here."

"I will go to him at once," Soyera said.

"No, no," the woman exclaimed; "that will never do. You must stop a day or two here. Sufder would be angry, indeed, were he to find that you did not remain here; and would blame me for it. I should be willing enough for you to stay a week, or a month; that is a different thing from becoming an inmate of the house."

"I will wait till tomorrow, for I have made a long two days' journey from the top of the Ghauts and, as I am not accustomed to walking, my feet are sore. In the morning I will go and see my brother.

I did not so much as know that he was alive. I feel sure he will take me in, willingly; for he is but two years older than myself, and was always kind to me."

Accordingly the next morning she retraced her steps, and had no difficulty in finding the farm of Ramdass. Choosing the time when he would be likely to be in for his dinner, Soyera walked up to the door of the house, which was standing open.

As she stood there, hesitating, Ramdass came out. He was a man of some forty years of age, with a pleasant and kindly face. He looked at her enquiringly.

"Do you not know me, Ramdass?" she asked.

"Why, 'tis Soyera!" he exclaimed. "And so you have come back, after all these years—thirteen, is it not, since you went away?"

"Welcome back, little sister!" and he raised his voice, and called, "Anundee!"

A young woman, two or three and twenty years of age, came to the door.

"Wife," he said, "this is my sister Soyera, of whom you have often heard me speak.

"Soyera, this is my wife. We have been married six years; but come in, and let us talk things over.

"You have come home for good, I hope," he said. "So you too have married and, as you come alone with your child, have, I suppose, had the misfortune to lose your husband?"

"Yes, I was alone in the world, and came hither not knowing whether you were alive or dead; but feeling sure of a welcome, if I found you."

"And you were not mistaken," he said heartily.

"Anundee, you will, I am sure, join me in the welcome; and willingly give my sister and her child a place in our home?"

"Assuredly. It will be pleasant for me, when you are in the fields, to have some one to talk to, and perhaps to help me about the house."

Soyera saw that she was speaking sincerely.

"Thank you, Anundee; you may be sure that I shall not be idle. I have been accustomed to work, and can take much off your hands; and will look after your two children;" for two boys, three or four years old, were standing before her, staring at the newcomer.

"That will be pleasant, Soyera; indeed, sometimes they hinder me much in my work."

"I am accustomed to children, Anundee, as I was for years nurse to English children, and know their ways."

"Well, now let us to dinner," Ramdass broke in. "I am hungry, and want to be off again. There is much to do in the fields."

The woman took a pot off the embers of a wood fire, and poured its contents into a dish. The meal consisted of a species of pulse boiled with ghee, with peppers and other condiments added.

"And how did you like being among the English, Soyera?"

"I liked it very well," the woman said. "They are very kind and considerate to nurses and, although they get angry when the gorrawallah or other men neglect their duty, they do not punish them as a Mahratta master would do. They are not double faced; when they say a thing they mean it, and their word can always be trusted. As a people, no doubt they are anxious to extend their dominion; but they do not wish to do so for personal gain. They are not like the princes here, who go to war to gain territory and revenue. It was reasonable that they should wish to increase their lands; for they are almost shut up in Bombay, with Salsette and the other islands occupied by us, who may, any day, be their enemies."

Her brother laughed.

"It seems to me, Soyera, that you have come to prefer these English people to your own countrymen."

"I say not that, Ramdass. You asked me how I liked them, and I have told you. You yourself know how the tax collectors grind down the people; how Scindia and Holkar and the Peishwa are

always fighting each other. Do you know that, in Bombay, the meanest man could not be put to death, unless fairly tried; while among the Mahrattas men are executed on the merest excuse or, if not executed, are murdered?"

"That is true enough," Ramdass said; "none of the three princes would hesitate to put to death anyone who stood in his way, and it seems strange to me that even the Brahmins, who would not take the life even of a troublesome insect, yet support the men who have killed scores of other people. But it is no use grumbling; the thing has always been, and I suppose always will be. It is not only so in the Deccan, but in the Nizam's dominions, in Mysore and, so far as I know, in Oude and Delhi. It seems so natural to us that the powerful should oppress the weak, and that one prince should go to war with another, that we hardly give the matter a thought; but though, as you say, the English in Bombay may rule wisely, and dislike taking life, they are doing now just as our princes do—they are making war with us."

"That is true but, from what I have heard when the English sahibs were speaking together, it is everything to them that a prince favourable to them should rule at Poonah for, were Holkar and Scindia to become all powerful, and place one of their people on the seat of the Peishwa, the next step might be that a great Mahratta force would descend the Ghauts, capture Bombay, and slay every white man in it."

"But they are a mere handful," Ramdass said. "How can they think of invading a nation like ours?"

"Because they know, at least they believe, that Scindia, Holkar, and the Peishwa are all so jealous of each other that they will never act together. Then you see what they have done round Madras and Bengal and, few as they are, they have won battles against the great princes; and lastly, my mistress has told me that, although there are but few here, there are many at home; and they could, if they chose, send out twenty soldiers for every one there is here.

"Besides, it is not these alone who fight. The natives enlist under them, and aid them in their conquests; and this shows, at least, that they are well treated, and have confidence in the good faith of the English."

"It is all very well, Soyera, to talk that way; but I would as willingly believe that the stars will fall from the sky as that these Englishmen, who simply live in Bombay because we suffer them to do so, should ever conquer the Mahrattas, as they have subdued other portions of India where, as everyone knows, the people are not warlike, and have always been conquered without difficulty.

"Look at our power! At Delhi the emperor is a puppet in our hands, and it is the same in all the districts on the plain of the great river. The Rajpoots fear us, and even the Pindaries would not dare carry their raids into our country. That a small body of merchants and soldiers should threaten us seems, to me, altogether absurd."

"Well, brother, we will not argue about it. Time will show. As a woman of the Mahrattas, I trust that day will never come; but as one who knows the English, I have my fears. Of one thing I am sure, that were they masters here, the cultivators would be vastly better off than they are at present."

Ramdass laughed.

"What do you think of my sister's opinions, Anundee?"

"I do not know what to think," the young woman said; "but Soyera has seen much, and is a wise woman, and what she says are no idle words. To us it seems impossible, when we know that the Mahrattas can place a hundred thousand horsemen in the field; but I own that, from what we know of the English, it might be better for people like us to have such masters."

"And now, Soyera," Ramdass said, when he returned from his work in the evening, "tell us more about yourself. First, how did you learn where I was living?"

"I learned it from the wife of our cousin Sufder."

"How did you fall in with him?"

"Well, I must tell you something. I had meant to keep it entirely to myself, but I know that you and Anundee will keep my secret."

"Assuredly we will. I am not a man to talk of other people's affairs and, as to Anundee, you can trust her with your life."

"Well, in the first place, I deceived you; or rather you deceived yourself, when you said, 'I see that you have been married;' but the children were here, and so I could not explain. The infant is not mine. It is the son of my dear master and mistress, both of whom were killed, three days ago, by bands—of which Sufder commanded one—who attacked them suddenly, by night."

"What! Is the child white?" Ramdass asked, in a tone of alarm.

"It is not white, because I have stained the skin; but it is the child of English parents. I will tell you how it happened."

And she related the instances of the attack upon the little camp, the death of her master and mistress, another white officer, and all their escort; told how she had hidden the child under the cover of the tent, how Sufder had saved her life, and her subsequent conversation with him regarding the child.

"Now, what do you intend to do with him, Soyera?"

"I intend to bring him up as my own. I shall keep his skin stained, and no one can suspect that he is not mine."

"Then you do not think of restoring him to his people?"

"Not until he grows up. He has neither father nor mother, and to whom could I hand him, now? Moreover if, as you say, our people intend to drive the English from Bombay, his fate would be certain. When I am by myself with him, I shall talk to him in English, as soon as he is old enough to understand that he must not speak in that language to others; then, when he joins his own people, he will be able to converse with them. In the ten years I have spent in English service I have come to speak their language well. Though I cannot teach him the knowledge of the English, I can do much to fit him to take his place as an Englishman, when the time comes."

"It is a risky business," her brother said, "but I do not say that it cannot be carried out; at any rate, since you have so decided to keep him, I can see no better plan."

Two days later, Sufder came in.

"So you got here safely, Soyera?"

"Yes, I had no trouble. But I did not expect you back so soon."

"The matter is all settled, though I think we were wrong to grant any terms to the English. We had them in our power, and should have finished the matter, straight off."

Delay and inactivity, the natural consequences of utter incompetence and of divided councillors, had occurred. Colonel Egerton, in consequence of sickness, had resigned the command; and had been succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Cockburn. On the 9th of January they were within eighteen miles of Poona, and they had still three weeks' provisions with them. Two or three skirmishes had taken place, but without any result; yet Mr. Carnac, without having suffered any reverse, and now within a day's march of the capital, proposed that a retreat should be made, at once.

The proposal was combated by Captain Hartley, a gallant young officer, and Mr. Holmes of the Civil Service. Cockburn, being called upon for his opinion, said he had no doubt the army could penetrate to Poona; but that it would be impossible for it to protect its enormous baggage train. Mr. Carnac, however, persisted in his opinion, in spite of the prayers of Rugoba and, at eleven o'clock on the night of the 11th of January, the heavy guns were thrown into a large pool, a quantity of stores burnt, and the force began its retreat, in face of enemies estimated differently at from fifty to a hundred thousand men.

Against such vigilant foes there was but little hope, indeed, that the movement would be unnoticed and, at two o'clock in the morning, a party of horse attacked the advance guard. Cockburn

sent forward two companies of Europeans to support them, but the Mahrattas had succeeded in plundering part of the baggage.

In a very short time the rear was also attacked. This was covered by some six companies of Sepoys, with two guns, commanded by Captain Hartley. These received the charge of the enemy's horse and foot with great steadiness and, several times, took the offensive and drove their assailants back.

When morning broke, the little force found themselves altogether surrounded by the whole army of the Mahrattas. Hartley's Sepoys were now sorely pressed, but still maintained their position, and were reinforced by five companies of Europeans and two more companies of Sepoys. With this support, Hartley beat off every attack. At ten o'clock he received orders from Colonel Cockburn to retreat, but the officer who carried the message returned, begging that he would allow Captain Hartley to await a more favourable opportunity. Cockburn agreed to this, but sent Major Frederick to take command of the rear, with orders to retire on the main body. This movement he effected without serious loss, and joined the rest of the force at the village of Wurgaom.

It was already crowded with camp followers, and the wildest confusion reigned. The enemy's horse took advantage of this and charged through the baggage, and the troops were unable to act with effect, being mixed up with the crowd of fugitives. However, they soon extricated themselves, drove off the enemy, and placed the guns in commanding positions round the village. At four o'clock the enemy retired.

Early the next morning the Mahratta artillery opened fire on the village. Some of the Sepoy troops now became dispirited; but Hartley's men stood firm, and the Mahrattas did not venture to attack. The loss on the previous day was found to amount to three hundred and fifty-two killed, wounded, or missing; including many who had deserted during the night. Among the killed and wounded were fifteen European officers, whose loss was a great misfortune for, although the Sepoys fight well under their European officers, they lose heart altogether if not so led.

Mr. Palmer, the secretary of the committee, was now sent to negotiate with the enemy. The first demand made was the surrender of Rugoba; which the committee would have agreed to, but Rugoba had privately arranged to surrender to Scindia. The next demand was that the committee should enter on a treaty, for the surrender of the greater part of the territory of the Bombay Government, together with the revenue of Broach and Surat. These terms were so hard that even the craven committee, who were entirely responsible for the disaster, hesitated to accept them.

Cockburn was asked whether a retreat was wholly impracticable, and he declared that it was so. Captain Hartley protested against this opinion, and showed how a retreat could be managed. His opinion was altogether overruled, and Mr. Holmes was sent with powers to conclude the treaty—which, however, the committee never intended to observe.

Scindia took the principal part in arranging the details, superseding the authority of Nana Furnuwees, the Peishwa's minister. Scindia's favour was purchased by a private promise to bestow upon him the English share of Broach, besides a sum of forty-one thousand rupees as presents to his servants.

For their share in this miserable business Mr. Carnac, Colonel Egerton, and Colonel Cockburn were dismissed from the Company's service; and Captain Hartley was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. The Governor of Bombay refused to ratify the treaty, on the ground that the officials with the expedition had no power whatever to enter into any arrangement, without the matter being previously submitted to, and approved by, the Government. Fortunately, at this moment a force that had been despatched from Bengal, under Colonel Goddard, to support Rugoba was nearing the scene of action; and that officer, learning the danger to which Bombay was exposed, took the responsibility and, marching from Hoosingabad, avoided a body of twenty-two thousand horse, which had been despatched from Poona to cut him off, and reached Surat without encountering any opposition.

This welcome reinforcement materially altered the situation, and Bombay lay no longer at the mercy of the Mahrattas. There was now Goddard's force, and the army that had fallen back from Poona and, what was still more important, Scindia had by his secret convention deserted the confederacy; and it was morally certain that neither the Peishwa nor Holkar would send his forces against Bombay, leaving to Scindia the power of grasping the supreme authority in the Deccan during their absence.

In 1779 General Goddard, who was now in command at Bombay, entered into negotiations with Nana Furnuwees. These were carried on for some months; but were brought to a conclusion by Nana declaring that the surrender of Salsette, and the person of Rugoba, who was again a fugitive in Bombay, were preliminaries to any treaty. Bombay received a reinforcement of a European regiment, a battalion of Sepoys, and a hundred artillerymen, from Madras; but before they arrived Goddard's force had captured Dubhoy, and a treaty had been effected.

The town of Ahmedabad was to be handed over to our ally, Futteh Sing; but it declined to surrender, and was taken by assault, the storming party being commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hartley.

Scindia had as usual changed sides, and was now operating in conjunction with Nana; and he and Holkar, with twenty thousand horse, marched to Baroda. Goddard advanced to give battle; but Scindia, to gain time, opened negotiations.

Goddard, however, was not to be duped. The negotiations were broken off, and he advanced against the Mahrattas. Their horse, as usual, charged; but were driven back by the artillery fire, and routed by a regiment of Bengal cavalry. Scindia, however, encamped a short distance off but, when Goddard again advanced to the attack, retired.

Goddard, however, was not to be drawn into pursuit. He captured some small forts, and sent Colonel Hartley to relieve Kallan, which was being besieged by the Mahrattas. Hartley surprised their camp, pursued them for some miles, and killed a great number; while Lieutenant Welsh, who had been sent forward to relieve Surat—which was threatened by a large Mahratta force—defeated these, killed upwards of a hundred, and captured their guns; while one of Scindia's detachments, on the banks of the Nerbuddah, was routed by a detachment of Bengal Sepoys under Major Forbes.

On the other side of India, great successes had been gained by a Bengal force under the command of Captain Popham; who attacked and routed a body of plundering Mahrattas, captured by assault the strong fort of Lahar, and not only carried by surprise the fortress of Gwalior, regarded by the natives as impregnable, but took it without the loss of a single man.

In December, General Goddard laid siege to Bassein. He and Hartley, whose force was covering the siege, were attacked on the 11th of that month by twenty thousand cavalry and infantry. These, however, were defeated after making several desperate charges; and on the following day another battle took place, in which the Mahrattas were totally routed, and their general killed, after which Bassein surrendered.

Chapter 2: A Strange Bringing Up

The war went on during the following year, but in 1782 peace was concluded. In 1784, the Mahrattas joined the Nizam and the British in an alliance, having for its object the overthrow of Mysore; which state, first under Hyder Ali, and afterwards under his son Tippoo, was a source of danger to all the allies.

In the meantime Harry Lindsay, who was now called Puntajee, had been living quietly on the farm of Ramdass; and no suspicion whatever had been excited in the minds of the neighbours, or of any of the people of Jooneer, that he was aught but what he seemed—the son of Soyera. Once a week he was re-stained; and even his playmates, the two sons of Ramdass, believed that he was, like themselves, a young Mahratta. They knew that, sometimes, their aunt talked to the child for hours in a strange language; but she led them to believe it was the dialect of Bombay, which she thought it might be useful for him to learn.

The child was shrewd and intelligent, and strictly obeyed Soyera's instructions never, on any account, to talk in that language with her except when they were alone; for she said that, if he did so, some great misfortune would happen to him.

Thus, at six, he was able to speak English and Mahratta with equal facility. As soon as his hair began to grow, it had also been dyed; for its colour was fair, and would at once have excited attention. He was a sturdy boy, and had never known a day's illness.

Four more years passed, and Soyera then revealed to him the fact that she was not, as he supposed, his mother, but that he was of English parents; and related to him the manner in which they had come by their death, and how she had saved him.

"The language which you are speaking," she said, "is English. I spoke truly, when I said it was the language in use in Bombay; for it is the tongue of the white men there. Now you will understand why I wanted you not to speak in it, to anyone but myself; and why I have stained your skin, once a week. At present we are at peace with the English; but there may be war again, at any time, and in that case were it known that you are white, your life would not be safe for a moment; or you might be thrown into some dungeon, where you would perish miserably."

She then explained to him why she had not attempted to take him down to Bombay, and restore him to his countrymen. She had always hoped the time would come when she could do so but, until he grew up to manhood, it was necessary that he should stay with her; for, being without friends in Bombay he would, as a boy, be unable to earn his living.

The boy was greatly affected at the news. There were things that he had never been able to understand; especially why Soyera should consider it necessary to wash him with dye so often, when neither his cousins nor the other children of his acquaintance were so treated—as far as he knew, for as he had been strictly charged never to speak of the process, which he considered an infliction, he had never asked questions of others. He had never, therefore, for a moment suspected that he was not like those around him. He knew that he was stronger than other boys of his own age; more fond of exercise, and leader in all their games; but he had accepted this as a natural accident. The fact that he belonged to the race that were masters of southern India, and had conquered and slain the Nabob of Bengal, was a gratification to him but, at present, the thought that he might some day have to join them, and leave all those he loved behind, far overpowered this feeling.

"I shall never become English, if you do not go with me," he said. "You saved my life, and have been a mother to me. Why should I go away from your side, to people that I know nothing of, whose ways would be all strange to me?"

"It is right that you should do so, Puntajee—I will not call you by your proper name, Harry Lindsay, lest it should slip out before others. Your life should be spent among your own people; who, I think, will some day rule over all India. They are a great people, with learning of many things

unknown here, from whom I always received the greatest kindness. They are not, like the Mahrattas, always quarrelling among themselves; they are not deceitful, and they are honourable. You should be proud to belong to them, and I have no doubt some day you will be so; though at present it is natural that, knowing no place but this, you should not like the thought of leaving."

Harry Lindsay, whose spirits had hitherto been almost inexhaustible, and who had never been happy when sitting quiet, was greatly impressed with what he had heard and, for some time, he withdrew himself almost entirely from the sports of his friends, hiding himself in the groves from their importunities, and thinking over the strange position in which he was placed.

Soyera at last remonstrated with him.

"If I had thought you would take this matter to heart, Puntjee, I should not have told you about it. I did so because I thought you could scarcely be stained, much longer, without demanding the reason for what must have seemed so strange a thing.

"I do not want you to withdraw yourself from your playmates, or to cease from your games. Your doing so will, if it continues, excite talk. Your friends will think that a spell has fallen upon you, and will shun you. I want you to grow up such as your father was—strong and brave, and skilful in arms—and to do this you must be alert and active. It may well be that you should not join your countrymen until you are able to play the part of a man, which will not be for ten years yet; but you know that my cousin Sufder has promised that, as soon as you are able to carry arms, he will procure a post for you under Scindia.

"There you will learn much, and see something of the world whereas, if you remain here, you would grow up like other cultivators, and would make but a bad impression among your countrymen, when you join them. Sufder himself has promised to teach you the use of arms and, as all say he is very skilful, you could have no better master.

"At any rate, I wish you to resume your former habits, to exercise your body in every way, so that you may grow up so strong and active that, when you join your countrymen, they will feel you are well worthy of them. They think much of such things, and it is by their love for exercise and sport that they so harden their frames that, in battle, our bravest peoples cannot stand against them."

"But the Mahrattas are strong, mother?"

"Yes, they can stand great fatigues; living, as they do, so constantly on horseback but, like all the people of India, they are not fond of exercise, save when at war. That is the difference between us and the English. These will get up at daybreak, go for long rides, hunt the wild boar or the tigers in the jungles of the Concan, or the bears among the Ghauts. Exercise to them is a pleasure; and we in the service of the English have often wondered at the way in which they willingly endure fatigues, when they might pass their time sitting quietly in their verandahs. But I came to understand that it was to this love of theirs, for outdoor exercise, that they owed their strength and the firmness of their courage. None can say that the Mahrattas are not brave but, although they will charge gallantly, they soon disperse if the day goes against them.

"So also with the soldiers of Tippoo. They overran Arcot and threatened Madras; Tanjore and the Carnatic were all in their hands; and yet the English never lost their firmness and, little by little, drove Tippoo's troops from the lands they had conquered; and it may be that, ere long, Tippoo will be a fugitive, and his dominions divided among those whom he has provoked.

"Is it not wonderful that, while not very many years ago the Whites were merely a handful, living on sufferance in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, they are now masters of southern India and half of Bengal; and even venture to engage a great empire like that of the Mahrattas, stretching from the sea on the west to Delhi, and holding the mastery over all central India? There must be something extraordinary about these men. Why, you would scarce believe it, but I have seen often, and wondered always; when they have an entertainment, instead of sitting quietly 'and having dancing girls to posture for their amusement, they dance themselves with their women—not a mere movement of the body and hands, such as you see among our dancers, but violent dancing, exhausting themselves

till the perspiration streams from their faces—and this both men and women regard as amusement; so, Puntojee, if you are to take your place among your countrymen again, you must accustom yourself to fatigues, and strengthen your body in every way; or you will be regarded with contempt as one who, although of their blood, has grown degenerate and unworthy of them."

"I will do so," the boy said. "You shall not complain of me, again. Hitherto I have played for amusement, and because I liked to exercise my limbs, and to show the others that I could run faster and was stronger than they were; but in future I shall have a motive in doing so, and will strive to be worthy of my father."

From that time, Harry Lindsay devoted himself to exercises. He learnt from Sufder, when he visited his native town, and from old soldiers, when he was away, to use a sword and dagger, to hurl a light spear accurately, to shoot straight with a musket, that Sufder had picked up on the field of battle at Karlee, and also with the pistol. He rose at daybreak, and walked for miles before coming in to his morning meal; and exercised the muscles of his arms, not only by the use of the sword, but by holding heavy stones at arm's length.

Soyera, although still retaining her own religion, had carefully instructed him in that of the English; with which she had, during her service, become fully acquainted.

"I am only a servant, an ignorant woman, and it is not for me to decide which religion is the best, and I have never thought of giving up that of my people; but the religion of the Christians is much simpler than ours. They believe in one God, only; and in his Son who, like Buddha, was a great saint, and went about doing good. I will tell you all I know of Him, for my mistress frequently spoke to me of Him; and hoped, I think, that in time I should accept Him, as she did. When you join your people, it is as necessary that you should be of their religion, as of their race;" and so, in time, Harry learned at least the elements of Christianity.

As usual he had been, at the age of six, marked, like Soyera, with three perpendicular lines on the forehead—the sign of the worshippers of Vishnu.

"You are twelve years old now, Harry," Soyera said to the boy, one day. "Now I must do what I have concluded, after a talk with Ramdass and Sufder, is the best thing for you. We have agreed that it will be better that you should not join your countrymen, and claim to be the son of Major Lindsay, until you are a man. I do not know what they would do with you. They might send you back to England, but I cannot say what would become of you there; but we have agreed that, when you do join them, you must be like other young English gentlemen, and not be looked down upon as one who, though he has a white skin, is but a Mahratta peasant.

"In the first place, you must learn to speak English."

"But I do speak English!" Harry said, in surprise.

"Yes, such English as I do; but that is not as the white sahibs speak it. We who have learned it speak the right word, but not in the right way. I have seen young white ladies, when they first came out here, and came to the house of your mother, sometimes smile and scarcely understand what I said to them. It is not like that that you must talk English—good enough for an ayah, not good enough for a sahib—so we have decided, Sufder, Ramdass and I, that you must go down to Bombay, and learn to talk proper English.

"We have thought much how this shall be done, and have settled that our thinking, here, is no good. I must wait till I get to Bombay, where I can get advice from people I know."

"Will you stay there with me, Soyera?"

"I cannot say what will be best," she answered, gravely; "I must wait till I get there. Ramdass will go down with me. It is a good time for him to go. The harvest work is done, he can be spared for a month. He would like to go. He has never seen Bombay. We shall go in the wagon."

The distance from Jooneer to Bombay was but about eighty miles, and the journey was performed in five days, and Ramdass took down a light load of maize, whose sale would pay the expenses of their journey. Soyera rode and slept on the maize, except in two villages, where she was

able to procure a lodging for the night. Ramdass and Harry walked by the bullocks, and slept at night by the roadside, wrapped in their blankets.

On arriving at Bombay they put up at a khan, in the native town and, the next morning, leaving Ramdass and Harry to wander about and look at the wonders of the city, Soyera went to the shop of a Parsee merchant, who was in the habit of supplying the canteen of the troops, contracted for supplies of forage and other matters, and carried on the business of a native banker. She had often been to his place with Mrs. Lindsay; and had, from the time that she entered her service, deposited her savings with him. She had, in the first place, asked her master to keep them for her; but he had advised her to go to Jeemajee.

The Parsee was, himself, in his shop. She went up to him.

"You do not remember me, sahib?" she said. "I was the ayah of Major Lindsay. I was often here with the mem-sahib."

"I remember you, now," he said. "I do not often forget those I have known. Yes; your master and mistress were killed, at their little camp on the Concan. Nothing was heard of you, if I remember rightly. I have some money of yours in my hands. Have you the receipts?"

"I have them, sahib; but it is not for that that I come to see you. I wish to ask your advice on a private matter."

The Parsee looked a little surprised.

"Come in here with me," he said, leading the way to his private room, behind the shop.

"Now, what is it?" he asked, as he closed the door behind them.

"It was believed, sahib, that Major Lindsay's infant boy was killed, at that time, like all others in the camp. It was not so. I saved him. It is about him that I want to speak to you."

The Parsee thought for a moment.

"Yes, there was a child. Its body was not found, and was supposed to have been eaten by the jackals. Is it alive still?"

"Yes, sahib, I have brought him up as my own. His skin has been always stained; and none but my brother—with whom I live—his wife, and one other, know that he is English. I love him as my own child. I have taught him English, as I speak it; but I want him, in time, to be an English sahib, and for that he must learn proper English."

"But why have you not brought him down here?" the Parsee said.

"Who would have looked after him, and cared for him, sahib, as I, his nurse, have done? Who could have taken him? What would have become of him? I am a poor woman, and do not know how these things would be. I said to myself:

"It will be better that he should live with me, till he is old enough to go down as a young man, and say to the Governor:

""I am the son of Major Lindsay. I can talk Mahratti like a native. I can ride and use my sword. I can speak English well. I can be useful."

"Then, perhaps for his father's sake, the Governor will say:

""I will make you an officer. If there are troubles in the Deccan, you will be more useful than those sahibs who do not know the language.""

"I can do all that for him, but I cannot teach him to speak as English sahibs speak; and that is why I have come to you. You have twelve hundred rupees of mine, in your hands; for I laid out nothing while I was in the sahib's service, and my mistress was very kind, and often gave me presents. My brother, Ramdass, had five hundred rupees saved; and this he has given to me, for he, too, loves the boy. Thus there are seventeen hundred rupees, and this I would pay for him to be, for two years, with someone where he would learn to speak English as sahibs do, so that none can say this white boy is not English.

"Then he will go back, for two or three years, to Jooneer. He will learn to use his arms, and to ride, and to be a man, until he is of an age to come down and say:

"I am the son of Major Lindsay."

"But if you were to tell this, at once," the Parsee said, "they would doubtless send him home, to England, to be educated."

"And what would he do there, sahib? He would have no friends, none to care for him; and while his Mahratti tongue would be of great service to him, here, it would be useless to him in his own country.

"Do not say that my plan cannot be carried out, sahib. For twelve years I have thought it over. I have taught him all that I could, so far; and convinced myself that it would be the best. The boy loves me, and is happy: he would be miserable among strangers, who would laugh at his English, and would make him unhappy."

Jeemajee sat for some time in thought.

"I am not sure that your plan is not the best," he said, "and after saving his life, and caring for him, at the risk of your own, for all these years, you have assuredly a better right than any other to say what shall be done now. I will think over what you have asked of me. It is not very easy to find just such a home as you want, but I should consider the sum you offer is sufficient to induce many Englishmen living here to take him; but it is not everyone from whom he would learn English, as you would wish him to do, or who could teach him the manners of white officers.

"Come to me tomorrow evening, but you must not expect that I shall be able to answer you then. I must think it over, and make enquiries."

It was three days, indeed, before anything came of Soyera's visits to the Parsee trader; then he said:

"I think that I have found out just the place of which you are in search. I spoke to a friend yesterday, and he at once mentioned one whom I wonder I had not thought of, at once. Some years ago a cadet, who came out here with a young wife, died shortly after his arrival. As he had only been four years in the service, the pension of his wife was but a small one. She did not go back to England, as widows generally do. I know not why, except that I once heard two officers speaking of her. They said that they believed her family had quarrelled with her, for her marriage, and that she was too proud to go back again. She had two girls, who must be about the age of this boy. Her pension was not sufficient for her to live upon comfortably, and she opened a little school for the children of officers here.

"There are not many, you know, for they are generally sent home to England, when they are quite young. But she has always had four or five, sometimes eight or ten. They come to her every morning, and go home in the middle of the day, and she sees no more of them.

"After I had heard this, I went to her. I supply her with many things, for she gets her books and other things from me. I said to her:

"I have a white boy whose father and mother are dead. He is twelve years old. There are reasons why I cannot tell you who they were, but I can say that the boy's father was an English officer. He has been brought up by natives, and speaks English in the way that natives speak it. Those who have brought him up desire that he should learn to talk English well, and learn to have good manners, so that some day, when he goes to England, people should not say of him:

""This is not an English gentleman, or he would not speak like that.""

"I said that I had interested myself in the matter, and knew that it was right, and had come to her to ask her if she would take him into her house, which was very comfortable and well furnished, and everything as it should be.

"She asked questions. I told her enough to interest her; and said that, when the time came, it was hoped that he would be able to obtain employment under the Government—perhaps in the army, as his father had been. I said that those who brought him up were ready to make great sacrifices for his sake, but that they could not pay for him for more than two years; and that, as the boy knew so much English, they hoped this would be enough. I asked how much, if she agreed to take him,

she would charge. She said that she would think it over; and would call here, tomorrow, and tell me whether she would take him.

"She will be here at three. I think you had better come at that hour. I am sure that she would like to speak to you. I do not see why you should not say that you had been his ayah, and had saved his life, and brought him up. Many officers have been killed and, indeed, I do not see why you should not tell her the whole story. It will interest her more in the boy. But of course, before you tell her, you must ask her to promise not to repeat it."

Soyera went on the following day. She found that Jeemajee was already, with a lady, in his private room. She waited until the door was opened, and the merchant beckoned her in.

"This is the woman who has brought the child up, Mrs. Sankey," he said. "As I have told you, she was his ayah, and has behaved most nobly."

Turning to Soyera, he said:

"Naturally Mrs. Sankey asked why you had not come forward before. I told her your reasons, and she thinks that, perhaps, you have acted for the best for him. At any rate, she has consented to take the boy for two years; and I am to pay her, for you, the sum that you have named."

In reality, Mrs. Sankey asked a thousand rupees a year; but the Parsee, with the generosity for which his race is distinguished, had agreed to pay the extra three hundred rupees himself.

"Before it is quite settled," Mrs. Sankey said, "I should like to see the boy. As Mr. Jeemajee has told you, I have two daughters about the same age. I must, therefore, be guided in my decision by my impression of him."

"I will bring him to see you, in three or four days," Soyera said. "His stain is already faded a good deal, and I shall be able to get it off, by that time. I have to get English clothes for him."

"I am greatly obliged to you for saying that you will take him, if he pleases you. That I think he will do. I have taught him manners, as well as I could. He is as anxious as I am to improve himself; and will, I am sure, give you no more trouble than he can help."

"I will see that he is properly clothed, Mrs. Sankey," Jeemajee remarked. "I knew his father, and have a great interest in him."

Mrs. Sankey chatted for some little time to Soyera; gave her her card, with her address on Malabar Hill; and then left.

Soyera began to thank the Parsee for his introduction, but he said:

"It was a little thing to do and, as I knew his father, it was only right that I should help, as far as I could. Will you bring me, tomorrow morning, the measurement of the boy's height, size around his shoulders and waist, the lengths of his arms and legs? You need trouble yourself no further about it. I shall take that matter upon myself. Come, three days later, for his clothes."

"Goodbye! I have other matters to see about," and, without waiting for any thanks from Soyera, he at once went into his shop, and began to talk to his assistant.

Many were the scrubbings Harry had to undergo, during the next few days; and his hair and face were nearly restored to their proper colour when Soyera returned, one evening, with a coolie carrying a trunk of some size. It contained the whole outfit for a boy: one dark suit, and four of white nankeen; with a stock of shirts, underclothing, and shoes. Soyera showed Harry how these garments, with which he was wholly unacquainted, should be put on.

"They fit you capitally," she said, when she surveyed him. "And you look like a little English sahib."

"They feel very tight and uncomfortable," he said.

"They are sure to do so, at first; but you will soon get over that. Now, Ramdass will take you out for a walk for two or three hours, so that you can get accustomed to them. I should not like you to look awkward, when you go with me to Mrs. Sankey's, tomorrow."

The interview next day was altogether satisfactory. The carriage and bearing of the natives of India is easier, and more graceful, than that of Europeans; and the knowledge Harry had possessed,

for some years, that he belonged to a conquering race, the injunctions of Soyera, his strength and activity, and his unquestioned leadership among the boys with whom he played, had given something of confidence to his manner. Mrs. Sankey was greatly taken with him, and he at once became an inmate of her house.

He remained there for two years, and became so great a favourite that Mrs. Sankey insisted on his staying with her, without charge, for three or four months after the time for which she had received payment for him. He had worked hard and earnestly, and now spoke English as well and accurately as any English boy of his own age. He had, after being there a year, made the acquaintance of several boys of his own age, the sons of officers or officials. They knew him only as the orphan son of an English gentleman, in Government employ; and he was often asked to the houses of their parents, and none suspected that he had been brought up among natives.

At the end of his term, Sufder came down for him. Jeemajee, who had remained his steady friend, arranged that he should go to his house, and there resume his native dress and stain. In this garb he felt even stranger and more uncomfortable than he had done, when he first put on European clothes; but this was not long in wearing off and, by the time he reached Jooneer, he was again at home in it. He took with him, at Mrs. Sankey's suggestion, a number of English books, by authors she recommended; so that he could, by reading and learning some of them by heart, retain his knowledge of the language.

For the next three months he spent his whole time in practising with sword, pistol, and gun; under the tuition of an old soldier in Jooneer, who had been a noted swordsman in his time. He was already far stronger than the sons of Ramdass, although these were now young men. Anxious to, at once, exercise his muscles and gain in skill, he now attached himself to a famous shikaree who, seeing the boy's strength and courage, took him as an assistant when he went on excursions among the hills. Here Harry learned to dig pits for the capture of tigers; to smear leaves with a sticky substance, obtained from a plant resembling mistletoe, so that when a tiger or bear trod upon them and, finding them sticking to his feet, paused and rubbed these on his head, until he became blinded and bewildered with a mass of sticky foliage, a well-placed shot would stretch him dead.

For a year he worked with the shikaree. Sometimes they hunted simply for the value of the skins; but more often they were sent for by villagers, who were suffering from the depredations of tigers or leopards, and who were willing to pay for having them killed. Harry Lindsay acquired quite a reputation in Jooneer and the surrounding country, for the shikaree spoke freely of his bravery, intelligence, and skill with his arms. His width of shoulders and the strength of his muscles caused him to be regarded as a prodigy; and it was generally considered that, when he grew up, he would become a great fighter, and attain wide renown as a leader of bands in the service of Holkar, or the Peishwa.

When he was sixteen, Sufder, who had watched his progress with great approval, said to him:

"You are scarce a man in years yet, Puntjee; but you are strong, skilful with your weapons, and far more of a man than many ten years older than yourself. It is time that you should see something of war. Since the death of Scindia, a few months back; and the succession of his nephew Doulut, who is about your own age; things have become even more unsettled than before. Scindia was a great man and, although at times worsted by his rivals, always managed to repair his fortunes and to add to his power; but whether the young Scindia will keep the wide territory that his uncle won is doubtful. Holkar, although at times he and Scindia united, as when the English marched against Poona, has been his rival and enemy.

"The Peishwa has sometimes been in alliance with one of these great princes, sometimes with the other. His minister, Nana Furnuwees, is a man of commanding talent. Had it not been for him, it is probable that Scindia and Holkar would long since have become altogether independent; but he has always contrived to play one off against the other and, by securing the services of the secondary chiefs, such as the Rajah of Nagpore and the Rajah of Kolapoore, to hold the balance of power; but he is an old man, and at his death there is no saying how things will go.

"Matters are complicated, too, by the fact that Scindia has now in his service sixteen battalions of drilled infantry, commanded by French officers; and these have proved so valuable, in the various sieges he has undertaken, that Holkar has been obliged to imitate his example. There are many who think that the introduction of infantry will, in the end, prove disastrous to the power of the Mahrattas; whose strength has hitherto lain in their cavalry, which could perform long journeys, strike a blow and be off again, and so were more than a match for the infantry of other Indian princes. But with infantry all this will be altered, for the marches must be no longer or faster than they can journey. The order of battles, too, will be changed altogether; and we shall depend more upon foot, while our horse, until now almost invincible, will become of secondary importance.

"However, that is not the question, at present. The first thing to be considered is, to which of the three great leaders you are to attach yourself. As you know, I was for many years in Scindia's service; but at his death the position was changed. Scindia knew that I was active and capable; had he lived, I should soon have gained much promotion. However, his chief minister took a dislike to me; and I felt that, now the Maharajah was gone, Doulut would be easily swayed by the counsels of those around him; and that instead of promotion I should be more likely to lose my command, and perhaps be put out of the way. Therefore I left Doulut's service, and have entered that of the young Peishwa who, at the advice of Nana Furnuwees, has given me the command of a troop of a hundred men.

"Years ago I gained Nana's goodwill, by apprising him of the hostile intentions of the Rajah of Nagpore; when he promised me that, should I at any time leave Scindia's service, he would give me as good a position as I held there in that of the Peishwa. The young prince is but twenty-one, and I will ask Nana to present you to him as one who, in time, will become a valuable officer; and it is likely that Mahdoo Rao will receive you well when he hears that, though so young, you have gained great credit as a slayer of wild beasts; and that, as he will see for himself, you promise to grow into a strong man, and a brave soldier.

"Nana Furnuwees is a man who, by his conciliating manner, gains the confidence of all who come under his influence; and it is wholly due to him that the authority of the Peishwa has not been entirely overthrown by Scindia and Holkar. He is a reader of men's minds, and has always surrounded himself with friends of discernment and courage; and I think you would be likely, if you remained in the Peishwa's service, to rise to a very much higher rank than I should ever do, being myself but a rough soldier with a heavy hand.

"Holkar, at present, is fast becoming altogether imbecile. He is worn out both in mind and body, and I should not advise anybody to join him. Therefore the choice rests between Doulut Rao Scindia and the Peishwa; as far as I can see, there is an equal chance of your seeing service with either."

"I can choose without hesitation," Harry said. "Had you still been in the army of Scindia, I would have joined it, too; but as you have now entered that of the Peishwa, who is the lawful ruler of the Mahrattas, though overshadowed by Scindia and Holkar, I should certainly choose his service.

"In any case, I would rather be with you. You have taught me the use of arms, and to you I owe it that I was not killed, when an infant; therefore I would assuredly rather fight under your orders, than take service with Holkar or Scindia.

"As to their quarrels, I know nothing. Ramdass has often told me as much as he knew of these matters, but it all seemed to me to be confusion; and the only thing I could understand was that they were always intriguing against each other, instead of putting all their forces in the field, and fighting it out fairly, and so deciding who was to be the chief lord of the Mahrattas."

"Although but a soldier, Puntjee, I cannot but see that this constant antagonism, between the three principal leaders of the Mahrattas, is unfortunate in the last degree. We are wasting the strength that, if properly employed, might bring all India into subjection and, when trouble really comes, we shall be a divided people, instead of acting under one head and with one mind. However, it is not for us soldiers to meddle with these things; but to do our duty to the chief under whom we serve.

"Well, if such be your choice, I will present you to Nana Furnuwees. I am glad that you have chosen that service for, in the first place, being young, he may take a liking to you, and you may obtain rapid promotion; and still more, because I should prefer to have you with me."

Hitherto, Harry had worn only the scanty clothing in use by the peasantry, and the small cultivators; but Sufder now bought him clothes such as were worn by youths of a superior class. Soyera had offered no objection to his departure and, indeed, Sufder had spoken to her on the subject, before he had broached it to Harry.

"'Tis hard upon me to give you up," she said to the lad; "but I have always known that it must be so, and indeed, for the last year I have seen little of you. The change will be good for you. You will learn the manner of war, and take an interest in the intrigues and troubles that are constantly going on, and of which we hear little."

"When you rejoin your countrymen, a few years hence, I shall go with you. You need my testimony, to show that you are the son of Major Lindsay; and I can be useful to you, in managing your household. But at present it is best that I should stay here. A young soldier would not care to have his mother looking after him, and it is for your good that you should go your own way; and besides, you will have the counsels of Sufder to aid you. I should be out of place and, for the present, I am happy here with my good brother and sister-in-law, the latter of whom would miss me sorely. Moreover, Poona is but two days' ride from here, and you will no doubt be able sometimes to come over and see us."

"I have done what little I could for you. You are now old enough to make your own way. The bird that has taught its nestling to fly does not try to keep it in the nest, when it is once able to take care of itself."

"I can never be sufficiently grateful, for all that you have done for me," Harry said earnestly. "You have been more than a mother to me and, wherever I go, I shall not be happy unless you are with me, though I see it is best, this time, that I should go alone; but assuredly, when I join my people, and have a home of my own, it would not seem like a home to me if you did not share it."

Two days later, Harry mounted a horse that Ramdass had given him, and started with Sufder for Poona. On arriving there they rode to the little camp, half a mile out of the town, where Sufder's troop was stationed.

"You don't carry your tents with you, when you are on service in the field?"

"Not when on an expedition where haste is needed; for we should make but poor progress, if we were hampered by luggage. When on a distant expedition, we take tents."

"This is a standing camp, and there are a score like it round the town. They always remain in the same position; sometimes one troop occupies them, sometimes another. When we go on an expedition, we leave them; when we come back, if they are still unoccupied, we again take possession. If they have been allotted to another troop, a vacant one is found for us."

"Only one regiment of horse and two of foot are in the city, where they have lines of huts. We differ from the rest of the army, being always on service; the others are only called out when there is occasion for them, each under its own chief and, in case of necessity, the Peishwa can put thirty thousand horsemen in the field, besides those of the rajahs in alliance with him."

The next morning Sufder, in his best attire, went with Harry into the city; the latter for the first time carrying a sword, dagger and pistols in his cummerbund, or sash. Without being questioned, they entered the chamber where Nana was giving audience to all who waited upon him on business.

Sufder took his place at the lower end of the chamber, moving forward as one after another applicant was disposed of until, at length, his turn arrived. The minister, who knew that he was a brave soldier, who had enjoyed the confidence of the late Scindia, acknowledged his deep salutation with a friendly nod.

"What can I do for you, Sufder?"

"I desire nothing, your excellency, save that I may be permitted to present to you one of my family: the son of a relation of mine who, although still young, I may venture to recommend to you as one possessing great courage and intelligence. I have myself given him lessons in the use of his arms; and he has had other instructors, and done credit to them. For the past year he has been working with a famous shikaree, and has killed many tigers that were a scourge to the villages near the Ghauts, together with many bears and leopards; and his master reported that his fearlessness was great, and that as a marksman his skill was equal to his own. He was most unwilling that he should leave him, but I considered it was time for him to enter the army; in which, I believe, he will soon distinguish himself."

"How old is he?" the minister asked.

"He is as yet but sixteen but, as your highness may see, he is as strong as most men, having devoted himself to exercises of all sorts, since he was a child."

"He is indeed cast in a strong mould, and his face pleases me.

"And so, you would enter the service of His Highness, the Peishwa?"

"That is my desire, your excellency."

"You are young to serve as an officer and, for the present, you had best remain with Sufder's troop. In the meantime, I will see what suitable post can be found for you."

With an expression of thanks, Sufder and Harry left the audience hall.

"It is a good beginning, Puntjee," the soldier said, as they left the minister's palace. "Nana Furnuwees was evidently pleased with you, and I think he will give you special employment. At the same time, serving one master here is not without its danger—Nana especially, powerful as he is, has enemies as powerful; for he has always stood in the way of the ambition of Scindia."

That evening an officer brought, from Nana, an order conferring upon Harry the appointment of an assistant officer in Sufder's troop, with the usual pay and allowances and, three days later, an order came for him to attend the audience of the minister. On arrival, he was told by the officer of the chamber that he was not to present himself at public audience, but that Nana would speak to him privately. He was therefore taken to an inner chamber where, an hour later, Nana joined him.

"I think by your face, Puntjee, that you can be trusted; and I have decided to place you in the service of His Highness, the Peishwa. What position you will hold there must depend upon yourself, and him. I shall simply recommend you as one of whom I have heard much good. It would be as well for you not to mention your age; but let him suppose that, as you look, you are about the same age as himself. He is amiable and kindly, and your position will be a pleasant one.

"I am anxious to prevent evil advisers from obtaining influence over him. He is young and unsuspecting, and much harm might thus come to the state. It is, then, for the general interest that he should be surrounded by those whom I can trust; so that, if any plotters are endeavouring to poison his mind, their plans may be thwarted. I have of course, officers about his person who are thoroughly trustworthy; but these are much older than himself, and he chafes somewhat at what he wrongly considers his tutelage. But indeed, as he is but twenty-one, and wholly unversed in matters of state, it is needful that the management of affairs should rest in the hands of those who have long controlled it.

"Scindia would be the first to take advantage of any imprudence. He is already, by far, the most powerful of the Mahratta princes. His possessions are of immense extent; he holds the emperor at Delhi in the palm of his hand; he can put one hundred thousand horse into the field, and has large numbers of infantry, including sixteen battalions drilled by French officers, and commanded by de Boigne; and although Doulut Rao is but twenty, and as yet we know but little of his disposition, he is of course surrounded by the advisers of his uncle, and may be expected to pursue the same policy. His uncle gained great ascendancy over the Peishwa, and his death was a fortunate circumstance. Still, it is certain that the prince, until his powers are matured, will yield to the advice of those to whom the conduct of affairs is entrusted.

"Now, I am going to the palace, and have requested a private audience with Mahdoo Rao, and I will take you with me."

Followed by a train of officers, with whom Harry fell in, the minister proceeded to the palace. His train remained in the public hall, and Nana went into the Peishwa's private apartment. In a few minutes, an official came in and called Puntotee; and Harry at once followed him to an inner room, where the Peishwa and his minister were alone. Harry bowed to the ground.

"This, Prince, is the young man of whom I have spoken to you. He bears an excellent character for his skill in arms, and has killed many tigers and other beasts. It was but the other day that you complained that you had no one of your own age to whom you could talk freely; and I have selected this young officer as one who, I thought, would be agreeable to you."

"I thank you heartily, Nana. In truth, I sometimes need a companion; and I think, by his face, that this officer will be an agreeable one. To what post, think you, had I best appoint him?"

"As he is a famous shikaree, I should say that it would be suitable were you to make him director of the chase."

"But I never go hunting."

"That is true; but in time, when your occupations of state lessen, you might do so," Nana said. "And indeed, even at present, there is nothing to prevent your hunting sometimes in the royal preserves, where there must be an abundance of game of all sorts."

"So let it be, then," the Peishwa said. "In truth, I care not for the killing of beasts, unless they do harm to the villagers. But it is right that there should be someone to direct the men who have charge of the preserves and, as an official, you will have the right of entry here at all times, and will be frequently about my person; and I will confer with you about other things, as well as the chase. You will, of course, have an apartment assigned to you."

"You will arrange about the emoluments, Nana."

"You had better go to my house, and wait for me there," Nana said; and Harry, bowing deeply to the prince and his minister, left the palace.

He did not deceive himself as to the reason for which Nana had thus placed him in a position in which he was likely to be frequently in the company of the young prince. He intended him to act as a spy. This he was firmly determined not to do, in any matter save in thwarting any designs Scindia might have. That was a public duty.

By this time, he had learnt much of the events that were passing. Ramdass and the other ryots of his acquaintance regarded Nana Furnuwees as the guardian of the country. For many years, it was his wisdom and firmness alone that had thwarted the designs of Scindia, whose advent to supreme authority would have been regarded as a grave misfortune, by all the cultivators of the Deccan. Scindia's expenses in keeping up so great an army were enormous, and the exactions of his tax gatherers ground to the dust the cultivators and peasantry of his own wide dominions; and Harry was therefore ready to give Nana a faithful support in all public matters. He knew that the minister had many enemies, even among the rajahs in the Peishwa's dominion, and in those round it; for they regarded him, with reason, as a curb upon their private ambitions and, for years, intrigues had been going on for his overthrow.

On the other hand, Harry was much pleased with Mahdoo Rao, who was a most amiable and kindly young man. While determined, then, to do all that he could in support of Nana; he decided that he would, on no account, give him any report that would be unfavourable to the Peishwa. His interview with the minister, on the return of the latter, was a short one.

"Here," the latter said, "is a purse of five hundred rupees, with which to obtain garments suitable for one in attendance on the Peishwa. Your emolument will be two hundred rupees a month. I shall issue orders to the men employed in the forests and preserves to report to you; and have requested the chamberlain to allot an apartment to you in the palace, and to tell off two servants to be in attendance on you."

"You understand that your mission, as far as I am concerned, is to give me early warning, if any of those favourable to Scindia—you shall be furnished with a list of their names—are endeavouring to obtain an undue influence over the prince; who is of an altogether unsuspecting character, and would be likely to fall an easy victim to bad counsels."

"You can depend upon my doing so," Harry said. "I have been taught to regard Scindia as an enemy to the public peace, and shall use all diligence in carrying out your excellency's orders."

And, leaving the minister, Harry went to Sufder and told him what had happened.

"In truth, Puntjee, you were born under a lucky star. I never dreamt that Nana Furnuwees would have thus introduced you to the Peishwa. Now, lad, you have a fine career opened to you. It will need caution but, as Scindia's ancestor was but a slipper bearer, and rose to the highest rank and honour; so it is open to you to win a great position, if you steer clear of the dangers that attend all who play a part in public affairs. I foresee that you will become a favourite with the prince, but remember to put your trust in Nana. He is, at present, the greatest power in the land, and has been so for many years but, unlike most who have attained such authority, he is liked by the people, for he uses his power well, and for the good of the state.

"You see, even now the young Peishwa is by no means secure on the musnud. The adherents of Rugoba, who was undoubtedly the lawful ruler of the Deccan, still live; and may one day raise the flag of revolt, in favour of his sons Bajee Rao and Chimnaje Appa who, with Amrud Rao, his adopted son, are all in close custody in the hill fort of Sewneree, under two of Nana's officers.

"There is a general feeling of pity for these young men, even among those who regard their imprisonment as necessary—for, were they free, a civil war would assuredly break out again—and the feeling is increased by the fact that Bajee Rao is a youth of extraordinary accomplishments. He is graceful in person, with a handsome countenance and a charming manner and, although but nineteen, he is an excellent horseman, skilled in the use of the bow, and considered to be the finest swordsman in the country. He is deeply read in all our religious books and, in all the country, there is no one of his age so learned.

"All these things, however, only add to the necessity for his being kept in prison. A youth so gifted and, as many people consider, the lawful heir to the throne, would speedily be joined by all the enemies of Nana; and might not only drive the minister into exile, but dethrone Mahdoo Rao. Such being the case, no one can blame Nana for keeping them in confinement—at any rate, until Mahdoo Rao has been master for some years, and has proved that he is able to maintain his position.

"Now, lad, I will go into the town with you, and purchase dresses fit for an official of the palace."

"I quite see that I have been most fortunate in obtaining such a position, Sufder; but I own I should have preferred to remain with you, and learn to do service as a soldier."

"That you may learn later on," Sufder said. "Having the confidence of the Peishwa, you may soon obtain military rank, as well as civil and, if war breaks out, may hold a position vastly better than you could hope to attain to as the mere chief of a troop."

"It seems very ridiculous, Sufder, that I should be thus put forward, without any merit of my own; while you, who have fought in many battles, are still only commander of your troop."

"I have no desire for more," Sufder replied. "I am a soldier, and can do my duty as ordered, but I have no head for intrigues; and I consider the risks of a battle are quite sufficient, without those of being put out of the way for mixing myself up in plots.

"Again, your rise is not altogether undeserved. You have, by your exercises, attained the strength of manhood early; and your experience as a tiger hunter has fitted you for the post for which you are appointed, just as your diligence in exercise in arms will be of good service to you, if you come to hold military command. But you must be circumspect and, above all things, do not forget to use the dye with which Soyera has furnished you. Hitherto your white skin has done you no harm but, were it discovered here that you are English, it would at once be imagined that you were a spy, and little time would be given you to explain how matters stand."

"I will certainly be careful as to that and, now that I am to have a private apartment, I shall be able to apply the dye without the fear of being interrupted, as might have been the case in camp."

On the following day, Harry, having obtained clothes suitable to his position, betook himself to the palace, where one of the officers of the chamberlain conducted him to his apartment, and assigned to him two men appointed to his service.

Chapter 3: A Change In Affairs

Harry Lindsay's duties were little more than nominal. The reports sent in to him, by those in charge of the royal preserves, could scarcely be considered as satisfactory; as they stated that, owing to the fact that for years there had been no hunting there, the tigers had greatly increased in number, and had thinned down the stags and, indeed, in some cases had so destroyed other game that they were driven to escape from the enclosures, and to ravage the villages. But beyond receiving these reports, and riding over occasionally to the preserves, Harry had little to do save to take part in any court ceremonies and, when called upon to do so, to accompany the Peishwa in his walks in the palace garden. He therefore determined to learn to read and write in Mahratta and, for two or three hours a day, a man of the weynsh, or mercantile class, came in to teach him. So careful was Nana Furnuwees, in preventing Scindia's adherents from approaching the prince, that Harry had nothing whatever to report on this head.

One day, when Mahdoo Rao, who had taken a great liking to him, was walking in the garden, chatting familiarly to him of his life in the country, and his adventures with tigers and other wild beasts, he said:

"Have you seen my cousin, Bajee Rao?"

"No, Your Highness, I have never seen him."

"You have heard of him, of course, and nothing but good."

"That is so, Prince. It seems that, both in sports and learning, he is wonderfully well instructed."

"I should like to see him," the prince said. "I admire what I have heard of him, greatly, and it is hard that he should be shut up in prison; and yet he is scarcely more a prisoner than I am."

Harry was struck with dismay.

"But Your Highness is in no way a prisoner!"

"I am not shut up in a fortress," the young prince said, "but I am no more my own master than Bajee Rao is. Nana Furnuwees treats me as if I were a child. He is, I know, devoted to me; but that makes it no more pleasant. I can go where I like, but it is always with my retinue. I cannot choose my own friends."

"Your Highness will forgive me, if I say that it is for your own safety, and for the peace of the country that your minister watches over you so jealously; and doubtless he thinks that, having been the chief adviser to your family, for so many years, having guarded it so successfully from those who would have lessened your authority, for the present it is of the greatest importance that he should continue to guide the state."

"I am, at least, very glad that he allows me a companion of my own age, to whom I can talk freely."

"On all subjects, Your Highness, excepting state matters. Nana presented me because I was ignorant of the court, and knew nothing whatever of intrigues, and was not likely to take any part in them. Therefore, Your Highness, I pray you but to speak upon ordinary matters; be assured I am your devoted servant, but the courtiers would grow suspicious, were you to talk of state matters with me. These things speedily become known, and I should fall under Nana's displeasure."

"Perhaps you are right," the Peishwa admitted, in a tone of melancholy. "No doubt, whatever passes in this house is known to my minister; and indeed, it is his duty to make himself so acquainted. Still, I feel it hard that I should not have one friend to whom I can speak."

"The time will come, Prince, when you will be able to do so and, doubtless, there will be at hand those who will dare to have your confidence."

The prince was silent but, after this, he abstained from any remarks to Harry concerning the state. He had, indeed, for some time been in correspondence with Bajee Rao, who had gained the confidence of one of those appointed to look after him and, though there was nothing save expressions

of friendship on the part of both princes, Nana was furious when he found out, from his spies, what was going on.

The news came as a shock to the minister. Nana had been the greatest enemy of the house of Rugoba; and the discovery of this correspondence, and the friendship between the two young men, so threatened his authority that, after ordering that Bajee Rao and his brothers should be more strictly confined than before, he visited the Peishwa and upbraided him bitterly for having entered upon a friendship with the head of a party which had harassed his family, and had brought innumerable troubles on the state. Then he sent a message to Harry, bidding him to come, at once.

"How is it, Puntajee," he said sternly, "that you have altogether failed to justify the faith I put in you, and have already assisted Mahdoo Rao to enter into relations with my enemy, Bajee Rao?"

Harry was thunderstruck at this sudden attack.

"My lord, you must have been misinformed. I know nothing of any such correspondence and, if it really went on, I think the Peishwa would have taken me into his confidence."

"Do you mean to say that Mahdoo has not spoken to you about his cousin?"

"No, sir, I do not say so for, some four months ago, he spoke in terms of admiration for Bajee Rao; but he did not pursue the subject, and never afterwards alluded to it."

The minister looked at him fixedly.

"I believe you," he said. "You do not look like a double-faced man, but as one who would tell the truth, whatever were the consequences. Moreover, I felt that if you had known of Mahdoo Rao's intentions, and had not reported them to me, you would, on receiving my message, have endeavoured to make your escape. I have of course enquired, and found that you spent your afternoon, as usual, with your scribe; and that you afterwards rode out to Sudfer's camp, and there talked for half an hour, sitting outside the tent and conversing on ordinary matters; and then you returned here to the palace. These proceedings go far to assure me that you were ignorant of the discovery that had been made, that a correspondence had been going on between Mahdoo and Bajee. Still, I thought you might have known of the correspondence, though not of the discovery; but now I am quite convinced that you were altogether ignorant of what was going on."

The scene with Nana, and the knowledge that he had brought upon his cousins even stricter confinement than before, acted most painfully upon the mind of the young Peishwa, already embittered by the restraint in which he was being held. He now shut himself up in his room, and absolutely refused to leave it. His absence from the durbars was put down to illness. Nana paid no great attention to him, believing that the young prince would speedily recover himself.

This, however, was not the case, for settled melancholy took possession of him. On the 22nd of October he appeared at the Duddera, a high ceremonial, went among his troops and, in the evening, received his chiefs and the representatives from the great rajahs but, three days later, he threw himself from a terrace in front of his palace, broke two of his limbs, and so seriously injured himself that he died, two days afterwards; having, almost in his last breath, expressed to Nana his strong desire that Bajee Rao should succeed him on the musnud.

The consternation of the minister was unbounded. It seemed that, by this sudden and unexpected blow, the whole of his plans were overthrown; and that not only his position, but his very life, was in danger.

He sent for Harry, two hours after the Peishwa's death.

"Answer me frankly," he said. "Can I depend upon you, absolutely? And have you had no communication of any kind from my enemies?"

"You can depend upon me, my lord. Everyone knows that you have saved the state, a score of times; and will, I doubt not, do the same again."

"I have the will," the minister said, gravely, "but whether I have the power is another thing. I sent off a messenger to the general, Purseram Bhow, bidding him gather as many troops as possible and march hither; and I shall send letters to the Rajah of Nagpore, and Scindia. Holkar, being in

Poona, I have already seen and, as he has always supported me against Rugoba, he is as anxious as I am as to the succession.

"I shall now send you with a duplicate letter to Purseram Bhow for, since the terrible accident to Mahdoo Rao, whom I loved dearly for his amiable character, it is probable that the adherents of Bajee Rao have been active; and that my every movement is watched, and attempts may be made to stop any messengers that I may send out. Take Sufder's troop with you. If you are stopped, fight your way through, whatever their force. It is a matter of supreme importance that this letter should reach the general."

"It shall reach him, my lord," Harry said, as he took it; "in five minutes I shall be on my way."

Going to his room he changed his attire, mounted his horse, and rode to Sufder's camp. The men were all ready, as Nana had sent an order to Sufder to prepare instantly for a journey.

"So it is you, Puntojee!" the captain said, as he rode up; "the orderly did not tell me whom I was to escort, nor our destination. In which direction do we ride?"

"I am bearer of a letter to Purseram Bhow."

"Then I know the direction;" and, giving orders to his men, he rode off at once by the side of Harry.

"This is a terrible business, Puntojee."

"I am greatly grieved, indeed, for no one could have been kinder to me than Mahdoo Rao."

"Yes, yes," Sufder said; "that is all very well, but the serious side of the matter is that, just as everything seemed settled, we may be entering upon another civil war, more terrible than the last. Of course, I am sorry for the young Peishwa; but I doubt whether he was in any way fit to rule over the Mahrattas. Kindness of heart goes for nothing with a people like ours; split up into many factions, led by many chiefs, and ever ready for war. It needs a strong, as well as an able man to hold in check all the parties in the state.

"Scindia was the sort of man to rule us. He was strong in every way, was troubled with no scruples, would strike down without mercy any who opposed him. He took great care of his troops, and they were always ready to follow him. That is the man we want on the musnud; not a young prince, of whom we can only say that he was kindly.

"And why did Nana choose you?"

"I am a second string to his bow. He sent off a messenger as soon as he heard of Mahdoo Rao's accident but, fearing he might be intercepted on the way, he has chosen me as being a person no one would be likely to suspect of being his messenger, on so important a matter."

"It is important, indeed, Puntojee. There is no saying what may be the result of the Peishwa's death. There is no doubt that Scindia and Holkar will, for once, be in complete accord with Nana Furnuwees, and will combine in any plan to keep Rugoba's son from succeeding; still, there are many of the friends of Rugoba who will be ready to declare for his son and, moreover, there are the stories that have been so widely circulated as to Bajee's personal appearance, and his many accomplishments—these will gain for him a great number of partisans."

The journey was performed without interruption. At one time, a body of some fifty horsemen made their appearance on rising ground near the road, but drew off when they saw how strong was the party and, after a ride of sixty miles, they arrived at Purseram Bhow's camp. Harry dismounted in front of the general's tent and, entering, handed him the letter.

"What is your news?" the latter asked, before opening it.

"There is none, General, beyond what the letter, sent to you three hours before I left, will have prepared you to hear. I only bear a copy of that letter, in case the first should not have reached you."

"It is well that the precaution was taken for, in truth, the messenger has not arrived."

"It is possible that he may have been murdered on the way, sir; for we saw a party of fifty horsemen on the road, whose intentions seemed to be hostile, but as I had Sufder's troop of a hundred men with me, they drew off."

"But what is the news, then, that is so important that steps are taken to stop messengers that bear it?"

Harry related what had taken place, the old officer giving many ejaculations of regret, and horror, at the news of Mahdoo Rao's death.

"'Tis a terrible misfortune, indeed," he said, "and is like to throw the whole country into disorder again."

He opened the despatch now, and glanced through it. He called some of his officers, who were gathered near the tent, and ordered them to cause the trumpets to be sounded for all the troops to be in readiness to march, at once; leaving only a small body of infantry to pack up the tents, and follow at a more leisurely pace with the baggage.

An hour later two regiments of cavalry started, infantry men being taken up behind the troopers and, late the next day, they arrived at Poona. Scindia and the Rajah of Berar had also been sent for, in haste and, as soon as they arrived, a council was held as to the choice that should be made of a successor.

All were opposed to the selection of Bajee Rao; for he would have been brought up by his mother, with the deepest enmity towards those who had successfully combined against his father. It was therefore proposed that the widow of Mahdoo Rao should adopt a son, in whose name the government should be carried on.

It was not until two months had been spent in negotiations that the matter was finally settled. One of Scindia's ministers, named Balloba, alone opposed the course decided upon; and Bajee Rao opened communications with him, and succeeded in winning him over to his cause. Having done this he addressed Scindia; offering him a very large addition to his territory, and payment of all his expenses, if he would assist him to gain his rightful position. As Balloba had great influence over the young Scindia, the offer was accepted.

The arrangement was made so secretly that Nana Furnuwees had received no intimation, whatever, of what was going on, until the agreement had been concluded. Purseram Bhow was again summoned to Poona and, with his usual energy, made a march of one hundred and twenty miles in forty-eight hours.

The position was a difficult one, indeed. At one blow, the plans that had been so carefully laid by Nana were shattered. Scindia, who had but a month or two before formed one of the confederacy, had now gone round to the side of Bajee Rao, who regarded the minister as his greatest enemy. Holkar was not to be depended upon and, in Poona, there were many adherents of the son of Rugoba. The council held by Nana, Purseram, and two or three other great officers was long and, at times, stormy; but it was finally agreed that the sole way out of the perilous position, caused by Scindia's desertion, was to anticipate him and to release Bajee Rao, and declare him Peishwa.

Purseram started, at once, to the fort where the brothers were confined. Harry, who was now deeply interested in the course of events, was one of Nana's officers who accompanied Purseram. On hearing the general's errand, the officer in command of the fort at once sent for Bajee, his brother Chimnajee, and Amrud—who was the adopted son of Rugoba, and who stood on an equal footing with regard to the succession. Bajee Rao listened calmly to the proposals made to him in Nana's name, asked several questions, and demanded guarantees; but was evidently disposed to accept the proposals, if assured that they were made in good faith.

Amrud strongly urged him to decline the offer; but Bajee, upon Purseram taking the most solemn oath known to the Hindoos, in proof of his sincerity, accepted the offer and, with his brother Chimnajee, rode with Purseram to Poona; Amrud being left behind in the fort, as Purseram considered that he would continue to exercise his influence over Bajee in a direction hostile to Nana's interest.

As soon as the party arrived at the capital, an interview took place between Bajee and Nana when, in the presence of many of the great officers, both swore to forget all enmities and injuries, and Bajee promised to retain Nana at the head of his administration.

That same evening, the minister sent for Harry.

"Puntojee," he said, "I have a commission for you. I know that you are loyal to me, and that I can depend upon you. I wish you to go at once to Scindia's camp, which is now on the bank of the Godavery, and ascertain how he takes the news. Doubtless Balloba, his prime minister, will be furious at finding that, instead of Bajee becoming a mere creature of Scindia's, I have placed him on the musnud, and retain my place as his chief minister. I can employ you for this business better than most others, for the greater part of my officers are personally known to those of Scindia, while you have scarce been seen by them. I have also a high idea of your shrewdness; and I have no doubt that you will, in some way, be able to gain the information that I require—indeed, it will probably be the public talk of the camp. If you should find an opportunity of entering into negotiations, with any influential person in Scindia's court, I authorize you to do so in my name; and to agree to any reasonable demands that he may make, either for a payment in money or in estates. Scindia's character is wholly unformed and, though today he may be guided by Balloba, tomorrow he may lean on someone else.

"You can go in any guise you think fit, either as a trooper or as a camp follower. In either case, you had better take Sufder and twenty men with you; and leave them in concealment within a few miles of the camp so that, in case of necessity, you can join them; and his men can act as messengers, and bring your reports to me."

As it was now a year since Harry had first gone to Poona, and he had during that time worked diligently, he could now both read and write the Mahratta language, and was thus able to send in written reports; instead of being obliged to rely upon oral messages, which might be misdelivered by those who carried them, or possibly reported to others instead of to the minister; whereas reading and writing were known to but few of the Mahrattas, outside the Brahmin class.

Sufder expressed himself much pleased, when he heard that he was to accompany Harry.

"I am sick of this life of inactivity," he said. "Why, we have had no fighting for the past five years; and we shall forget how to use our arms, unless there is something doing. I would willingly accompany you into Scindia's camp, but I am far too well known there to hope to escape observation. However, I will pick out twenty of my best men so that, if there should be a skirmish, we shall be able to hold our own. Of course, I shall choose men who have good horses, for we may have to ride for it."

Harry himself was very well mounted, for Mahdoo Rao had given him two excellent horses; and as he had, when out with Sufder's troop, tried them against the best of those of the sowars, he felt sure that he could trust to them, in case of having to ride for his life. The trooper who looked after them had become much attached to him, and he determined to take him with him into Scindia's camp, one of Sufder's other men looking after the horses.

After a consultation with Sufder, he decided on adopting the costume of a petty trader or pedlar carrying garments, scarfs, and other articles used by soldiers. Of these he laid in a store and, three hours after his interview with Nana, started with his escort; the trooper leading his spare horse, on which his packs were fastened, and his own man riding a country pony. The distance to Scindia's camp was under a hundred miles, and they took three days in accomplishing it. It was important that the horses should not be knocked up, as their lives might depend upon their speed.

When within ten miles of their destination, they halted in a grove near the Moola river. Here Harry changed his clothes, and assumed those of a small merchant. Then he mounted the pony; a portion of the packs was fastened behind him, and the rest carried by his servant.

Scindia's camp lay around Toka, a town on the Godavery at the foot of a range of hills. On arriving there he went to the field bazaar, where a large number of booths, occupied by traders and country peasants, were erected. The former principally sold arms, saddlery, and garments; the latter, the produce of their own villages. Choosing an unoccupied piece of ground, Harry erected a little

shelter tent; composed of a dark blanket thrown over a ridge pole, supported by two others, giving a height of some four feet, in the centre. The pony was picketed just behind this. In front of it a portion of the wares was spread out, and Harry began the usual loud exhortations, to passers by, to inspect them.

Having thus established himself, he left Wasil in charge, explaining to him the prices that he was to ask for each of the articles sold, and then started on a tour through the camp. Here and there pausing to listen to the soldiers, he picked up scraps of news; and learned that there was a general expectation that the army would march, in a day or two, towards Poona—it being rumoured that Scindia and his minister, Balloba, had been outwitted by Nana Furnuwees; and that Balloba had made no secret of his anger, but vowed vengeance against the man who had overthrown plans which, it had been surely believed, would have resulted in Scindia's obtaining supreme control over the Deccan.

Returning to his little tent, he wrote a letter to Nana, telling him what he had gathered, and giving approximately the strength of Scindia's force; adding that, from what he heard, the whole were animated with the desire to avenge what they considered an insult to their prince. This note he gave to Wasil, who at once started on foot to join Sufder; who would forward it, by four troopers, to Poona.

The next morning he returned and, after purchasing provisions from the countrymen, and lighting a fire for cooking them, he assisted Harry at his stall. The latter was standing up, exhibiting a garment to a soldier, who was haggling with him over the price, when a party of officers rode by. At their head was one whose dress showed him to be a person of importance; and whom Harry at once recognized as Balloba, having often noticed him during the negotiations at Poona. As his eye fell upon Harry he checked his horse for a moment, and beckoned to him to come to him.

"Come here, weynsh," he said, using the term generally applied to the commercial caste.

Harry went up to him, and salaamed.

"How comes it," the minister asked, "that so fine a young fellow as you are is content to be peddling goods through the country, when so well fitted by nature for better things? You should be a soldier, and a good one. For so young a man, I have never seen a greater promise of strength.

"It seems to me that your face is not unknown to me. Where do you come from?"

"From Jooneer, your excellency, where my people are cultivators but, having no liking for that life, I learned the trade of a shopkeeper, and obtained permission to travel to your camp, and to try my fortune in disposing of some of my master's goods."

As Jooneer was but some sixty miles from Toka, the explanation was natural enough and, as the former town lay near to the main road from Scindia's dominions in Candeish, it afforded an explanation of Balloba's partial recognition of his face.

"And as a merchant, you can read and write, I suppose?" the latter went on.

"Yes, your highness, sufficiently well for my business."

"Well, think it over. You can scarcely find your present life more suitable to your taste than that of a cultivator, and the army is the proper place for a young fellow with spirit, and with strength and muscles such as you have. If you like to enlist in my own bodyguard, and your conduct be good, I will see that you have such promotion as you deserve."

"Your excellency is kind, indeed," Harry said, humbly. "Before I accept your kind offer, will you permit me to return to Jooneer to account for my sales to my employer, and to obtain permission of my father to accept your offer; which would indeed be greatly more to my taste than the selling of goods."

"It is well," Balloba said, and then broke off:

"Ah! I know now why I remember your face. 'Tis the lightness of your eyes, which are of a colour rarely seen; but somehow or other, it appears to me that it was not at Jooneer, but at Poona, that I noticed your face."

"I was at Poona, with my master, when your highness was there," Harry said.

"That accounts for it."

The minister touched his horse's flanks with his heel and rode on, with a thoughtful look on his face. Harry at once joined Wasil.

"Quick, Wasil! There is no time to be lost. Throw the saddle on to the pony, and make your way out of the camp, at once. Pitch all the other things into the tent, and close it. If you leave them here, it will seem strange. Balloba has seen me at Poona, and it is likely enough that, as he thinks it over, he will remember that it was in a dress altogether different from this. Go at once to Sufder. If you get there before me, tell him to mount at once, and ride fast to meet me."

Two minutes later, everything was prepared; and Wasil, mounting the pony, rode off, while Harry moved away among the tents. In a quiet spot, behind one of these, he threw off his upper garments and stood in the ordinary undress of a Hindoo peasant, having nothing on but a scanty loincloth. He had scarcely accomplished this when he heard the trampling of horses; and saw, past the tent, four troopers ride up to the spot he had just left.

"Where is the trader who keeps this tent?" one of them shouted. "He is a spy, and we have orders to arrest him."

Harry waited to hear no more, but walked in the opposite direction; taking care to maintain a leisurely stride, and to avoid all appearance of haste. Then, going down to the road by the side of which the bazaar was encamped, he mingled with the crowd there. Presently, one of the troopers dashed up.

"Has anyone seen a man in the dress of a trader?" and he roughly described the attire of which Harry had rid himself.

There was a general chorus of denial, from those standing round, and the trooper again galloped on.

Harry continued his walk at a leisurely pace, stopping occasionally to look at articles exposed for sale, until he reached the end of the bazaar. Then he made across the country. Trumpets were blowing now in the camp, and he had no doubt that Balloba had ordered a thorough search to be made for him. He did not quicken his pace, however, until well out of sight; but then he broke into a swinging trot, for he guessed that, when he was not found in the camp, parties of cavalry would start to scour the country. He had gone some four miles when, looking behind him, he saw about twenty horsemen, far back along the road.

The country here was flat and open, with fields irrigated by canals running from the Moola, and affording no opportunity for concealment. Hitherto he had been running well within his powers; but he now quickened his pace, and ran at full speed. He calculated that Wasil would have at least half an hour's start of him; and that, as he would urge the pony to the top of his speed, he would by this time have joined Sufder; and he was sure that the latter would not lose an instant before starting to meet him. He had hesitated, for a moment, whether he should break into a quiet walk and allow the troopers to overtake him, relying upon the alteration of his costume; but he reflected that Balloba might have foreseen that he would change his disguise, and have ordered the arrest of a young man with curiously light eyes.

Harry had always attempted to conceal this feature, as far as possible, by staining his eyelashes a deep black; but when he looked up, the colour of his eyes could hardly fail to strike anyone specially noticing them.

His constant exercise as a boy had given him great swiftness of foot, and the year passed as a shikaree had added to his endurance and speed and, divested of clothing as he was, he felt sure that the horsemen, who were more than a mile in his rear when he first caught sight of them, would not overtake him for some time. He was running, as he knew, for life; for he was certain that, if caught, Balloba would have him at once put to death as a spy. Although hardy and of great endurance, the Mahratta horses, which were small in size, were not accustomed to being put to the top of their speed except for a short charge; and the five miles that they had galloped already must have, to some extent, fatigued them.

After running at the top of his speed for about a mile, he looked back. The party was still a long distance in his rear. Again he pressed forward, but his exertions were telling upon him and, before he had gone another half mile, the Mahrattas had approached within little more than half that distance.

Far ahead he thought he could perceive a body of horsemen, but these were nearly two miles away, and he would be overtaken before they could reach him; therefore he turned suddenly off, and took to one of the little banks dividing one irrigated field from another. As soon as the horsemen reached the spot where he had left the road, they too turned off; but Harry, who was now husbanding his strength, saw a sudden confusion among them.

The little bank of earth on which he was running was but a foot wide, and was softened by the water which soaked in from both sides. It could bear his weight, well enough; but not that of a mounted man. Only one or two had attempted to follow it, the others had plunged into the field. Here their horses at once sank up to the knees. Some endeavoured to force the animals on, others to regain the road they had quitted. The two horsemen on the bank were making better progress, but their horses' hoofs sank deeply in the soft earth; and their pace, in spite of the exertions of the riders, was but a slow one.

Harry turned when he came to the end of the field, and followed another bank at right angles, and was therefore now running in the right direction. He was more than keeping his lead from the foremost of his pursuers. Some of the others galloped along the road, parallel to him, but ahead.

The horsemen he had first seen were now within a mile. On they came, at the top of their speed; and the troopers on the road halted, not knowing whether this body were friends or foes, while those on the bank reined in their horses, and rode back to join their comrades. Harry continued to run till he came to another bank leading to the road and, following this, he arrived there just as Sufder galloped up with his party, one of the troopers leading his horse. They gave a shout of welcome, as he came up.

"I thought it must be you," Sufder said, "from the way you ran, rather than from your attire. Shall we charge those fellows?"

"I think not," Harry said. "In the first place Scindia has not, as yet, declared war against Nana and Bajee; in the second, there may be more men coming on behind; therefore it will be best to leave them alone though, if they attack us, we shall, of course, defend ourselves."

"I think that is their intention, Puntojee. See, they have gathered together! I suppose they daren't go back, and say that you have escaped."

"Give me either your sword or spear."

The latter was part of the regular equipment of the Mahratta horsemen. Sufder handed him his sword and, as the pursuers advanced towards them at a canter which speedily became a gallop, he took his place by the side of Sufder and, the latter giving the word, the band dashed forward to meet their opponents.

The combat was a short one. Sufder's followers were all picked men, and were better mounted than Scindia's troopers. These made special efforts to get at Harry, but the latter's skill with the sword enabled him to free himself from his most pressing opponents. Sufder laid about him stoutly and, his men seconding him well, half their opponents were speedily struck to the ground; and the rest, turning their horses, fled at full speed. Sufder's men would have followed, but he shouted to them to draw rein.

"Enough has been done, and well done," he said. "If Scindia means war, nothing will be said about this fight; but if he does not, complaints will doubtless be laid against us, and it is better that we should be able to say that we fought only in self defence; and that, when the attack ceased, we allowed them to ride off unmolested, though we might easily enough have slain the whole of them."

On arriving at the grove where the troop had halted, Harry at once resumed his own clothes; for although in his early days he had been accustomed to be slightly clad, he felt ill at ease riding almost naked. Here, too, he found Wasil, who had ridden with such speed that his pony was too much

exhausted for him to ride back with the rest. He received his master with the greatest joy, for he had feared he would be captured before leaving the camp.

They continued their journey to Jooneer, where they halted for the night. Sufder went to his house, and Harry rode out to the farm.

Chapter 4: A British Resident

As Harry drew rein at the farm Soyera ran out, followed by her brother and Anundee, with cries of joy at his unexpected return. It was nearly fifteen months since she had last seen him; though he had, when opportunity offered, sent messages to her assuring her that he was well, and hoped ere long to be able to come over to see her.

"I should scarce have known you," she said, "in those fine clothes of yours. You sent word that you were an officer in the Peishwa's service; but I hardly thought that you could be so much changed. You have grown a great deal, and are now much taller than Ramdass's sons."

The worthy farmer and Anundee were also delighted to see him.

"How long are you going to stay?" the former asked.

"Only till tomorrow, at daybreak. I have to ride forward, with all haste, to Poona; for I have been on a mission for Nana Furnuwees."

"Surely it is not so important that you cannot stay a few hours, Puntjee?"

"It is of importance. You may have known that Nana has placed Bajee Rao on the musnud, and he has installed himself as his minister; thereby defeating the plans of Balloba and Scindia, who will probably come along here with their whole force, in a day or two."

Late that evening, when the others had retired to bed, Soyera and Harry had a long talk together.

"Have you thought, Harry," she asked, after speaking for some time about his doings and position at court, "of joining your people again? There is peace between the Peishwa's court and the English. There is a British Resident at Poona and, as you have now gained a certain rank there, you could go to him with a much better face than if you had come direct from here, as a peasant. Then it would probably have been supposed that you were an impostor. That you were English, of course could be seen by your skin; but it might have been thought that I had adopted some English child, and was now trying to pass it off as the son of an officer."

"I think, mother, that I had best continue, for some time, as I am. You see I have, at present, nothing in common with the English except their blood. Were another war to break out between the Mahrattas and Bombay, I would at once declare myself to the Resident here, and go down to Bombay but, even then, my position would be a doubtful one and, unless I were to enlist in their army, I do not see how I should maintain myself.

"Moreover, you must remember that I have now a deep interest in matters here. Nana Furnuwees has treated me with much kindness, and placed his confidence in me. He has many enemies, as I have told you. Scindia is about to advance against Poona, and it is probable that he may succeed in driving Nana into exile, or imprisoning him for life; and establishing Balloba, or some other person devoted to his interest, as minister, in which case Scindia would be absolutely supreme. Nothing would persuade me to desert Nana; who has, for many years, alone withstood the ambition of Scindia's party. I do not say, for a moment, that my aid would be of the slightest use to him but, at any rate, he shall see that I am not ungrateful for his kindness; and will be faithful to him in his misfortunes, as he has been kind to me, when in power."

"That is right," Soyera said. "The cause of Nana is the cause of all in this part of the Deccan; for we should be infinitely worse off, were Scindia to lay hands on us. But there is an alternative, by which you could at once remain faithful to Nana, and prepare your way for joining the English, when you considered that the time for doing so had arrived."

"What is that, Soyera?"

"You might go to the English Resident, and tell him who you are, and how you have been brought up. Say that, at present, you wish to remain in the service of Nana; who has been a good friend to you, and with whom your sympathies, like those of nearly all the cultivators in the Peishwa's dominions, accord. Say that you hope, when the time comes, to return to your countrymen; and that,

in the meantime, you will give him any information in your power as to what is going on, subject only to your friendship for Nana. Thus, by making yourself useful to the Resident, you may prepare your way for joining your countrymen and, at the same time, be able to remain with Nana until either he is victorious over his enemies, or his cause is really lost."

"The plan is an excellent one," Harry said, "and I will certainly adopt it. Undoubtedly, the feeling among the English must be in favour of Bajee Rao and Nana. As Bajee is the son of Rugoba, he is their natural ally. Moreover, they would object most strongly to see Scindia become master of the whole Mahratta power; which he would probably use against them, at the first opportunity. It would, as you say, greatly facilitate my obtaining a fair position among the English; and I might also be able to do Nana a service. Of course, I have seen the English Resident many times, in the streets of Poona; and more than once, on special occasions, at Mahdoo Rao's court. As it is his business to know something of all connected with the palace, it is probable that he may have heard of me; at any rate, it would be easier to explain to him my position, than it would be to go down as a stranger to Bombay—where I should be ignorant as to whom I should first approach, and how to declare myself—a matter I have very often thought over."

The next morning the troop started at daybreak and, riding fast, reached Poona by noon. Harry went at once to report what he had seen to Nana.

"I received your letter yesterday," the minister said, "and the news was indeed bad. Purseram Bhow has offered to go out to give battle to Scindia, but my forces would have no chance: not only is Scindia's army much larger, but he has the infantry regiments commanded by foreign officers, and against these my infantry could not prevail. It would be madness to risk fighting, under such circumstances. The wheel may turn and, ere long, I may be in a position to thwart the schemes of Scindia and Balloba."

Nana had never been conspicuous for personal courage, though his moral courage, and his ability to meet any storm were unbounded. He was now an old man, and dreaded the shock of battle, when the chances appeared to be so much against him. He could not depend upon the support of Bajee, who had already shown himself willing to side with the strongest, and to make terms for himself, without the slightest regard for those who had befriended him.

"But if your excellency does not think of fighting, what course will you pursue?"

"I shall leave the country, at once," he said. "If I stop here, I know that Balloba, who is my personal enemy, will have me put to death. I only need time to recover from this sudden misfortune, and it would be madness for me to wait here, and to fall into the power of my enemies."

"Purseram Bhow is greatly offended, because I will not allow him to fight; but I, who have for so many years done my best to prevent civil war in this country—a war which, however it ended, would break up the Mahratta power—would not bring its horrors upon Poona. It is against me that Balloba is marching and, if I retire, bloodshed will be altogether averted."

"Will you accompany me, Puntojee?" he asked almost wistfully.

"Assuredly I will do so, sir; and I think that I can answer for Sufder, who has, I know, a great regard for your excellency. As to myself, I have little hope that I should escape unharmed, if Balloba arrive here before I leave. He detected me, even in my disguise in his camp; and I had a narrow escape, for a party of his cavalry pursued me, and would probably have caught me had not Sufder, with his band, met me, and defeated them with a loss of half their number. You may be sure that Balloba will learn who was in command, and Sufder's life would be no safer than my own."

"May I ask when your excellency is going to leave Poona?"

"Scouts were sent out yesterday, as soon as your letter was read and, directly Scindia's army gets in motion, I shall receive news. When I do, I shall leave. The horses will be saddled in readiness, and I shall be at the edge of the Ghauts by the time Scindia arrives here. You can tell Sufder to come, at once. He knows the disposition of the captains of the various troops, and will be able to tell me who can be depended upon."

Sufder was indeed outside the palace, having told Harry that he would wait, until he had learned the result of his interview with Nana. Harry briefly related to him his conversation with the minister.

"I think he is right," he said. "Purseram Bhow is a stout fighter, and is as brave as a lion; but Scindia's force would be double that which he could gather, at such a short notice, and Nana does right not to risk everything on the chance of a single fight. He is a wily old fox, and has got safely through dangers which would have crushed an ordinary man. You will see that, before long, he will be back again, and reinstated in power.

"At any rate, I will accompany him. After that thrashing we gave Balloba's horsemen, my head would not be safe here an hour, after his arrival."

On the road, Harry had informed him of the decision at which he had arrived, upon Soyera's advice; and Sufder agreed that it would certainly be a wise step. Accordingly, when the latter entered the palace, Harry went straight to the British Residency. He sent in his native name to Mr. Malet, and asked for an interview, and was at once shown in.

"You wish to speak to me, sir?" the Resident said, in the Mahratta language. "I think I have seen you at Mahdoo Rao's court."

"I have seen your excellency there," Harry replied, in the same language.

Then, seeing that the Resident spoke the language with difficulty, he went on, in English:

"It is a matter chiefly personal to myself."

The Resident looked at him in surprise, for it was the first time he had heard a Mahratta speaking English.

"I am the son of Major Lindsay who, with his wife and escort, was murdered by a party of Mahrattas, seventeen years ago, at the time when the English army was advancing against Poona. I was saved by the fidelity of an ayah, who had been in the family for ten years. A cousin of hers was, fortunately, one of the leaders of the party who attacked the camp and, with his connivance, she carried me off and made her way back to her family, near Jooneer. She stained my skin, as you see, and allowed it to be supposed that she had married in Bombay, and that I was her own child.

"She has brought me up with the intention of my rejoining my countrymen, as soon as I became a man; for she did not see how, until then, I could earn my living among strangers. She taught me as much as she knew of the language and religion of the English and, when I was twelve, took me down to Bombay and left me, for some two years and a half, in the house of Mrs. Sankey, a lady who taught some of the children of officers there. When I left Bombay I was able to speak English as well as other English boys of my age.

"My nurse had, from the earliest time I can remember, encouraged me in taking part in all sports and games; and when I was but eight a soldier, a cousin of hers, began to teach me my first exercise in arms. I continued to work at this until I went down to Bombay and, on my return, spent all my time, for some months, in riding and shooting. After this I was, for a year, with a famous shikaree; and took part in the killing of many tigers, and other wild beasts. This was fortunate; for when, through this relation of my nurse, I was introduced to Nana Furnuwees, and by him to Mahdoo Rao, the latter was pleased to take a fancy for me, and appointed me to the charge of the game preserves.

"At the present moment I have just returned from a mission, in disguise, to Scindia's camp. Nana has shown me great kindness. My intention is to remain with him, until he has passed through his present difficulties, which are very serious. After that, I hope to be able to go to Bombay, and to obtain a commission in the Company's service."

"I remember well the circumstances of the murder of Major Lindsay, and his wife; for I was in Bombay at the time. It was a matter of deep regret to us all, for he was greatly liked but, at the time, everyone was excited over the infamous treaty of Wurgaum. I remember that when a party was sent out, on our receiving the news of the attack, the bodies of the major and his wife were found, as also those of his servants and sowars; but it was reported that no trace could be discovered of the

infant, or of his ayah. It was thought possible that they had escaped, and hopes were entertained that the woman might have carried off her charge. I have no doubt as to the truth of your story.

"Is your nurse still alive?"

"She is, sir, as is also the man who assisted her. His name is Sufder, and he commands a troop of the Peishwa's cavalry. Both will testify, at the right time, to the truth of my statement."

"I can the more readily believe it," the Resident said, "inasmuch as, in spite of your colour, I can perceive a certain likeness to Major Lindsay, whom I knew intimately."

"My intention, in coming to see you now, sir, was to offer to furnish any information to you, concerning the movements and plans of Nana Furnuwees, so far as such information could do him no harm."

"I heard that there had been discussions between Nana and Purseram Bhow, the latter wishing to give battle to Scindia; but I think that Nana is right in refusing to sanction this for, from all I hear, Scindia's army is very much the stronger."

"It is, sir; and I should say that Purseram's army could hardly be depended upon to fight, under such circumstances."

"What is Nana going to do?"

"He is going to retire, as soon as Scindia's army is fairly in motion."

"He is in an awkward position," Mr. Malet said, "but he has reinstated himself, several times, when it seemed that everything was lost. I have great respect for his abilities, and he is the only man who can curb the ambition of Scindia and his ministers. Scindia's entire supremacy would be most unwelcome to us for, indeed, it is only owing to the mutual jealousy of the three great chiefs of the Mahratta nation, that we have gained successes. Were the whole power in one hand, we should certainly lose Surat, and probably Bassein and Salsette, and have to fight hard to hold Bombay."

"I shall be very glad to receive any reports you can supply me with, for it is next to impossible to obtain anything like trustworthy information here. We only hear what it is desired that we should know, and all these late changes have come as a complete surprise to me; for what news I do obtain is, more often than not, false. Unfortunately, truth is a virtue almost unknown among the Mahrattas. They have a perfect genius for intrigue, and consider it perfectly justifiable to deceive not only enemies, but friends."

"And when do you think of declaring yourself Mr. Lindsay?"

"I shall remain with Nana, so long as there is the slightest chance of his success; unless, indeed, the course of affairs should lead to the English intervening in these troubles; then, in case they declare against Nana, I should feel it my duty to leave him at once."

"I do not think there is any probability of that. Our policy has been to support him, as the Peishwa's minister, against either Scindia or Holkar. I shall, of course, report your appearance to the authorities at Bombay; and I am sure there will be a disposition to advance your views, for the sake of your father; and moreover, your knowledge of the language of the Mahrattas—which is, of course, perfect, or you could not have maintained your deception so long—will of itself be a strong recommendation in your favour."

After thanking Mr. Malet for his kindness, Harry returned to Sufder's camp, and gave him an account of his interview with the Resident.

"That is satisfactory, indeed, Puntotee. It shows the wisdom of the step you took. Now, as to our affairs here, I have mentioned the names of five captains of troops; all of whom can, I think, be relied upon. However, I am now going out to see them, and have only been waiting for your return. Six hundred men is but a small body; but it is a beginning, and I have no doubt that others will join Nana, later on. But I am not sufficiently sure of their sentiments to open the matter to them, and it is essential that no suspicion of Nana's intention to leave the town should get about. There might be a riot in the city and, possibly, some of the captains, who have not received the promotion which they regard as their due, might try to gain Scindia's favour by arresting him."

On the following day a messenger arrived from Nana, requesting Sufder to place himself with his troop, and such other captains as he could rely upon, on the road a mile west of Poona. He himself would leave the town quietly, with a small body of his friends, and join them there. Sufder at once sent off five of his men, with orders to the captains whom he had seen on the previous afternoon and, within an hour, six hundred men were gathered at the point indicated. Half an hour later a party of horsemen were seen coming along, and Furnuwees soon rode up, accompanied by several of his strongest adherents.

The officers were gathered at the head of their troops. Nana, drawing rein, said to them:

"Thanks for your fidelity. I shall not forget it; and hope, when the time comes, to reward it as it deserves."

He motioned to Harry to join him.

"Scindia's army was to march this morning," he said, "and his horsemen will be here by tomorrow evening, at latest."

They rode to Satara, where Nana had arranged to stop until he received news, from Purseram Bhow, as to the course of events at Poona; and two days later a messenger rode in, with news that Scindia had arrived near Poona, and had had a friendly interview with Bajee Rao. Balloba had seen Purseram, and had pretended great friendship for him; but the old soldier was by no means deceived by his protestations.

"If we had only to do with Scindia," Nana said, "matters could be easily arranged; but the young rajah is only a puppet in his minister's hands."

Several days passed, and then another letter came from Purseram. It said that Balloba had resolved to oppose Bajee Rao, and to have both a minister and a Peishwa of his own nomination; and that he proposed to him that Mahdoo Rao's widow should adopt Chimnajee as her son, that Bajee should be placed in confinement, and that he, Purseram Bhow, should be his minister. He asked Nana's advice as to what course he should take. He stated that Balloba had said he was greatly influenced, in the methods he proposed, by the hope of rendering them in some degree acceptable to Nana.

As the latter had only placed Bajee Rao on the musnud as a means of checkmating Scindia, he advised Purseram to accept the offer; but pointed out the absolute necessity for his retaining Bajee in his own custody. Purseram omitted to follow this portion of the advice, and a formal reconciliation took place, by letter, between Balloba and Nana. The latter was invited to proceed at once to Poona; but on finding that Purseram had allowed Balloba to retain Bajee in his hands, he suspected that the whole was a scheme to entice him into the power of his enemy, and he therefore made excuses for not going.

Bajee, ignorant of the plot that had been planned, went to Scindia's camp to remonstrate against a heavy demand for money, on account of the expenses to which Scindia had been put; and to his astonishment he was, then and there, made a prisoner. Chimnajee positively refused to become a party to the usurpation of his brother's rights; but he was compelled, by threats, to ascend the musnud. On the day after his installation, Purseram Bhow wrote, proposing that Nana should come to Poona to meet Balloba, and to assume the civil administration of the new Peishwa's government; while the command of the troops, and all military arrangements, should remain as they stood.

In reply, Nana requested that Purseram should send his son, Hurry Punt, to settle the preliminaries; but instead of coming as an envoy, Hurry Punt left Poona with over five thousand chosen horse. This naturally excited Nana's suspicions, which were strengthened by a letter from Rao Phurkay, who was in command of the Peishwa's household troops, warning him to seek safety without a moment's delay.

Now that he saw that half measures were no longer possible, Nana ceased to be irresolute and, when his fortunes seemed to all men to be desperate, commenced a series of successful intrigues that astonished all India. He had quietly increased his force, during the weeks of waiting since he had left

Poona. He had ample funds, having carried away with him an immense treasure, accumulated during his long years of government. There was no time to be lost and, as soon as he received the letter of warning, he left the town of Waee and made for the Concan.

As soon as he reached the Ghauts, he set the whole of his force to block the passes, by rolling great stones down into the roads. In addition, strong barricades were constructed, and a force of two hundred men left, at each point, to defend them. The infantry he had recruited he threw into the fort of Raygurh, and added strongly to its defences.

Balloba had proposed that Nana should be followed without delay, and offered some of Scindia's best troops for the purpose; but Purseram, acting in accordance with the advice of some of Nana's friends, raised an objection. He had now, however, resolved to break altogether with the minister, whose timidity at the critical moment was considered, by him, as a proof that he could never again be formidable; and he accordingly gave up Nana's estates to Scindia, and took possession of his houses and property in Poona, for his own use. After remaining for a few days, waiting events and sending off many messengers, Nana sent for Harry.

"I have a mission for you," he said. "It is one that requires daring and great intelligence, and I know no one to whom it could be better committed than to you. You see that, owing to the turn events have taken, Bajee Rao and myself are natural allies. We have both suffered at the hands of Balloba. He is a prisoner in Scindia's camp; though, as I understand, free to move about in it. I privately received a hint that Bajee, himself, recognizes this; but doubtless he believes that I am powerless to help either myself or him.

"In this he is mistaken. I have been in communication with Holkar, who is alarmed at the ever-increasing power of Scindia; and he will throw his whole power into the scale, to aid me. The Rajahs of Berar and Kolapooore have engaged to aid me, for the same reason; and the Nizam will sign the treaty that was agreed upon between us, some time since. Rao Phurkay has engaged to bring the Peishwa's household troops over, when the signal is given.

"More than that I have, through Ryajee, a patal, who is an enemy of Balloba, opened negotiations with Scindia himself; offering him the estates of Purseram Bhow, and the fort of Surrenuggar, with territory yielding ten lakhs, on condition of his placing Balloba in confinement, re-establishing Bajee Rao on the musnud, and returning with his troops to his own territory.

"I have no doubt that, when Bajee Rao hears this, he will be glad enough to throw himself heartily into the cause. I may tell you that he is apparently a guest, rather than a prisoner; and that he has a camp of his own, in the centre of that of Scindia; and therefore, when you have once made your way into his encampment, you will have no difficulty in obtaining a private interview with him. It is necessary that he should have money, and silver would be too heavy for you to carry; but I will give you bags containing a thousand gold mohurs, which will enable him to begin the work of privately raising troops."

"I will undertake the business, sir. The only person I fear, in the smallest degree, is Balloba himself. I must disguise myself so that he will not recognize me."

Without delay, Harry mounted his horse, placed the two bags of money that had been handed to him in the wallets behind his saddle, exchanged his dress for that of one of Sufder's troopers, and then started for Poona, which he reached the next day. He did not enter the town; but put up at a cultivator's, two miles distant from it.

"I want to hire a cart, with two bullocks," he said to the man. "Can you furnish one?"

"As I do not know you, I should require some money paid down, as a guarantee that they will be returned."

"That I can give you; but I shall leave my horse here, and that is fully worth your waggon and oxen. However, I will leave with you a hundred rupees. I may not keep your waggon many days."

After it was dark, Harry went to the town and purchased some paints, and other things, that he required for disguise. Having used these, he went to the house of the British Resident and, on stating

who he was, he was shown in. Mr. Malet did not recognize, in the roughly-dressed countryman, the young officer who had called upon him before.

"I am Harry Lindsay and, being in Poona, called upon you to give you some information."

"I recognize you by your voice," the Resident said; "but I fear that there is nothing of importance that you can tell me; now that Nana Furnuwees is homeless, and Bajee Rao is no longer Peishwa."

"Nana is not done with, yet, sir."

"Why, he is a fugitive, with a handful of troops under him."

"But he has his brains, sir, which are worth more than an army and, believe me, if all goes well, it will not be long before he is back in Poona, as minister to the Peishwa."

"Minister to Chimnaje?"

"No, sir, minister to Bajee Rao."

"I would that it were so," Mr. Malet said, "but since one is a fugitive and the other a prisoner, I see no chance, whatever, of such a transformation."

"I will briefly tell you, sir, what is preparing. Bajee, feeling certain that he will, ere long, be sent to a fortress, has communicated with Nana, imploring him to aid him."

"If he has turned to Nana for support, he is either mad, or acting as Balloba's tool."

"On the contrary, sir, I think that his doing so shows that he recognizes Nana's ability; and feels that, ere long, he may become a useful ally. Already Nana has been at work. Holkar, who naturally views with intense jealousy Scindia's entire control of the territory of the Peishwa, has already agreed to put his whole army in the field; Rao Phurkay will rebel, with the household troops and, what is vastly more important, Scindia has embraced Nana's offer of a large sum of money, and a grant of territory, to arrest Balloba, and to replace Bajee on the musnud. In addition to this, he has won over the Rajah of Berar, has incited the Rajah of Kolapoore to attack the district of Purseram Bhow; and has obtained the Nizam's approbation of a treaty, that had already been settled between Nana and the Nizam's general, the basis of which is that Bajee is to be re-established, with Nana himself as minister and, on the other hand, the territory formerly seized by the Peishwa to be restored.

"My mission here is to inform Bajee Rao of the plans that have been prepared, and to obtain from him a solemn engagement that Nana shall be reappointed as his minister, on the success of his plans."

Mr. Malet listened to Harry with increasing astonishment.

"This is important news, indeed," he said; "marvellous, and of the highest importance to me. Already I have been asked, by the Council of Bombay, to give my opinion as to whether it is expedient to render any assistance to Nana Furnuwees. It is, to them, almost as important as to Nana that Scindia should not obtain supreme power. I have replied that I could not recommend any such step, for that Nana's cause seemed altogether lost; and that any aid to him would be absolutely useless, and would only serve Scindia with a pretext for declaring war against us. Of course, what you have told me entirely alters the situation. It will not be necessary for the Council to assist Nana, but they can give him fair words and, even if Balloba should win the day, he will have no ground for accusing us of having aided Nana.

"It is impossible to overlook the value of your communication, Mr. Lindsay; and I can promise you that you will not find the Government of Bombay ungrateful, for it will relieve them of the anxiety which the progress of events here has caused them."

On leaving the Residency, Harry returned to the farm where he had left his horse and, early next morning, put on his disguise again, painted lines round his eyes, touched some of the hairs of his eyebrows with white paint, mixed some white horsehair with the tuft on the top of his head, and dropped a little juice of a plant resembling belladonna—used at times, by ladies in the east, to dilate the pupils of their eyes and make them dark and brilliant—in his eyes.

Soyera had told him of this herb, when he related to her how Balloba had detected him by the lightness of his eyes. He was greatly surprised at the alteration it effected in his appearance, and felt assured that even Balloba himself would not again recognize him.

He bought a dozen sacks of grain from the farmer and, placing these in the bullock cart, started for Scindia's camp. He had, during the night, buried the gold; for he thought that, until he knew his ground, and could feel certain of entering Bajee Rao's camp unquestioned, it would be better that there should be nothing in the cart, were he searched, to betray him. He carried in his hand the long staff universally used by bullock drivers and, passing through Poona, arrived an hour later at the camp, which was pitched some three miles from the city.

As large numbers of carts, with forage and provisions, arrived daily in the camp for the use of the troops, no attention whatever was paid to him and, on enquiring for the encampment of Bajee Rao—one of whose officers had, he said, purchased the grain, for his horses and those of his officers and escort—he soon found the spot, which was on somewhat rising ground in the centre of the camp. It was much larger than he had expected to find it as, beyond being prevented from leaving, Bajee had full liberty, and was even permitted to have some of his friends round him, and two or three dozen troopers of his household regiment.

In charge of these was a young officer, who was well known to Harry during the time of Mahdoo Rao. Seeing him standing in front of a tent, Harry stopped the cart opposite to him and, leaving it, went up to him.

"Where shall I unload the cart?" he asked.

"I know nothing about it," the officer said. "Who has ordered it? The supply will be welcome enough, for we are very short of forage."

Then, changing his tone, Harry said:

"You do not know me, Nujeeff. I am your friend, Puntjee."

"Impossible!" the other said, incredulously.

"It is so. I am not here for amusement, as you may guess; but am on a private mission to Bajee Rao. Will you inform him that I am here? I dare not say whom I come from, even to you; but can explain myself fully to him."

"I will let him know, certainly, Puntjee; but there is little doubt that Balloba has his spies here, and it will be necessary to arrange that your meeting shall not be noticed. Do you sit down here by your cart, as if waiting for orders where to unload it. I will go across to Bajee's tent, and see him."

Nujeeff accordingly went over to the rajah's tent, and returned in a quarter of an hour.

"Bajee will see you," he said. "First unload your grain in the lines of our cavalry, place some in front of your bullocks, and leave them there; then cross to the tent next to Bajee's. It is occupied by one of his officers, who carries the purse and makes payments. Should you be watched, it would seem that you are only going there to receive the price of the grain. Bajee himself will slip out of the rear of his tent, and enter the next in the same way. The officer is, at present, absent; so that you can talk without anyone having an idea that you and Bajee are together."

Harry carried out the arrangement and, after leaving his bullocks, made his way to the spot indicated. He found the young rajah had gone there.

"And you are Puntjee!" the latter said. "I saw you but a few times, but Rao Phurkay has often mentioned your name, to me, as being one who stood high in the confidence of my cousin Mahdoo. Nujeeff tells me that you have a private communication to make to me; and indeed, I can well believe that. You would not thus disguise yourself, unless the business was important."

"It is, Your Highness. Nana Furnuwees has received your message. He reciprocates your expressions of friendship, and has sent me here to let you know that the time is approaching when your deliverance from Balloba can be achieved."

He then delivered the message with which he had been entrusted. Bajee's face became radiant, as he went on.

"This is news, indeed," he said. "That Phurkay was faithful to me, I knew; but I thought that he was the only friend I had left. Truly Nana Furnuwees is a great man, and I will gladly give the undertaking he asks for; that, in the event of his succeeding in placing me on the musnud, he shall be my minister, with the same authority and power that he had under Mahdoo."

"I have, at the farmhouse where I am stopping, a thousand gold mohurs, which Nana has sent to enable you to begin your preparations; but he urges that you should be extremely careful for, as you see by what I have told you, he has ample power to carry out the plan without any assistance from yourself, and it is most important that nothing shall be done that can arouse the suspicions of Balloba, until all is ready for the final stroke. I have not brought it with me, today, as I knew not how vigilant they might be in camp, and it was possible that my sacks of grain might be examined. As, however, I passed in without question, I will bring it when I next come, which will be in two days."

"I suppose there is no objection to my telling Phurkay what is being done?"

"None at all, Your Highness. He has not yet been informed, though communications have passed between him and Nana. But, although the latter was well convinced of his devotion, he thought it safer that no one should know the extent of the plot, until all was in readiness."

Two days later, Harry made another journey to the camp, and this time with the bags of money hidden among the grain, in one of the sacks. He saw Bajee Rao, as before, and received from him a paper, with the undertaking required by Nana. The sack containing the money was put down where Bajee's horses were picketed, and was there opened by a confidential servant, who carried the bags into the tent which was close by.

As he was leaving the camp, Harry had reason to congratulate himself on the precautions that he had taken; for he met Balloba, riding along with a number of officers. Harry had, with his change of costume, assumed the appearance of age. He walked by the side of the bullocks, stooping greatly and leaning on his staff; and the minister passed without even glancing at him.

Harry, on his return, paid the farmer for the hire of his cart. The latter was well pleased for, in addition to the money so earned, he had charged a good price for the two waggon loads of grain. Harry then put off the peasant's dress, and resumed that of a trooper, and rode back to Raygurh, where he reported to Nana the success of his mission.

Chapter 5: Down To Bombay

Harry's stay with Nana was a short one as, in three days, he was again sent to Poona. This time he was to take up his abode at a large house, occupied by two of the leaders of Bajee's party; the rajah having told him that he would request them to entertain him, if he should again come to Poona. He was the bearer of fifty thousand rupees, principally in gold, which he was to give to them for the use of Bajee. He had no message this time for the prince, personally, Nana having said to him:

"I want you to let me know how matters are going on. The young man may do something rash and, if Balloba's suspicions are in any way excited, he may send him to some distant fortress; which would seriously upset my plans, for I should have to retain Chimnaje in power, as representative of his brother.

"We know that he was placed on the musnud greatly in opposition to his wishes; and he certainly hailed, with pleasure, the prospect of Bajee's release. Still, it would not be the same thing for me. A minister of the Peishwa can rule without question by the people but, acting only as minister to a representative of the Peishwa, he would be far more severely criticised; and it is certain that, to raise money for paying Scindia the sum that has been agreed upon, extra taxation must be put on, the odium resulting from which would fall upon me."

The two officers received Harry cordially. He had personally known them both and, as Nana's representative, they would have treated him with much honour, had it not been pointed out to them that this might be fatal to their plans for, did Balloba hear that some strange officer was being so treated by them, he would be sure to set at once about finding out who he was, and what he was doing there.

"Matters are going on well," they said. "The old general, Manajee Phurkay, who was one of Rugoba's devoted adherents, is now staying in Bajee's camp, and is enlisting men for his service."

"Where are they being assembled?"

"In Bajee's camp. He is not interfered with, there."

"It appears to be a very rash proceeding," Harry said. "It is true that Bajee has apparent liberty, and can have with him in his camp many of his friends; but a gathering of armed men can scarcely escape the eye of so keen an observer as Balloba."

A few days later, Harry, being out one evening, saw a party of soldiers coming along the road from the direction of Scindia's camp. This was unusual for, in order to prevent plundering, the orders were stringent that none of Scindia's troops should enter Poona. He hurried back to the house, and acquainted the two leaders with what he had seen. They were inclined to laugh at his apprehension but, when a body of horsemen were seen coming down the street, they issued orders for the doors to be closed and barricaded. There were some twenty men in the house, and when the officer who commanded the detachment summoned them to open the door, and to deliver the two nobles to him, he was met by a decided refusal, from the chiefs themselves, from an upper window.

The officer then ordered his men to dismount and break open the door but, when they attempted to do so, they were met by a fire of musketry from every window. Many fell; and the officer, seeing that the house could not be taken, except by a force much larger than that at his command, rode off at full speed, with the survivors, to Scindia's camp.

No sooner had they gone than the horses were brought out from the stables, and the two officers, with ten of their troopers, rode off at full speed. Harry refused to accompany them, as he wished to see what had really happened, in order to carry the news to Nana. He therefore rode out to the farmhouse where he had before stayed, left his horse there, and returned to Poona.

Here he heard that Rao Phurkay had been seized, and that Bajee Rao's encampment was surrounded by troops, who suffered none to enter or leave it. The next morning he went over there and

found that, as the supply of water had been cut off, the garrison had surrendered; all being allowed to depart, with the exception of Bajee, over whom a strong guard had been placed.

Before they left, Manajee Phurkay gave them all directions to gather in the neighbourhood of Waee. They did so, and were joined at once by the two chiefs. Nana promptly sent them a supply of money, telling them to take up their position at the Salpee Ghaut; where they were speedily joined by ten thousand men, and openly declared for Bajee Rao.

In the meantime Balloba, believing that the whole plot was the work of Bajee Rao, determined to despatch him, as a prisoner, to a fortress in the heart of Scindia's dominions. He sent him off with a strong escort, under the charge of an officer named Sukaram Ghatgay who, although having command only of a troop of one hundred horse, belonged to an ancient and honourable family.

Balloba could hardly have made a worse choice. Ghatgay had a daughter who was reported to be of exceptional beauty, and the young Scindia had asked her father for her hand. Ghatgay, an ambitious and enterprising man, had given no decided answer; not from any real hesitation, for he saw how enormous would be the advantage, to himself, of such an alliance; but in order to increase Scindia's ardour by pretended opposition, and so to secure the best terms possible for himself. The reason he gave would appear natural to any Mahratta of good blood, as none of these would have given a daughter of their house to one who, however high in rank, had ancestors belonging to a low caste.

Upon the way, Bajee, who was aware of Scindia's wishes, and was most anxious to obtain his goodwill, urged Ghatgay to give him his daughter in marriage and, after much pretended hesitation, the latter agreed to do so—on condition that Bajee would authorize him to promise Scindia a large sum of money, as soon as he again ascended the musnud; and that he would get the prince to appoint him his prime minister, which post would be vacant at the overthrow of Balloba. This being arranged, Bajee Rao pretended that he was seriously ill; and Ghatgay therefore halted, with his escort, on the banks of the Paira.

Taking with him his disguise as a countryman, Harry, as soon as he learned that Ghatgay had started with Bajee, mounted and followed him; and travelled, at some little distance in rear of the party, until they halted. Then he went to the house of a cultivator, left his horse there, and exchanged his dress as fighting man for that of a countryman.

There was no occasion for him, now, to disguise his age or darken his eyes and, as before, he hired a cart, bought some grain for forage, some sacks of rice and other things, and boldly entered Ghatgay's camp. As the prices he asked were low, Ghatgay purchased the whole contents of his cart. When this was cleared, Harry left his cattle and wandered about, saying that he and the animals needed an hour's rest.

Presently he passed Bajee Rao, who was standing listlessly at the door of a tent.

"I am Puntojee," Harry said, as he passed. "I followed you with the horse, that I might help you to escape."

"Stay and talk to me here," the young prince said. "It will seem that I am only passing my time in asking you questions about the country."

"I wanted to ascertain the road by which you will travel, after crossing the river. I have money with me, and will endeavour to raise a force of forty or fifty men; with which to make a sudden attack upon your camp, after nightfall. I will bring a good horse with me. If you will run out when you hear the uproar, I will ride up with the spare horse. You will leap on to its back, and we can gallop off."

"You are a brave fellow, Puntojee, and I thank you heartily for your offer; but, happily, I stand in no need of it. I have gained Ghatgay over, and he will linger here until we hear that Balloba has been arrested, and that Nana Furnuwees is approaching Poona. Believe me, I shall never forget your offer, or the fidelity that has prompted it; and when I am established as Peishwa you shall, if it pleases you, have any post at court you may desire."

"I thank you much, Prince; but I am an officer of Nana, and know that, in acting as I have done, I am acting in his interest, as well as yours. I am glad that the necessity for making an attack upon

the camp is obviated. I might have had considerable trouble in raising a sufficient force for such a purpose, for even the most reckless would hesitate to fall on one of Scindia's officers; and in the next place, although I doubt not that I should have been able to carry you off, Ghatgay would, as soon as he had beaten off the attacking party, have set out in pursuit, and raised the whole country, and the difficulty of reaching the Western Ghauts would have been immense.

"I hope to see Your Highness at Poona."

So saying, he strolled carelessly back to the bullock cart, waited till the animals had finished their feed, and then drove off again; returned the cart to its owner, and started again for Poona.

On his arrival there, he went to the Residency and informed Mr. Malet that Bajee had gained over the officer who was escorting him, and was ready to come back to Poona, as soon as the blow was struck.

"It will be struck soon," Mr. Malet said. "All is in readiness. I sent your report on to the Council, urging that, as it seemed likely that Bajee Rao would soon be on the musnud, they should express their readiness to recognize him. I received a despatch only yesterday, saying that they perfectly agreed with me, and had already sent off a messenger to Nana stating their willingness to recognize Bajee as lawful heir to the late Peishwa.

"Things are working well. The Nizam's general has been ordered to watch Purseram Bhow, who is raising troops for the purpose of aiding in crushing Bajee's supporters. Holkar and Scindia's troops also are in readiness to move and, after the fete of the Dussera, the regular battalions in the Peishwa's service, commanded by Mr. Boyd, will march to the Neera bridge, and a brigade of Scindia's regulars will move against Raygurh.

"It is evident that neither Balloba nor Purseram has the slightest suspicion of what is going on, or they would never have despatched troops from here. I certainly have felt very uneasy, since Bajee was carried away; for he is a necessary figure, and should be here as soon as Nana arrives, otherwise there would be no recognized head. It would have been hopeless to try to deliver him, once imprisoned in one of the strong fortresses in Scindia's dominions; and the latter could have made any terms for himself that he chose to dictate.

"Your news has relieved me of this anxiety, and I think it probable that everything will now be managed without bloodshed; and that we may, for a time, have peace here."

The next morning, Harry rode off and rejoined Nana, who thanked him warmly for the manner in which he had carried out his mission, and especially for his offer to attempt to rescue Bajee from his captors.

"It would have been the greatest misfortune," he said, "had he been carried far away. I should have been obliged to recognize his brother Chimnaje; and Scindia, having Bajee in his hands, would have kept up a constant pressure, and might probably have marched to Poona to restore him; which he would certainly have succeeded in doing, for the feeling of the population would have been all in favour of the lawful heir.

"As a token of my satisfaction, here is an order upon my treasurer for fifty thousand rupees."

All being ready, Scindia, on the 27th of October, suddenly arrested Balloba; and sent a body of his troops, with those of the Nizam's general, for the purpose of seizing Purseram Bhow. The latter, receiving news of what had happened in good time, and taking with him Chimnaje, fled to a fortress; but was quickly pursued, and obliged to surrender. Bajee Rao was brought back to Beema, eighteen miles from Poona. His brother Amrud, and Rao Phurkay, were also released.

Nana joined his army at the Salpee Ghaut, and Scindia's infantry, under Mr. Boyd, marched for the capital; which Nana refused to enter, however, until he had received a formal declaration, from Bajee, that he intended no treachery against him. This pledge was given; and a treaty was, at the same time, entered into by the Nizam and Scindia, both agreeing to establish Bajee Rao on the musnud, and reinstate Nana as his prime minister. These matters being settled, Nana returned to Poona, from which he had been absent for nearly a year, and resumed the duties of prime minister.

A fortnight later, Bajee Rao was solemnly invested as Peishwa. One of his first acts was to send for Harry, to whom he gave a robe of honour, and thirty thousand rupees in money, in token of his gratitude for the risk he had run in communicating with him, and for his daring proposal to rescue him from the hands of his escort.

On the day after Nana's re-entry into the capital, Harry received a note from Mr. Malet, asking him to call.

"I expect Colonel Palmer to relieve me of my duties here, in the course of a day or two. I need scarcely say I shall be glad to be released from a work which is surrounded with infinite difficulty, and which constantly upsets all human calculations. Nana is in power again; but another turn of the wheel may take place, at any moment, and he may again be an exile, or possibly a prisoner.

"It seems to me that it would be well for you to accompany me to Bombay. The remembrance of your services will be fresh, and they cannot but be recognized by the Council. That body is frequently changed and, in two or three years' time, there will be fresh men, who will know nothing of what has happened now, and be indisposed to rake up old reports and letters, or to reward past services; especially as the whole position here may have altered, half a dozen times, before that."

"I will gladly do so, sir, and thank you very heartily for your kindness. I will ride over to Jooneer, tomorrow, and bring my old nurse down with me; and I have no doubt Sufer will be willing to accompany us. He has rendered good services to Nana; and the latter will, I am sure, grant him leave of absence for as long as may be necessary."

"I think it would certainly be best to take them both down, if possible. They could make affidavits, in Bombay, that would place it beyond doubt that you are Major Lindsay's son. It is morally certain that there are relatives of your father and mother still living, in England. I do not say that you require any assistance from them; but when you return home, as everyone does, two or three times, in the course of his Indian service, it would be pleasant to find friends there; and it would be well that your position should be established beyond all question."

"I will gladly go down with you," Sojera said, when Harry laid the matter before her. "I am happy and contented here, but should be glad to see Bombay again. It was my home for ten years. I am very glad you have made up your mind to go, for it is time that you should take your place among your countrymen; and the recommendation of the Resident at the court of Poona is as good a one as you could wish for.

"I should say that you had better give up, at once, staining your skin. I can see that you have not used the dye for some days, and it would be as well to recover your proper colour, before Mr. Malet introduces you to the Council at Bombay."

"I will ride down to the town," Harry said, "and engage a gharry [a native carriage] to carry you to Poona. When we get there, I shall learn what route Mr. Malet will take, and how fast he will travel; and shall then see which will be the best for you—to go down in a gharry, or to be carried in a dhoolie [a palanquin]."

"But all this will cost money, Harry."

"I am well provided with funds," Harry said, "for the Nana and Bajee Rao have both made me handsome presents for the services I rendered them. There is, therefore, no reason why we should not travel in comfort."

They arrived at Poona two days later; and Harry—having ascertained that the new Resident would not arrive until the next day, and that he would probably wish Mr. Malet to defer his departure for at least two days, in order to give him his experience of the factions and intrigues there, and of the character of all those who were likely to influence events—rode to see Nana, who had not yet returned to Poona.

"I have come, your excellency," he said, "to tell you that it is my wish to retire from the public service."

The minister looked greatly surprised.

"Why, Puntojee," he said, "this sounds like madness. Young as you are, you have secured powerful protectors, both in the Peishwa and myself; and you may hope to reach a high office in the state, as you grow older.

"I do not know, though," he went on, speaking to himself rather than to the lad, "that high office is a thing to be desired. It means being mixed up in intrigues of all kinds, being the object of jealousy and hatred, and running a terrible risk of ruin at every change in the government here."

Then he turned again to Harry.

"And what are you thinking of doing?"

"I will speak frankly to your highness. I am not a Mahratta, as you and everyone else suppose. I am the son of English parents."

And he then went on to give an account of the killing of his father and mother, and of how he was saved by Soyera, and brought up as her son; until such times as he might, with advantage, go down to Bombay. Nana listened with great interest.

"It is a strange tale," he said, when Harry brought the story to a conclusion, "and explains things which have, at times, surprised me. In the first place, the colour of your eyes always struck me as peculiar. Then your figure is not that of my countrymen. There are many as tall as you; but they have not your width of shoulders, and strong build. Lastly, I have wondered how a young Mahratta should be endowed with so much energy and readiness, be willing to take heavy responsibilities on his shoulders, and to be so full of resource.

"Now that you have told me your story, I think you are right to go down and join your own people. Everything is disturbed, and nothing is certain from day to day here. I was a fugitive but a short time ago and, ere long, I may again be an exile.

"Moreover, no one can tell what may happen to him. Your people are quarrelling with Tippoo, as they quarrelled with his father, Hyder; and I think that, before long, it is possible they will overthrow him, and take possession of his territory.

"Were the various powers of India united, this could not be so; but the English will always find some ready to enter into an alliance with them, and will so enlarge their dominions. The Mahrattas may laugh at the idea of their being overthrown, by such small armies as those the English generals command; but our constant dissensions, and the mutual jealousy between Holkar, Scindia, the Peishwa, the Rajah of Berar, and others, will prevent our ever acting together. It may be that we shall be conquered piecemeal.

"I have watched, very closely, all that has taken place in southern India and in Bengal. I have seen a handful of traders gradually swallowing up the native powers, and it seems to me that it may well be that, in time, they may become the masters of all India. Were I to say as much to any of our princes, they would scoff at my prediction; but it has been my business to learn what was passing elsewhere, and I have agents at Madras and Calcutta, and their reports are ever that the power of the English is increasing. A few years ago, it seemed that the French were going to carry all before them; but they, like our native princes, have gone down before the English; who seem, moreover, to get on better than the French with the natives, and to win their respect and liking.

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