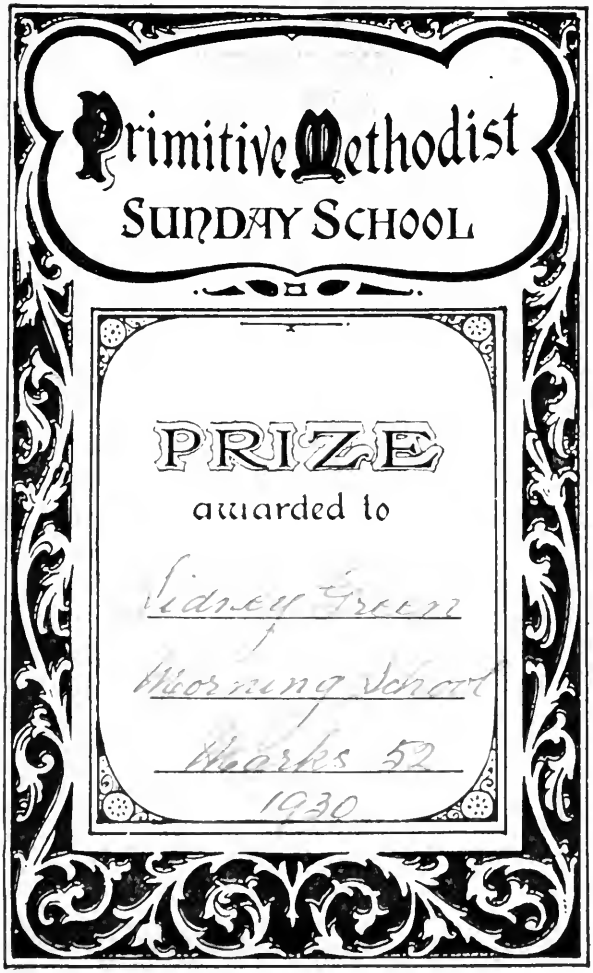
THE SILVER HAND

ELIZA F. POLLARD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The Silver Hand

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SHE LED THE WAY TO WHERE LAY A CHILD SLEEPING

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The Silver Hand

A Story of India in the Eighteenth Century

BY

ELIZA F. POLLARD

Author of "The Queen's Favourite"
"With Gordon at Khartum" "The Doctor's Niece"
"The Lady Isobel" &c.

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Illustrations

CHAPTER I

Broken Links

A long, low, white-stuccoed house, with a broad veranda hung with scented grass purdahs, faced a green lawn, the uniformity of which was broken by beds of many-coloured flowers, which only the continuous watering by the native gardener, or mali as he was called, kept fresh. A broad carriage drive swept round the lawn beneath shady trees, whilst two great groups of palm trees on either side of the veranda gave an impression of cool restfulness; the world seemed shut out. Every window of the house was carefully screened by chiks to keep the interior cool; the cawing of the crows and the twittering of innumerable smaller birds alone broke the stillness.

As the evening crept on an almost imperceptible breeze stirred the leaves of the trees. Suddenly the silence was broken by the sharp clatter of horses' hoofs, and a young man, mounted on a native pony, rode up the carriage drive. He was followed by a syce (native groom), who, when his young master dismounted at the veranda steps, led his horse away in the direction of the stables. The youth scanned the front of the house with a discontented expression.

"No one moving yet," he muttered discontentedly, and he proceeded slowly to mount the steps of the veranda and throw himself into a lounge chair, of which there were several. At the same time he drew a fine

cambric handkerchief out of his jacket pocket and passed it over his face.

Noiselessly the khansamah (butler) advanced and stood beside him with a silver salver, upon which was a glass of sparkling iced water.

"Ah, that is good!" sighed the young man, stretching out his hand for the glass. The khansamah had already placed it on a low table beside him, and with a deep salaam was retiring, when the youth by a sign stopped him.

"Raman," he asked, "is the Sahib Felix still taking his siesta?"

"The Sahib Felix is not at home. He rode with the Missy Sahibah this morning; but when they came back he found a messenger waiting with a letter from the great sahib. He drank a cup of coffee, changed his clothes, ordered a fresh horse, and rode off to the city That is all, sahib." And once more salaaming so low that his turban wellnigh touched the ground, he retired.

At that same moment the glass door which led from the house on to the veranda was thrown open, and a young girl stepped out.

She was tall for her age, and very thin, as European children mostly are in India; she was also very pretty, almost ethereal looking, very fair, with soft, fluffy hair, which, doubtless on account of the heat, was rolled round her head, and fell in soft, fair curls about her face and neck. She wore a loose frock of some transparent material, with short, puffy sleeves, leaving her arms bare. Round her neck was a string, or rather several strings, of pearls of unusual size and whiteness. The expression of the child's face was one of innocent happiness. The parted lips were smiling, and the eyes

laughed; in fact, the play of the whole face was joyous, and there was a mischievous note in her voice as she said:

"What can have happened, Eustace, to bring you out so early?"

"I hoped to have found Felix here," he answered. Rising and taking the child's hand, he led her to a low chair more especially her own.

"I think father must have sent for him, for he went off in a hurry as soon as we came in from our ride. Has anything happened?"

"Not that I know of," he answered. "But there are strange rumours abroad. French ships have been seen on the coast, and, what is worse, Hyder Ali's men are said to be pouring down from the highlands of Mysore into the Carnatic."

The child opened her big blue eyes. In all except in appearance Ursula Carmichael was far in advance of her years. She had no companion of her own age; she lived with her father and his friends; her brother Felix and his friend Eustace were her sole companions. Felix was nearly twenty, Eustace eighteen. She knew all the events of the day; no one thought of keeping silence before her, so now Eustace went on:

"It will be no joke if Hyder, the French, and the Mahrattas are all down upon us at the same time."

"Oh, I dare say we could manage them!" answered Ursula with that perfect faith of a child who has never known fear. "You are a regular bird of ill omen, Eustace. Ah! here they come; now we shall hear all about it." And, springing up, she ran down the steps of the veranda to meet a group of horsemen coming at a sharp trot up the ride.

The foremost was a tall, handsome man of about

forty—Mr. John Carmichael, one of the richest and most prosperous merchants in the Madras Presidency. His son, Felix, rode a few yards behind, with Mr. Satori, the junior partner of the firm of Carmichael & Son.

As Eustace rose and came forward the men nodded to him, Felix calling out: "You've heard the news, I suppose?"

"Rather!" was the short answer; "that's what brought me out."

Mr. Carmichael had dismounted, and Ursula's arms were already round his neck. "Father, what do you think Eustace has been telling me? Dreadful things! He says the French, the Mahrattas, Hyder Ali, are all coming down upon us to murder us."

"You might have spared yourself the trouble of frightening the child," said Mr. Carmichael sharply.

"I am sorry, sir," answered the young man. "I came out thinking to find Felix here. Is there any truth in the report?"

"I am very much afraid there is, but there is no immediate alarm; at least I think not. My little girl must not be frightened!" And with that fatherly love which every child, especially a girl child, awakens in a man's heart, he gathered Ursula closer in his arms, carrying her up the steps of the veranda.

"I am not frightened, father; I have never thought of being frightened."

"That's right. Now we will take our baths, and after dinner we will talk matters over. I have left orders that messengers should be sent out if there is any further alarm; but I do not anticipate there will be. Do you, Satori?"

"I am afraid I am not as sanguine as you are," answered the younger man. "I certainly cannot say

I like the look of things, especially the appearance of French ships on the coast. Mark my words, the French will never rest till they have captured Pondicherry again, and to do that they must co-operate with Hyder."

"Oh well, they're not here yet!" said Mr. Carmichael with a careless indifference natural to him.

He had come over to India when a mere boy, as was by no means uncommon in those days. He had served under Clive, and witnessed all the ups and downs of the founding of that great Indian Empire, which, thanks to such men, is now the brightest jewel in our monarch's crown. Therefore he did not know what fear meant. The younger men were evidently less impassive.

As soon as the gentlemen had appeared, turbaned Indians had sprung up as if by magic, the khansamah or chief butler at their head. They absolutely took possession of the guests, conducting them into the house to the marble baths already prepared for the master and his friends; so it came to pass that Ursula found herself alone. She threw herself into a hammock, and lay there swinging, till she was roused by a soft touch of fingers passed through her hair. Then she smiled. "Oh, Krishna, dear," she said, "my hair is quite all right!" She spoke in Hindustani, and the woman answered her in the same language. She was a small woman. Her eyes and hair were black. She was clothed in the softest white cotton sari, covering her head and enveloping her whole figure, yet so cleverly arranged that it left her movements quite unhampered. Her voice was soft, almost melodious.

"My bird," she said, "wake the sahib up. Do not let him sleep. He says there is no danger, but Krishna

knows better; the danger is close by. Krishna's own people are coming over the great mountains."

"Do you mean the Mahrattas?" asked Ursula.

"Whom else should I mean?" answered Krishna. "Are they not my own people? Was I not made prisoner and brought to Madras with my baby the very day you were born and the mem-sahib died? It was to your father's house they brought me. The next day my babe died, and I heard you weeping; so I said: 'Give me the child, it will comfort me', and I laid you between my breasts, and you drank and were satisfied. So I forgot my own people because of the love I bore you."

"Dear Krishna, why do you tell me all this to-day? Of course I love you, and you love me."

"I tell you because of the danger which is threatening, that you may remember," answered the woman. "All last night I heard their horses' hoofs coming over the mountains. They are a fierce people and will not spare. They will fall upon the white men and slay every one of them. Tell the sahib that the enemy is at his gate."

"Assuredly I will tell him what you say, and he will know what to do. See, here he comes. As soon as dinner is over I will speak to him," said Ursula.

Almost at the same moment the four men, fresh and clean-shaven, and dressed in spotless suits of white linen, came out on to the veranda. The khansamah announced dinner, and instantly the men passed through the open window into the dining-room. The table was luxuriously spread with silver, glass, and flowers, for the wealth of these merchant princes allowed them to indulge in the pleasures of the table. Turbaned Indians moved noiselessly, handing food of every kind, forestalling their master's needs; it was the method of Eastern service. Krishna stood behind Ursula, and with

her own hands put the food upon her plate, holding the silver goblet to her lips when she desired to drink. When the child had had food enough, or did not wish to partake of some particular dish, she waved her small white hand, and instantly it was removed. She sat in the mistress's place, opposite her father, on a slightly raised chair, a position which gave her a certain dignity.

She might have been a royal princess, for she was evidently the centre of attraction. Her father watched her as if he had no thought beyond her, smiling at her and asking her little questions of her day's doings, but he did so less than usual; they were all more or less preoccupied, and so the meal was a comparatively silent one.

It was, moreover, a very hot night, and, as soon as possible, Ursula pushed her chair back and called out: "Father, it is stifling, I am going on to the roof. Won't you come, boys?"

Felix glanced at his father, who nodded back at him, and Felix rose, saying: "All right, Ursa, Eustace and I will keep you company. Father and Mr. Satori will talk business."

"I wish they would not," she said, putting one arm round her brother's neck. "Do you think Hyder Ali and the French are coming, Felix?"

"I don't think anything at all about it," he answered, tossing her into a hammock and swinging her to and fro.

Eustace went to the edge of the parapet and remarked: "There's a storm brewing." Neither of them saw Krishna until she stood by Ursula's hammock.

Downstairs, as soon as the men-servants had disappeared, Mr. Carmichael pushed the decanter towards

his partner, saying: "Shall we move out to Madras to-night, or wait till to-morrow?"

"It is late to-night; in a few hours it will be dawn. Give orders that everything be in readiness for an early start," said Satori.

"I think that will do," answered Mr. Carmichael. "You see no messenger has come out, so there can be no fresh alarm. If only we had Hastings here! But President Whitehall is no good at all; he will simply be scared. I sent a messenger off to Hastings before I left the office, and Bennett is to be trusted."

"Trusted! Yes, but he has no authority in the city," answered Satori.

"You mean I ought not to have left the city to-night. After all, I had to see after the safety of my family."

He had hardly given utterance to the last words when the sound of horse hoofs on the dry parched ground broke on the silent night. They both rose simultaneously and listened anxiously. The sound was still at a certain distance, but the hardness of the ground carried it.

"To the roof!" said Mr. Carmichael.

But at that moment Felix stopped them, saying: "It is the Commissioner, Bennett, and half a dozen officers. It must be something serious; they are riding hard." Even whilst he was speaking the room was filling with men, some in military, some in civil dress, but all looking supremely anxious.

"There is no time to lose, Carmichael. The president has sent us as an escort, the roads are no longer safe, and your presence is needed in the city. Hyder Ali has captured Portobello and Conjeveram. The roads are crowded with fugitives. See, the sky is red with the flames of the burning villages! The

natives and the whites are gathering as fast as they can under the guns of Fort St. George."

John Carmichael turned fiercely on the speaker. "What fools you all are to let yourselves be scared. Hyder Ali's troops are on the coast, working their way up to Pondicherry. That will occupy them for the present."

A young officer stepped forward. "You forget the Mahrattas, Mr. Carmichael. It is said a party of them is in the neighbourhood, and the villages are burning."

"Order the horses, Felix. Fetch the child; I will carry her on my horse. You'll have to take care of yourselves," he added, turning to the native servants, who were crowding into the room and filling up the veranda.

"We'll stand by you, sahib," shouted several voices. At the same moment there came from the garden the sound of many feet, shots were fired, and the veranda was invaded by a crowd of figures—dark, fierce-faced, with turbaned heads, and the well-known dress of the half-savage Mahratta freebooter. The neighing of the horses mingled with the shrill Hindu war-cry: "Hari! Hari!"

The handful of Englishmen had seized every musket and pistol they could lay their hands on, and now stood close together.

"Do not fire until I tell you," said Mr. Carmichael, stepping forward, shouting in Hindustani: "What do you want? Are you robbers or warriors?"

The native servants had by this time gathered round their master; many had managed to arm themselves with swords and lances and native weapons which had adorned the walls as ornaments or trophies. Eustace and Felix stood close behind Mr. Carmichael. They

were both armed with pistols, and their young faces looked very white in the moonlight.

"You have seen to Ursula; she is safe, I suppose," said Mr. Carmichael, throwing back his head and speaking over his shoulder to Felix.

"I left her with Krishna; she is sure to see after her," he answered, adding sharply: "Take care, father!" But the warning came too late. A report, and John Carmichael fell backwards, shot through the heart.

How is it possible to tell what followed? A dash forward, a gallant defence, and the flames rose; shouts and yells, hideous beyond measure, filled the night; the clash of arms, the report of firearms, a dense smoke enveloped the house, out of which tongues of fire rose and fell on a smouldering heap of what had been so lately a happy home. White figures and dark figures fled out into the night; no one recognized an enemy from a friend; no one knew who was living or who was dead. The stable door had been thrown wide open, and the agonized cries of the terrified horses added to the horror of the surroundings.

The day was hardly dawning when troops of officials and a mass of men and women came pouring out of Madras. The whole country was plundered and devastated; villages and houses were destroyed—little or nothing remained but ruins for miles round the city; and it was, moreover, an established fact that Hyder was marching with a hundred thousand men up the coast. A few of Mr. Carmichael's native servants had managed to escape and had reached Madras. Raman the khansamah had kept close to Felix. He saw him stumble and fall. He immediately threw himself upon him and covered him with his own body.

He had always been devoted to him from a child, and when the first rush was over, he, being a strong man, lifted him in his arms and carried him to a cowshed at a little distance from the house. Felix soon regained consciousness, and upon examining him Raman found that, though he was badly hurt, the wound was only a flesh wound, resulting from the thrust of a spear, which, if properly tended, would have no serious result. Like all Indians, Raman was learned in the use of herbs and in the dressing of wounds. He found his remedy to hand. Tearing off a strip of linen from his turban, he took a handful of cow's dung, and with it bound up the wound. Felix made no moan; his mental pain far exceeded his physical sufferings.

"Do you think they are all dead, Raman?" he said.

"Why think at all, sahib?" answered the man with that cold indifference which marks the followers of Mohammed. They are essentially fatalists. "Allah is great. What is to be will be."

It is not often in our history that such a disaster has to be recorded. There was consternation in Calcutta when, a few days later, a swift ship flying before the south-west monsoon brought the evil news, and the Government knew that the struggle with Hyder was for life or death. Three weeks later the British Empire in Southern India had been brought to the verge of ruin. But there were both genius and courage at the helm—strong heads and strong hearts.

CHAPTER II

Adrift

"My lord, thou great and mighty one, deliverer of the poor, go no farther, for behold thy reward awaits thee."

So spake—or rather shrieked—a gaunt, dishevelled woman, standing in the middle of the road waving her arms, as my Lord Scindia, the greatest of the Mahratta chieftains, passed on his way. At the sight of the woman the horse uttered a shrill cry and stood almost erect on its haunches, beating the air with its fore legs. But the rider never stirred in his saddle—he and the animal were as one.

"Out of the way, woman!" he shouted. "Would you have me slay you?"

Fearlessly the woman laid her hand on the bridle.

"Does not my lord understand? The 'Blessed One' lies under yonder palm tree; even she through whom greatness and power will come to thy nation. Ten days I have waited and watched for thee."

"Out of my way, woman; thou art mad!" exclaimed Scindia.

"The gift of the gods! And thou despisest it, and would slay me! I *will* go out of thy way. I will seek Hyder Ali; he will understand. Thou, may be, hast forgotten the prophecy," continued the woman, coming close up to him. "I will tell it thee. If a strange man and a strange maid, who can never clasp

hands, shall go for shelter, and be harboured and kindly dealt with by the Mahrattas, then they shall crush the tiger in his lair, and be great over all the land; the dark man and the white man shall do them homage. I go to Hyder Ali." And she turned away.

"Hold!" shouted Scindia. "Thou evil one, show me this wonder of the world." And he threw himself off his horse.

"And if it be too late?" she answered, turning round and looking scornfully at him from under her dark lashes.

"Then thou hast lied, and I will slay thee as I would slay a snake across my path. Listen! Thou art a Mahratta, a woman, and I am Scindia, thy lord."

"I know it," she answered; and she turned and led the way to where, beneath a palm tree, lay a child sleeping. Her young face was as white as the loose robe which covered her round limbs, or as the pearls which encircled her throat and arms.

"Is that all?" exclaimed the chief angrily. "Begone, and take thy brat with thee!"

"So thou wilt lose the blessing!" she answered. "I tell thee once again she is a gift from the gods. Take her; I go hence; my task is done; thy fate is in thine own hands. Beware how thou dealest with her, lest the blessing become a curse. Farewell!"

In a second she was gone; he saw her flying over the country, a small, thin, uncanny-looking figure, her black hair floating behind her as if it had been the wings of a bird. She had the appearance of a spirit taking its flight from earth; her small brown feet seemed hardly to touch the ground. Scindia shouted after her, then shrugged his shoulders and looked down on the sleeping child. "She may be

sent by the gods, but she looks like a 'feringhee batcho'" (child). He stooped down and examined her more closely, with a marvellously delicate touch lifting the closed eyelids. Then he muttered: "She will not sleep much longer."

The Mahrattas are not, as a rule, tall, but Scindia was rather above the average height of the warriors of his race. He was a perfect type of the Indian—the dark and yet strangely transparent skin, the thick beard and moustache curling upwards, fierce black eyes, but with a strange possibility of softness in them, perceptible even now as he looked down on the sleeping child.

Suddenly he shook himself and turned away, hardening his face. "Surely the gods can take care of their own!" He uttered a shrill cry, which instantly brought his horse to his side. He laid his hand on the animal's neck, and would have vaulted into the saddle, but suddenly the horse backed. "Ither ao!" (come here) shouted Scindia angrily. The horse instantly obeyed; but another attempt to mount it was followed by the same result. Then Scindia flew into an awful passion, and struck out at the horse, which rushed past him into the open plain, neighing loudly, with ruffled mane and tail whisking the air. Astonished at such strange conduct from an animal which was usually docility itself, Scindia looked round to see what might be the cause, and there, close behind him, stood the child; her blue eyes wide open, her face uncovered, she looked to him like a spirit from some other world. That she was a gift from the gods he no longer doubted.

"Koh u hai? (who is it) what am I to do with her?" he questioned, as she stood immovable beside him.

The question was answered in an unexpected way. The child passed him and went straight up to the horse, holding out her hand and saying gently 'Ao!' (come). The horse heard and obeyed, coming up to her where she stood, and rubbing its head lovingly upon her shoulder. Then she turned to Scindia and repeated 'Ao!' He also obeyed without hesitation, lifted her up, and leapt himself into the saddle. Then, without a touch of the spur, the horse flew over the ground carrying its double burden.

The day had hardly dawned when the strange woman first spoke to Scindia, so that the dew was still on the ground, and the air was cool and fresh. Indeed the wind sweeping over the Ghaut mountains was sharp, as they flew through the air it lashed their faces like whipcords. Scindia felt the child shiver, he even thought he heard her moan. He turned his head and looked at her.

"Do the gods weep?" he thought, for down the girl's face tears were streaming fast. He lightly drew his rein and instantly the horse stopped. The question rose in his mind: "What could he do with this creature?"

Had he been a Western man he would have comforted her, but an Eastern has no dealings with children—that is women's work. He looked round and about in the hope of seeing some human habitation, but there was nothing but the vast plain, and beyond the mountains rolling one above another, until they disappeared in the clouds. The sky was tinged with a deep crimson hue, veiled by a soft mist, precursor of coming heat. A great stillness reigned over the earth, upon which those two seemed utterly alone. What strange destiny had brought them together?

He was on his way back to Poona to gather fresh troops with which to make war on the British and at the same time crush Hyder Ali, when suddenly this white thing had been thrown in his way. What for? He would not have it; he would rid himself of it.

He was still at a great distance from Poona. How was he to travel with an unveiled woman—child or goddess—on his saddle? And there she sat, quite still, weeping. It would have been a trying position for a civilized man, but to this barbarian it was intolerable. There was nothing for it but to lift her down and leave her. He flung himself off the horse; but when he went to lay hands on her the horse backed and would not let him approach.

"Surely some evil spirit has entered into the beast!" he exclaimed.

"Why an evil spirit?" asked a soft voice, speaking in his own tongue. "May it not be a good spirit, which would prevent your doing an evil deed?" said the same voice.

"Who are you, and where do you come from?" he asked.

"I cannot tell you who I am or where I come from," she answered. "I must have slept and forgotten. The last thing I remember was a great din, din, and I saw flames of fire. I think I must have fallen from the stars. Perhaps I shall awake to-morrow and remember."

Scindia listened, wondering at the innocence her speech betrayed. She had forgotten the world whence she had come! To his Eastern nature there was nothing wonderful in this. The mysteries of life and death were less strange to him than they are to the

more material nations of the earth. But he was, nevertheless, sorely puzzled what to do with her.

She slipped off the horse, moved away from him, and, finding herself on the bank of a narrow stream, she knelt down and bathed her face and hands in the clear mountain stream. It was deliciously cool; she filled the palm of her hand and drank of it again and again. Thus refreshed, she noticed that the folds of the white cotton garment she wore had got loose, and she began to unwind it. It was a sari some ten or twelve yards long and two or three broad, the national dress of all Hindu women; she had evidently never worn it herself, but she had seen it arranged by the natives, so she drew the broad folds over her head and wound them again and again round her slight figure, tightening and knotting it firmly at her waist. It must have been put on her whilst she was sleeping, for it was well folded and she had not much trouble to straighten it; one long piece fell over her shoulders, and she had but to draw it forward over her head to screen her face. Scindia watched her.

"If she be not of our people she has lived with them; she speaks our tongue and she can clothe herself after the fashion of our women, and with the sari round her no one can see her face, no one will know whether she be white or black. I will take her and leave her in the first village we come to."

But, strange to tell, he did not do as he was minded; some hand seemed to arrest him whenever he would have put her down. So together those two scoured the land, riding so swiftly that as they passed on their way none could tell who or what sat on the wild horse behind Scindia.

When the heat of the sun was too great, he would

stop and take shelter beneath the great trees of a forest, or under the shadow of a mountain. He carried meal in a bag, which he would mix with water and bake between two stones, and give her a portion. She never murmured, but thanked him with a wondrous smile, took it from his hand, and ate. He watched her kneel down and pray, morning and night, but never questioned her, indeed they rarely spoke. He lit big fires at night to scare away the wild beasts, and she lay down and slept as if it had been on a bed of down. She was neither a woman nor a child to him, but, as the woman had said, a gift from the gods, and so he honoured her. He shot birds, which he roasted, and would have shared with her, but she would not touch flesh of birds or beasts. Fish he also caught in the shallow streams, diving in the clear water, and seizing them with his strong white teeth. Nothing seemed to surprise her, so they travelled on for days and weeks; when he absented himself, as he did sometimes for several hours, he always left the horse with her; indeed the animal would not follow him if she were not with him.

It was night, they were riding at full speed, when before the tired eyes of the maiden there arose a great white city with minarets and towers, looking vague and mystical in the shadows of night. Scindia suddenly turned and spoke to her.

"It is the end; this is the city of Poona. I will take you to my wife and you will serve."

"I will serve her," answered the maiden.

They entered a courtyard and rode up to a veranda. He lifted her off the horse, and as she stood on the ground the animal laid its head upon her shoulder,

and she whispered in its ear: "Goodbye, dear!" then she followed the master.

To those who have no especial knowledge of Indian history the question may well arise: Who were the Mahrattas? what interest have we British of the present day in their past existence? The answer is: The Mahratta Confederacy formed at one time an integral part of what we call to-day the great Indian Empire. The Mahrattas proper occupied a large tract of country to the north of Mysore, touching upon the vast Mogul Empire, which it was destined in a great measure to destroy, and upon the ruins of which its own transient greatness was founded. The Mahrattas were also Hindus of the purest extraction. They retained the old Brahminical religion, whereas the inhabitants of the other provinces of India were Mohammedans. They worshipped a horrible god called Siva, and a host of minor deities amounting, it is said, to four-score and ten. That there was something more in this ancient religion than what at first presents itself to our minds is evident to the most casual student of Eastern religions. The legends of Buddha have in them a strange resemblance in many cases to the doctrines preached and taught by our own master Christ. The doctrine of renunciation was especially dwelt upon. To the Brahmin, Buddha is Christ. The mass of the people were ignorant and superstitious, but their priests, the Brahmins, were men of the highest education it was then possible to attain to in India. They had schools and colleges, but they kept all knowledge within their own narrow circle. From this caste the peshwa or chief of the Mahrattas was chosen, and the office had become hereditary. A very mild sort of polygamy existed among the Mahrattas;

indeed as a rule they had but one wife, and their women had far more liberty than the Mohammedan women. They wore the sari over their faces when they went abroad, but they did not do this in their dwelling houses, except when strangers were present. The women, we are told, were frank, open, and generously inclined. The common Mahratta woman worked hard in the fields, but the ladies and princesses were highly educated and often took a prominent part in public affairs. Therefore it was no unusual thing for the female heads of a family to receive envoys, to be consulted by their husbands if anything out of the common occurred. They were, as a rule, better linguists than the men—they had more time to spend in study; besides, they frequently took foreign slave girls to serve them, and from them learnt French or English as the case might be. The head centre of the Confederation was at Poona, but low caste Mahrattas were scattered all over the country.

The Confederacy grew, as we have said, out of the ruins of the Mogul Empire, till it embraced nearly the whole of India. Its armies consisted of soldiers from all parts of India. Its infantry was not of good quality, but its cavalry was an enormous force, numbering fully a hundred thousand cavaliers. The horsemen were noted riders, splendidly audacious, riding long distances right into the heart of a hostile country, without any support, striking terrific blows, and then returning rapidly beyond the reach of pursuit. They boasted of having watered their horses in every Indian river from the Kavari to the Indus. When the Confederation was at its height it numbered nine million people under its control, and formed the largest Hindu sovereignty which ever existed; and yet a Mahratta was almost synonymous with a "highwayman", which

is not surprising when we consider they existed by plundering expeditions. This was the people whose disputes England was called upon to settle at the time of our story.

Driven out by the British from their principal possessions, the French went over in considerable numbers to the Mogul Emperor, Hyder Ali, and taught his native soldiers the tactics of European warfare. The Mahrattas, not to be outdone, adopted French methods also; but the European system was not suited to their genius, it hampered their movements. The old Mahratta chiefs were greatly displeased when these changes were introduced, and uttered predictions of military disasters which were in the end more than fulfilled. The three combative powers in India were therefore the British, Hyder Ali, and the Mahrattas. The French were only to be feared inasmuch as they gave power and knowledge to the native chiefs, but the British Government knew they had still to reckon with them.

The Mahrattas were at the present moment divided amongst themselves on the subject of the succession of the peshwa. Some members of the Confederacy sided with Rughoba, others declared that the legitimate right lay with the posthumous son of the late ruler, who had been installed as peshwa when only an infant of forty days old. The British had favoured Rughoba, because Bombay lay in the very centre of the disordered country, and would be exposed to great danger if the faction opposed to Rughoba were to prevail. The British, therefore, decided to send money and troops to the assistance of Rughoba.

It was at this critical moment that French agents from the court of Louis XVI appeared at Poona.

The ship which brought them over had put into a Mahratta port. Their names were Raymond de Senlis and André de St. Lubin. Having found their way to Poona, they presented their credentials, were courteously received by the Peshwa, and confided to the care of the great Mahratta chief Scindia.

Now Count Raymond de Senlis was an old friend of Prince Scindia; indeed it was at the prince's instigation that he had gone to France, and, presenting himself at the French Court with gifts of jewels and precious stones, had represented to the king and his ministers the necessity of minimizing the British power in India. It was some little time before he could gain a hearing. France was already on the eve of her great revolution; the failures which had attended the French army in India had caused a revulsion of feeling. India was no longer a Golconda, the French East India Company was discredited, and it required all Count Raymond's persuasive eloquence to overcome the prejudices which existed concerning India. There is nothing so fatal as failure, especially to a people like the French. After a time, however, the count obtained permission to recruit for both men and arms, and the result was that many soldiers who had fought in the European wars, whose pay was in arrears, and who felt themselves ill-used, were willing to try their fortunes in a new country, tempted by the count's descriptions of India and the wealth which it was possible to earn in that far-away land. So the count was fairly successful in enlisting some two or three hundred picked men, to serve as instructors and examples in the Mahratta infantry, which, as we have before said, was defective both in discipline and in knowledge. He was thinking of taking his departure with his men for St.

Malo, where he intended to embark, when by mere chance he one day came across a distant cousin, in the second or third degree, the young Count André de St. Lubin. They had never met—St. Lubin was only three- or four-and-twenty, and Count Raymond was well on in the thirties,—but they knew each other by name. St. Lubin belonged to the elder branch, and was considered as the head of the family. Raymond de Senlis was connected by marriage, his mother having been a St. Lubin. But in Brittany the rights of consanguinity are sacred, and, meeting in a public tavern, hearing each other's names, they shook hands and fell to talking.

So it was that Raymond learnt that his young cousin was living alone in the old château, with much land and no money. His father and mother had died when he was a child, his grandmother had brought him up, and he had gone on living in the château with the village curé for his tutor. Now the old grandmother had gone the way of all flesh, and he was alone in the world. That was a year ago, and he had suddenly awakened to the fact that he was wasting his life, and that he would do well to see the world. But, alas! land he had in plenty, food he did not lack—his peasants and farmers paid him in kind,—but of money he had little or none. So with some difficulty he had sold an outlying farm for a quarter of its value, and had ridden on one of his homebred horses to Paris to seek his fortune. He knew no one, he had no prospects for the future, his very name and rank hampered him, and he was well-nigh penniless. Under such circumstances to present himself at Court was impossible. As far as he could see only two paths were open to him, either to enlist as a common soldier, or to return and vegetate in the old château. He inclined to the former plan; at least

there was room for ambition, and, who could tell, he might have the supreme good luck of distinguishing himself. The St. Lubins had always been good soldiers. Yes, he would be a soldier. It was at this very juncture that he came across Count Raymond de Senlis.

In the course of an hour the whole aspect of the world had changed for André St. Lubin. A trained diplomatist, Raymond de Senlis was not long in acquiring a perfect knowledge of his young cousin's position and aptitudes. He had liked him at first sight, but before an hour was over he did more than like him, he was fascinated by his frank, open nature, his unsophisticated ideas of men and things in general.

"I'm not going to leave you to be mauled about by the wolves. I'll take you under my wing," thought de Senlis, and so he spoke to him in glowing terms of the opportunities which a life in India offered to an adventurous spirit.

"The English are driving the French out of their possessions, but it will not always be so," he said, "because we shall unite with the native chiefs, we shall train them after the fashion of European warriors, and with our united strength we shall conquer the whole country. After all, we are soldiers, whose first object is glory; the English are traders, they seek money, they know nothing of the art of war."

Then he went on to tell of the great Indian kingdoms, of Mysore, of Oudh, but over and above all he spoke in praise of the great Mahratta Confederacy, of the chiefs Prince Scindia and Prince Houlkar.

"The Mahratta cavalry can overthrow the English, and has more than once done so. It is magnificent when it charges the enemy," he asserted, adding: "If you have nothing better to do, try your fortune with

me. I will present you at Court, and get you a commission to accompany me as agent from the French King to the Mahratta Confederacy. Prince Scindia is a great friend of mine, and will make you welcome. Believe me, it is worth your while. When you come back you will bring gold and jewels enough to rebuild your old château, and to live like your ancestors *en grand Seigneur.*"

It did not take much more than this to persuade André St. Lubin to cast in his fortunes with his cousin; he had no other prospects. So to Court he went, and kissed the King's hand, and received his commission. He raised a small sum of money on his land, with which he fitted himself out, and then with a light heart set sail with his cousin from the port of St. Malo to seek his fortune. He had a very vague idea as to his new duties, but that did not trouble him. Raymond knew; that was enough.

CHAPTER III

An Indian Princess

We imagine oriental palaces of old to be replete with all kinds of luxury, in fact to be places of infinite beauty. A few there may have been, with marble halls and gilded saloons, but the interior of the ordinary dwellings even of men so high in station as Prince Scindia was almost sordid. There was little in the way of home life. Women for the most part neither received nor expected thought or attention from their lords and masters. There were a few exceptions, witness that marvellous tomb erected at Agra to commemorate for all ages the love of a man for a woman. In ordinary cases, however, women lived and died with few of the joys of life, and their houses reflected their lives, cold and desolate: long corridors, small comfortless rooms with white walls and stone floors upon which were strewn cushions and even bedding, none of the cleanest. On these women squatted. Half-naked children rolled on the floor squabbling for a sweetmeat or a fruit; no one heeded them; the women chattered on, and themselves sucked sweetmeats.

In a room as bare as even the others in the house, a woman sat, but everything about her bespoke order. Her white linen sari was spotless; it was fastened on her head by gold pins, which also held a bunch of red roses just above her small ears, in which were rings of gold

studded with rubies. Dark though it was, it was a very sweet face: the features were delicate and refined; the large almond-shaped eyes had a world of feeling in them; her hands and feet were very shapely. Hair as black as a raven's wing fell in two long plaits on either side of her face.

She was looking up at a small woman standing before her, worn and haggard, so thin that her cheek bones stood out, and her eyes were sunk in her head. Though they were sunken, however, her eyes were preternaturally bright, and shone like coals of fire.

"You say the prince will be home to-night; how do you know it?"

"It has been revealed to me, else I should not have been here," answered the woman. Then suddenly she threw herself prostrate on the ground at the feet of the princess.

"He will come back and bring in his hand a gift of the gods!"

"What will he bring me?" asked the princess eagerly.

"A child he found sleeping on the roadside. It is the gift of the gods. When she enters your gates happiness and prosperity will come with her. You are sad, princess, because you have no child. You fear lest the prince should take another wife; but Scindia loves you; he will not do so. He will wait, the child will come, and both your hearts will rejoice. Thus shall Scindia crush the Tiger of Mysore, and be the greatest prince in India. He is bringing you only half the gift of the gods; the other half is coming from across the water."

"You are a strange woman," said the princess; "you have been only three days in Poona, yet you seem to

know all things! Is the child the prince is bringing one of our own people, or is she a feringhee?"

"She is white as the snow on the mountain tops," answered the woman, "but she has Mahratta blood in her veins. She has neither father nor mother; the gods hold her in their hands."

"What shall I do with her? If she is not of our caste, where will she live, who will care for her?" asked the princess.

"I will, and the gods will. I am of no caste. Give her to me, and bid Lord Scindia give me the little house without the walls, and you will come to her and she to you, for you will love each other; it is so ordained."

"Go!" said the princess; "when the prince comes we will see if you have spoken true." Even as she ceased speaking there was a sound of horses coming into the courtyard, a running to and fro, and then voices calling one to the other.

"It is my lord," said the princess, rising; and under her dark skin there was a deep glow, and her eyes shone like two stars.

"It is thy lord, and the gift of the gods is with him," said the strange woman; and she crouched down upon the ground in the farthest corner of the room, drawing her sari well over her face.

Then the purdah was drawn back, and with quick steps, looking eagerly round him, Scindia entered, and the princess was in his arms. Then they sat down on the cushions, and she curled herself up beside him, her arms about his neck, and whispered softly: "Thou hast been long on the road, my beloved."

He laughed. "Thou sayest truly, but it is no fault

of mine; I have been burdened. Listen, my soul's comforter, I have marvellous things to tell thee." And then rapidly he told her of that strange companion who had travelled with him. "Whether I would or not I could not leave her behind," he said. "The horse would not move without her. Dost thou not hear him now calling to her?"

"Yes, I hear," said Princess Laily; "but where is the child?"

"On the veranda. I bade her stay there till I had told thee.

"If the women see her they will torment her," exclaimed the princess; and springing up she ran out into the corridor, just in time to disperse a group of women and children who were crowding round something which clung to the narrow pilasters of the veranda.

"Away, all of you!" she called out, waving her hands; and they dispersed. To her astonishment the horse had walked up the steps of the veranda and pushed his muzzle into the child's hands. Princess Laily watched her.

A little, drooping, white thing with such a weary face! The woman's soul went out towards her, and with a sort of motherly instinct she held out her arms to her. In a second the little hands were clasped round her neck, and the sweet, white face was pressed against the dark one. Clapping her hands, the princess waited till the strange woman appeared, and strove to take the child out of her arms.

"I will take her; I have a room; she will be safe with me. Let me have her!" the woman pleaded. The child's eyes had closed, for she was worn out and weary. As soon as she had felt herself safe in those sheltering arms her strength failed her, and she lost

consciousness. The princess loosed her hold of her. "If I give her thee, wilt thou swear to bring her to me to-morrow at dawn? You say she is a gift of the gods. I would not lose the blessing."

"Thou shalt not! But to-night thy husband waits for thee. See, here he comes." And as the princess turned her head the woman fled down the steps of the veranda across the courtyard with the child, the horse trotting after her.

"Who is the woman to whom thou hast given the child?" asked Scindia.

"I do not know," answered Laily. "She is a strange woman, who came to me and told me thou wast coming and would bring a blessing with thee. And she told me other things to gladden my heart. It seems she has only just come to Poona, but she desires to settle here and take charge of that which thou shouldst bring. She is a strange creature. I do not know who she is, or whence she comes."

Scindia remained thoughtful for a few minutes, then he said: "Of one thing I am assured. She will not harm the child. It was a woman who gave her me. Who knows, it may be the same. She could not have travelled with the child, so she got rid of her. But how she herself reached Poona before me is a wonder. Well, let things be till to-morrow; when she brings thee the child I will see her. Now I must to the palace to see the peshwa. I was told in the city that two strangers had arrived from the French king. I will see thee again, my dove."

He left her and went to his own side of the house. The princess returned to her room, wondering at the strange thing which had happened, and the face of the white child haunted her even in her sleep. With early

dawn she rose and went out on to the veranda. The woman was sitting on the steps waiting for her.

"Where is the child?" she asked.

"She is sick. All night she has tossed to and fro, moaning. She will die."

"She must not die. If the gods have sent her, surely they will heal her. Where hast thou taken her?" asked the princess.

"To the house I asked of thee. It stood empty, and I carried her thither."

"Is she lying on the bare ground? Has she no bed?" asked the princess.

"I knew she was coming, so all yesterday I gathered moss and sweet, dry grass. She lies softly; have no fear."

"What is thy name, and whence comest thou?" asked the princess.

"My name is Krishna. I am a Mahratta born, but I have neither husband nor child, and I have been in captivity. Now I am free. I found this child; the gods have sent her to me, even as they sent my Lord Scindia on the road where she lay, and I will care for her until her spirit pass into another body and I know her no more. Ask no questions. Strive no more to fathom the mystery of the gods. They have sent her to thee; let that suffice thee. Behold who comes hither!" And she pointed to two figures crossing the courtyard, a man and a youth in European dress, embroidered coats, silk knee breeches, white silk hose, shoes with silver buckles, and broad felt hats with long plumes.

"They are the French agents come to seek Prince Scindia," said the princess. "I will go with thee and see the child. They are nothing to me. Come!" And drawing her sari over her face she passed the strangers

and went out through the gates on to the highroad. How often is it so in life! We pass our fate and do not recognize it. The two men who were crossing the courtyard of Prince Scindia's house were the Counts Raymond de Senlis and young André de St. Lubin.

The first was a man of about forty years of age. He had served in India many years, had held high appointments under Dupleix, had even accompanied that officer back to France, and to a certain extent compromised his own position by his loyal adherence to his chief. He returned, however, to India, and when the French were driven out of Pondicherry he attached himself to the native princes, anxious for one thing only, to hinder as far as was possible the ever-increasing supremacy of the British.

It is curious to observe how in the new world, as in the old world, Britain and France were always rivals; they literally trod on each other's heels. In India this was especially the case. The French were the first on the ground, and their position was far superior to that of the British. They came as conquerors, impressing the natives with all the paraphernalia of war, the beating of drums, and the clashing of swords. The original English East India Company was, on the contrary, only an insignificant handful of traders, with no warlike propensities beyond the natural instinct of self-preservation. They actually paid their footing to the native princes, and were content to build for themselves a humble factory near the mouth of the River Hugli. By an act of skill and of kindness they obtained from the native prince the permission to trade with the Hindus.

The story is told of how a princess of the family of the Emperor Shah Jehan was nearly burnt to death by her dress having accidentally caught fire. Her life

was despaired of. An English physician was sent for, and in answer to the appeal, a Mr. Gabriel Broughton, surgeon of an East Indiaman, was dispatched. His treatment of the princess was successful, and the emperor in gratitude asked him to name his reward. He declared he required nothing for himself, but requested the extension of the privileges of his countrymen in the province of Bengal.

"Let my nation trade with yours," was the Englishman's generous reply, and having obtained his request he was sent across India at the emperor's expense to carry out the compact. He rendered a second medical service of high value to the emperor's son. For this he obtained permission to establish British factories at Balasore and Hugli—a fresh step in the growth and progress of the British Empire.

France had sent out, for the conquest of India, able men and good soldiers. They carried with them the traditions of their nation, chivalry and love of glory. It was commonly said: "The French fought for glory, the English for something more substantial".

Labourdonnais and Dupleix were generals of renown. Dupleix at one time was the greatest potentate in Hindustan. But his power rose and disappeared like a meteor flash. He was recalled to France by his ungrateful country, who would send him neither money nor men to support his position. And, what must have been still more galling to a man of undoubted genius, his English adversary, who overthrew his power, was no soldier like himself, but a young clerk to a company of traders, without the slightest knowledge of even the rudiments of war. But Robert Clive was, as Lord Chatham called him, "a heaven-born general". Without any instructions he held the fortress of Arcot

against great odds; then followed the battle of Plassey, after which he became virtually ruler of India. The "great Mogul", who bore the proud title of "the king of the world", was nevertheless satisfied to disburse enormous sums of money for the privilege of remaining under British protection. The wealth of India was virtually laid at Clive's feet. He it was, and none other, who snatched India from the hands of the French and founded the British Indian Empire.

He was, fortunately, succeeded as governor-general by a man of equal genius, namely, Warren Hastings, who also rose to power by his own merits. He gathered soldiers and generals around him as a good workman chooses the best tools which come to his hand; and with their aid he drove the French out of all the principal stations in India.

The French Government, hampered at home, would not understand that without money or men it was impossible to wage war against both the Hindu and the British armies, so they recalled their generals; their soldiers either returned to France or spread themselves over the country, seeking their fortunes as adventurers. Some of the French officers, rather than return home in disgrace, presented themselves at the courts of those native princes who had not as yet given in their adhesion to the British Government.

First among these princes was the Nabob of Mysore, Hyder Ali. He was himself a usurper, a Mohammedan soldier of low rank, with no education, who, placing himself at the head of a small body of adventurers, soon proved himself to be a man born for conquest and command. He became the founder of the great Mohammedan kingdom of Mysore, the most formidable enemy with whom the British had to contend. His

natural inborn genius taught him the desirability of opposing the French to the British—he recognized their antipathy to each other; so he welcomed all the discarded French officers to his court, flattered their wounded pride by bestowing on them positions of importance, and placing them over his armies as instructors in European principles of war and tactics. He even went so far as to send emissaries to France to obtain mercenaries, as the Mahrattas had done, but with still greater success. At one time as many as nine hundred French men and officers landed and marched into Mysore. It was with these recruits that Hyder had crossed the Ghauts and invaded the Madras Presidency, whilst along the Coromandel Straits French and British ships were continually in collision. Many battles were fought by land and sea, much blood was shed, as must ever be the case when nations war between themselves for supremacy. And the wild Mahrattas scoured the country on their fierce ponies, divided also amongst themselves, to-day on one side, to-morrow on the other, until little by little Scindia's iron hand drew them together and made of them a nation; but that time had not come yet; the prophecy had yet to be fulfilled!

CHAPTER IV

Under a Cloud

Two young men were walking on the fortifications, or rather the seawall, of the city of Madras, as it existed in the eighteenth century.

"I tell you, Frank, it is impossible. I cannot remain here; it will kill me. You say your mission-work will take you into the interior of the country; let me go with you. Bennett can manage the business. I have personally lost all interest in it, and if it were not for the thought of Ursula I should get rid of it and leave the country altogether."

"I can quite understand your feelings, Felix," said Frank Burgess. "At the same time I strongly advise you not to act hastily; you seem to be so fully persuaded that Ursula is not dead. I am not given to be superstitious, but still there is something in natural instinct which I do not think we ought to ignore; therefore, if I were you, as far as business matters are concerned, I should act just as if I were responsible for Ursula's share, till such a time as you are morally sure of her death."

"And that I never can be unless I can lay my hands on Krishna," said Felix Carmichael. "Her disappearance is what leaves the doubt in all our minds. Sita Raman is sure he saw her with Ursula in her arms. Frank, you can never imagine the horrors of that night; they haunt me still!"

"I can quite believe you," answered the Reverend Frank Burgess.

Mr. Carmichael's nephew had been in India only a few months. He had been educated for the ministry, and had always evinced an intense desire to enter the field of missionary work in India. He had written to his uncle to that effect immediately after his ordination; and though, as a business man, Mr. Carmichael considered it unprofitable, he did not feel justified in opposing his nephew. He had originally offered him a place in his business, but when Frank chose the church he transferred his offer to his youngest brother, Robert, then at school; and it had been decided that in the course of the following year Robert, with his mother and sister, Susan, should come out to India, Mrs. Burgess to take charge of Ursula, who would by then be sorely in need of some female supervision, and Robert to begin training in his uncle's office.

Ever since her husband's death, which had taken place shortly after Robert's birth, Mr. Carmichael had taken upon himself the charge of his sister's family, and had acted with great generosity. More than once Mrs. Burgess had hinted that it would be advisable, both for Ursula's health and education, to send her to England; but this Mr. Carmichael had strenuously opposed.

"My money is worth nothing to me," he wrote to his sister, "if it does not enable me to keep my child with me. You have *carte blanche* to bring over with you the best and most experienced governesses—money is no object; and there are hill stations for the hottest time of the year, where you can enjoy mountain breezes. No! Unless I see that the child's health flags I will not let her go. If such were the case, I should throw

up everything, give the business over to Felix, and come home with Ursula.

So the matter had been decided, and Frank had come over alone. For the time being he had accepted the chaplaincy of the one English church in Madras, and had resided with his uncle. The life was very enjoyable, and he became greatly attached to his little cousin; he undertook her education—she could do little more than read and write, but he found her mind so fresh, so receptive, that teaching her became a real pleasure. The lesson hours were looked forward to by both pupil and teacher. Ursula's first real religious notions were received from Frank Burgess. Beyond the most rudimentary ideas of Christianity she had received no religious teaching—she had been left almost entirely to the care of native servants. Felix had been sent to school in England very soon after Ursula's birth and his mother's death; when he returned to India she became to him his plaything and his darling.

"I am only surprised she is not utterly ruined," Frank wrote to his mother soon after his arrival. "But she is not. She must be 'born good'; she is simply delightful. She is what you would call very backward, but still she knows a lot of things, and she is a wonderful linguist. Hindustani she has, of course, spoken from her birth, and English also; besides these two languages she speaks French with the greatest facility. You see, there are a great many French people out here, and Uncle Robert's house is open to every nationality, so she has picked French up somehow. She is certainly a dear little thing, but quite different from the usual English child."

"I expect I shall have some trouble to bring order

into such a very ill-regulated household," remarked Mrs. Burgess to her daughter, a girl of sixteen, who was just fresh from a fashionable school, and who was looking forward with no little excitement to the prospect of going out to India and being introduced into society by an uncle whose wealth and position ensured her many advantages, not the least of which was an early marriage. Already a sum of money which seemed to her inexhaustible had been sent over to purchase a suitable outfit for mother and daughter.

"I do not know much about ladies' requirements in the way of clothing, my dear Louisa," Mr. Carmichael had written, "but I do know that I wish you and Susan to have everything you require without stint; so, if I have not sent enough, do not hesitate to draw upon King & Co. for as much as you need. They have received my orders; your credit is unlimited."

This was written only a few days before the disaster. It was by mere chance that Frank had gone into Madras the previous day to celebrate a marriage, and as it was Saturday, and very hot, he had preferred remaining in the big cool town house to dragging in and out for the Sunday services. He had seen both his uncle and Felix before they left Madras that evening, and, with the rumours which were floating about, he had urged them to return to the city with as little delay as possible.

"Your house is so far out," he remarked. "If there were a raid of the Mahrattas—and people are talking of the possibility—it might be awkward."

"My dear Frank, you have never seen a Mahratta or you would know it would be rather more than awkward," answered Mr. Carmichael. "Myself," he

continued, "I am not inclined to think they will trouble us. We have much more to fear from Hyder Ali and the French."

When, therefore, he was informed that the president had sent requesting Mr. Carmichael's immediate presence, he thought his uncle had judged rightly, and waited for his return with the commission and officers sent to fetch him. We know he waited in vain. The whole town was in an uproar, when a syce, having managed to get a horse out of the Carmichaels' stable, had rushed through the mêlée, succeeded in gaining the highroad, and so had made his way to the city. The syce was followed at long intervals by other stragglers, all more or less wounded, but no European appeared. This was afterwards accounted for by the fact that the gentlemen were all herded together, and were at once surrounded and killed.

Frank was the first to ride out; he could not believe but that things had been exaggerated, and that he should find someone on the road. Surely Krishna would have managed to find a hiding place for Ursula! Strange to say, the Indian woman had taken an intense dislike to Frank. All the jealousy in her nature—and that is not a little thing to reckon with in an Indian—had sprung into existence from the first time she had seen him take Ursula on his knee and begin to teach her.

"What did the child want to learn for?" she asked. "Everything came to her, and it was hurtful for her to be shut up!" She complained to Mr. Carmichael, but he only laughed.

"The little sahibah would learn neither more nor less than she chose," he said. So she got no redress, and went away angry, and from that hour it was war to

the knife, on her part at least, against Frank. She did everything she could to prevent Ursula and him from being together, till at last one day Ursula stood before her, and spoke to her. Her bath had been late, she was not dressed when Frank called to her, and he had been obliged to go out without giving her her lessons, and Ursula cried and told him how Krishna tried every day to prevent her from learning.

"Then you must make her understand that you will be a mem-sahib one day, and that there are many things which you must learn; she will listen to you better than to anyone else, because she loves you, and I am afraid for that very reason she does not love me. Jealousy is a bad thing, little woman, and I am afraid Krishna is jealous."

"Is she? What is it to be jealous?" she asked.

"That is a lesson I will not teach you, and I hope you may never learn it, dear," he answered.

So Ursula spoke to Krishna, and told her she must and would learn what the Sahib Frank had to teach her. Krishna yielded, but with an ill will; and she loved Frank none the better because she had to give in.

It was with a heavy heart that Frank rode out that Sunday morning to seek for his friends, and found them not. Only the dead bodies of those who a few hours before had been in the full enjoyment of life lay covered up and cold, waiting to be carried to their graves. His uncle and Eustace Rayner lay side by side, with the commissioner and two young officers. After the murderers had ridden away, one or two of the servants had crept back, and had found that some of the men, though severely wounded, were still alive, amongst them Monsieur Satori. They had removed him to another room, and assisted him as best they

could. But though he searched high and low, assisted by servants and friends, who now came flocking out, Frank could find no trace of either Felix or Ursula. At last an idea struck several of the searchers; the robbers must have carried the brother and sister off as hostages. Frank felt some degree of comfort even in this, as he rode back, almost broken-hearted, to Madras.

He had not gone far when he was startled by the appearance of a man running out of the wood towards him. He recognized at once the khansamah, Sita Raman, and rode up to him.

"He lives, Sahib Frank, he lives; but you must be quick, for he is faint with loss of blood."

"Who lives?" asked Frank hastily.

"Who but the Sahib Felix! I, Sita Raman, saved him. Come!"

Flinging himself off his horse, Frank followed the man, who talked volubly. They had only a few yards to go, and there lay Felix on the ground, with a scared white face. He rose quickly when he saw Frank, but staggered and would have fallen if his cousin had not laid hold of him.

"Steady, old boy!" he said in a husky voice; but Felix clung to him with his uninjured arm, laid his head on his shoulder, and sobbed. Frank did not try to stay his tears; indeed his own were falling fast. Thus they wept in each other's arms. After a few minutes they recovered themselves.

"You can sit my horse, can't you?" asked Frank. "The sooner we get you home the better, you know. Raman will walk on one side of you, I on the other; come!"

"Stop one moment," sobbed Felix; "tell me about Ursula."

"Five minutes ago I did not know whether you were alive, dead, or a prisoner; you were not among the dead, that was all. It is the same with Ursula, therefore there is every reason to believe that she has escaped with Krishna; they are both missing."

"Thank God!" said Felix, and he allowed himself to be lifted on to the horse, and so they returned to Madras.

Weeks went by, but no news could be obtained of either Ursula or Krishna. A high reward was offered both by the Government and by Felix, but there was not a trace of either of them to be found. Felix was, being of age now, head of the firm of Carmichael & Son. Monsieur Satori had only just been admitted as junior partner, and the shock he had received was so great that he had given in his resignation, and had declared his intention of returning to Europe. Felix persuaded him to remain as sleeping partner; he liked the man, and his father had liked him; he was Italian on his father's side, English on his mother's, therefore he was deeply impressionable. "Go home and come back again later; you will be sorry to have thrown up a good thing; besides, I want you. I shall keep the place open for you," said Felix. So the matter was settled, they shook hands and parted with a mutual feeling of goodwill and friendship.

It was strange for a young man like Felix to feel himself alone responsible for everything. Over and over again he said to Frank: "If it were not for you, I could not bear it." The cousins were inseparable. Frank was not naturally a business man, but he applied himself to help his young cousin, and his very presence was a comfort. They lived together in close communion, and his naturally thoughtful religious nature comforted and strengthened Felix; besides,

Ursula was a strong link between them. Frank had the same brotherly love for her as Felix had; indeed he knew the child's mind better, and he grieved beyond measure for her loss. He had received several offers of missionary work from different societies, but since the catastrophe he had refused them all; he felt that his first duty was to Felix. His uncle had acted most generously towards him and his family; the least he could do was to stand by his cousin in his sore affliction. He was accustomed to those sudden bursts of despair, when but for him Felix would have thrown everything up and simply allowed himself to drift. On this especial day he had seen that Felix was in one of his dark moods. After dinner he had persuaded him to take a stroll on the fortifications. There, as he had expected, he had given vent to his feelings, and Frank had answered him with full sympathy. At the same time, he maintained, as he had always done, that it was a man's duty to remain at his post.

"I have been thinking whether it would not be as well to carry out your father's plan, and let my mother and sister come out and keep house for us. It will help us both, for I assure you, Felix, I believe I am as miserable as you are. They would bring a new element into our lives. I shall certainly not leave Madras at present; I do not think we have any right to do so. Supposing Ursula were found and brought home, and there was no one to receive her!"

"I had not thought of that," said Felix. "I am ashamed to say I think more of my own pain than of what that dear child may be suffering. Yes, we will stay here, and you shall send for Aunt Louisa; it will be less desperately miserable for both of us. Do you know, I saw that poor girl Phyllis Rayner to-day;

she was looking so ill, and she told me her father and mother would not be comforted for the loss of Eustace; they depended so much upon him."

"Yes, I know all about that," said Frank. "Mr. Rayner is letting the business slip through his fingers from sheer lack of energy. I think you ought to see him, Felix, for, indirectly of course, it was in trying to warn us that Eustace lost his life; and if the business fails the women will have nothing to live on."

"What can I do for them?" said Felix, falling back into his old listless tone.

"Go and call upon them. Mrs. Rayner will soon tell you how matters stand, and before bad becomes worse you may be able to help the man."

Felix smiled, which was just what Frank wanted, saying, with a touch of humour: "I wonder how many more pensioners you will land upon me?"

Frank laid his hand affectionately upon his shoulder. "My dear fellow, believe me, it is the only way. In helping others you help yourself."

"I suppose you are right," answered Felix. "Now, about Aunt Louisa; you wrote by the last mail to tell her what had happened, but you forgot that she will not get that letter for five or six months; in the meantime, she was to start a month after the receipt of my father's letter, so she will be well on the road, and will never receive your letter."

"Of course not," said Frank. "I had not realized how slow the communications between England and India are. After all, it is perhaps as well; it settles matters as far as we are concerned, and it will save her present pain."

"Just so," answered Felix, "and between this and then, who knows, we may have found Ursula. I am

employing native detectives, and they are like bloodhounds if they once get on the scent."

He spoke more cheerfully than Frank had heard him do for a long time, and, as they retraced their steps homewards, he said: "I feel as if I should sleep to-night; you are very good and patient with me, old fellow."

"Not at all," answered Frank, "I understand your sorrow because in a great measure it is my own."

It was a lovely night, the moon was shining over the sea, and the sky was ablaze with stars. Frank and Felix were both young, and, because of the pain they had gone through, sensitively alive to outward influences.

"It seems a shame to go to bed on such a night," said Frank. "Let us go up on the roof."

Felix acquiesced, and they went up to the square roofed platform, and threw themselves into the lounge chairs with which it was plentifully furnished. Then they communed together, not of their hopes and fears in this world, but of the great mystery of God's dealings with mankind, and of the ultimate end and object of it all.

"I have often marvelled," said Frank, "more especially since I came to India, at the faith of the three wise men—the Magi—who, looking up, saw a star, and, without questioning, followed it into a far-away country. They left everything—their home, their own people—and went forth to seek a king, and they found only a babe lying in a manger; yet we are not told that they showed any surprise or murmured at the long journey they had taken for apparently such a poor result. They accepted what they found, knelt, and offered their gifts, and tramped home again satisfied. And we will accept nothing which we do not

understand; we murmur at the roughness of the road which we are called upon to tread, forgetting that the Christ is waiting for us at the end of the journey; not the babe, but the man of sorrows, who trod the same path we are treading of pain and sorrow. It is want of faith; we pray for many things, but we do not pray sufficiently for faith. It is the most blessed gift of God, bringing with it perfect peace. Fancy what it must be to have no fear, to be assured that whatever happens is well!"

"It is unattainable," said Felix.

"With God nothing is impossible," answered Frank. "We can at least pray for it to be given to us." With that he rose, and, without another word, they parted for the night.

CHAPTER V

The Great Monsoon

When the news of the pending danger of Madras reached Calcutta, in twenty-four hours the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, had decided what was to be done. He made light of the Mahratta incident, though he regretted the loss of life; but he had reason to believe that the attack was directed more especially against Hyder Ali, and that the real Mahratta chiefs had little or nothing to do in the matter. In any case a peace, even if it were only a temporary one, must be concluded with the Mahrattas, to allow of all possible energy being directed against Hyder Ali. A large military force and a supply of money were immediately dispatched to Madras with Sir Eyre Coote, who was also to replace, as Governor-General of Fort St. George, the incapable President Whitehall. So rapidly were these measures carried into effect that the reinforcements were in Madras before the French fleet, which had so long threatened them, had arrived in the Indian Seas. What Sir Eyre Coote felt was necessary to establish once more British preponderancy, was, to strike a decisive blow and gain a complete victory over Hyder Ali. This was absolutely necessary to check his further progress. So far he had been triumphant all along the coast; the Sepoys in many garrisons had thrown down their arms. The British general therefore profited by a road which Hyder had himself

caused to be cut through the jungle and sandhills to enable him to make a flank attack on the British. The British troops were only eight thousand in number, and Hyder was at the head of eighty thousand. Nevertheless, without hesitation, Coote attacked. It was a desperate battle, lasting, we are told, six hours; but it ended in Hyder's complete defeat. A few weeks later Coote inflicted a fresh defeat upon Hyder, and destroyed not less than five hundred of his cavalry in their charge on the British guns. Neither Tippoo nor the French, of whom there was a large contingent under General Bussy, cared to give Coote battle again. They retreated before him. Unfortunately a victim to ill health, the victorious general was himself obliged to throw up his command and go back to Calcutta.

The British and French fleets kept up a continuous warfare on the sea, but what more especially affected Hyder Ali was a master-stroke of policy on the part of Warren Hastings. He entered into a treaty with the Mahratta Confederacy, which, if carried into effect, Hyder Ali knew would bring the Mahrattas into Mysore; he therefore hurriedly left his French allies and hastened to Mysore.

"I must go alone," he said, "against these faithless Mahrattas. I dare not admit the French into my own country."

This man, who had been the tyrant of India, whose vices and cruelty were only to be equalled by his own son, Tippoo Sahib, was a very old man, and, if we are to believe the chronicles of the time, the most miserable of men. His most familiar friend asked him one day why he started so much in his sleep. He is said to have replied: "My friend, the state of beggars

is more delightful than my envied monarchy, for they see no conspirators when awake and dream of no assassins when asleep."

But the French would not allow him to despair. They had received considerable reinforcements, and felt persuaded they should be able to hold their ground in the Carnatic, and drive the British into the sea. So he consented to continue the war. He was the more easily persuaded to do this as the British admiral, Hughes, refused to remain in the Madras roads, but insisted upon going round to Bombay, where he could properly refit his shattered fleet. It was fortunate for Hughes that he took this resolution, for had he hesitated, and lingered in the neighbourhood of Madras, he would have probably lost his whole fleet.

It was the 15th of October, and Frank Burgess was riding back to Madras after paying an early visit to an English workman who had met with an accident and who was in danger of death. It was still quite early, and he was surprised to see groups of natives standing at the corners of the streets, talking and gesticulating. He stopped and asked if anything were amiss. He was answered quickly:

"The monsoon, sahib. It will be here to-night."

Vaguely Frank had heard the monsoon spoken of, but he had understood that as a rule it was beneficent, watering the land and preventing drought and famine. Now he saw fear imprinted on every face. He hastened to the Carmichael offices, to find anxiety and confusion even there, where everything was usually so quiet and well regulated. Felix and Bennett were deep in consultation. Several of their own ships were expected in the harbour; the question was,

would they get in before the monsoon reached the coast?

"If they do not we shall have heavy losses. I am told that it threatens to be of unusual violence," said Felix. "Listen!"

They were standing together on a parapet which had been built out from the main body of the business house, and which, so to speak, overhung the sea. He leant forward over the balustrade, signing to Frank to do likewise.

"Do you hear it now?" he asked.

"Indeed I do," answered his cousin. "It is as if thunder were rolling in the bowels of the earth."

"The time is most unfortunate. I have three of our largest ships, laden with rice, which ought to have been in yesterday, and are not yet sighted. If they are not in before night, they will be lost; and though I shall be the poorer by several thousand rupees, there is something worse which we shall have to face."

"And what may that be?" asked Frank anxiously.

Ever since he had been in India, it seemed to him, disaster had succeeded disaster, a sort of terror reigned over the country. The city of Madras was crowded with poor natives of the Carnatic, who had fled from Hyder and had taken refuge under the guns of Fort St. George. At the best of times they were desperately poor, but under present circumstances they were verging upon starvation. Their staple food was rice, of which there had been a scarcity in and around Madras presidency, and the ships which were now making for the harbour were known to be laden with rice for the garrison, the town, and the army.

Felix explained this to Frank, adding: "If anything were to happen to those cargoes, it would mean absolute famine."

"There's misery enough among the natives already," said Frank. "The city and the suburbs are swarming with beggars. God help us if it be as you say!"

"Have you thought that your mother and sister may even now be knocking about in the Roads, if only the captain be wise enough to keep well out to sea? Listen!"

And with a feeling of anxiety almost akin to fear they listened to the ever-increasing roar of the wind and ocean. The sea, like a great leviathan, came rolling in; the ships rose and fell on the huge waves which came dashing on to the shore. It seemed hopeless to imagine that anything could live in such a furious tempest. The noise was deafening. It was impossible to hear what one man said to another; indeed the violence of the wind was such that no one could stand against it. It swept down the streets and round the corners; trees were torn up, the leads from the roofs fell clattering to the ground, endangering the lives of passers by; animals as well as human beings were driven before it. Frank and Felix managed with difficulty to reach their house. Sita Raman was waiting for them anxiously.

"Ah, sahibs," he exclaimed as he opened the door just wide enough to let them slip in, and then shut and barred it, "it is a terrible affliction! All the ships which are out at sea will be wrecked or swamped, and the rice which was to give life to so many will be scattered on the waters, food for fishes, whilst men will die of hunger." And he wrung his hands,

as did the other servants, who crowded into the hall to see the young sahibs.

Frank, standing in their midst, said: "I am astonished at you, Raman. I thought you were persuaded that the will of Allah was unquestionably right; at all events there is nothing to be done but for you to pray to Allah, and for us to our Christ. We men cannot stay the winds or the waves. Come, Felix." And the two young men passed through the hall to a room which served them as smoking-room and library.

"I don't see much use in going to bed to-night; we should not sleep. Did you ever hear such a noise?" said Felix.

"It is truly terrific," answered his cousin.

They stood together at the window, watching with awe the battle of the elements. They felt the house shake under the violence of the hurricane, the garden over which they looked was a desert—the trees were uprooted, the flower-beds were swept away, and over all was that awful shrieking of the elements, as if ten thousand devils had been let loose on the earth. In the passages and the halls, wherever they happened to be, the natives lay on the ground moaning; and so it was all over the city, in every house and hovel. No one save the babe at the breast slept that night in the city of Madras or for many miles round, and when the morning dawned the scene which met the eyes of the inhabitants, or at least of those few who ventured out, was appalling. The strand was covered with wrecks or fragments of merchant ships. It was a cruel sight, for, as we have already said, many of these ships were loaded with rice, every bag of which was lost, and there was no possibility of procuring a fresh supply either by land or sea. There was nothing to look for-

ward to but famine, war, and pestilence. Both the young men, worn out with watching, and almost stunned by the noise, had towards morning laid themselves down on the floor, and so had fallen into a merciful sleep; they were both young, and nature claimed her dues. They were awakened by Sita Raman coming in, bringing with him a perfume of coffee.

"Sahib," he said, salaaming, "there are two sahibs waiting to speak with you. I am afraid they bring evil tidings to your excellence."

"How can you expect they should bring anything else?" said Felix, rising. "Thank God for an hour's forgetfulness!" he added, looking at Frank, who had also risen.

The same thought was evidently in both their minds, but Raman did not move.

"Drink your coffee, sahibs; ill news on an empty stomach is bad." Like children they obeyed him, or perhaps it was with that instinctive desire to put off the evil hour.

"Show the gentlemen in, Raman," said Felix, putting down his cup, "and see that the baths are ready for us."

Then he turned to the window; for the life of him he could not have spoken to Frank. Was he about to hear that mother, son, and daughter had been lost in last night's storm?

The door was thrown open, and Bennett and Rayner entered.

John Bennett was a man of something over forty. He had been devoted to Robert Carmichael. He was now head manager, and knew everything connected with the firm. He had been, and still was, inconsolable for his master's death, but the certainty that Felix

could never get on without him had nerved him to make a supreme effort to keep things together. He and the master had worked together to make the business what it was. He would stand by the children to the last. It was now six months since that fatal night, and he was, like Felix, still fully persuaded that Ursula was living.

Bennett was a tall, spare man, his face burnt almost as brown as a native's. He had come to India as a boy, and had never gone home. His whole soul was wrapt up in the house of Carmichael & Son; he knew everything concerning it. Robert Carmichael had wished to make him a junior partner, but he had declined. "What is the use of breaking up into portions? Let the children have the whole," he said. He was a bachelor, and whatever relations he had were in England, but no one ever heard anything about them. It was rumoured that he had saved a goodly pile; certainly, as the manager of such a firm, he had ample opportunities for so doing.

"Well, Bennett," said Felix, stepping forward to meet him and holding out his hand, "are we bankrupt?"

"It would take more than one monsoon to do that," he answered shortly. "It's pretty bad and is likely to be worse, but I guess we shall pull through. No, I came up especially to relieve your mind about the *Sultan*; as far as can be ascertained she's all right; she's well out at sea still, and if she can weather the storm for the next few days, until the monsoon has gone down, she'll come in with flying colours."

"Thank you, Bennett!" said Frank, holding out his hand. "It's been an awful night; I hardly dared hope they'd keep clear of the coast."

"Well, we've lost three of our best ships, smashed up on the strand, cargoes lost."

"What of the crews?" put in Felix.

"Some have gone down, of course, but several of the lads managed to cling to spars and planks and what not. Rayner was down there almost before it was light, and he's got two young fellows in his house."

"That's good!" said Felix. "But two, what's two? I must go and see after the others. Come on, Frank! Thanks, both of you, for coming up. Make Sita Raman give you your breakfast. I'll meet you at the office." And he was gone, followed by Frank.

Bennett watched them with a smile. "They'll do double good work now their minds are relieved," he said. "Well, I think we've earned our breakfast, Rayner; we've a heavy day's work before us."

A call brought Raman, who looked round with a disconsolate air. "The sahibs are gone without their haziri," he exclaimed.

"Yes. They are young, Raman; they can do it, but we old ones must eat. Will you serve us?" The Indian salaamed and left the room with an air of discontent. Felix was the idol of his life; he would have died for him; he was to him as a son. Had he not saved him, the fatherless one?

So haziri was served to the two gentlemen in the dining-room, but Raman did not put in an appearance. He followed his master through wind and rain down to the strand, to see the damage which the night had left behind it.

"You did a good thing to take Rayner into your office," said Frank. "If this had happened whilst he was still on his own account, I believe he would have done something desperate."

"I dare say you are right," answered Felix. "I put the matter in Bennett's hands. You know they live in the same house, and Bennett is very friendly with the mother and daughter. I wanted to bolster the man up, but Bennett would not hear of my doing so. He said that there was nothing to bolster up, and that the only thing to do was to get rid of the whole concern and take him into the office on a fixed salary with profits. He was not a confirmed drunkard; it was worry that made him drink. He promised that he would see that Rayner had plenty of work to keep him out of mischief, and that the money would go where it ought to. So the matter was settled, and Rayner is a reformed character."

"The wife and daughter are beyond measure grateful to you," said Frank.

At the same moment, turning a corner, they came in full view of the sea front. The rain had ceased, but the wind was still blowing, and the sea was tossing mountains high, breaking in surf on the shore, and, alas! bearing with it wreckage of all sorts. Thousands of people had crowded down, and were fighting, struggling with each other, to get what they could. There had been an attempt at order, even at one moment there had been a question of calling out the troops, but the idea had been abandoned. Someone had said: "Let them take what they can, it will not save them from starvation."

It was easier to fight Hyder Ali than pestilence and famine. The town was already overcrowded with refugees, but now they came flowing in from all parts of the country, crying out for food, and there was none. It would be months before rice could be brought round from Bengal, and in the meantime they

died by hundreds in the city, and at last the roads which led to the towns were strewn with the dead and dying. Nothing was heard but cries and moans and unavailing prayers for relief, addressed to men who had not a grain of rice to spare, and who might soon be subject to the same want and agony.

Before the first week was out both Frank and Felix realized the impossibility of bringing Mrs. Burgess and the two young people into such an awful state of things. Long consultations were held with Bennett, and at last it was agreed that as soon as the *Sultan* was sighted, Bennett and Frank should go out to the ship, and get them to exchange at once into a ship bound for Calcutta. If necessary Frank would accompany them and return as soon as possible to Felix. The interview would naturally be a painful one, as Mrs. Burgess was entirely in the dark as to even her brother's death. The position was a most difficult one; but, as often happens in this world, it solved itself. The voyage had been by no means a successful one. Mrs. Burgess had been unable from the first to leave her berth, and at one time was so seriously ill that there had been some question of putting her on land. We must remember that the accommodation of these sailing vessels was by no means luxurious, and that they were absolutely subject to the wind and weather. So it came to pass that for six weeks they were becalmed, and then, as fate would have it, they were caught by the changing monsoon and driven on to Arabia Felix. Here they lay for several weeks.

Another danger menaced them; the French and British fleets were out, and the risks were great that their vessel might be attacked, in which case

they would all be made prisoners of war, and sent no one could say where. To avoid this, and because his crew was very sickly, and owing to the delays they had been subjected to they had run short of food, the captain put in to one of the many islands in the Indian Sea, called Johanna Island. Here Mrs. Burgess was able to land, and, though the accommodation was anything but luxurious, she was thankful to rest, obtain fresh food, and recruit. She wrote several letters to her brother, which were confided to ships likely to touch at Madras; but not one of them reached its destination. Naturally Robert was immensely excited, and would have given all the world to have left the merchant vessel and gone on board one of the men-of-war which were continually crossing their path. He knew everything that could be gathered concerning Hyder Ali, Tippoo, and the French, and he then and there declared to his sister that nothing would persuade him to go into his uncle's office; he would either be a sailor or a soldier and "lick" both Hyder Ali and the French. Of course he had to restrain himself before his mother, but with Susan he poured out his whole soul.

"You are a very silly boy," she assured him. "If you go into my uncle's office your fortune is made. Mother has often told me he is the richest man in Madras. Look at all the money he has sent us! No, you must be a good boy and do just as he wishes you. Frank disappointed him by going into the Church; you must not do anything of the sort."

Susan was just an ordinary girl, neither better nor worse than the usual run of girl. She had looked forward to her life in India, as it was natural she should, and she had felt glorified by her uncle's wealth.

The long sea voyage and her mother's illness had been a sore trial to her patience, and, if the truth were told, she had felt rather aggrieved by so many troubles. Like most girls she had been building castles in the air. She was young and quite good-looking, and people had told her that she would be a great favourite in India. Her mother had more than once hinted that she might marry her cousin Felix, but she made up her mind she would not have him; it would be too dull. She was a little girl when Felix was in England, and though he was very kind, and gave her beautiful necklaces and bangles, he had paid no further attention to her. So Susan used to look at the stars, and dream of that lover who was to come some day, and of all the good things that she thought ought to be hers. That she was in the world for any high or noble purpose never crossed her mind. Her religion was just a regular routine; she said her prayers, and went to church on Sundays; she never told lies, nor, as far as she knew, did anything wrong. It was natural and right, she thought, that her brothers should give up everything to her. So she lived her little life, careless and happy. Are girls better or worse in these days than their little sisters of a century ago? Who shall judge between them? Certain it is that "To whom much is given, of her shall much be required!" And girls to-day have advantages far beyond anything that fell to the lot of their grandmothers.

Such was the situation, then, a situation sufficiently terrifying to even the strongest nerves, and one which allowed but little place for confidence when the men in positions of responsibility bethought themselves of the menace it held for the many women and children in the stricken city. Famine already stalked swiftly towards

them, pestilence must follow in its train, while the danger from armed enemies was to be reckoned with. Well indeed was it for Mrs. Burgess and her daughter that, during their long voyage and those weeks on the island, they were spared all knowledge of some events which so nearly concerned them and of scenes in which they were destined to play a part.

CHAPTER VI

Life or Death?

For many weeks the child Myna, as Krishna had named her, lay tossing on her bed of ferns and moss. The princess came and looked at her and sorrowed, she hardly knew why, but her soul loved the child. She had brought a strange, undefined new feeling into her life—a something which had not been there before; and she would sit by the hour beside her, laying leaves dipped in fresh water on the fevered brow. She brought soft linen to wrap round her, and with her fingers she pressed the juice of luscious fruits into the dry mouth, and the child, though apparently unconscious, showed that she was aware of her presence and loved it. The fountains of pain and joy seemed alike to be dried up—she shed no tears, and her lips never smiled. She grew so thin and weak that at last she lay quite still; only the quick breathing and the wide-open eyes, over which a veil seemed to be drawn, gave evidence of life. A Brahmin, said to be learned in sicknesses of all sorts, was brought to her. He squatted down on the ground beside her, and after a time he made signs over her, muttering incantations; but though he came day after day she grew no better. All the windows in the houses at Poona were either wide open or closed by wooden shutters. Now the one thing the child could not bear was darkness. If, because of the heat, Krishna drew the shutters to,

she would moan and fret until they were open again; so, to screen her a little, they hung over the window opposite the spot where she lay a screen of green matting. She endured this better; but still she was never really happy when she could not see the sky.

The two Frenchmen who had arrived at Poona the very same day as Scindia were soon busily engaged reviewing the Mahratta troops and giving the military instruction required. Captain Raymond de Senlis was an experienced soldier, but young André de St. Lubin had never seen a battle—he knew nothing of warfare. But he was a good shot. He had lived all his life in the old château in Brittany, surrounded by woods, and, with the exception of the few hours he spent in study with the village curé, he hunted wolves and wild boars, foxes, big and little game, nothing came amiss to him. The seigneurs in the neighbouring châteaux knew they were sure of a full bag and a profitable hunt if they could get St. Lubin to join their party. But he was poor and shy, and after his grandmother's death he had lived a solitary life in the old house with two servants, his old nurse, and her husband. Business took him to Paris, and there he chanced upon Raymond de Senlis. He was only three-and-twenty, a big strong fellow, who had never known a day's illness, longing for a new life, something to carry off the superabundance of energy for which he had no use. No marvel, therefore, if he accepted the first offer which came to him. What mattered it to him whom he served—Mogul or Mahratta, they were all the same to him! And Captain Raymond took care to impress upon him that it was for the glory of France. Besides, as he knew nothing

of the tactics of war, he was going out as a sort of political agent. What that meant he did not enquire.

Raymond de Senlis was not so ignorant. He knew that it meant the overthrow of the British and the restoration of the French in India. The Mahrattas were essentially unstable—the natural enemies of the Mogul Empire. If they could crush the Mysores by the help of the British, they would not hesitate to become the allies of the British East India Company. This was what Raymond was especially set upon preventing. And he had arrived just at the time when Warren Hastings was treating with the Mahratta Confederacy. It would be his aim and object to prevent this alliance. Scindia was as cunning as the French diplomatist, but he, too, had an object to attain: he did not wish de Senlis and his companion to go over to Hyder Ali, which they most assuredly would do if they suspected him of siding with the British. So he fenced with him. He took his guests all over the country, even up to Agra, which was his own especial dwelling place.

One evening the three were riding past the small wooden house which Krishna had chosen for her dwelling place. It was on the outskirts of the town. The sun was setting, and the crimson glow lighted up the dwelling, pouring in at the open windows, showing the minutest details of that bare interior. And yet the three riders instinctively reined in their horses and looked in, for a cry had arrested them, a shrill cry as of a creature in pain, and illumined in the crimson glow of that setting sun they saw the transparent body of a child rise up, and extend towards them hands so small that they might have been an infant's, and the voice called: "Papa! Papa!"

WITH THE CHILD IN HIS ARMS HE WENT AND STOOD AT THE OPEN WINDOW

"What is it? Who is it?" asked de Senlis.

"I wish I could tell you. It is a great mystery. I found that child, or rather she came to me, on the road. She mounted my horse, and I could not get rid of her," said Scindia. "Come away!"

But still the cry went up: "Papa! Papa!" A woman put her arms round the child as if to quiet her, but in vain. André St. Lubin threw himself from his horse, exclaiming: "If she be a living creature she belongs to us, not to you;" and he ran into the house, and, going up to the child, took her in his arms, saying in French: "Little one, what ails you?" She was quiet directly, and when Raymond de Senlis also appeared she smiled, such a wan smile, and stroked the sleeve of his coat.

"You are right," said de Senlis; "she is no Indian-born child, neither is she French, though she understands us. She has been stolen."

She lay quite still and contented in André's arms, her eyes wandering over his half-military, half-civil uniform.

De Senlis had travelled much, and he recognized at once that she was suffering from low fever, caught probably by the marshy lands through which she had travelled, by exposure, and from shock. It was evident that she did not remember what had happened to her, and yet there was a vague yearning in the eyes, which looked up at him from cavernous depths. It was almost as if she recognized him. After that one piteous cry of "Papa! papa!" she did not speak again—she evidently could not. Krishna came forward, and would have taken her out of André St. Lubin's arms, but the thin fingers clutched at his coat sleeve and de Senlis, turning to Prince Scindia, said:

"Of course I cannot speak with any certainty, but I believe I could do something for that child. I have a medicine which was given me by a native doctor when I was dying of fever, and after taking it for a few days the fever left me. Of course I was a man, and she is a child; but if you would like me to administer it to her I will do so. If nothing is done for her, in twenty-four hours she will be dead. It is wonderful she is still alive."

"The child is nothing to me," answered Scindia. "I do not know who she is. Surely she does not belong to our nation. The life of a child is not worth much when she has neither father nor mother to grieve when her spirit departs out of her body. Why hold it back?"

A feeling of anger, which he could not account for, stirred André St. Lubin. He had never held a child in his arms before. Was it the weakness, the utter helplessness of that frail thing which appealed to him? She had dropped into a sort of sleep; it might be the sleep of death for aught he knew. Scindia was growing impatient. "Give her back to the woman," he said, "and come away."

But André answered: "Fetch the medicine, my cousin; I will remain here till you come back."

"Better not," said Monsieur de Senlis. "If she died, and there is every probability she will, they might say we killed her, and there would be a fine row. You cannot know how such a thing will be taken."

"Get the medicine, my cousin, I will run the risk," said André.

All this time Krishna had kept silence, as if she did not understand. But she understood quite well.

She had not lived in Madras ten years without understanding French and speaking a sort of patois.

So now she laid her hand on de Senlis's coat, and said in French: "Fetch the medicine."

"Come, prince. I have an idea after all that the child belongs more to my people than to yours. I wonder how you came by her? At any rate I'll give her the medicine, and that as quickly as I can. She's going fast." With that he left the house, Scindia following, scowling at Krishna as he passed her. He had not recognized her as the woman who had forced the child upon him, because, whenever strangers entered the house, she carefully drew her sari over her face.

When the prince and de Senlis had disappeared, Krishna came close to André and said in broken French: "You will save her, and great good will come to you. You will be richer than any of your people, and more fortunate: she is blessed."

"Who is she?" asked André.

"That I may not tell you," answered Krishna. "But you will know one day, if she lives. And she will live. See how she sleeps, she who has not slept for many weeks!"

It was truly curious the interest this child had suddenly awakened in this young man, who had had no affections in his life, save for the old grandmother who had brought him up, and the village curé. Once Krishna said: "Shall I take her from you?" but he shook his head. In an incredibly short space of time a lad came in by the open door, put a small packet into Krishna's hand, and ran out again. Not willingly will an Indian linger in the house over which death hovers. Krishna brought the packet to André. He read the direction, written in French by his cousin,

then looked round the room, which, save for the bed on the floor, and here and there a strip of matting, was quite bare. "Water and a bowl," he said. Krishna disappeared, and returned with a pitcher of water and a wooden bowl. He shook his head. How should he make her drink? Her head had drooped upon his shoulder, like a bird's. It is wonderful where the fount of tenderness springs from! It is like love, heaven-born; and André, looking down at the dying child in his arms, loved her.

The Bretons are devout and very religious. They have infinite faith, they believe in the efficacy of prayer, and in miracles; and André had lived all his life in this atmosphere of belief. He, the seigneur of the village, had gone to mass every Sunday, as far back as he could remember; religious doubts had never troubled him; and so now, dipping his finger in the pitcher, he signed the child with the sign of the cross, in the name of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost". "*Pauvre petite*, no one has thought of praying for her," he murmured, and he said an Ave Maria.

He had hardly finished when she stirred, opened her eyes, and looked at him. Instantly he took one of the small packets contained in the large one, and dropped the contents into her half-open mouth. Then, holding out his hand: "Water—quick!" he said, and Krishna poured water into the hollow. It was time, for the child could not swallow—her tongue and lips were alike parched. But, drop by drop, with infinite patience, he let the water fall into her mouth, and as he did so he noticed that the white powder dissolved. At first she made no attempt to swallow, the muscles seemed by degrees to relax, and there was a slight gulp, which increased gradually. Neither he nor

Krishna ever knew how long a time they spent thus; so engrossed were they that they failed to notice the entrance of the old Brahmin and of the princess, who stood watching the scene in breathless silence. The princess's sweet face was very sad, for, as we have said, she, too, loved the child. There are some creatures born to be loved, from whose very presence love seems to emanate. So it was with this little one. At last Krishna noticed the Brahmin, and instantly prostrated herself before him.

"Will she die or live, thou holy one?" she asked.

"Dost thou not see death is passing over her?" he answered.

The sky was no longer red, but luminous with a silvery sheen, and looking down through the wide-open window was a star, so large and so brilliant it might have been the star of Bethlehem.

"He has saved her, and she will save him; so have the gods willed it," said the old man, stretching out his arms and bowing his body to the earth. The princess and Krishna followed his example, but André rose, and, with the child in his arms, he went and stood with her at the open window. He held her high, so that the evening breeze swept round and about her; the white linen sari covered her from head to foot; her face was the face of a corpse. Her eyes were wide open; she had seen the star; she was smiling at it. The only particle of colour about her was the long, golden hair, which streamed over the man's arms like a shower of gold; and as he held her thus, he sang in a voice so strong and pure, it floated from earth to heaven. True, the words were in an unknown tongue, in the old Latin of his Church, which he alone understood, *Miserere mei Deus*, but the prayer note was there, and surely it

ascended to heaven on the wings of love. When he had finished he carried the child back to her couch of moss and dried ferns, laid her down, and lo! she was asleep with a smile upon her lips, breathing softly.

CHAPTER VII

Out of Evil cometh Good

Thus it came to pass that those who should have formed but one family were scattered far away from each other, ignorant of what was befalling the one or the other, helpless, with nothing to do but to wait. It is difficult to conceive such a position in these days of steam and electricity. Patience and silent endurance must have been more easily learnt and far more practised then than now; long days and months of waiting must have trained the soul. There was not the same rush to and fro; women and girls were found at home sometimes; it was not necessary to have a fixed day to receive one's friends and acquaintances, one did not go from door to door and find them closed—"Madame was not at home", though a shadow behind a curtain told a different tale. Friendships were possible in those days—to-day friends are few and far between. Still, we have our compensations. What would not Frank and Felix have given to have known that Mrs. Burgess and the young people were safe in harbour. That they had left England they had been duly informed by a letter which had been posted when they touched at the Cape, but since then they had heard nothing, and week succeeded week of such utter public misery in Madras that they at times almost forgot their personal troubles.

Almost all the business houses were closed, many of

the warehouses were turned into hospitals; gaunt figures crept about the streets or lay down in some corner to die. A famine in the East, with a mixed population of Hindus, Mohammedans, and Europeans to deal with, is surrounded with difficulties with which the ordinary European mind cannot grapple. The religious question is paramount, the question of loss of caste, of defilement, crops up every moment. For the first time in his life Felix felt the powerlessness of wealth. Until the ships came in again gold could not buy the necessary food; everything that could be done to minimize the evil was done, but it seemed an impossible task, a herculean labour. The military and the civil government joined hands, public and private charity did their utmost, but in vain. There was no food, therefore men and women had to die. Frank, Felix, and Phyllis Rayner worked from early morning till far into the night.

One day Phyllis met Frank Burgess and stopped him, which was an unusual thing for her to do, for she was a shy girl. She had a difficult life with an invalid mother and an incompetent father. She had come over to India when she was only sixteen, a pretty, incapable girl—incapable because she simply did not know what to do. She saw that everything was wrong, and did not know how to make it right. A sick mother and a drunken father were enough to dishearten any girl. She knew no one; the only person who noticed her, and guessed at her trouble, was John Bennett. He occupied rooms in the same block as the Rayners, and sometimes they would meet as she crossed the courtyard; and every Sunday she was to be seen in church, but always alone. As time went on, John Bennett saw a troubled look in the blue eyes, which had been

so clear and innocent-looking when she first came from England.

"It's a shame that such a young thing like that should have trouble," he thought. "She ought to have nothing but play and fun. Precious little fun she has, I'm thinking."

As he was not married he had no domestic troubles; and had time to interest himself in his neighbours' affairs, and listen to the gossip which his own khidmutgar was only too ready to pour into his ears. So it was that he learned that Rayner's business was a losing concern, that in consequence he both gambled and drank, neglected his wife and daughter until they had barely the necessaries of life. Then it so happened that for two or three mornings he met Phyllis crossing the courtyard at the hour when he was going to business. She looked happy, and when he bowed to her she smiled, which she had not done of late. So the next morning he ventured to stop her and ask after her mother. A cloud gathered on the young face, and tears came into her eyes.

"She is very ill to-day," she answered. "Father vexed her last night, and she had no sleep; then I am obliged to leave her. You see, the business is so bad I must do something, so I go to Mr. Dawson's every morning to teach their two little children. I have been very fortunate to get the work. Good morning, Mr. Bennett!" And she went on her way.

"Plucky girl!" muttered the manager; "I wonder why such a fellow as Rayner comes to have such a daughter!"

The same evening he told Frank Burgess of the sick woman, and Frank found his way to the house, and, as it was his duty, he ministered to Mrs. Burgess's

spiritual needs and heard her story. "Then," as Felix said with a quaint smile, "Frank turned father, mother, and daughter over to me; and I passed them on again to Bennett, who took charge of Rayner, placed him in his own office, and finally established the whole family in a bungalow just outside the town, reserving two rooms for himself and his own servants, with the right to pay the larger portion of the rent." Matters had gone well for the Rayners ever since. Mrs. Rayner's health had improved, and Phyllis had recovered her good looks. As for Bennett, he was glad to have the semblance of a home and someone to speak to after business hours.

Such was the state of things when the monsoon came and all the misery it entailed. It is astonishing how in the time of national trouble social barriers are broken down, and a feeling of equality springs up between people who before have almost ignored each other's existence. The British colony, though numerically smaller than the native population, was by its energy and common sense the dominant spirit. The sense of duty and Christian charity caused the Europeans to strive to the best of their ability to assist their more ignorant and suffering fellowmen. In doing this they drew nearer one to another. Meetings were held, consultations as to the best way of distributing what food could be procured, and gradually, very gradually, because it was not customary in those days, women's help was asked.

There were so many Indian women and children utterly neglected, because of the rules which cut them off from the outside world and hedged them in! Two or three English women alone answered to the call.

"We will give what we can, but you cannot expect us to go amongst those dreadful people," was the daily

answer Frank received. He had become fairly intimate with the Rayners, and one day he had complained to Mrs. Rayner of the difficulty of getting at the native female population. "You women," he said to her, "will not hold out a helping hand to your poor sisters, because they are not of the same colour as yourselves. Surely this must change some day. The women are dying, and the children are dying, not from starvation only, but from ignorance. We can do something for the men, but the women, we cannot get near them."

"What would you have us do?" asked Mrs. Rayner.

He rose, and a strange light came into his eyes, a light which is rarely seen except when a soul is roused to action, to the carrying out of some noble deed for God. Such is the soul of the enthusiast. And Frank Burgess was an enthusiast. "Do!" he exclaimed. "Go into the highways and bid them to come in." He said no more, but took up his hat and went out. He had not seen Phyllis Rayner standing behind the purdah which separated the living room from the vestibule. She had been on the point of entering when his words arrested her; she just caught the light of his eye, the enthusiasm of his words, then she shrank back into herself.

The next morning she waylaid him. He was looking tired and ill. Indeed, their work and the anxiety of their private lives was telling upon both the young men; more perhaps on Frank than on Felix, because he was unaccustomed to the climate.

Phyllis noticed how ill he looked this morning, but she only said: "I heard you talking to mother yesterday, Mr. Burgess, and I have been turning over all night in my mind what we could do. It is not easy, you know." She looked up at him frankly. She had

lost her shyness now, because she had forgotten herself.

"Easy! I should rather think not," he said; "indeed I do not know if it is possible," he added despondently. The enthusiasm of the day before was over. "The spirit is ofttimes willing, but the flesh is weak."

Then the woman stepped in. "Oh, yes! I think we might do something; not much, but a little, perhaps."

He looked at her and smiled. "She is only a girl still," he thought indulgently. "Tell me what you propose."

"It is very hot out here," she said. "If you will come into the bungalow I will tell you. I talked it over with mother, and she thought something might come of it."

They were walking under a long avenue of trees, in an opening of which stood the bungalow. A few minutes brought them to it, and Phyllis, to avoid entering upon the real object she had in view, talked of the weather, and the possibility of ships coming in, bringing letters, &c. "I have almost lost hope," said Frank wearily. "It is incomprehensible that we should be so long without news."

"After all, you have one thing to be thankful for," said Phyllis; "they will escape all we are going through."

"I repeat that to myself at least half a dozen times a day," said Frank. "It is something to be thankful for. But now tell me what is your plan?"

They had reached the veranda, which ran round three sides of the bungalow, and Frank let himself fall into a lounge, but Phyllis stood straight up before him, colouring slightly.

"It is such a little thing, now it comes to the telling," she said, "only it struck me you were right, and

that women in this country especially ought to help women. I saw a woman dying under the trees the other day. She had a child hanging on to her, a wretched little creature, and she held it out to me, muttering some word in her own tongue. I saw she wanted me to take the child; so I took it, and when she saw it in my arms she gave a ghastly smile, closed her eyes, and died. Oh, it was terrible!"

"What we see all day and all night," said Frank. "What have you done with the child?"

"I could not bring it into the house," she said, "so I got a basket, wrapped it up, and made a corner for it in that little shed;" and she pointed to a wooden lean-to. "Then I fed it. I thought it would die; but not at all, it means to live. It is such a queer mite. Will you come and look at it?"

"No, thank you!" said Frank. "I am no judge of babies, especially black ones. What has this to do with your plan for helping me?"

"Oh, don't you see?" she answered with a little impatience. "You men are really very dense sometimes. I beg your pardon," she added quickly, "but it is so simple. What I have done for one, surely I can do for three or four." Then, forgetful of everything but the new plan, she continued: "There is a long shed a few hundred yards behind Mr. Carmichael's factory. He is not using it now. I asked Mr. Bennett if he would lend it to us; we could easily make it into a sort of nursery for these waif and stray children, instead of letting them lie dying about the streets or in dark corners. What do you think?"

"Think?" answered Frank. "Why did we not think of it before? I tell you if only you women would exert

yourselves you would solve with the greatest ease problems which puzzle us men."

"Perhaps you might not like it. You might think us rather bold," said Phyllis with a smile.

"Oh no! we shall not; we shall be very glad," he answered. (Alas, poor man, he did not see into the near future!) And then they began to talk of ways and means.

"How will you get the food to feed your children?" he asked. "We cannot suffice for our own households, the servants are half-starved. We Europeans come better off than the natives, because we can eat flesh, fish, and fowls; but it makes my heart ache to see the natives stare at the forbidden food. What will you do?"

"What is the use of asking? I shall trust, and do my best," she answered. "Only ask Mr. Carmichael for that warehouse and straw; the rest I will see to."

Frank looked at her, rather astonished at her quiet assurance; she seemed to have grown suddenly.

"Very well, I will find Felix at once and tell him of your plan."

"Not mine, but yours," she answered. "Did you not say the women ought to take charge of their fellow-women and the children? I should not have thought of interfering if you had not said that."

"Indeed, Miss Rayner, I think you are deceiving yourself. What about the baby you were hiding away in the shelter?" She blushed rosy red.

"That was nothing," she answered, "just one little child."

"Well, goodbye!" And he held out his hand, adding, as if it were an afterthought: "Does your mother know?"

"Oh yes! I should not have spoken to you without telling her."

"As soon as I have seen Felix I will let you know. There need be no delay. Once more, goodbye, and thank you!" And putting up his big white umbrella he was starting bravely to get back to the town, when a buggy drove up to the bungalow, and who should get out but Felix, so wan and thin and careworn, so unlike the prosperous, wealthy young man of only six months ago!

"How do you do, Miss Rayner?" he said, holding out his hand. "I heard you were out here, Frank, so came out to take you in. It is much too hot for you to go back to town on foot. You will be getting sunstroke."

"It is much too hot for you to think of returning, even in the buggy. You must remain here until sunset," said John Bennett, coming out. "There is not much to eat anywhere, but we can share and share alike. At any rate you will not be burnt up."

And so it came to pass the buggy was sent away, and they all made themselves comfortable in hammocks and lounges during those almost intolerable midday hours. As John Bennett had said, there was very little substantial food, barely enough to satisfy a child, but they drank strong coffee, of which he happened to have laid in a good store, and then they talked earnestly of the new plan. At first neither Felix nor John Bennett would entertain the idea at all. The difficulties they raised were innumerable, till at last Phyllis said quietly: "After all, if it were easy there would be no necessity for doing it. Why do we argue at all? Let me just try it. Anyhow, whether it succeeds or fails, it will be according to God's will. Give me the room, Mr.

Carmichael, and as much straw and hay, or anything of the sort you have at your disposal, and mother and I will do the rest."

"You may have the warehouse, and welcome," answered Felix, "but I do not believe you will need it for a week." She made no answer.

In the cool of the evening they all went down to inspect the premises. It was a big, bare room on the ground floor, with shuttered windows, and just outside there was a well, which Phyllis pointed out triumphantly to Frank.

"I had that well in my eye," she said, "when I asked for the place. You will see that it will answer the purpose."

How it got about they never knew, but the following day the clean straw had scarcely been spread over the floor when there came creeping in women with naked children in their arms, or rather the skeletons of children, scarcely human in their ugliness. Some of the women just laid them down and went, others snatched at the morsel of bread which was offered them, and cried out for more.

"This will never do," said Frank; "the women must not be allowed inside, and we can only take in living children, not dead."

Phyllis had succeeded in enlisting two native women; they were pariahs and had lost caste. One of these they stationed at the entrance to receive the children, and Frank fetched a young English doctor, who certified that at least each child had still a chance of life, and so passed it on. After a certain hour the doors were closed to all-comers. Then, to Phyllis's despair,

there arose from outside cries and moans, prayers for admittance.

"You must not open," both Frank and the young Dr. Austin assured her. "You have twelve now; you cannot manage more." And reluctantly she yielded. Twelve when there were scores dying on the roadside! But the men decided that twelve, and no more, should be taken for the present. The great difficulty was to procure efficient help; the native women were so utterly ignorant, and the European ladies stood aloof.

At the end of the first day Mrs. Rayner decided it could not be done. Phyllis's heart sank. Tears filled her eyes as she looked hopelessly round on those forsaken scraps of humanity, a few of whom, eased and comforted, were sleeping.

"We have taken them in; we cannot turn them out, mother," she said.

"Something must be done; I cannot have you kill yourself," answered her mother. And, worried and worn herself, she left the place.

"You see," said Phyllis, "what we women are worth. We cannot hold our own; we have no power of organization."

"Because you have not been trained," answered Frank. "You have done wonders to-day, handicapped as you have been."

"And yet I am to give up. What use is it all?"

"Wait! As you say, you cannot turn these children out. I think I know a woman, a widow, who would take charge for the night and relieve you. To-morrow we shall do better. I have had two hammocks fixed up in a closet close by. Bennett and I will spend the

night there, and the two Indian women must remain. To-morrow we shall, I am persuaded, get others thankful to have food. I will go and talk to your mother. You must allow it does not look very hopeful; but I am afraid I put the idea into your head, and both Felix and I have determined to stand by you; so don't be downhearted, but have faith."

He had hardly ceased speaking when a cart drove up to the door. Two Indians, evidently belonging to some gentleman's house, got out, and, seeing Frank and Phyllis in the doorway, they salaamed, and presented the latter with a letter, saying: "For the Missy Sahibah Rayner."

"It is from the mother of my little pupils," she said, opening it. In a minute she lifted her eyes, half-dimmed with tears, to Frank's, saying in a low voice: "You are right, what we lack most is faith," and she handed him the letter:

"Dear Miss Rayner,

"I have heard of your venture, and I think you are very brave. I wish I could join you, but I have my husband and children, so it is impossible; but what little I can do, I will. I am sending you parcels of old linen and children's clothes, also flour, and boxes of biscuits, and I have given order that all the scraps of bread and broken meats are to be taken down to you morning and evening. My husband is prepared to help with money, if it is needed; but I know, alas! that money cannot buy what you most need. I give you carte blanche to send to me for anything you need. I shall send you a can of milk from our own cows night and morning. I am making your venture known, and I am sure we women, who have our homes and

little ones to see to, will stand by you and give you all the material help we can.

"Yours very sincerely,

"E. Dawson."

Phyllis had turned away from Frank whilst he was reading the letter, because she could not keep the tears back, but she soon steadied herself, and by the time he had finished he heard her giving orders for the unpacking of the cart. She came up to him with one of those smiles which spring from the heart, and lighten up lips and eyes. "I am so happy!" she said. At that moment Felix and John Bennett came in, and when they saw what good fortune had befallen Phyllis, they rejoiced with her, and helped to store the goods, whilst Phyllis and the women fed the children with the new milk. It was a pathetic scene, but one which angels surely looked down upon with heavenly joy, and for the time being that woman and those men forgot something of the sorrows which had befallen them, and in their hearts thanked God for His manifold mercies.

CHAPTER VIII

The Silver Lining

HAPPINESS! how we all crave after it, and how seldom we recognize its presence, even when it is with us. "Man never is, but always to be blessed", the poet tells us. Not perhaps till long years have passed over our heads does the memory of certain days and certain hours come back to us, and we sigh with the remembrance of past happiness. Of course we have all red-letter days in our lives, and we recognize them as such, but they do not last; the heart could not bear the strain of long-continued joy or the pressure of overmuch sorrow. But it is the quiet striving after right doing, the forgetfulness of self, the love for and of those around us which creates lasting happiness; the love of God made "manifest within us".

So it came to pass that in the midst of pestilence and famine those three young people, Felix, Frank, and the girl Phyllis, were happy. They rose in the morning with gladness, and they lay down at night tired, yet with contentment in their hearts and a smile upon their lips. From the day of the opening of the nursery those three were fast friends; they had the same interests, they worked hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder. That most beautiful and purest of affections had come to them, friendship. They were three, not two, but it made no difference; perhaps it was because Phyllis was a girl, and the two men were both united in their

chivalrous devotion to her, that she neither felt nor made any difference between them. They worked together like comrades, they talked one with another, and ofttimes they prayed together. So, thus shared, the daily tragedies, the ennuis, the difficulties of life vanished. Of all sublime things true friendship is surely the sublimest. They had been units before, now they were a trio; there was no more solitude, they talked and walked together and shared each other's burdens, but the wan, weary look was no longer stamped on Felix's face, and Phyllis had lost the care-worn expression which was marring her youth. Yet the task they had taken upon themselves was no sinecure; by night and by day they laboured against fearful odds, in that nursery of human suffering. Lookers on marvelled.

To keep the number down to one dozen infants was impossible; the children lay at their door; they had to take them. And, strange to tell, from the first, gifts poured in; there was no lack of food or clothing. Whence much of it came they did not know. The doors and windows were kept open by day and by night, and in the morning, almost with the rising sun, Phyllis would come down and find big and little parcels lying outside on the ground waiting for her; sometimes it would be a single article of clothing, sometimes fruit or a bunch of flowers; it mattered not. Rich and poor alike gave of their wealth or of their poverty to the children's refuge. After the first, the women never sought to enter, but Phyllis often saw a dark face gazing longingly at the waking and the sleeping children, and she would smile and point, first to one, then to another, until the mother's cry of pleasure would tell her she had found the right one,

and she would take it in her arms and let the hungry mother hold it to her bosom for a moment. But they never tried to keep them; they gave their children back into Phyllis's arms, and kissed her hands as she took them. One thing struck everyone, namely, that from the time the children's refuge was opened, not only was the mortality among the children less, but it decreased among the women. That deadly despair had left them, hope had been born again. They no longer lay down to die; they made a last effort; a morsel of food sufficed them. It was as if they said: "The child will live, and so must I." There was food in the refuge which the children could not eat, the women took it in secret, defying the law which forbade them to eat the Christian's food. The men would not so defile themselves, but the women, well —life was sweet, and Allah was merciful.

"They cannot be much longer; I reckon that, within a week, two of the ships will enter port. What do you say, Bennett?"

"They certainly ought to," said John Bennett; "but there is no saying in these days. What with the French and the Dutch on the seas, and Hyder Ali and Tippoo on land, we're outnumbered."

"If only that treaty with the Mahrattas were concluded!" said Felix. "I can see no reason why it should hang fire as it does."

"Shall I tell you the reason?" said Bennett.

"Certainly, if you can," answered Felix.

"Because of the fortress of Bednore," said Bennett. "It rankles in the souls of both Hyder and his son that we have possession of the place. The Mahrattas are equally jealous that we hold it."

"Then there never will be peace," said Felix. "Old Matthews is not likely to give up his eagles' nest."

"Certainly not without a struggle," answered Bennett.

"There come Frank and Phyllis," said Mrs. Rayner, stepping out on to the veranda where Felix and Mr. Bennett were sitting. "What a hurry they are in! it is too hot even now to walk so fast."

"Why do they walk at all?" said Felix. "The buggy was in the shed." As he spoke he rose and went to meet the two.

"Anything up?" he called out.

"I should rather think so," was the quick answer. "The ships are sighted."

"Hurrah!" shouted Felix; and he took Phyllis's hand and shook it until she called out: "Gently, please!"

"Pardon!" he said, almost with a boyish glee, "I am so happy." And putting her arm in his, he continued: "I do not think you can understand how tired I am of all the misery of the last year; sometimes I think it must be a horrible nightmare, and that I shall wake up to find my father, my little Ursula, and Eustace with us again."

"Indeed I do understand you," she answered. "One gets so tired of sorrow, it seems so unnatural to be always sad. Never a day goes by but I find mother weeping over Eustace's picture. If only he had not gone out that day!"

"Fate!" said Felix; "but you see we have drifted back to our 'horribles'." They had wandered down a little path, and were turning back, when they were surprised at seeing a tall youth advancing towards them. At the same moment Frank called out: "Come

in, you two loiterers, we are going to have some food, and then we will go down and see the ships come in."

"Frank!" And the boy, for he was little more than a boy, sprang forward, ran up the steps of the veranda, and threw his arms round Frank Burgess's neck.

"My dear boy, my dear Robert, where have you sprung from?" said Frank; but he did not give the boy time to answer. His usually calm face was working with emotion, and his voice trembled as he added, addressing himself to no one in particular: "Friends, this is Robert, my brother Robert;" then, turning to the lad, he asked huskily: "Where is mother?"

"At Johanna Island." He paused for a second, then in a low voice added: "You must forgive me, Frank; I could bear it no longer. I ran away."

"You mean to tell me you ran away and left our mother, Robert?" said Frank sternly.

"Don't be hard upon him, Frank; let us hear what he has to say for himself first. Come and sit down, Robert; I'm your Cousin Felix, and I'm awfully glad to see you. I'm sure the others can't be far away."

Robert took his cousin's hand and shook it heartily. "I'm afraid they are, though," he said; "but they are all right, Frank," he added, turning to his brother. "I was really no good to them, and I had a sort of feeling that if I made a move it might be the right thing. I would have enlisted on a man-of-war if it had not been for mother." And he looked at Frank, as well as to say, "and I'll do it yet."

He was a well-grown lad of seventeen, with a clear, open face, firm chin, and well-cut features. He had a shaggy mane of brown hair, which needed clipping, but he was good to look at, and Frank felt proud of him;

besides, there was the feeling that one at least was given back to him. So his whole soul relented, and his heart went out to Robert. Throwing his arm round his shoulders, he said: "If you assure me they are all right, that is something in your favour, you young rascal; but why on earth did you run away?"

"Because if I had waited to ask mother I should never have got away at all; and, Frank, do you know, I heard that you were all dying of pestilence and famine in Madras, and I could not bear it! I felt I must come to you." And he turned and looked into Frank's face with eyes which were very moist.

"All right, lad!" said Frank, "go on."

"There was nothing to do in that beastly island," continued Robert, "and I had got into the way of boarding all the ships as they came in, if I got a chance, and finding out where they were bound for; but I had never had the luck to hit upon one going to Madras. You see, Johanna is a little out of the straight road."

"Look here, Frank, I won't have the lad asked another question till he's rested and has had some food," interrupted Felix. "It's not common hospitality, and, if we are nothing else, we are hospitable in India. He assures us that my aunt and Susan are safe; now we must kill the fatted calf for him, afterwards he shall tell us the remainder of his story. For the nonce you are a hero, Robert." And Felix clapped the lad on the back.

"How awfully good you are, cousin Felix! I am so sorry, I heard——"

"Never mind what you have heard, let us make the best of the present moment; besides, I must be quick, and you too, Bennett; we must be there when the ships come in. I expect you put off, Robert?"

"Yes, I got the captain to let me come in by the pilot's boat. There were crowds waiting. I heard someone say there would be a row when the unloading began. You see, it is one of your own ships, Felix, with rice and flour, and all manner of stores. I can tell you we have had to run for it; we were very nearly caught by a French cruiser."

"Only one more question, Robert—why did you not bring mother and Susan?" asked Frank.

"Because there was no accommodation; the captain would not hear of it, and mother is so awfully ill on the sea, I was afraid to risk it. The captain was awfully good; he just took me because I told him who I was, and how long we had been on the journey. He said you had all had trouble enough, and it might be a relief for you to see me, so he just smuggled me on board, and here I am, jolly glad to be here too." And he looked round on them all, beaming.

"And we're jolly glad to have you!" said Felix.

"Now to supper," said Bennett; and they all adjourned to the dining-room, where Phyllis and her mother had prepared a meal as best they could for so many guests.

But that is a common thing in India, where everyone more or less keeps open house. The meal was not half through when a messenger came from the town to say that the ship was in port, and that Felix's and Mr. Bennett's presence was immediately required. So without delay all the men took their departure. Robert would not be left behind. "I'm only too glad to have found my land legs again," he said. Phyllis drove down with them as far as the refuge, where it was her turn to spend the night.

"What's that place?" asked Robert.

"Time enough to tell you that to-morrow," said Felix, as he lifted Phyllis down.

"It is my palace, Robert," she said. "I will invite you in to-morrow. Good night, all of you!"

She disappeared, and they all drove away with lighter hearts than they had known for many a day. There was a rift in the cloud which had hung so long over them, and they saw a glimpse of a silver lining. They hardly realized what a difference Robert's coming would henceforth make to them. It was a new element; he had to be thought of, he had to be looked after, and the two young men had their hands already full; so had Mr. Bennett, but somehow women always seem to have time, and so it came to pass that Robert gradually fell into Phyllis's hands, and she had to find employment for him. He was really a good lad, and fell to following her about like a great big mastiff. He fetched and carried; he was always ready to lend her a helping hand, though at first he was horrified at the work she was doing.

"Girls in England don't work like this," he said to her one day. "Susan thinks she is coming over to dance and amuse herself. Her fine frocks will not stand this sort of thing."

"She will not be asked to do it," answered Phyllis. "Let us hope both pestilence and famine will be over by the time your mother and sister arrive."

"I wonder what mother will say when she hears that uncle is dead and cousin Ursula lost! I'm awfully sorry, you know, and I think Felix a brick, or rather a hero, going about doing his work, helping everyone, never thinking of himself. He's awfully good to me too; he has never once reproached me for running away from mother, though Frank has. Frank says it was cowardly; but you see, Miss Rayner, mother would have

wanted to come too, and she really could not; neither she nor Susan could have roughed it on board that boat, and I felt I really could not stand it any longer on that dreadful island!"

"Nevertheless I am sure you ought to have stayed with them. What will they do all alone?"

"Better than if I had stayed," answered Bob. "Mother will come to some decision because of me; she'll try and get off. But I am really sorry for Felix and Frank when she does come. She'll just fret and fume, and shut herself up in her room, and think herself terribly ill-used; and as for Susan, when she puts on black frocks instead of her pretty new ones, she'll just cry her eyes out. By Jove, it won't be lively! I hope I shall be a long way off before that happens."

"Off! Where are you thinking of going to now?"

"I don't know," he answered; "but I mean to enlist and be a soldier. I will not go into the office. I know Frank will be angry, but I can't help it."

"You have not tried," said Phyllis. "I do not think you ought to say that you will not do as you know your brother wishes until you have tried. I know it will vex them both very much, and they have had so much to try them already. You ought to consider that."

"I suppose I ought," answered Bob, "but what would be the use of wasting time; they would turn me out, even if I did not go of my own accord."

"Still, it would be better; you will at least have shown a desire to please them."

Impatiently Bob turned away, but a few days later Mr. Bennett came back to the bungalow more annoyed than Phyllis ever remembered to have seen him.

"It's too bad," he said, puffing away at his pipe

after dinner; "they are all youngsters together. Mr. Felix has but one idea—to give every man who asks for it a berth. He's sent that young Master Bob into my office to be trained, as if I had not something else to do to keep things going. If this continues we shall be landed in queer street before we know where we are."

"But perhaps he may turn out all right," Phyllis said.

"No, he won't. I know the look of the lad. He just hates the whole thing, and he'll chuck it before the month is out." And Phyllis in her heart knew he was right. Still, she was glad that Bob had made the effort.

CHAPTER IX

The Awakening

FROM the hour when André St. Lubin laid the child down, and she fell asleep, a change came over her. In the middle of the night Krishna was surprised by the sound of scratching outside the window. Krishna opened the shutter, and there was André standing by the ledge. He had discovered that Krishna both spoke and understood French; so, speaking in that language, he asked: "Is she still sleeping?" Krishna nodded assent. Opening the shutters a little wider, by the light of the silver moon André could see Ursula as he had left her. Then he gave Krishna a smaller packet than the one he had administered, saying: "If you can, put it on her lips and moisten them with water, but above all things do not wake her." Having said this he went away, and Krishna did as he had bidden her. Throughout the whole of the following day, and the succeeding night, the same treatment was continued, only instead of water they gave her milk And so the fever left her gradually, little by little, till the dryness yielded to a soft moisture, and the little hands lay quiet on the silken sheet the princess had thrown over her.

Many were those who came to see her, but neither Raymond de Senlis nor André would allow anyone save the princess into the room. "All depends upon her waking," said Raymond. "It is not an ordinary

fever she has had; she has been drugged." It was to André he said this, as he stood looking down upon the child; he had not noticed Krishna standing close behind him, and he did not see the start she gave and the look of fear which came into her face.

"Drugged! who would drug a child like that?" exclaimed André.

"That I cannot tell," answered his cousin, "but she has been drugged with opium, and so skilfully that she has not herself been aware of it, though she must have been kept under the effect of the drug for a long time. It has acted upon her whole system, but more especially upon her brain. I doubt if she remembers anything in the past; it may come back to her partially by and by. This breakdown is caused by her having been deprived suddenly of the drug; the want of it brought on the fever, which was accelerated by fatigue."

"And now what will happen?" asked André.

"She will awake in a normal state; the craving will have left her. She will be very weak, but the poison is driven out of her system. But if it is administered to her again in the very smallest quantity, she will die."

They both turned sharply round, startled by a sudden noise behind them. Krishna had been to fetch water and had let the pitcher fall on the stone floor. It lay broken at her feet, and the water was spilt. As the two men left the room André said: "We will come back in an hour. My cousin thinks she will awake soon. Have some warm milk ready to give her."

To their astonishment, as they went out, the old Brahmin was at the door. He threw up his arms and cried: "Blessed is he who restoreth life; he shall

do great things on the earth; the people shall fall down and worship him." And as he spoke he bowed himself to the earth, touching the ground with his forehead.

With some difficulty they succeeded in getting through the crowd and finding their way to Prince Scindia's palace.

"I must really get him to explain to the people that we are not gods, but simply men, who perhaps know a little more than they do, but still are not even medicine men."

"Do you not think you ought to tell the prince about that child; she is evidently either French or English. I should say the latter, though she both speaks and understands French," said André. "To my mind that native woman knows all about her. Cannot you get Scindia to tell you how exactly he came by her? If that woman drugs her now, she will, you say, kill her. Yet who is to prevent her? She is evidently entirely in her hands."

"There is nothing to be done," answered de Senlis. "It is neither your business nor mine, and in a month at latest we shall be away from here. The prince told me this morning that he has decided to make an attack on Fort Bednore, and he wants us to accompany him, as the infantry will have the greatest share of work; he and Hyder Ali have for once agreed to drive the English out of the fort."

"I am glad we are going to see some active service at last," said André. "Do you think it probable we shall unearth the English?"

"There is a fair chance of so doing," answered de Senlis. "Old General Mathews feels so secure up there, they say he is off his guard."

"And what has Prince Scindia to do in the matter?" asked André.

"Why, the old Begum of Bednore is some relation of his and lives here in Poona since the English gave her her liberty. She is immensely rich and has promised, I am afraid to say how many lacs of rupees to Scindia, if he will get her reinstated. She knows Hyder will never put her on the throne again, but she imagines Scindia will; and he humours her because of her rupees and the plunder which is still concealed in Bednore, unknown to anyone but herself. So, my dear André, you may expect your *baptême de feu* in the course of a few weeks."

They had reached the palace, and were ascending the steps leading to the veranda, when the graceful figure of the princess appeared. She was dressed after the usual fashion, but instead of the sari being white it was in a sort of diaphanous material of the brightest blue, fastened on her head with silver pins. It was wound round her waist and limbs so mysteriously that only those who were familiar with the intricacies of this peculiar garment could tell where it began and where it ended. Half-veil, half-shawl, the wearer could screen her face or show it at her own will and pleasure. Over her shoulders and bosom, reaching to her waist and covering her arms, she wore a sort of jacket, called chathe, handsomely embroidered in silver; altogether she was a very brilliant little person. The sari was thrown across the lower part of her face, but her eyes were visible, and they smiled on the two men as she passed them.

"I wonder whether it would be against all rules of the country to speak with the princess. I believe she is the only person who could really solve

the difficulty. Someone must be set to watch Krishna."

"I cannot see how it is to be managed," said de Senlis. "You speak so little Hindustani."

"But you speak it well and fluently; why should you not tell her?" said André.

"With Krishna always there on guard!" said de Senlis.

"I will manage that," answered André. "If the child is awake when we go back you must find that you have forgotten the medicine; you will then ask permission of the princess to send Krishna to fetch it. The princess is sure to go back and tell Scindia what has been discovered. He will doubtless send for us, and so a watch will be set on Krishna. It is the only thing we can do, unless the child be removed to the palace."

"That is impossible; it would be against their religious rules. She does not belong to them. She can neither eat nor drink, nor can she dwell, under the same roof with them," said de Senlis.

"Then we must leave her in the hands of God and the blessed saints," said the young man.

But there were influences at work of which they knew not. The first part of their plan only was carried out. When they returned to the house they found "the child"—for between themselves they called her nothing else—lying wide awake, holding the princess's hand; and, strange to tell, she was weeping. Slowly the tears ran down the small, pale face, and when André stooped over her she turned away and would not look at him. Even for the princess she had lost her sweet caressing ways, and looked at her as if she would have asked: "Who are you?"

"Did you not know her before her illness?" asked de Senlis.

The princess made a sign in the negative. "The prince brought her to me; he found her on the road. I had never seen her."

"That accounts for it," said de Senlis. "She has come to herself now and she does not know where she is; her little heart is troubled. Does she know Krishna?" At the name the child turned quickly round with a little cry, but the woman had fled.

"I thought as much," said de Senlis to André; "I will find her." He lifted the purdah and went out, the child's eyes following him. Crouching in the farthest corner of the long, dark passage he caught a glimpse of Krishna. He went up to her and said in her own language: "Come, I must speak to you; get up." She obeyed with cringing obedience.

"You have nearly killed that child," he said. "Why did you do it?"

"I would not kill her; she is my life. I sought to save her," said Krishna.

"With opium?" he said. "Do you not know that kills?"

"I know it makes us forget, and gives sweet dreams, and sleep," she answered.

"Not to a child like that," he said. "What has a child to forget? Where have you stolen her from? Who are her people?"

Then, looking up with a bold, evil face, Krishna lied. "I do not know," she said.

"We shall all know soon," answered de Senlis. "Her senses have come back to her; she is remembering Listen, she is calling for you." And through the partition they heard the child's voice calling: "Krishna!"

"Let me go to her," she pleaded. "I love her as my own soul."

De Senlis hesitated; after all there was no hurry about finding out her parentage, the great point was to prevent any further use of the opium. Probably the child would soon speak for herself. So he answered her: "You say you love the child; well, give me up all the opium you possess, or I will have her removed from this house and you shall never see her again. As far as I can judge she belongs to my people, and I will take care of her. There are plenty of honourable French women in Bombay to whom I can give her in charge." He had hardly uttered the words before Krishna was crouching at his feet, holding up a dirty packet.

"Take it, take it all," she cried, "but do not send the child from me; she does not belong to your people."

"Then she is English, and you have stolen her; for the present I will take charge of her, and you shall obey my orders. When I want to know more concerning her, I shall ask, and you will answer me. At present the chief thing is to restore her to health. She will remember by degrees things of her past life, but you will not encourage her to talk of it. Are her people rich?"

"Dead, all dead!" she answered.

De Senlis was silent for a moment, then he said: "Go to her, but remember I am on the watch."

Krishna rose, drew aside the purdah, and went in. A cry greeted her, and as she bent over her, the child's arms were around her neck, and they crooned together. De Senlis heard the child say: "Where am I, Krishna? Who are all these people?" and she began to weep again.

"Comfort her and tell her she is safe," said de Senlis. Then, bending over her, he said: Ma petite, tell me your name." She looked at him and answered without hesitation: "Ursula".

"Then, my little Ursula, you have been very ill," he said, "but you are better; do not ask any questions, but lie still and be happy." She was not to be so easily quieted; André had gone to the window and stood facing her.

"I know him, I have seen him," said Ursula eagerly. "Take me up and carry me," she begged. And gently, as he had done the night before, André lifted her in his arms and carried her to the open window, where she could see the sky. After a few minutes the child's brow puckered. "Why do you not sing?" she asked. He lifted up his voice and sang the "Te Deum Laudamus", and before he had half finished she was asleep again. "That is as it should be," said de Senlis. "She will tell her own story soon." But he was mistaken; Ursula's physical recovery was rapid, but she was perfectly silent concerning her past life. They could not make out whether she remembered or not. She spoke French and Hindustani, but never English. She was sweet and caressing to the princess, but she shrank from the prince. She never really seemed perfectly happy except with André, and he adored the child.

De Senlis laughed at him. "I cannot help it; she fascinates and charms me," he said; "I suppose it is from the fact of my never having had any affections. I remember neither father nor mother; my grandmother was a stern old woman, very proud, very poor, bitter against all the world. She never kissed me, she would not suffer me to visit my neighbours because she said

I had not decent clothes, and that I would disgrace the family. When she died, I found old family jewels and sold them. I also sold outlying portions of the estate; that is what I had been doing when we met, my cousin. I had no companions, no friendships; I had never taken a child in my arms, I had never kissed one, until this child Ursula held out her arms to me, and I took her to my heart. She is lonely and I am lonely; we are well matched."

"Who knows, she may prove a golden egg to you. I am persuaded she comes of a good stock. Krishna will speak one day," said de Senlis.

"As far as I am concerned she may keep silence for ever. Some day, if no one claims her, I shall carry my little sweetheart away to the old castle in Brittany, and she will bring sunshine into those forsaken chambers, and the sound of laughter will be heard once more in its halls and passages; she will drive away the ghosts."

Raymond de Senlis had listened to him with astonishment. "Well," he said when André ceased speaking, "I can only say I think you are mad, the child has possessed you."

"Why should she not?" said André. "She is so pure, so sweet, when I look at her I feel as if God had sent one of His holy angels to dwell among us. I could no more think an evil thought or do an evil deed in her presence than in that of the ever-blessed Virgin. Ah, my cousin, let be! It is a wicked world, you tell me; I have not had much experience; at the present hour I see no evil, for I look at all things through the eyes of a little child."

"Well, you must amuse yourself, and she is an innocent plaything; I might not say as much if she were

a few years older." And de Senlis went out to find the prince, thinking to himself: "Those Bretons are a strange people."

André remained thoughtful and silent for fully a quarter of an hour after de Senlis had left him. He had lived so much alone, so much with nature, wandering sometimes from the dawn of day till sunset through almost impenetrable forests, his dogs at his heels, his gun on his shoulder; he was almost like a primitive man in his solitude. He had wanted food, so he shot hares, rabbits, and birds, and he gathered herbs which were good for man, and they had sufficed him until one day he went out into the world, and the world laid hold on him. But down in the depths of his soul there had remained, from that long indwelling with nature, a love of the beautiful, and an undeveloped tenderness. This child had come to him as a revelation, so he worshipped her. Morning, noon, and evening he went to see her, taking her fruit and flowers. She was always glad, and welcomed him, would let him pick her up and carry her in the early mornings, or after sunset, into the open country. Krishna would follow; she never lost sight of the child; her one fear was that someone would carry her darling away. Strange to say, the only person she was not jealous or afraid of was André. Perhaps it was because he never questioned her; he was content to wait for a revelation which he knew must come some day, and which did not signify to him. What matters it to the true lover what his beloved one is or has been? She is herself, and for herself he loves her. By degrees Ursula gained strength; one day she walked to meet him, laughing and holding out her hands as a child taking its first steps to meet its father. From the first he insisted on her

being treated as a European child; she had full liberty, only she wore the Indian dress, the sari. The princess had brought her many yards of the finest linen, in bright colours, blue and red of different shades, which with her ropes of pearls gave her a certain air of distinction.

During the great heats André would sit beside her, telling her wonderful stories of his old home, quaint legends of fairies which are so familiar in Brittany. There is no country so rich in folklore as old Brittany. Faith still lives in the green valleys and the rocky coast of this ancient kingdom of France, even as loyalty to their rightful king died hard in the châteaux and the cottages.

They were very happy those two, so happy that the past, which she was beginning to remember, receded more and more into the background of Ursula's memory. She learnt to speak and understand French as if it had been her own tongue. One day André brought her a very beautiful missal, richly illuminated, to show her, and to his surprise she pointed out the letters, calling them out rightly. Krishna was not in the room at the time, and, looking up at André, Ursula said: "You taught me that long, long ago."

"No, Ursula, I never showed you this book before," he said; "I never taught you your letters. Can you read?"

She looked puzzled. "Yes, you did," she said; "I remember quite well, I sat on your knee and you taught me. Krishna did not like it," she added triumphantly.

From that day he taught her to read and write. At first she was puzzled; it was not quite what she had already learnt; she did not know that the difference lay between the French and the English tongues.

Those pleasant days of study, when Ursula rapidly acquired proficiency and André played the part of patient and devoted teacher, were destined to be interrupted before long. De Senlis and his friend were soon to be engaged in sterner work.

CHAPTER X

Hyder Ali

THE Mahrattas were still vacillating as to whether they should join Hyder Ali or accept the British proposals. Raymond de Senlis was impatient at Scindia's indecision, and threatened him more than once that if he did not make up his mind he would leave him and join his fellow-countrymen who were serving under Tippoo or Hyder Ali.

But, as often happens in this world, matters settled themselves. One evening there arrived at Poona two messengers direct from Hyder Ali, requesting to have speech with the two Frenchmen who were then residing in the peshwa's palace.

"They are my guests; what do you desire of them?" asked Prince Scindia.

The messengers refused to deliver their message to anyone save the Frenchmen themselves, so at last Scindia went himself to find de Senlis and André, and conducted them into the hall where the messengers were waiting for them. As soon as they appeared the Indians prostrated themselves before them, and from beneath their mantles they drew forth bags of gold, which they laid at their feet, the chief man saying:

"These are the gifts 'the conqueror of the world', the great and mighty Hyder Ali, King of Mysore, sends to your excellencies, beseeching you to come to him without delay, for he is visited with a sore affliction,

and he has heard that you are possessed of much knowledge in the art of healing. He is in great pain, so that his spirit can no longer rest in his body, but will be driven out. The disease which has taken hold of him is one to which common mortals are not subject, the raj-pora. The medicine-men of our own people can do nothing for him, charms and incantations are of no avail. He has heard that here in Poona there are two strangers who can bring the dead back to life, and can ease the sharpest pain; therefore he has sent us to fetch you, and, we pray you, come with all speed. Horses are waiting along the road to take you to the king. The gifts he has sent by us are of no account. Ask what you will, it is yours; and if you heal him his treasury will open its coffers and pour forth gold and jewels such as the world has never seen before."

"And if we fail to heal him we shall be at his mercy, and he will cause us to be tormented and slain," said Raymond. "Everyone knows the vengeance meted out by Hyder to those who fail to accomplish his will."

"You need not fear. See, we have brought you a safeguard—not papers only, but Hyder's own ring. With that you can travel from north to south, east to west, of the kingdom of Mysore."

"But we know not the disease you speak of. How shall we cure him?" said André.

The messengers grew fierce with anger, and, looking at Prince Scindia, they said: "If they will not come, Hyder will send out his soldiers, and they will ravage the land and burn and slay whatever comes within their reach."

"We do not fear you," said Scindia proudly. "Nevertheless I would not have Hyder think I wish him to pass away into the unseen without the help he

asks for; therefore I will plead with my friends and allies for him."

Then he turned to Raymond, and begged him to go with the messengers.

"It is to your own interest," he said, "and to mine. If you will not, Hyder will think I have prevented you, and his anger will be fierce against me. You can, moreover, claim what you will of him, and he will surely give it you."

"Let us go," said André. "Why should we not make hay while the sun shines? Let us take the good things the gods send us." And laughingly he pointed to the bags of gold, adding: "Why, with that alone I could build up the old château at home."

Raymond de Senlis looked at him, smiling. "That is your hobby," he said. "Well, you shall have your way. We will go back with you," he said, turning to the messengers. "When do we start?"

"Now, without delay," was the answer. "Hyder Ali is watching the sunrise and the sunset on your coming."

"Good! We will be ready in an hour." And Raymond pointed to the sundial in the courtyard. Then he set out with André, and the two crossed over to the side of the palace which had been given up to them. Behind them came two servants of Prince Scindia carrying the money bags.

"This is not exactly what I expected," said de Senlis, "but it is not a bad beginning, and we do not know what it may lead to."

"I wonder how we got the reputation of being healers?" said André.

"That is one of the wonderful things of this country; everything becomes known," said de Senlis.

"Then how does it happen no one can tell, or at least they seem not to be able to tell, whence that child comes?"

"You use the word 'seem'," answered de Senlis, "and you do well. I doubt their being as ignorant as they seem. Now, what shall we do with all this gold?"

As he spoke he took up one of the bags, cut the string which bound it, and poured the contents on the floor where the servants had deposited them. It was a dazzling sight, and the two cousins looked at each other in astonishment.

"If we had come for gold only, we might set sail for home at once," said de Senlis.

"True," answered André, "but it would be rather mean to take all and give nothing in return. We'll stay and fight a few battles for them."

"I am of your opinion," said his cousin.

"What shall we do with all this?" asked André, pointing to the gold.

"First fill our pockets," answered Raymond, and he proceeded to do as he said. André imitated him.

"We cannot overload ourselves," he said when they had put a fair amount also into their saddle bags. For a few seconds they both stood looking at the two remaining bags. Suddenly André said: "I will take them to Krishna. She will store them away for us."

De Senlis shrugged his shoulders. "So it is ever in life," he said; "too much or too little. It will be as safe with her as anywhere."

"Then I will go at once and bid the little one goodbye. Will you not come also?" asked André.

"I will follow you, but first I must speak with the prince."

So André went alone. When he gave the gold bags

to Krishna he said: "If anything should happen to me, remember my share is for Ursula; and, Krishna, I have never asked you who she is, but if you know, I pray of you to give her back to her own people."

He made so light of his departure that Ursula did not realize what it meant. "You will be back soon?" she asked.

"Oh yes!" was the answer; and he kissed her hands and stroked her hair, and when de Senlis came riding round, with the syce bringing André's horse, she bade them both farewell with a smiling face, and as they rode away she stood at the house door and waved her hands until they were out of sight, then, to Krishna's astonishment, she wept.

In vain she sought to comfort her, but she would not be comforted. Turning away from her, and going into the house, she threw herself on the bed of moss, and lay there, refusing the food Krishna offered her. Therefore the Indian woman went to the princess, saying:

"She will neither eat nor drink, only weep, so she will be sick unto death again, and there will be none to heal her." And she sat on the floor and wrung her hands. So the princess arose, and, accompanied by Krishna, went down to the house and sat beside Ursula, and in her sweet, soft language she comforted her.

"He will return," she said, "and it will grieve his great heart if his bird is sick and cannot welcome him. When my Scindia leaves me I also am sad; it is the lot of every woman, and I weep, but not for long. I make pilgrimages, I offer gifts to the Buddha on his behalf, and so I live and hope, and when he returns I array myself in a soft, new sari, and I bathe in scented rosewater and anoint my hair; and my heart is glad when he tells me I am more beautiful than when he left

me. Such is love! Thou art but a little child, but the child's heart and the woman's heart are very near akin if we keep our love pure; so thou must arise and come with me, and we will make sweetmeats, and thread beads, and wander in the gardens, calling the birds, and they will come and perch upon thy shoulders and whisper to thee of their mate who has flown away, and of the empty nest, which in due time will be filled again, and then there will be joy. They will tell thee all this, so wilt thou learn to live." And she lifted her up from her couch, smoothed her tumbled sari and her rumpled hair, threw her arm round her, and led her out beneath the trees, and in the cool of the evening they wandered along the river banks with other maidens and little children. For the princess loved children, and offered gifts daily to the gods, of fine wheaten flour, and fruits, praying that a child might be given to her. And so the pain died out in Ursula's heart, and she smiled again, and at night she knelt and said the prayer he had taught her, adding thereto one of her own making, that the dear Christ would watch over her friend and bring him home again; and so she slept in peace.

Raymond de Senlis and André St. Lubin, when they arrived at the sick man's bedside, were greeted as if their presence alone was sufficient to heal him. That the patient was dying, de Senlis saw at a glance. Hyder Ali was over eighty years of age, and was suffering from a disease called the raj-pora, to which only the high and noble were supposed to be subject. In reality it was nothing more nor less than an enormous carbuncle, in the present case in such a state of decomposition that it was hopeless even to think of recovery. To alleviate the agonizing pain was all de Senlis could hope to do.

"You must keep silence. If you tell him he must die he will kill you," said Hyder's best friend and biographer, Meer Hussein.

"Nevertheless he will know it, and I do not think he will kill me," answered the Frenchman. Then he dressed the king's wounds very carefully with an ointment he had brought with him, in which were strong opiates.

When he had finished, the old man looked up at him and said: "I am better."

De Senlis made no answer.

"I am better," repeated the king, still fixing de Senlis with his great black eyes, and those around him put on cheerful countenances and said one to another, so that he might hear: "The crab will die, but the king will live."

Still de Senlis did not speak.

"I shall surely live, and not die. The pain has left me. Is it not so, stranger?"

"In the grave there is no pain," answered de Senlis.

The attendants looked at each other fearfully.

The fierce eyes of the old man glared angrily. "Fetch a lac of rupees and my collar of emeralds," he commanded. He was obeyed. They were laid on his couch, within reach of his hand. "They are yours; take them and heal me," he said, looking at de Senlis.

"I am neither God nor Allah," was the quiet answer. "I cannot give you life when the angel of death calls you."

"I have not heard him," answered Hyder.

"He comes like a thief in the night," said de Senlis.

The old man turned his face to the wall. Suddenly he looked round at André. "And you," he said, "can

you do nothing? You are young. Have you no new drug which may stay the evil?"

"I have not even as much wisdom as my cousin," he answered.

"Then, if you can do nothing for me, why did you come?" asked Hyder.

"Because you sent for us, and because your servants said you would slay them if they did not take us back with them."

"And now what prevents my slaying you?" said Hyder.

"There is nothing," answered de Senlis, "only I do not think you will. I have given you ease, and if you will obey me you will have no more pain, and you will not know when the end comes."

Hyder stared fixedly at him, then he said: "I will not kill you, and I will make you rich if I die without pain. You hear, Meer Hussein? You will see that justice is done."

"I will see to it," answered his friend.

"Now, what shall I do to meet this foe and not shrink from him?" Hyder asked.

De Senlis hesitated a moment, and then answered: "Wash and be clean."

As he gave utterance to these words there arose from all the native physicians and the attendants an exclamation of horror, but Hyder, almost meekly, asked: "How can I wash and be clean with running sores. I should die if I were moved."

"Trust yourself to us," said de Senlis, touched at the helplessness of the old man. "Only order your servants to bring a bath, abundance of water, and clean linen. We will serve you and you shall have no pain, and afterwards you will feel refreshed, and your

senses will come back to you as to a young man in his prime.

"Nevertheless I shall die?" he asked questioningly.

"In peace and comfort, when the time comes, like a child falling asleep," de Senlis said reassuringly.

"So be it," said the king; and he ordered the bath to be brought, and fresh linen, and he turned everyone out of the room except the two Frenchmen, and they performed their self-imposed task.

They bathed his limbs, they dressed his wounds, they swathed his whole body in fine linen, then they laid him back in a clean bed; they cut and combed his hair and beard, and all this they did so rapidly and so gently that the sick man did not once call out, and when he lay propped up on his pillow de Senlis administered to him a sweet draught. He was content, and said with assurance: "I shall surely live, and not die." Then the two Frenchmen called in the attendants and bade them clean the room.

When this was done, Hyder's friend and attendants were admitted to see him, and they were astonished. "He is no longer an old man; his youth has come back; he will not die," they said; and Hyder looked up at de Senlis for a sign, but there was no sign; so he lay back on his pillows and repeated prayers and invocations on his fingers, and his people did likewise. When he had finished he called the chief men of his army round him, and with much clearness and decision he commanded that two thousand cavalry should at once be dispatched to ravage the country of the Poligars, and that five thousand horse should be sent for the like purpose to Madras. Then he took a little mutton broth and lay down to rest. That same night

his ever-victorious spirit winged its flight to paradise. So died Hyder Ali, the founder of the kingdom of Mysore.

At this same time Madras was threatened with serious calamities. The French kept appearing and disappearing along the coast; but, strange to say, they remained inactive, and after the famine allowed the town to be in a great measure revictualled from the Cicars and Bengal. A few frigates would have sufficed to compel a surrender through famine, but they let the opportunity slip by.

The probable cause of this oversight was the state of Hyder's health. Tippoo was engaged in opposing the advance of the British under General Mackenzie on the Malabar coast, so his hands were full. Indeed he was so eager to drive the British out of the country that he attacked them at a small seaport town called Paniany. For this sudden attack Mackenzie was wholly unprepared. He had not had time to put the place in defensive order when the enemy, under the command of French officers, attacked him on four sides at once. The sepoys were driven in and four guns taken at the first attack before the British troops had had time to get under arms. Things were beginning to look badly for the glory of Britain when suddenly, to the sound of pipes and pibroch, the gallant 42nd Highlanders advanced to the charge and drove the French and Mysorians before them at the point of the bayonet. A terrible slaughter ensued, and Tippoo was forced to retreat, leaving only killed and wounded behind him. Almost at the same time Tippoo received the news of his father's death, and though he was the acknowledged heir, he had brothers and cousins, and it behoved him to look after his inheritance. So he turned his back

on Paniany and hastened to secure the munsnud and the treasury.

"There is no reason why we should return to Poona," said de Senlis to André a few days after the last honours had been bestowed upon the remains of Hyder. I have just heard that Scindia has removed with his whole household to Agra, his own capital. You do not perhaps know that the Confederacy is divided into several kingdoms, independent, yet united as a whole, and that they make war as they choose. Since Scindia has decided to accept a treaty of peace with the English we have nothing further to do with him. The English are our natural enemies, and we came over as agents of the King of France to destroy their supremacy; we must therefore unite with Tippoo Sahib. He has behaved very decently to us as regards his father, and has offered me the command of a regiment, with you as captain. I believe we are to be sent against Bednore, so we shall be doing under Tippoo what we proposed doing under Scindia. It comes to the same thing, and the plunder of Bednore will make it well worth our while."

André saw no reason why he should not accede to his cousin's plans. Life for the French was by no means unpleasant in Tippoo's camp. Besides, they were pretty sure to see some fighting, as the Mysorian army, which Hyder in his last moments had dispatched against Madras, would necessarily encounter a British army before long. The French were scattered throughout the Mysorian troops, the officers especially, yet they lived very much together and had many privileges not granted to the natives.

André also was keen to distinguish himself; his ambition was roused, and before he had been many

weeks in the army he was reckoned as one of the smartest of the officers. He was always ready for any adventure; his perfect health, his strong physique, told especially in his favour. Many of his comrades paid their tribute to the climate with attacks of fever and malaria, but he never suffered in that or any other way. The long marches were no trouble to him, indeed they were rather a pleasure. Had he not walked whole days, from early morning till late at night, in his own dear Brittany? For now that he was absent the love of country surged up strongly within him. He found himself longing for the scent of the woods. He would lie awake at night and think, with strange longing, of the village, the church, the pretty peasant girls, Annette, Louise, and Marie, dancing on the village green, and their pleased shyness when he, their seigneur, asked them for a dance. And then he would console himself, thinking of all the grand things he would do with the money which seemed now so easily won. They were splendid dreams! and interwoven through them all he saw the sweet face of his little friend. He never doubted for one moment but that she would be there. He would fall asleep and dream that they were wandering hand in hand through the forest, and so found themselves on the open greensward, where the fairies met and disported themselves. One night they carried Ursula off, and he lost her, and awoke with a great fear at his heart and a great thankfulness that it was only a dream. Oftentimes also it troubled him that he could hear nothing of her; she had so wound herself about his heart that at all times she was more or less with him. His was one of those rare unspoilt natures. He had lived with nature and nature's God so long that the world had no real grip upon him. Yet he was

a supreme favourite with his comrades. "Le grand Breton" was the name they had given him.

Many were the songs he sang on the night marches to cheer the men. Little Breton pastoral songs, so simple, yet so touching that they brought tears to the eyes of these exiles, and made the love of country surge up in their hearts. André also made friends with the natives, and learnt the language with remarkable rapidity. Seeing his great aptitudes he was quickly raised to a high position, and when Tippoo, having indignantly refused to make terms with the British, hastened to join the main body of the Mysorian army, he insisted that St. Lubin should accompany him. With no fewer than nine hundred French, two thousand sepoys, and two hundred and fifty kafirs they marched against General Stewart. This was to be André's first encounter with the British.

CHAPTER XI

On the Warpath

"LET me go, Frank; I hate business. If you insist upon my going into business, I tell you frankly, I will run away."

"But you are not trained—you know nothing of a soldier's life. You will have to enlist as a common soldier, and you'll find that pretty hard."

"I shan't! And if I do, you won't hear me complain," said Robert.

"If my uncle had lived I should not so much have minded," answered Frank. "But it is hard on Felix to have this big business on his hands alone, when he always knew that it was his father's intention to make either you or me an active partner. Besides, there are our mother and Susan to be thought of. Who is to support them? Felix, I suppose, as long as he chooses, but if he marries, that may not suit his wife."

"I thought it was a settled thing that Susan was to marry Felix. I know my mother told me so."

"I never heard anything about it," answered Frank indignantly. "Is Susan aware of this arrangement?"

"No, of course not," answered Robert. "Mother told me not to hint at it to her. You see, Susan is very romantic, and she is set upon having lovers and all that sort of thing. It's the way with girls! She imagines she is going to make no end of conquests, and if Cousin Felix wants to marry her, he will have

to kneel down and kiss her hand, and all that sort of bosh, you know."

Frank could not help laughing.

"Well," he said, "I think that rather a cool way, to say the least of it, of settling our future plans. It simply means that Felix is to marry Susan and keep the whole family."

The boy looked surprised. "I suppose it does," he said; then suddenly he went up to Frank, threw one arm round his neck, and said: "Look here, old man, why trouble? You are always preaching that God will take care of us if we walk straight. Well, if I go into the business I am sure I shall go to the dogs. Just let me enlist; I shall have my pay. I know it's little enough, but I'll make it do. Sir Edward Hughes put into Madras yesterday; he is taking troops out to Bombay. Let me go with him; I don't want to knock about here till mother comes; she'd make such a fuss. Let me go, Franky," he added caressingly. "You'll see me come back a general some day, and then I'll keep you all fine."

At that moment Felix came in from the office. He was looking excited. "Sir Edward is coming to dine with me to-night. I must get some other fellows to meet him. As soon as he has revictualled his ships he will be off to carry orders to General Macleod." He looked from one brother to the other, and, patting Robert on the shoulder, he said kindly: "Has the parson been lecturing you again, Bob?"

They were very good friends those two. Robert did not stand in the least in awe of his rich cousin, and the freshness of the English schoolboy pleased Felix.

Without hesitation Robert answered: "I've been

telling him, Felix, that I want to be a soldier. I'm quite sure I shall never make a respectable business man."

"You're about right there, laddie," said Felix. "Bennett said as much to me this morning. I had a fine account of you! 'His writing's bad, his spelling is atrocious, and as for his arithmetic, it's just awful!'" And Felix threw up his hands in imitation of old John, as they familiarly called him.

The two men laughed, but Robert coloured deeply. "I knew it," he said.

"He promises to behave himself and come back a general if we let him go," said Frank.

"Then by all means let him go," said Felix.

A wild hurrah greeted the words. "You dear old man," said Robert, throwing his arms round his cousin's neck, "you are a brick!" And instantly he began executing a war dance.

"Steady, Robert!" said Felix. "What about the mother?"

"Of course she'll object; but once the thing is done she'll have to make up her mind to it."

"Perhaps you ought to wait till she arrives," said Felix. "It cannot be very long now. It's this fighting between Hughes and the French which keeps our merchant ships out at sea. But the French admiral has moved off, and Hughes will follow, so my ship will get a chance of slipping in."

"I want to go with Sir Edward Hughes," said Bob; "it is such a chance."

"Well, we will speak to Sir Edward this evening," said Felix. Now, be off! I want to talk to Frank."

"You won't let him dissuade you, will you, Felix?" asked the boy anxiously.

"I don't think he'll try. Now, be off with you!"

Madras was slowly recovering from the bad time it had passed through, but the resources of the country were drained to meet the expenditure of the war, which practically covered the whole country. Nevertheless the power of Britain was making itself felt, and the native princes were beginning to acknowledge her rule. Still, it was an anxious time for those who dwelt in the cities, and for those who ploughed the seas with merchant vessels. Felix felt this acutely. He was young and comparatively inexperienced, and the whole responsibility of a large business was a heavy weight for young shoulders; besides, he had lost heavily during the late disasters. But the house of Carmichael & Son, as it was still called, had remained steady when others had come to grief, and its reputation stood high in the market.

"You'll have to let him go, Frank, he'll do no good here," said Felix; "and, after all, I almost wish I were in his shoes. I'm sick to death of this everlasting grind after money. Let him go and be a soldier. We shall be proud of him some day. He's just the sort of lad to get on."

"He's had no military education. I don't think he has ever held a rifle," said Frank.

"Neither had Clive at his age; I have often heard my father say as much. You mark my words, Bob will begin at the lowest step of the ladder of fame and he'll climb to the top. I've faith in Bob."

"To a certain extent I have," said Frank; "but the ways and means must be forthcoming, and it is a shame we should all be dependent upon you. You are a young man, and must think of your own future."

"If you imagine I am going to load Bob with

benefits you are quite mistaken. It would be the unkindest thing I could do for him," answered Felix. "He must be the maker of his own fortune. He shall go with Sir Edward as a volunteer to join Stewart. I will give him his kit and a small sum of money, then he must shift for himself. My aunt will, of course, come and keep house for me as my father decided; and indeed I very much need her. As master I shall be obliged to entertain considerably more than I have done up to the present time. My father frequently said he had let every social duty drop since my mother's death, but he expected my aunt would alter all that. Then I hope you have made up your mind about the chaplaincy, Frank. You are greatly needed in Madras. You must give up the idea of going among the heathen for the present, and be content to minister to us at home. I want you, Frank," he added; "I cannot spare you yet."

"How neatly you have arranged it all!" said Frank, turning to him. "But do you know, my dear fellow, you are taking up grave responsibilities; you seem to think of everybody but yourself."

"It is a mercy I have other people to think of," answered Felix. "My plan of life is mapped out for me; it is intensely uninteresting. I could not contemplate it if I had not you all to think of. By the by," he continued, "when I saw that Robert would be of no use in the business I sent for Bennett, and told him he must be my partner. I could not possibly drag the ship on alone. The dear old fellow hummed and hawed, but I just gave him the deeds of partnership, which I had had drawn up. I sent for Rayner and one other witness, and made him sign it then and there, so now it is Carmichael & Bennett."

"I'm awfully glad of that," said Frank. "I'm sure it will be a great relief to you, and he has deserved it. Now he ought to get married."

"He'll never do that—he's too wrapt up in the Rayners," said Felix.

The two were silent for a few seconds, then Frank said quietly: "No news, I suppose?"

Felix shook his head. "And yet," he said, "I am more than ever persuaded that she is living. Sita Raman declares Krishna was seen fully three weeks after the catastrophe, but alone."

"I am sick of all these surmises," said Frank; "they never go any farther. Well, I must be off. Goodbye, and thank you, Felix!"

"No need!" was the quiet answer. "You'll come to the dinner; we must have our chaplain to say grace," he added. "It is my first official dinner, remember."

"I'll be there, right enough," answered Frank, and with a handshake the two friends parted.

The dinner was a complete success. Robert was introduced to the great man, who promised to take him on board his own ship and land him as near General Stewart's camp as possible. "If I cannot get to Stewart I'll hand him over to Macleod," he said; "he's the better man of the two, to my mind." So in the course of a few days Robert took his departure in high spirits. Frank, Felix, and Phyllis saw him off and wished him God-speed, then they walked back together to the bungalow.

On his voyage to Bombay Bob won golden opinions. Though he had no settled duties he was never idle, always to hand ready to run commissions for anyone, from Sir Edward Hughes downwards, and in return he learned many things—the handling of the ropes,

the loosing and the furling of sails, the use of the compass, the handling of the rudder; nothing came amiss to him, even to washing down the deck. He was in his element, and was gloriously happy.

"The lad did well to chuck business," said Sir Edward one day to his lieutenant; "he'll make a splendid soldier or sailor. It would have been a shame to deprive the country of his services."

They reached Bombay a couple of days before General Macleod and his companions were to start for Bednore.

"If I can get them to take you, it will be a fine opening for you under Macleod," Sir Edward said to Robert as they landed.

"Indeed, sir, it is good of you to think of it for me, and I hope I may do you credit," answered Robert.

That same evening the admiral said to General Macleod: "I've John Carmichael's nephew on board; he wants to enlist and be a soldier. Felix Carmichael asked me to bring him along with me and hand him over to either you or Stewart, if you will take him. I don't think you will regret it. He's as fine a young fellow as I've come across for a long time—so keen for the work. I shall be greatly mistaken if he does not distinguish himself some day."

"Where is he? Let me see him?" said the general. "We want lads with grit in them."

"I'll send for him," said the admiral.

So Robert was called up and questioned. He answered frankly—neither over-boldly nor too humbly. The general was satisfied.

"Well, my lad," he said, "you shall have your chance. We start to-morrow for Bednore to relieve General Matthews of his command. You shall go with

me, and once there, if I am satisfied with you, I will give you your commission. So now be off, and keep yourself in readiness to start."

Delighted beyond measure, Robert saluted the officers and went his way.

"I'll be like that jolly old general one day," thought Robert, rubbing his hands. "I'll remember and be good to the lads too."

It was evening when they left Bombay the following day. A small vessel had been chartered to take them up the coast, and the three officers and Robert, with the captain and a couple of sailors, set sail on a lovely moonlit night. It was but a short night journey, and they expected to reach the port they were making for on the following morning. It meant, however, skirting a considerable length of coast which bordered on the Mahratta territory, and which was frequently infested by pirates of all nations. Neither the officers nor the captain had taken this into consideration. The night was clear, the wind favourable. They looked upon the short voyage they were about to take almost as a pleasure trip. Towards midnight, however, they became aware of a ship much larger than their own bearing down upon them.

The captain at once recognized it as a Mahratta ship.

"That won't hurt us," said General Macleod; "we've as good as made peace with Scindia."

"Scindia is only a part of a whole," answered the captain. "Each Mahratta state makes war independently, as it suits its own especial chief; besides, I very much doubt if the ship belongs to the Confederacy. It strikes me it is a pirate ship."

The captain's surmise proved true.

"In that case I suppose we shall have a brush," said Major Shaw.

The pirate ship was now well abreast of them.

"It is no use attempting to fight," said the captain, "we have nothing to fight with; we must just run for it." And he gave the order to run full sail before the wind.

The ships were near enough together for those on board to distinguish one another. It was evident that the pirates were few in number, but they soon gave proof that they were well armed, for when they perceived that the British had no intention of fighting, they poured a heavy fire into their little vessel. Major Shaw was killed outright.

The British returned the fire. What mischief they did they were never destined to know.

Another volley was poured into the British ship. Mackenzie and Macleod both fell severely wounded. Robert was still untouched. Hardly knowing what he did, he seized a gun and fired into the pirate ship.

"It is of no use, my boy," said the captain, "we have no stock of ammunition."

But the fever of a first fight was on Robert. He continued firing. When his ammunition failed he threw down his own musket and seized the general's. The captain followed his example, and for a few minutes the balls fell like hail into the pirate ship, doing as much mischief as if the struggle had been conducted on more scientific lines. Had the captain and Bob only known that, of the five men on board, three had been killed outright and two wounded! But of one thing they did become aware: that whereas their own gallant little ship, favoured by wind and tide, flew over

the waters, the pirate ship gradually slackened speed and fell behind.

On the British boat there were two sailors besides the captain and the mate. One had been hit, and the captain's arm hung helpless by his side. There were therefore only two sound men on board, and Bob, but he had so conducted himself that he had suddenly attained to the dignity of manhood in the eyes of his fellows. Seeing that all immediate danger was over, he knelt down beside his wounded general.

"What can I do to help you, sir?" he asked.

"Take my handkerchief and my sash and see if you can stop the bleeding." And he pointed to his leg. Bob obeyed instantly, and though from his want of skill he must have caused the wounded man much unnecessary suffering, he partially succeeded in doing as he was desired. It was impossible to attempt to move the wounded into berths, so mattresses and tarpaulins were brought on deck, and they were laid thereon. The dead man alone was carried aft and covered up.

"Now make for land quickly," said the captain, we must get these gentlemen attended to as soon as possible.

"And you yourself, captain, can't I help you?" said Bob.

"Thank you, my lad, I don't think I'm badly hurt.

He let Bob strip off his coat, wash the blood from his wound, and bind it up. "I expect the bone's a bit smashed up," he said, "but that is nothing compared to these poor fellows." And he looked sadly at the general and the colonel. "You see they made a mark with their uniforms. It's wonderful how you have got off scot free!"

"That comes of being nobody," said Bob.

For the next three hours he attended incessantly to the general and the colonel, bathing their faces, down which the sweat of agony was pouring. It was his first apprenticeship to pain and suffering, and it affected him deeply. "He's a plucky one," said the mate to the captain, "he'll make a fine soldier, for after all he's only a lad now, and I don't believe he's ever seen fire before."

"Why, of course not," said the captain, "he's Carmichael's nephew, just come from England. He was to take his eldest brother's place in the business, but he's not one of that sort, so he came down with Hughes to join one of the generals, and as luck would have it Macleod offered to take him to Bednore. He'll not get there now, I'm thinking." A sharp call from Robert stopped the conversation, and brought the captain to Colonel Mackenzie's side.

"I shall be gone before you get in, captain," the colonel said. "You'll let my wife know. You'll find instructions in case of death in my valise. Goodbye, lad, you'll make a good soldier if you don't get cut off too soon, because you're a gentleman." And he pressed Bob's hand.

"Oh don't go, sir!" he said, tears pouring down his face, for he was only a lad, and he had never looked on death before; and putting out all his young strength he raised the colonel in his arms.

"There's land, sir; we're putting in; you'll be all right when you get a doctor."

But it was of no use, the colonel's head sank on the boy's shoulder; a quick gasp, and the spirit passed away.

It was quite a small port which they entered about

half an hour later. Of three strong, hale men and good officers who had left Bombay a few hours before only Macleod was landed alive, and he was laid by for many weeks. Robert remained with him of necessity, but in any case he would have done so, because, like a boy, he grew so attached to the general that to be with him and serve him was contentment to him. He had never cared for anyone before so much; he felt for him that hero-worship which is only possible in early youth, and so he was satisfied to be a prisoner with him for several months in the Mahratta town of Geriah. He never left him by day or by night, bestowing upon him every possible attention. At last they were set at liberty, but by that time Bednore had been reconquered by Tippoo Sahib, and General Macleod went north to join his own army corps, taking Robert with him.

It were impossible to tell all the battles and skirmishes in which he was engaged, but that his was a successful career was from henceforth certain. He rose rapidly, and before long he was aide-de-camp on General Macleod's staff. News of him reached Frank and Felix, and they were proud of the boy.

"He's all right. He said he'd be a general, and, mark my words, he will not fail," said Felix.

CHAPTER XII

First Experiences

It is difficult to give more than a very faint idea of the India of the last half of the eighteenth century. It was in truth one great battlefield, a struggle between West and East, as to which should be the master. One feels sorry for those native princes who saw their wealth coveted with greedy eyes, and who, to keep up the semblance of power, had to empty their coffers at the feet of that comparatively insignificant number of white men, who by reason of their greater knowledge and power overcame and conquered the children of the soil. Such is the main fact of the great struggle between two races, which culminated little more than half a century later in the great mutiny which cost Britain so much. Whatever sins as conquerors we committed against a conquered race, surely we paid for them with the agony of brave men and women, and the slaughter of innocent children. And if we look steadily for the cause of all this misery we shall find only one answer, the lust of gold. It is no excuse that those we plundered were themselves tyrants, thieves, and liars; we employed the same cunning and greed to obtain what we coveted, we were no better than the heathen!

Situated high up in the western Ghauts stood the fort of Bednore. It was considered impregnable, and yet again and again it had changed masters. Hyder Ali, on some question of succession, had scaled the

mountain fortress from ridge to ridge, driving before him the native ranee and her adopted son, until she had reached the highest pinnacle and could go no farther.

In vain she sought to buy Hyder off with fabulous sums of money. At one time she offered him twelve lacs of pagodas, at another time, as he drew nearer, eighteen lacs, which is equal in English money to £864,000, but he refused, knowing full well that the treasure in Bednore was worth much more. Then, having removed all the money and jewels she could, she ordered the palace and treasury to be set on fire when danger from the enemy became imminent. This was done, and the most opulent city in the world was almost entirely destroyed. Even then the treasury was said to contain twelve millions, and the plunder was enormous; but Hyder took possession, and in a few hours his seal was on every door. The ranee was forced to capitulate and was imprisoned for life. Hyder Ali always spoke of the taking of Bednore as the foundation of his subsequent greatness.

When Hyder was threatening Madras, orders were given by the Governor to besiege and take possession of Bednore. General Mathews had just landed at Bombay, and the task fell to his lot. It was a formidable piece of work and by no means to his taste. It meant seven miles of stiff climb up the rugged acclivity of the Ghauts, to the city. On the road trees had been felled and, lined with brushwood, barriers and batteries rose to the top of the hill, which was defended by seventeen thousand men. These men, for some unknown reason, had abandoned the defence of Bednore, which lay still fourteen miles distant. It was garrisoned by three hundred and fifty British sepoys taken in Coromandel, who had enlisted in the service of Hyder.

In the dungeons of the fort lay one Captain Donald Campbell, a prisoner in irons. When General Mathews began his attack on the citadel, Campbell was released and sent by Hyder to inform Mathews that Hyder Ali would deliver up the fort and the country, and remain subject to the British. The next day Mathews moved forward to the acknowledged command of the capital and the territory of Bednore.

No one was more astonished than General Mathews himself at his rapid success; he took the city without shedding one drop of blood.

"To what can it be owing," he exclaimed, "save to the divine will, that an army, without provisions or musket ammunition, should have its wants supplied as it advanced; for without the enemy's rice and powder and balls we would have had to stop until the army could be revictualled."

Mathews's conduct after the taking of Bednore was anything but satisfactory. He refused to divide any part of the spoil with the officers and men, and, considering that the men had received no pay for months, this, to say the least of it, was irrational. Complaints had been made to the President of Bombay, and the council had decided that Mathews was to be superseded by Colonel Macleod, who, with Colonel Mackenzie and Major Shaw, made ready to start on their way to Bednore to take command of the city.

General Mathews, hearing he was to lose his post, behaved like a madman. He scattered his army all over the country in contemptible mud huts. He took up his own headquarters in the city of Bednore, and he afterwards removed to the fort, without laying in any stock of provisions or ammunition; nor did he attempt to strengthen the fort.

Directly after Hyder's death Tippoo determined once more to make himself master of Bednore, and with a large army he marched thither. The French element was in the ascendant; there were upwards of six hundred French volunteers, besides officers, in Tippoo's army.

André de St. Lubin was in high spirits. At last he was going to take part in a real campaign! At Tippoo's approach the British were forced to retire from the lines surrounding Bednore and to concentrate themselves in the city and the fort. The siege began on the 7th of April.

Considering the small number of men in the fort, and the size of the investing army, the possibility of a successful defence was from the first hopeless, unless it was relieved from without, and of that there was no prospect. The besieged had, besides their numerical inferiority, to contend with the scarcity of food, and must necessarily succumb to starvation if to nothing else.

Many sorties were made by the besieged, and even Tippoo renders unwilling homage to their energy and bravery. In one of these sorties, St. Lubin, with a handful of men, encountered the British on the ridge of a rock overhanging an unfathomable precipice. There was so little space that it became an almost hand-to-hand fight. André and his opponent were well matched. The latter was a tall, muscular Scot, but he was unnaturally thin and gaunt from privation. Nevertheless he succeeded in driving St. Lubin to the edge of the precipice, and under the weight and impetus of the two men a portion of the rock gave way. Instinctively the Scot fell back, dragging his adversary with him, but St. Lubin, not being aware of his danger, struck out to free himself. The Scot in his turn came

down with his knife upon the uplifted arm. In a second the sword dropped from St. Lubin's hand, and with a cry of agony he stepped backwards, and would have fallen headlong down the rock if the Scot had not caught him round the waist and forced him back.

"I guess you're my prisoner," he said, as he let him fall at his feet; then he saw the bleeding hand, hanging almost severed from the arm, and the ghastly, unconscious face of the young man.

The fight was over; the French had been driven back, and were now descending the rock precipitately; the British, not caring or not having the strength to pursue them, were moving slowly back into the fort.

The Scot and André were therefore practically alone on the ledge. Looking down upon his prisoner, and seeing the plight he was in, the Scot muttered to himself:

"I was just a fool to pull him back. If I'd let him gang his own gait he'd have been fine and easy by this time, whereas now he's got to go through it all again. Shall I finish him off, or shall I let him come to?" He shook his head. "It's one thing to kill a man in battle, another to slay him in cool blood. The Almighty must settle whether he's to live or die."

Stooping, he lifted the bleeding hand, but he dropped it instantly with a shudder. It just hung by a strip of flesh to the wrist.

"That was a fine stroke, Sandy," he said; "it will never serve him again. He's better without than with it," and with his knife he severed the hand from the bleeding stump. Then he knelt down, and, tearing off a strip of tartan from his scarf, he bound it tightly round the arm to stay the bleeding. "Now I'll just

carry him to the fort and let the doctor see to him; he's like to bleed to death."

He made an effort to lift him up, but St. Lubin was the bigger man of the two, and Sandy was suffering from the effects of famine. He could not raise him.

Fortunately at that moment a man came round the corner.

"What have you got there, Sandy, my boy?" he called out.

"A wounded prisoner, only he's just a bit too heavy for me; I can't take him in."

"Then let him be," said the other. "What do we want with prisoners? We ain't got food enough for ourselves."

He looked down on André, saw the hand lying apart from the body in a pool of blood, then gave utterance to a long, low whistle.

"Did you do that, Sandy?" he asked.

"I maun say I did," was the almost shamefaced answer. "Now be quick and help me to carry the poor laddie in; whilst we're talking he is bleeding to death, and he's a fine bit of a man, more especially for a Frenchman."

They lifted him between them, and were moving off, when the Scot said:

"Bide a bit; who knows, he might wish to see it," and, going back a step or two, Sandy picked up the bleeding hand, wrapped it in a bit of stuff, and put it in his bonnet. Then he took up his burden again, and they moved on slowly, for St. Lubin was a heavy man, and, as we have said, they were not overstrong.

"He's more than half-dead. What did you bring him in for? You're daft to have done it! His comrades would surely have come back to look for him

when they missed him. He's no common soldier; he's an officer. Look at his clothes!"

"Maybe you're right, doctor, but I just hadna the heart to leave him to come to by himself, seeing I had maimed him. If I'd killed him outright it would have been different. Now just do what you can for him, and somehow I'll carry him back to his own people."

"You'll never get the chance of doing that, Sandy," answered the doctor. "Why, he's lost nearly all his blood. He's going fast."

"Maybe your mistaken, doctor," answered Sandy in a coaxing tone of voice. "He'd no be so uncivil when I've done my best for him. The French are always polite. He'll not go the long journey without saying: 'Merci!' Now, laddie," he continued, "take a pull at this." And lifting André's head he put a bottle to his mouth, forced the clenched teeth apart, and poured the good strong whisky down his throat. "If that doesn't bring him to, nothing will," he said.

"Nothing will," repeated the doctor. "I did not know you had so much of the stuff left, Sandy," he added. "I've dressed his arm, that's all I can do. The bleeding ought to have been stopped sooner. He'll just drop off. What can it matter, one more or less?"

"I tell you it does matter," said Sandy passionately. "You're not going to let a fine fellow like that slip through your fingers. See! he is comin' to. Now, quick! Give him something that will keep the life in him."

"I've got nothing better than your whisky," said the doctor. "Stop a bit, though," he exclaimed suddenly; "it's a case of kill or cure. I've got an Indian

drug a native doctor gave me the other day. They say it's good to make a dead man live."

"Fetch it, there's a good man," said Sandy. "I'll warrant to keep him alive till you come back." And he almost pushed the doctor out of the hut. Then Sandy came back to the side of the wounded man, and bending over him once again administered the whisky, this time with such effect that with a moan André opened his eyes.

"Now, laddie, just lie still," said Sandy, laying his hand upon him to keep him down. You're sorely hurt, and the doctor's gone to get some fine stuff to cure you."

Not a word of all this did André understand; his first instinct was naturally to move the wounded arm, the result of which was a sharp cry of pain and a lapse into unconsciousness.

"Perhaps it would be just kinder to let him go," muttered Sandy. "A maimed man is a sorry thing, and it is his right hand too!"

At that moment the doctor appeared. "Hurry up!" said Sandy. "He's moved his arm and cried out pitifully. Where's your drug?"

"It will be of no use if he moves," said the doctor. "See! the bleeding has broken out again. I must stop that first, and then he must be strapped down."

In the midst of the operation André came to again, and the doctor, who knew a little French, explained to him that his arm was badly injured, and that he must not on any account move it. Indeed he took every precaution to prevent his doing so; but he did not tell him the extent of his misfortune.

"It is quite unnecessary," he thought; "he'll not live through the night." Then he administered the

drug, and after a very short space of time André fell, not into unconsciousness, but into a quiet sleep.

Sandy was triumphant. "A man who sleeps lives," he said.

"Not always," answered the doctor. "He may die in his sleep. I'd advise you to wet his lips now and again with that whisky of yours, and keep the bandages moist with cold water. I warn you, he is so far gone that he may die any moment.

"Now I'll go and lie down," he added. "It's little food I've had to-day, and I expect there will be less to-morrow, so a man must sleep. Call me if you see any change, and I'll give him another dose of the stuff. If he does not wake for three hours, then put that on his tongue." And he placed a small packet in Sandy's hand, and went out.

Sandy stood alone and silent beside the heap of straw upon which André had been laid. All night he watched beside him, and, to the doctor's astonishment, the next morning André was not dead. Day after day went by, and still he lived. His fever ran so high that he required no food; fresh water from the well sufficed him.

Before the end of April it became evident that General Mathews must surrender. The fort had become a heap of ruins, and the garrison was starving. The general therefore called a council of war, and then sent a flag of truce to Tippoo with proposals for capitulation. These Tippoo declared to be unfavourable, but he acceded to them on account of the approaching rains. The conditions of capitulation were favourable for the British; they were to go out with the honours of war; but Tippoo was never known to keep his word, and instead of permitting the general and his troops to

withdraw to the coast, according to the terms agreed upon, Tippoo bound them with chains or ropes, and sent them into Mysore to be thrown into horrible dungeons, on the pretext that Mathews had purloined some of the treasure which he had agreed to leave in the fort.

There is abundant reason to believe that Tippoo only sought a pretext for acting thus. The garrison marched out on the 3rd of May in this pitiable condition, and Tippoo gave his first public audience, and ordered a salute to be fired for this his first victory. When the messengers with the flag of truce were sent to Tippoo a letter was also sent to Monsieur le Comte de Senlis.

The Count had been in great trouble concerning André. He knew he had gone on the expedition to the fort, and that he had not returned. He had last been seen fighting a giant on the edge of a precipice. De Senlis had himself scaled the rock with two friends of André's to see if they could find any trace of him. They came to the very spot where the struggle had taken place, and at once noticed the landslip.

"One of them, at least, must have fallen over the precipice; perhaps both of them rolled over together. It seems probable," said a young man, an especial friend of André's. He had insisted upon accompanying the party. "Poor André!" he added, "if they had taken him prisoner they'd have killed him; they don't want prisoners up there. They've not got food enough for themselves."

The Count and his companions agreed that such must of necessity be the case, and sadly they retraced their steps back to the French quarters. When, therefore, de Senlis received a letter from the enemy's camp he hastened to tear it open without pausing to notice that the address was not in Andre's handwriting; only,

when it lay open before him, he perceived it was in English. He immediately sent for one of the British prisoners to read and translate it for him.

The man looked at the signature. "Fergusson. That is our doctor," he said.

"What does he write?" asked the Count.

The man shook his head. "I don't understand you; I can't speak French," said he doggedly.

"Tell me in English; I understand enough for that," said the Count impatiently.

"Well, he says the young man's alive; that it is a miracle; that you may thank Sandy MacIvor and himself for it after the Almighty. The young man would have written himself, only it's just his right hand which is hurt; but he's doing finely, and he'll be able to march out with the troops. He's a prisoner, but he's been well treated. That's about all," added the man. "I know Sandy MacIvor; he's a fine fellow."

"Well, you've earned that," said the Count, his face radiant with satisfaction, and he placed a gold piece in the man's hand, adding: "As for Sandy and the doctor, we'll make it our business to see that they come to no harm."

The good news soon spread abroad, and there was much satisfaction in the French camp.

"Only his hand injured; a mere bagatelle!"

The Count went straight to Tippoo, who congratulated him, and promised that as soon as the capitulation was signed he should be allowed to enter the fort and claim his cousin.

But it did not happen thus. The troops in the garrison received orders on the eve of the 3rd of May to be ready to deliver up their arms and to march out of the fort the following morning an hour after dawn.

The doctor, Sandy MacIvor, and André St. Lubin were together in the hut which Sandy had shared with André ever since the night he had brought him in and laid him on that heap of straw.

For more than a week André had been delirious, and when the fever left him his weakness had been so great, and the pain he suffered so excessive, that the doctor would not entertain the idea of his recovery. Still, they continued to administer the drug, and suddenly a change came on the twenty-first day after the accident. If he could then have had food he would have got rapidly well, but there was no food. Sandy had grown gaunter and thinner each day, the doctor was little better than a ghost, and as for André, when he attempted to stand, he would have fallen if Sandy had not propped him up. Strange to tell, so far André did not know the extent of his misfortune. By all manner of ingenious devices the doctor and Sandy had prevented him from finding it out. The first fortnight it was easy, because he was never quite conscious, and the pain seemed to absorb every other feeling, but at last they saw the day arrive when it would be no longer possible to hide the truth. He began to enquire why he could not feel his fingers, and he insisted on seeing his hand one day when the doctor was about to dress it.

"Well, you're a man," said the doctor, "and you must know it some day, but I warn you it's a gruesome sight."

Sandy left the hut and went and seated himself grimly on the outside wall of the fort overlooking the country. It was there the doctor found him, with a face like iron, staring straight before him. He never moved a muscle when the doctor came and sat down beside him, and said quietly:

"He's a brave lad, and a Christian. I don't say but what he shrank and called out at the sight. I thought he was going to swoon, for he's so weak a feather might knock him down, but he pulled himself together, and said in his own tongue: 'The will of the Lord be done! Go on, doctor;' and he held out the stump for me to dress it, but I saw he never looked at it again."

"Didna he ask who did it?" said Sandy huskily.

"No, he had no need; he knew it," answered the doctor. "But as I was leaving the hut he called out after me: 'Tell Sandy I want him.' So, my lad, you must go."

But Sandy shook his head, and walked in the opposite direction.

How they met, and how they made each understand the other's feelings, no one ever knew but themselves; from that day forth these two were friends in the true sense of the word.

The following day the doctor found them together, outwardly the same as before, only there was a watchfulness in Sandy's eyes which almost amounted to tenderness.

"I'll walk down between you two," said André to the doctor. "Whatever happens to the other men I intend to have your liberty in exchange for my life, for I am your prisoner, you know." And he nodded to Sandy.

So it came to pass, though not without difficulty, that when the general and his whole army were thrown into irons, and driven prisoners to Mysore, these two men were left behind. They were reckoned as part of André St. Lubin's prize money, only he was ordered to remove them out of the army, as they might otherwise be taken for spies.

"I may as well go also," André said to de Senlis.

"For the present I am of no use. When I have got accustomed to my misfortune I may be able to serve after some fashion. Now I am ill. I cannot throw the fever off, and my arm does not heal as it should do. I must consult another physician."

"I think you are right; indeed I do not know what else you can very well do," said de Senlis. "Only you are not very fit to travel, and it is a long way to any town where you would be likely to get good advice. I should go to Poona and rest there if I were you."

"Scindia is gone to Agra, I heard," said André, "and that is a long way north."

"But not difficult of access; it is on the main road. You could send a messenger to Scindia; he would find means of helping you on your way."

"What about Sandy and the doctor? I can't leave them behind," said André.

"Take them with you. Scindia has made peace with the English, so he will not object to harbouring them for a time, and later you can dispatch them to Madras."

This plan was carried out, and in due time the three started for Agra.

No one knew, save André himself, the depths of despair which at times overwhelmed him. Never to be a whole man again, always to be maimed and dependent on others! Sometimes, when Sandy put out a hand to help him, he would push him angrily away with inward rage at his sense of impotence. He, who had never required help from any man, to be thus dependent, and with no hope for the future! All his life long men and women would look at him with pity! No, he could never endure that; he would rather hide himself away in some corner of the earth. But he would see the child again before he disappeared from

the haunts of men. He longed for her. She was only a child; her pity would not wound him; and so he started on his journey northwards with a certain satisfaction, a feeling that comfort was awaiting him in that city of which he had heard so much—a city consecrated to love and to death, and whose white marble mausoleum was said to be a thing of such exquisite beauty, built to record a love which had made the joy of a man's life.

We will not follow André on that long journey, but will meet him at the end.

CHAPTER XIII

In Memoriam

THE Frenchmen had not been gone many weeks when certain events in the northern provinces caused Scindia to decide upon leaving Poona and taking up his residence in his own capital of Agra. The Confederacy was, as we have already explained, composed of many different tribes, each having its own chief, to whom alone they were subject.

They roamed from north to south, quarrelling and fighting one against another, subject to no fixed law. Peace in the land was therefore impossible.

It was Scindia's ambition to unite all these many tribes and bring them under his own authority. In several cases he had succeeded in accomplishing this, and had chosen for his capital and centre of action the beautiful city of Agra.

It might well have been called the "city of love", for soaring over and above all the other buildings in the city—and there were not a few of great beauty—is the "Taj Mahal", a mausoleum built in memory of a woman, the best-beloved wife of a great prince, who, in his desire that her memory should remain for ever in the eyes and hearts of men, built for her remains this most beautiful and costly monument, desiring that when his days were ended his body should be laid beside her. And so there arose, beneath that deep Indian sky, a sepulchre of the purest white marble.

Artists from all parts of India had been summoned to adorn both the interior and the exterior of this palace of the dead. Love and the symbols of love breathed forth from the very stones. It was, and still is, a veritable "architectural poem".

To this city Scindia repaired, bringing with him his beautiful young wife, the Princess Laily. Polygamy was, to a certain extent, permitted amongst the Mahrattas, but was not common among the higher castes, and Scindia had but one wife. The princess travelled from Poona on a magnificently caparisoned elephant, or, when she was tired, in a palki—a sort of couch, hung round with rich silken curtains, and carried on poles by bearers. She had desired to have Ursula with her, but after a time the child grew restless and wearied of the confinement, so she begged to be allowed to ride the horse which had been Scindia's, and which had brought her to Poona.

The prince, seeing how the animal loved the child, had given it to her for her own, so now her request was granted, and she rode on Mirza beside the princess's elephant.

Thus they travelled, a long procession, from Poona to Agra. Ursula rejoiced greatly at all she saw. The world seemed very beautiful to her: the high mountains reaching to the skies, the deep valleys, the wondrous lakes. She joyed beyond measure, and her soul grew. She understood, as she had never done before, the beauty of the earth and sky and the glory of the universe. Surely that was the dawn of happiness!

At last they reached the beautiful city, and Scindia, at his wife's request, bestowed a little palace with lovely gardens upon Ursula; and there she dwelt with Krishna and women servants chosen for her by the

princess. Henceforth either she was with the princess in her palace or the princess was with her; they were inseparable.

Gradually—no one quite knew why or wherefore—there had grown round Ursula a sort of halo of superstitious veneration. People looked upon her with awe, as if she were not quite of this world or made of common clay; it takes so little to force the minds of men and women into a certain groove. The slightest word, kind or unkind, for good or evil report, will leave its mark upon the most innocent soul.

If we realized this more fully we might, perhaps, be more careful how we speak one of another.

Everyone knew the story of how Scindia had found Ursula on the highroad, and it was said the gods had bidden him take her to his wife the princess. He had done so, and now the princess loved her with a great love. The city of Agra was well suited for romance in friendship or in love. It had also a high religious tone. The whole Hindu population held it in veneration, as the scene of the incarnation of Vishnu under the name of Parasu Rama.

Crowds of pilgrims came y arly to worship at the Moti Musjid, or Pearl Mosque, so called from its architectural beauty, which was only surpassed by the Taj Mahal. There were many learned Brahmins dwelling in the city, also there was a college for the training of priests in the mysteries of their religion. A certain religious element pervaded the whole city.

Into the spirit of the place Ursula seemed to have entered, yet by some strange instinct she knew she dić not belong to this people. Their religion did not appeal to her; she never worshipped after their fashion. From the time when André had, so to speak, unsealed

her mind, certain things had come back to her, and little by little she remembered.

She had been so young when the great shock came upon her, and she was so young still. But through the clouds she saw light, and who shall say but that, in loving pity for His forsaken child, God in His great goodness did send His angels in the stillness of the night to whisper in her ear those sacred truths which other children learn at their mother's knee? There is nothing impossible to God in His infinite love. Certain it is that, whatever she had forgotten, light, spiritual light, dawned upon this child's soul. She found herself repeating the hymns Frank had taught her on Sunday afternoons. Pictures she had seen of the Christ, came back to her memory — the child Jesus and the man Christ; she knew they were one and the same. Intermingled with this knowledge were the legends of saints and angels which André had told her. She had caught from him the Latin version of the Venite, the Gloria, the Te Deum, and she sang as he had sung, not always understanding the words, but exultantly, as the birds sing their song to the great Creator, and the princess would listen to her and rejoice with her. Strange to tell, all the sadness had passed out of Ursula's life; she did not trouble about the past, which she did not understand; she had an inward certainty that all would be revealed to her in due time. So she was happy.

The princess also taught her many things that were useful for her to know. So she learned to embroider, to thread beads, or, rather, precious stones, at which exercises she soon became quite expert and clever. When one day the princess bore Scindia a son, there was no end to Ursula's joy. And so the days

and weeks and months passed, and she had grown as children do at that age, which in India is more rapidly than in England. She looked something more than the child, yet scarcely the maiden. One day, as she was walking in the garden with the princess, they saw enter the compound an elephant carrying three men, whereupon they both entered the house, and waited to know who the strangers might be.

Now Ursula had never been subject to the rules of the Hindu women. First of all she was not a woman; her face was still, like the children's, uncovered, save from habit when she went abroad, and then not always. Krishna had even tried to dress her after European fashion, for there were many European women in Agra, wives of merchants, &c., but this Ursula would not have. She loved her Indian dress, and it became her well.

When, therefore, Krishna came and told her that the young Frenchman who had saved her life had come back, she was glad, and, like a child, ran out to him and greeted him, holding forth her hands to take his. In a second, when he held out his left hand only, she understood he was hurt, and tears filled her eyes.

"You are hurt," she said.

"Yes, I am sorely hurt," he answered; "and I have travelled all the way up from Bednore to see you, Ursula, my little maid;" and there was a note of disappointment in his voice. He did not know why or wherefore, but it seemed to him as if something had passed away, and he was alone. Where was the little child? But instantly the child look came back to her face, and she took his other hand and said gently:

"Sit down and tell me all about it. You healed me once, perhaps I shall heal you."

"That is impossible," he answered.

"Who can tell?" she said softly.

Then Krishna came up and whispered something in her ear. Ursula looked surprised, and said:

"But I must speak with him. Send the men to the men's quarters. Where is the princess?"

"She is gone to tell the prince; they will return together."

"That is well," said Ursula. "But will you not give us coffee and sweetmeats? This is our first guest."

Krishna clapped her hands and a woman servant answered. Krishna gave the order, and then sat down on the ground and waited. Then André told all that had befallen him, but he had not proceeded far when Scindia entered with the princess, and after they had greeted one another André continued. Much of what he related Scindia already knew—the taking of Bednore and Tippoo's treachery. He was much grieved at the loss André had sustained and for the pain he still suffered. "We have a medicine man who is well reputed for the curing of wounds. I will give you a house in which to live with your two Englishmen as long as you choose to remain with me, and when you are cured you can teach my men, with one hand, your manner of fighting, as well as if you had two. Now I will go and see your men." André rose, bade Ursula and the princess farewell, and followed Scindia. But his heart was sore within him because the child was taken from him.

So it happens only too often in life: what we hold to-day we lose to-morrow, and our hearts fail us until

we find that each thing has its time and place, and that compensations come to us of which we never dreamt. But we must be patient; and André was ill, and it fretted him that the child which had been a delight to him should be kept under watch and guard by these Eastern women. More than ever he determined to discover her history, and, if possible, to set her free.

The old Brahmin, who was said to be able to cure any wound, came to him each day with healing balms and herbs, which he boiled down and administered to him. Certainly the effect was all that could be desired: the arm healed and his physical health improved. Dr. Fergusson acknowledged that the cure was wonderfully rapid, but it was in vain he strove to possess himself of the precious ointment. The Indian applied it himself each day, and burned the cloths which he used.

"If he were either French or English we might bribe him, but an Indian Brahmin has no needs. Gold and silver are worthless in his eyes," he grumbled to Sandy, who agreed that the receipt for that ointment would be worth a fortune.

"Try and get it for me, there's a good fellow. You know you're not a canny Scotsman for nothing," said the doctor, and he patted him on the shoulder. Now Sandy, ever since that night when they had between them brought André back to life, adored the doctor. He followed him about, and was always ready to do him a service, when it did not interfere with what he considered to be his duty to St. Lubin. That was sacred to him, and came before all things else. Had he not maimed him? Must he not therefore serve him for all the remaining years of his mortal

life? Upon consideration it appeared to him that the Doctor's request was reasonable, and might prove useful at some future period to his beloved count and others. So he determined to use all his cunning to outwit the Brahmin and possess himself of some portion of the precious balm, which the doctor could then analyse, and so become acquainted with its properties. It seemed a very simple thing, but it was almost impossible to accomplish, for when the Brahmin dressed the arm he virtually sealed the bandages after such a fashion that no one but himself could undo them. André would not have suffered anyone else to touch them.

One day Sandy watched his opportunity. When the bandage was removed, and thrown for a second on one side, he pulled forth his dirk, and was about to sever a portion of the cloth to which the balm still adhered, when he received a sharp blow on his hand. The dirk fell to the ground, and he stood face to face with the priest and André. The Brahmin poured forth a volley of angry ejaculations, but André only said: "That is a mean trick, Sandy, for a brave man to be guilty of. The secret is his, and he is healing me. Shame on you! Get you gone out of my sight!"

And Sandy went out with his head down, a miserable man.

He had not gone far when he met the doctor. "Well, have you got it?" asked the latter eagerly. Then Sandy broke out in such a passion of indignation and anger that the doctor stood aghast.

"Weel!" he shrieked, "it's not weel at all. Why must ye make an honest Scotsman do your dirty work? What do I care for your ointment? If you're beaten

at your own work by a black-faced black-hearted Indian, it's your fault, not mine. Find the secret your ain self; I'll not be called mean for trying to oblige ye." And he was passing on, but the doctor put out his hand and caught him by the sleeve.

"Come, Sandy, what's up?" he said. "We're too old friends to quarrel."

A gentle answer turneth away wrath, and Sandy's heart was sore craving for sympathy, so he poured the whole story out to the attentive doctor, winding up with: "And what's most aggravating is that I'd got it safe between my two fingers, and I dropt it."

"That's a pity," said the doctor. Evidently they had both lost sight of André's point of view.

"He turned me out, told me to be gone," said Sandy in a sorrowful manner.

"We'll soon make that all right," said the doctor.

At that moment André appeared himself on the scene.

"What are you two conspirators up to now?" he asked quickly.

"Nothing," answered the doctor. "Sandy was telling me you are mad with him for trying to get a sample of that ointment. Well, it was my doing; I left him no peace. I want it, and I must have it, in the cause of science and humanity, young man; I think that's reason enough!"

"Not for stealing a man's secret," answered André. "I've had considerable trouble in getting the old man to go on with the cure. I have taken a solemn oath that neither of you shall be in the room when he dresses my wound, or at any time touch my hand until he pronounces it cured and unbinds it. So now you understand, no more nonsense; eh, Sandy?"

His voice had softened, for he knew he had hurt his

faithful friend, whose sense of honour was not quite as delicate as his own. The tone of his voice was enough for Sandy. He came straight up to him.

"You need have no fear, Count. I'll not meddle with the stuff again. I told the doctor he must do his own dirty work in the future."

"In the cause of science," said the doctor. "Think, Count, of the agony you were suffering, and I could give you no relief, but that Brahmin did, almost immediately, and your arm is a picture for healing. I'd give —well, a fortune if I had it, to know his secret, and I tell you plainly I'll never rest till I do know it, for humanity's sake."

And therewith he flung himself round and walked away, his head high.

"Bravo, doctor!" muttered Sandy in a low voice.

André heard him and smiled.

CHAPTER XIV

"Suffer the Little Children"

"I HEAR that the ship I sent out to Johanna Island has reached its destination, so I expect your mother and sister are on their way. If they steer clear of the French ships, and if the weather continues fine, we may expect them within the month. I must begin to set my house in order." And Felix sighed in that sort of hopeless way which men have when they have no womankind and see a vista of household duties before them.

"I should not trouble if I were you," answered Frank; "the place looks all right;" and he cast a rapid glance round the dining-room, in which they were having their meal. It was a handsome room, which Mr. Carmichael had taken a pride in furnishing after English fashion. Indeed he had gone to great expense to have things sent out from England.

"It's all very well for us men," continued Felix, "but women have all sorts of ideas about home, and, with the exception of our little Ursula, there has been no mistress about the house for the last dozen years. Naturally things can't be 'all right', as you call it."

"You must remember my mother has never lived in grand style," said Frank. "If it had not been for your father's generosity we should have been very poor."

Felix did not answer him at once. At last he said:

"I tell you what, Frank, I'll just turn Mrs. Rayner and Phyllis in, and give them *carte blanche* to do what they think necessary. As you say, I can't see that anything is wanting, but there must be. Your mother must have a sitting-room of her own, and the bedrooms want doing up. When we have dined we'll drive over to the bungalow and have a regular consultation."

Frank laughed. "A good excuse, Felix, but it is true we never know what to do without our women friends. But will it be fair to put extra work on Phyllis? It seems to me the Refuge is as much as she can manage."

"I'm thinking she ought to give it up," said Felix. "The need for it has ceased, the state of things has become normal, the famine and pestilence have died out; there is therefore no further necessity for its existence."

"And yet this morning, when I was down there, I saw her take in two emaciated children, and there were at least a dozen others playing and lying about the place. I made some such remark as you have just made, and she turned round upon me quite fiercely, exclaiming: 'What would you have me do with them? Turn them out, I suppose. That's just like you men!' and she went off without deigning to give me even good morrow."

"Well, she'll have to give it up," said Felix severely. "She's overworked, and must have a rest. I'm thinking of sending her and her father and mother to the hills for the hot weather. Old Rayner does not pick up his strength as he ought; he fainted in the office

yesterday. Besides, there's the question of ways and means; it costs a good deal to finance the Refuge. People have so far been very generous, but when they realize that the actual need for it has ceased, they will drop off; and Bennett, I am sure, will not hear of my taking the whole charge on my shoulders. He is always preaching economy. He says there is a pretty heavy deficit in the books this year. I am not surprised; we have been losing in every way: ships foundered or taken by the French, the monsoon, war, famine, and pestilence. When one comes to think of it, it is really awful!"

"And yet you talk of doing up the house!" said Frank. "I really wish you would drop that."

"My father would have wished it," answered Felix. "He would have done it himself; he was so set upon giving your mother a warm welcome. As it is, it will be a sad home-coming! Raman, have you ordered the dogcart?" he asked, turning to his faithful Indian servant.

"Yes, sahib; I heard your honour say he would go to the bungalow to-night. See, there it comes! Shall I accompany you?"

"No need, Raman. We shall not be late, and I see Ali is holding the horse. He can jump up behind."

"Ali no good," said Raman, tossing his head.

Ever since the Mahratta raid he had hardly suffered Felix out of his sight. He had a fixed idea that danger lurked everywhere, and that he was Felix's especial protector. "The only one left," he would say in his soft, sad voice; and so, even now, notwithstanding that Felix had negatived his request, he sent Ali off, and himself took the back seat. Felix made no re-

mark as he gathered the reins up, but only smiled at Frank. They both understood.

Their appearance created no surprise at the bungalow; they were accustomed there to this coming and going, and were always glad at the familiar sight of the dogcart.

Phyllis saw at a glance that Felix had come for a purpose, and as they shook hands she looked up at him, saying: "Anything wrong?"

"Nothing, my little inquisitor," he answered. "Only Frank and I were talking of changes which might be necessary in view of his mother's and sister's arrival, and I proposed we should come and consult with you and your mother. Frank agreed it would be the best thing; so here we are. Good evening, Mrs. Rayner! I've come to throw myself on your tender mercies."

"I am always glad to do anything in my power for you, sir," said Mrs. Rayner. "How can I serve you?"

Felix seated himself, and took the cigar Mr. Rayner offered him. Frank followed his example, and they lay back in the lounges in perfect comfort. The evening was not overpoweringly hot, the punkah was still at work, and the gardener was watering the grass and flower-beds with a long hose, and this also conduced to coolness.

"It's about the house, Mrs. Rayner," said Felix at last. "You see, it's been a bachelor's establishment so long it wants doing up—making fit for ladies,—and I have not the remotest idea how to set about it."

"It is some time since I was in your house," said Mrs. Rayner, "but from what I remember I think it requires hardly anything done to it."

"That's right, Mrs. Rayner," said Frank. "Please,

don't let him throw his money away on it. I am sure my mother will think it palatial."

Phyllis had listened in silence. She had always considered the Carmichael mansion "palatial", and quite resented the idea that any changes were necessary.

Felix continued. "I want a private sitting-room—'boudoir', I think you call it—for my aunt, and the rooms want painting and papering; the veranda also must be smartened up. We are accustomed to it, but I am quite sure newcomers would at the present moment consider it shabby. I want you and Phyllis to brighten it up. I do not wish to go to any extravagant expense. I just want to make sure that it is clean and comfortable; in fact, as it should be, for ladies."

"I understand perfectly," said Mrs. Rayner. "To-morrow Phyllis and I will go into town, examine everything, and make a list; then you can decide what you will and will not do. I agree with Mr. Burgess that you ought not to be extravagant. Here comes our mutual friend, Mr. Bennett; I am sure he will be of the same opinion."

"Oh, if Bennett has a word to say in the matter, nothing will be done at all!" said Felix in an annoyed tone of voice.

"What are you talking about?" asked John Bennett, after he had shaken hands with the two young men. Frank told him.

"Well, I agree with Felix," he said; "the old house wants brightening up, but very little will do that. If Phyllis and her mother take it in hand, they will soon set it right. I don't think they'll run up a very long bill. They know times are hard; but still we

like, when people come from England, to show them that we still know what's what."

So it was settled that Phyllis and Mrs. Rayner should use their own discretion.

"By the by, Phyllis, when do you propose giving up the Refuge?" asked Felix.

"I am not sure I shall give it up," said Phyllis, "unless you require the building, and turn me out."

"Do you mean to say you contemplate keeping it on indefinitely?" asked Felix.

"That depends," answered Phyllis. "I had a visit the other day from some of the principal ladies of the English colony; those who have helped me most. They seemed to think that, on rather different lines, the Refuge might, and even ought, to be continued. I have now ten to twelve children who have no parents. How can I cast them out? What would become of them? So, instead of a 'refuge', as it was in the time of need, we propose making an orphanage of it, and to bring these children up as Christians. You know we cannot reach them in the zenanas, where they are under the authority of parents, but these are waifs and strays. Surely we may take them and bring them into the fold of Christ's Church."

"I see no reason at all against it," said Frank eagerly. "The Roman Catholics would do it; they are far more zealous in their mission-work than we are. I have often wondered why this is the case. Do they care more? They certainly never let an occasion for making a convert slip by, and we do so only too often."

"Well, we intend holding on now," said Phyllis. "The ladies are really in earnest. Funds are being raised; it is only a question of room."

"That need not trouble you," said Felix. "You may have the warehouse, and welcome. Indeed it is not very suitable for us; it is too far out. You may have it rent free, and any changes you may think necessary for a permanent home I am quite willing to make. I can afford that much."

"How good of you, Felix! We do want kitchens, and partitions for the sleeping-rooms," said Phyllis.

"All right! I'll send my architect down, and I think we will ask Mrs. Dawson and those other ladies who came to you, Phyllis, to meet us early one morning, and we will have a regular consultation. Don't you think that will be the best way of keeping up their interest?"

"Most certainly I do!" answered Phyllis, delighted.

The remainder of the evening was spent talking and making plans. They were all in high spirits, and nothing else was discussed the whole evening as they sat on the veranda.

It was a great excitement. There had been as yet no attempt at Madras to evangelize the natives. The principle of non-interference with the religion of the people was considered of paramount importance, to avoid friction. But here were these children, forsaken and homeless; they could not let them slip out of their hands without making an attempt to save their souls as well as their bodies!

And so these young people, who had passed through so much sorrow together, consoled themselves by well-doing, and bound themselves together for good works. It came about naturally, not with pride of purpose, but rather because their souls were cast in that mould.

For the next few weeks they were very busy. The

British colony of Madras threw itself heart and soul into the building and setting up of this first Christian home for native children, and over the porch they caused to be inscribed in Hindustani and in English: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me".

CHAPTER XV

The Silver Hand

Two and three months went by after André came to Agra. His general health, which had suffered greatly from the effects of his accident, was perfectly re-established, and the wound had healed; but his spirits did not return. He suffered at times from an overwhelming sense of depression, from which nothing could rouse him.

At first he saw very little of Ursula, for indeed Krishna would not suffer her out of her sight, and would not let her make the acquaintance of any of the European families in Agra. In fact, Ursula herself was perfectly content to be alone with Princess Laily and the baby prince, though she insisted that André should from time to time be permitted to come and see her. Eventually it was settled that he should be her teacher, seeing he was still an invalid, Ursula so young, and both were of the same nation, as was supposed.

This gradually became a great pleasure to him, and roused him to a certain degree of energy; moreover, it obliged him to use his left hand. He had to teach her to write, and he could only do so by making the letters himself. At first he was very awkward, but by degrees he learnt to write as well with the left as he had done with the right hand, and

Ursula watched his progress as eagerly as he watched hers.

The lessons always took place out on the veranda; they were confined to reading and writing, nothing more, except the religious stories, which were the delight of Ursula's heart. One day he brought with him a great bunch of flowers, and from that time forth they talked about the flowers, and she learnt many things. Without being aware of the fact, but because of his early life spent in the forest and the country, André was learned in all things appertaining to nature. The doctor and he would wander out into the country and gather herbs, and many were the discussions which they had on the subject of plants and flowers.

Neither the doctor nor Sandy was ever permitted to penetrate the precincts of the house and garden which contained, they said, the fairy princess.

It was a strange language they spoke when they were all together; André picked up a considerable amount of English from his companions, and they a smattering of French from him.

Occasionally the doctor and Sandy would meet Ursula accompanied by Krishna, but the sari was always across her face, brought low down over her forehead, so that only her eyes were to be seen. One day it so happened that the two men were standing in front of the Pearl Mosque when Ursula stepped out. The wind caught the soft white material and lifted the end of the sari, so that her whole face was exposed to view, the soft aureole of golden hair, the deep-blue eyes, veiled by long lashes, and the exquisite smile which parted the child's lips. It was only for the space of a minute, then Krishna's

hand drew the veil round her. She had seen the two men, and she had noted the doctor's astonished look; she had also heard his exclamation: "Where have I seen that face before?"

She hurried Ursula away to a palki which was in waiting for her, and drew the curtains.

The doctor turned to Sandy and asked: "Do you know whether that is the child St. Lubin goes to see, and talks so much about?"

"How should I know?" said Sandy; "but if you ask me what I think, I should say it must be she. The Count" (for Sandy always designated him thus) "has mentioned that she was very fair, that she must be either English or French—the latter, he seemed to think, because she understood that language from the first."

"Well," said the doctor, in his excitement speaking louder than usual, "I tell you she is English, or at least she has an English mother. I know her face quite well!" And he turned away. He might have added: "It is the face of the one and only woman I ever loved." But a man does not cast such words to the winds; and, after all, Sandy was not his intimate friend; circumstances alone had made them comrades.

So he kept silence and went and shut himself up in the room which had been allotted to him, in a house close to Prince Scindia's palace.

Throughout that night he lived in the past, searching in his memory for every little detail of things which he had for years diligently put on one side. The child's face was ever present with him, but it was no longer the child's face he saw, it was another as young and fresh and tender as the child's! They had

been boy and girl together, Ellen Moore and he. He had called her his little wife when she was in short frocks and he in jackets. Then they had drifted apart, meeting only casually now and again; he elbowing his way in the world of men, she—well, he hardly knew what girls did with their days, until suddenly he heard she had gone the way of all girls and got married. There was an end to dream number one! He was told she had married an immensely rich man, who had made his fortune in India, and that she was going out there with him; after that he asked no further questions. But it so happened he got an appointment as doctor in the East India Company's service, and he went out.

At a big ball at Madras he came across her. He asked her name, and they met as old friends, just once, and then he went his way. The next thing he heard was that she was dead, and now suddenly her face rose before him again as from the dead. What did it mean?

He had heard a wonderful tale of how Scindia had found this child on the roadside and brought her to Poona, and that she was considered to be a sacred incarnation. "That is all nonsense," he had said more than once; but now he looked upon the matter in a more serious light. There was something mysterious in the whole affair, and he, Doctor Fergusson, was not going to be so bamboozled.

He'd tackle that young Frenchman the very next day—of course he knew all about her,—and if he would not make a clean breast of it, he'd find some other way; but that child with that face should not be lost to her own people. He never slept all that night. Early the following morning he strolled down

to the Jumna and bathed; then he came back, just in time to meet André going for his morning ride. "If you'll wait till my horse comes round I'll go with you," he said.

It was only within the last week or two that André had begun riding, and it was the doctor who had persuaded him to make the trial, which had proved perfectly successful. The doctor being absent this morning, André had still determined to ride, hating to feel he was dependent on the whims of another man. He was just about to start, and was almost disappointed at having the doctor forced upon him for company. However, he had to put a good face on the matter, and they went off together.

They had not gone far when the doctor observed: "Have you seen your little protégée this morning?"

"What are you thinking about?" answered André. "I go to her after breakfast, just for one hour, and that is a concession."

"I suppose so," said the doctor thoughtfully. Then he continued, speaking quickly: "What do you know of her? Who is she?"

"I wish I could tell you!" answered André. "It is a mystery I have tried in vain to fathom. I believe the only person who really knows is Krishna. I have tried her by every means in my power. I have even threatened her, but it is of no avail; she is mute."

"And Scindia?" said the doctor.

"Of him I am sure," answered André. "He picked the child up on the roadside. He says there was a woman with her who declared that the child was sent to bring him good fortune, and then disappeared. He would have left Ursula behind, but, strange to tell, his horse would not move until he took the child up

with him. It is that same animal which stands whinnying in the field adjoining the little house she lives in. It brought her all the way from Poona up to Agra. The other women came on elephants, but she rode Mirza. She must have learnt how to ride, for she has a splendid seat, and is perfectly without fear. I cannot imagine what will ultimately become of her. Sometimes I am inclined to carry her away, but where to?—and then she is so well guarded."

"How old should you say she is?" asked the doctor.

"Between eleven and twelve," answered André. "She has grown a great deal during her illness and since. When I first saw her she was so small and fragile she might have been any age; but now she is quite different, and she is remembering, only I cannot get a chance of questioning her; I never see her alone."

"Do you think she is French or English?" asked the doctor.

"Certainly not French," answered André. "She hardly understood the language at first, and even now she does not speak it like a French child. But I have never heard her speak a word of English. Hindustani was more familiar to her than either of the other languages."

"What conclusions have you come to concerning her?" asked the doctor.

"She has been stolen, of course, and Krishna is at the bottom of it," said St. Lubin. "Ursula knew her from the very first. When my cousin and I first saw the child she had been heavily drugged with opium, so heavily that she was under the influence of it to such an extent that she would have died or

gone out of her mind if it had not been put a stop to."

"Surely it must be her child; only mother and child could so resemble each other!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Whose child?" asked André. But the doctor did not answer him at once; he was thinking.

"Could you get me a free pass from Scindia, by which I might be ensured of a safe journey across country to Madras?" he asked. "Once I was there, I believe this mystery would be cleared up, and the child restored to her own people."

"It is impossible for Scindia to ensure your safety,' said André; "there are so many petty chiefs, who are to-day friendly with the English, to-morrow up in arms against them. The Mahrattas, though they call themselves a Confederacy, are divided amongst themselves. I am sure Scindia will not wish to detain you in Agra, and would doubtless conduct you as far as Delhi, but I doubt if he can do more."

"Well, I must be content with that," said the doctor. "I dare say I shall manage to reach Madras somehow. Will you see what you can do for me, Count? That child, as you know, must be rescued from her present position before she is much older, or they will be marrying her to one of their own chiefs or rajahs, and then no one can interfere."

"I am of your opinion," said St. Lubin; "but will you not tell me the reason for your sudden interest in the little one?"

The doctor hesitated for a second; he had grown very fond of St. Lubin. The patience with which he had borne his sufferings (and we must not compare the sufferings of wounds to-day to what they were at a time when there were no anæsthetics) had touched

him greatly, more especially because he had realized that in this young nobleman the moral pain of being thus maimed was as great as the physical. His pride of race rose in rebellion against the severing of a limb, as if it had been a disgrace. And then he was by nature so courteous. There was no doubt about it. André was a born gentleman, a Christian, and as simple as a child. The doctor and Sandy had a sense of shame for their own indifference to holy things when they saw him, day after day, fulfil his religious duties, say his prayers night and morning, sign himself with the sign of the cross before he broke bread, and all quite naturally without affectation or parade. Therefore it was that the doctor felt he was a man to be trusted, and so he, comparatively an old man, was able to speak to this young man, and to tell him of whom the child's face reminded him.

Reverently André listened to him. Even as he valued his religion, so he knew that love and womanhood were alike sacred things in a man's life. "Of course you cannot be mistaken," he said. "I wish you could see and speak with Ursula. I think you might rouse her."

He had hardly uttered these words when they found themselves on the border of a small lake, or "tag" as it is called in India, lying between the mountain ridges. A palki, with its bearers, was waiting at a little distance under the shadow of a group of trees.

This lake was held in high reverence by the inhabitants of Agra, because close by there was a holy figure of Buddha carved in stone. It had been found there one morning; how or when it had been conveyed to that particular spot no one knew. It was considered a miracle, and therefore doubly honoured.

The figure was more than usually large, and stood

forth with a certain grandeur. At the present moment two figures were slowly moving round it. One was evidently a native woman; the other, though she was also in native dress, was clearly a lightly built, slim girl.

She was walking round the god, examining it closely. Suddenly she stopped, bent forward, and, rising on tiptoe, touched one of the hands; then she held something up to her companion, which, as the sun touched it, shone. Ursula, for it was she, looked up in astonishment, and in doing so caught sight of the doctor and André. She did not hesitate, notwithstanding an attempt of Krishna's to stop her, but came running towards them. The two men instantly dismounted, and, holding their horses, went to meet her.

"See what I have found!" she exclaimed, holding out her hand; and they saw that she held in hers a silver hand of exquisite workmanship.

They both looked at it with astonishment. It was a right hand, and when André took it from her to examine it he noticed that it was exactly the size of his own hand, and that by some interior mechanism the joints moved. A strange feeling crept over him as he handed it to the doctor; but the doctor was looking at Ursula, and took it listlessly.

"Come and show me where you found it," said André.

"Ah, but I will not leave it with him!" said Ursula. "It is mine. The gods must have sent it to me for you." And she took it away from the doctor almost angrily.

Then he recovered from his stupor, and said, still looking at her: "Will you not let me see it?"

He spoke in English. For a moment she seemed

puzzled, tried to answer him, but, instead, burst into tears.

At that moment Krishna came up, drew her sari across her face, and, turning to the men, said sharply: "What have you done to her?"

"We have done nothing," said André. "She showed us that silver hand, and then broke out crying."

"Come, Ursula, my little friend, stop crying, and show us where you found this wonderful thing."

She recovered herself instantly, threw back her veil impatiently, and, like a child, holding out her free hand to André, said: "Come!" and the two went on in front together, the others following.

CHAPTER XVI

A Prophecy Fulfilled

"HERE, just here," said Ursula, and together they stood beside the figure of the god. Then she raised herself on tiptoe and placed the wonderful silver hand inside the palm of the god's right hand.

It was no ordinary figure. The face was well cut, the features almost delicate and of a pleasing expression, the eyelids closed. A sort of pointed headdress lent a completeness to the quiet, happy countenance. The arms were raised to the height of the breast, the left hand supporting the right hand; the fingers of both were only partially closed; such was the image of the Buddha. Ursula replaced her treasure where she had found it, and she and André stood looking at it. They were so engrossed that they did not notice that the doctor and Krishna had lingered behind.

Krishna was standing before the doctor almost bent to the ground.

"You had better speak at once, and speak the truth; for if you do not I shall have you taken to the court at Madras and have you judged there, and your punishment will be severe—as severe as the laws of England can make it. Rest assured of that."

"What do you want to know?" she asked in a low voice.

"Who is the child?" he asked.

"Why do you ask me?" she answered, lifting her

head and looking up at him with a cunning expression in her black eyes.

"Very well," he said; "I will tell you who I believe her to be. If I am wrong, you can tell me; if right, you will hold up your hand; and then I shall require to know why you have brought her here and acted the false part you have done."

Once again Krishna bowed her head to the earth.

"I knew the mother of that child. We were boy and girl together," continued the doctor. "She married, and I lost sight of her. I met her at a ball at Madras. I learnt that she was the wife of one of the richest men in the presidency, and that her name was Carmichael. Later I heard that she was dead. To-day I have seen her child, for the girl you call Ursula is her living image. How did she come here?"

"Pardon me, sahib," said Krishna. "I brought her because I love her. All you say is true. She is the daughter of the Sahib and the Memsahib Carmichael. The Mahrattas attacked and slew all her people, and I fled with her. 'I will take her to my own country,' I thought, 'and watch over her, and she will marry a great prince and be a ranee'; and it was as if the gods were with me. I put her to sleep, and carried her many hours, days, and weeks; and she lost her reason, and when she awoke she had forgotten everything—her own language, her people; she began a new life. The Frenchman taught her, and she learnt. Sometimes she would have glimmerings, certain things would seem familiar to her; then again she would forget."

"Why did you not tell Scindia, or the Count, who she was?" asked the doctor.

"I was afraid, and she was so well and so content

—why should she be disturbed? I waited till she should herself awake and ask me of the past, but she never has. Now, what will you do? Will you punish me? I love the child. You will not take her from me?"

"Not if you promise to obey me in all things," answered the doctor.

Again Krishna bowed to the ground, with hands crossed on her bosom, in token of submission.

"I will obey the sahib in all things," she answered.

At that moment they saw André and Ursula coming towards them.

"Tell me, is this trick of the silver hand your doing? Do you know anything about it?" asked the doctor.

"Nothing, sahib. Krishna knows nothing; it is the work of the gods."

André's face was very white as he approached. He was himself carrying the silver hand. Ursula was walking beside him. She was beaming.

"It is right, quite right," she said.

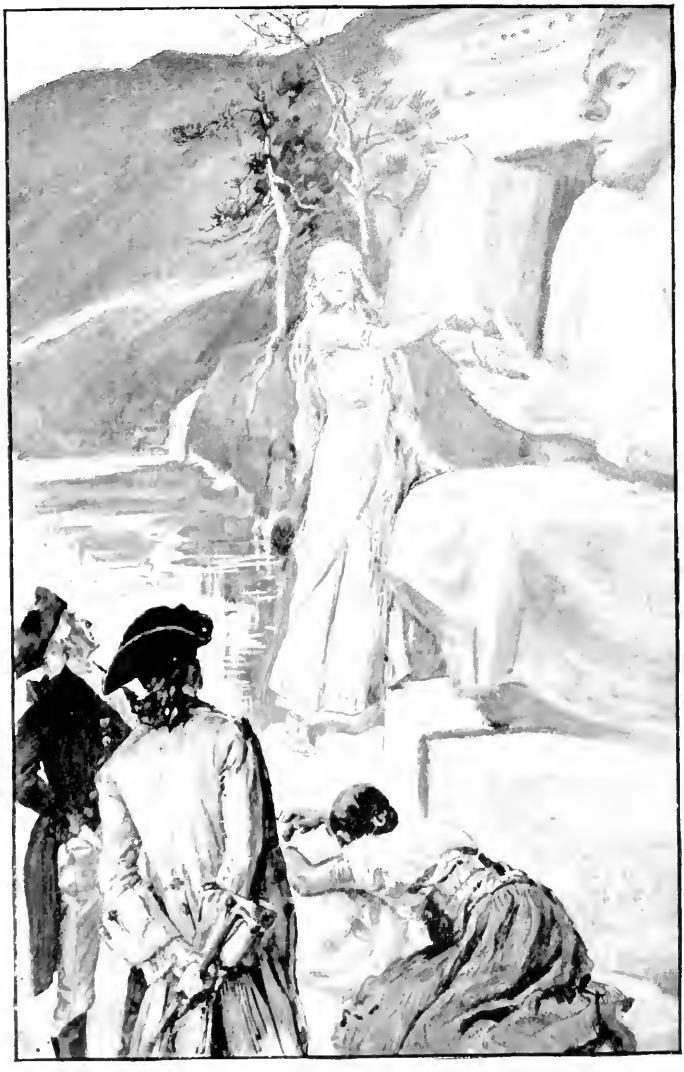
"What is quite right?" asked the doctor.

"The hand," answered André; "it is a facsimile of my own hand, and I believe, if it could be fastened on my wrist and be made firm, I should be able to use it. If I wore a glove over it no one would know the difference.

"Let me see," said the doctor.

He took the hand and examined it closely. It was a most perfect work of art; the mechanism was astonishing. It was hollow, and fashioned in such a way that evidently, when fastened securely on the arm, the hand and each finger would be responsive to the will of the wearer.

"It is very wonderful," said the doctor. "How did



URSULA REPLACED HER TREASURE WHERE SHE HAD FOUND IT

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the artist—for the maker could be nothing less—become possessed of the exact size of your hand and wrist?"

As he spoke he turned the hand over to examine the inside, and in the middle of the palm he saw an infinitesimal knob. He touched it. The hand opened out, and showed numerous fine silver threads passing up to the finger tips.

"Give me your arm," said the doctor.

André held out the injured member. The doctor turned up the sleeve of his coat, placed the silver hand in the right position, then gently closed it. The spring snapped, and without any undue pressure the hand and the arm were united.

"Well?" said the doctor.

"It is all right," answered André. "I feel neither pain nor inconvenience of any kind."

Then slowly he began to move the arm. He found that every articulation was easy; the wrist bent, the finger joints moved at his will. He held out his hand and took the doctor's, closing his fingers over his.

"They strike cold," said the doctor grimly.

"It is extraordinary," said André.

"Very much so," answered the doctor.

"Let us ride back to Agra and show it to Scindia. He may be able to throw some light on the mystery," said André.

"Why should you seek to fathom the works of the gods?" said Krishna. "Do you not fear to anger them? Accept in silence and with thanksgiving the good they send you, and question not, lest you offend them and they take back their gift. That is the 'Buddha of Bliss'."

"Your advice is good, Krishna. We will not ques-

tion; we will merely make known the good fortune which has befallen us. Shall we call the bearers of your palki? We have remained so long that the heat is beginning to be very great."

In a few minutes the palki and the bearers came up, and, having seen Krishna and Ursula installed therein, the doctor and André went together up to the Buddha and examined it. The placid countenance, so still and yet so full of expression, surprised them. André showed where the hand had been found.

"Of course it is not a chance thing; someone has done it, and I would give a great deal to find out who that someone is," he said.

"I should not try too much," said the doctor. "I expect we have not heard the last of it. I am curious to hear what Scindia will say."

Then they mounted their horses and rode away.

When Sandy saw the silver hand he flew into a passion.

"It is uncanny," he said. "I thought you were a godly man. Cast it from you! It is the work of the evil one."

"Nonsense, Sandy!" said the doctor; "it is a very good hand, and very well made."

"Ay, that's just it," answered Sandy. "Do you think the deil would serve ye with secondhand goods? He's too canny to do that."

"I'm afraid I cannot make up my mind to do as you desire, Sandy," said André.

They had ridden into the compound in front of Scindia's palace. Sandy had seen them, and come out to meet them. Standing by André's horse to help him to dismount, he had immediately seen the hand, and in a few words the doctor had told him how André had

come by it. Then he had spoken his mind. Naturally superstitious, as the Scotch Highlander is, he had resented the whole occurrence.

"It willna bring you good luck," he repeated.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Scindia, accompanied by his uncle, a high-caste Brahmin, who was also a priest, came towards them. André rode forward to meet him, holding the reins in his right hand; as he approached them the Brahmin stood still. Suddenly he prostrated himself on the ground, muttering words in Hindustani so rapidly that neither André nor the doctor could understand him. Then he paused, but remained still crouched on the ground, his arms crossed on his bosom and his head in the dust. Scindia appeared deeply moved.

"What does it all mean?" asked André; "what is he saying?"

"Dismount and come with me into the palace and I will tell you," answered Scindia.

Both André and the doctor obeyed. Every eye was fixed on the silver hand—the Brahmin gazed on it with admiration, Sandy with something between anger and fear, Scindia with veneration. The prince led the way into the great hall, and, standing at the top of the room, he invited all those present to approach. Then, turning to André, he said:

"It is no common thing which has taken place, but the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy. It is written in our records that two strangers should come and dwell peacefully in the midst of us, that one of these strangers from the far west should be possessed of an invincible silver hand, that he should command our armies, and that thenceforth the Mahratta Con-

federacy should attain its highest degree of power. Behold, the day has come, the will of God is about to be fulfilled. Have I spoken rightly, my mother's brother?"

"You have, Prince," answered the Brahmin; "there is no doubt. Behold the man who is to make of us a great nation! Bow down before him, make him the chief of your army, let the people also bow down before him." And, suiting the action to the word, he took hold of Prince Scindia's hand, and together they made obeisance before André.

He was overcome. "Indeed you are mistaken," he said; "I have but little knowledge of the art of war. I was never in a real battle, and I should not know how to order a battle or to be the leader of men. My cousin, who was with me, knows far more than I do. You must send for him."

The Brahmin smiled incredulously.

"If such be the will of your high mightiness it shall be done; we will send for the Count Raymond. But I warn you he cannot take your place; you and you alone can lead our armies to battle. You must show yourself to the people as the ordained of God, the Silver Hand! We have waited for you for upwards of a hundred years. You are our leader. I beseech you tell me how you came by the holy thing. Did Buddha himself bring it you?"

"By no means," answered André with a certain impatience. "It was brought to me by a little maid whom you all know, the lost child whom Prince Scindia found and in his pity took to his wife that she might care for her. She wandered out this morning beyond the walls of Agra, accompanied by Krishna, her woman servant. When near the tag (lake) she saw the new

image of 'The Buddha of Bliss', which appeared there no one knows how or when. The child's curiosity was excited; she went close up to it, and, standing on tiptoe, she looked into the palm of the god's hands, and there, shining white in the morning sun, was this;" and he held up his hand. Instantly Scindia, the Brahmin priest, and all those in the hall, which had gradually been filling, prostrated themselves.

"This is dreadful!" said André; "what am I to do?"

"Nothing!" answered the doctor. "Take what comes to you; if you are to be a great man, play your part well."

At that moment a cry went up from the crowd: "We would see the holy thing, the gift of Buddha to his people."

Now André was an unusually tall man, but he found himself suddenly hoisted on the shoulders of two turbaned Indians, who carried him down the great hall. The people made way for him, and threw themselves on the ground as he approached; from the hall he passed out into the compound. The news had already spread. The prophecy was fulfilled, the silver hand had been found in Buddha's lap, and lo! it was the stranger's hand. It was he who was ordained to lead them to battle; they were to be great among nations. The Mogul, the Tiger himself, was to bow down before them. And the air was rent with cries; yells of triumph reached to the far-distant corners of the city, and men, women, and children came running from all parts. A space had been kept in the immediate vicinity of the hero, and round him all the great men, the princes, the chieftains, all who were reckoned worthy of such honour, surrounded him.

Gradually there came over André St. Lubin's soul a feeling that he was no longer himself, but a man who had lived in times past, that now he had come back into the world to do some especial work, after which he would disappear again.

His face, which had always been so mobile, became set and hard; he saw the people surging round him, he heard their cries, but they did not move him; he was petrified, a block of stone even as Buddha himself.

Thus he was carried all round the city, always with his hand raised (indeed, seeing that he would not be able to hold it aloft, Scindia had taken a place beside him, and with his own hand supported his arm). But André was aware of nothing; like a man in a dream he felt himself carried on. Would it never come to an end? At last the bearers paused before the Pearl Mosque. They mounted the steps and stood in front of the great dome; then something awoke within him a sense of revolt. "I will not enter," he said. "It is enough; put me down;" but before they could obey him he had placed a hand on each shoulder of his bearers, and leapt lightly to the ground. To his astonishment he felt his arm gripped, and heard Sandy's voice close to his ear saying: "I knew you wouldna worship in the temple of Baal." As he spoke he took off his Scotch bonnet and put it on André's head. André never really realized how, but he found himself on the edge of the crowd, running for dear life.

CHAPTER XVII

A Surprise

PHYLLIS and her mother threw themselves eagerly into the work of preparing for Mrs. Burgess, and the men watched and encouraged them. The restoration of the old house was more important to them for the time being than the news of battles lost or won. After much trouble and considerable danger Mrs. Burgess arrived at Madras, but, alas! she was well-nigh brokenhearted when she was told of her brother's death and Robert's departure for the seat of war. She was naturally inclined to melancholy, therefore it took the greater hold on her. Frank's departure for India had been a grievance, but that Robert should have left her was more than she could endure. She wept incessantly. In vain Mrs. Rayner and Phyllis sought to console her. She was inconsolable. Robert had always been her darling.

She refused to speak to Frank. His offence was unpardonable; he had no right to let his brother go. And Ursula! she had been sent for purposely for the child, and she too was gone. What was there left for her to do?

"Why, Aunt Louisa, do you not think Frank and I need looking after? We are a couple of poor bachelors; you must take pity on us. I know it is very different from what you expected, but the worst is over, and Madras is picking herself up. I heard

the other day that the officers at Fort St. Williams were talking of giving a ball. Susan will have to come out. She is the last importation, and will, I expect, have a great success."

"I cannot understand you, Felix," said his aunt, with considerable dignity and an air of reproach. "I have only just heard of my dear brother's death, the loss of my niece, and Robert's departure, and you talk of balls. It is to my mind scarcely decent." And she turned away.

"You must forgive me, Aunt Louisa," said Felix, "but if you could only realize how everything has been crowded into so short a time. It seems years since my father and Ursula were taken from me. I cannot believe so much has really happened in little more than one year; when I think of it, it is like a dream. Is it not so, Frank?"

"It is indeed," answered his cousin. "You can have no idea, mother, what we have gone through, and Felix is so anxious you should not be oppressed by it all. It is his great desire to shield you and Susan from the effects of all that has happened which makes him speak and act as he does. Is it not better for us all that you should take up life where you find us, not drag us back to that past which we would so gladly forget, as far as it lies in our power to forget."

"You must take your own line of conduct and do as you choose, but I cannot wear a cheerful countenance and go out into the world when my heart is rent with sorrow for the living and the dead," said Mrs. Burgess. And having so spoken she left the room.

"Why do you pay any attention to mother?" said Susan, who throughout the conversation had kept

silence. "It is all very terrible," and tears gathered in the girl's eyes, "and of course it is a great shock. I am almost tempted to say with mother: 'What is the use of our having come out?' But if you think we can make things better for you, why then it is all right. I will do my best, but you must not expect much from mother; she always has some fancied grievance, and now she has a real one you must just let her air it. If only you had not let Bob go, Frank!"

"That was my doing," said Felix; "it was better to let him go under authority than to have him run away again, which is what he would have done."

"I am sure he would," said Susan; "but in that case mother could not have blamed you."

"I think we can survive it," said Felix. "But I really am sorry; you are likely to have such a bad time of it. Frank and I will do our best for you, and there are some nice people who are sure to call as soon as it is known you have arrived."

Susan laughed: "You may rest assured that mother will not receive callers for six months at least," she said, "and then only the chosen few. We have our mourning to get; that will be an occupation. Though how we are to wear bombasine and crape in this climate is more than I can imagine!"

"You must not dream of such a thing," said Felix. "I will drive you out to the Rayners' this evening, and they will tell you how to manage. If you must wear black, it must be of the thinnest. I should have thought something white would have done for you."

"I am sure I wish it would," she said eagerly. "I have brought such sweet white frocks out with me. I could not help crying this morning when that black

woman was unpacking them, and going into ecstasies over them. Suddenly she sank down on the floor and began crying too, calling out: 'Sahibah Ursula!' I suppose she meant my little cousin, and that the white frocks made her think of her."

"That's about it," said Felix; "but you must not let that trouble you. Ursula was simply adored by the natives, and they mourn for her passionately."

"I am told you have never been able to find out whether she is dead or alive," said Susan.

There was something cold in his sister's voice, which jarred upon Frank's nerves. He turned sharply to her, saying: "Susan, we never speak of our darling; we are waiting for her to come back to us;" and with that he left the room. Felix did not resume the conversation for a few minutes—evidently it was a tender subject, —but at last he said cheerfully:

"I must go to the office, or I shall have Bennett down upon me; the old boy keeps me up to the mark, though it is dull work. I'm afraid we have none of us a real love of business as my father had. As long as he was alive, and there was the home, it was all right, but it has never been the same since his death. There, you see, we always go back to the old sad subject; you must get us out of the habit, Susan. At all events we'll go for a good drive to-night and we'll pick Phyllis up. I want you to know her; she's been so awfully plucky all through the trouble. I hope you will like her." Then he left the room.

Certainly Felix did not know much about girls, or he would not have made that speech. Left alone, Susan threw herself into a lounge and reflected: "I don't believe I shall like that girl the least little bit. I believe she's the goody-goody sort. I heard Frank

talking to mother about a Refuge, and what fine work this Phyllis had done during the famine among the Indian children; now I don't mean to be made to do anything of the sort. It is quite enough to have one missionary in the family; in fact I am afraid life is going to be anything but cheerful out here —what between Phyllis the good and St. Ursula! Privately, I believe that child must have been a little horror. Mother always said so. Well, we shall see;" and, partly overcome by the heat, she fell into a comfortable sleep, from which she was roused by Felix's voice saying laughingly:

"Who was to be ready to drive with me?"

"Oh, I am so sorry!" she exclaimed, jumping up. "I will not keep you waiting long." And she disappeared, to return in the space of a quarter of an hour a perfect Hebe of freshness, in white muslin, white ribbons, and white bonnet, all of the last London fashion, which had not yet reached Madras. Felix looked at her with surprise and a certain degree of pleasure. As we have said before, she was not really pretty, but she had all the freshness of an English girl, and her long sea voyage had given her such an appearance of health as was not often seen in India.

Felix looked at her with admiration, and said laughingly: "Why, Susan, you will make all the ladies of Madras jealous, and I shall make all the men hate me! There's not a girl in the whole Presidency can hold a candle to you."

Susan blushed and giggled, saying: "I expect you're a long way behind in the fashions out here, Cousin Felix."

"I guess we are," said Felix; "at all events I have never seen anything like you before." And,

taking her hand, he led her to an open carriage, which was waiting for them, and lifted her in, for it was swung on high wheels, and, taking the reins, drove through Madras with considerable satisfaction.

Susan's good temper returned, especially as she became aware that more than one person turned round to look at her. She began to think it was not such a bad place after all, and that it was just possible she might realize some portion of her dream. To be driving with a handsome young man, the observed of all observers, was by no means a bad beginning. This feeling of self-satisfaction was rather increased than diminished when, having jumped down and entered a bungalow, Felix returned with what seemed to her a plain and decidedly shabbily dressed girl. "So that is the wonderful Phyllis!" she thought, and inwardly laughed at the mere idea of such a rival. After all, she was only a clerk's daughter, quite a common person! But Felix did not seem to think so. He helped Phyllis into the gig as carefully as he had helped her; and all the time, after he had introduced the two girls to each other, he talked to her. It seemed quite natural; they had so much to say to each other. Several times Phyllis turned to Susan, asking her about England and her voyage, telling her how anxious they had all been when no news came of them. "After all," she said, "it was for the best, for it would have been terrible for you to arrive in the middle of that famine."

Somehow she found Susan anything but responsive; but in her charity she put it down to her feeling strange, and the effect of all the bad news she had heard.

"She'll be all right in a week or two," she thought.

But in a week or two they were no better acquainted. Indeed Susan had managed to administer two or three sharp remarks, which hurt Phyllis not a little.

One morning she had come into town with her father, and, not finding Felix at the office, she had gone on to the house. But he had left early with Frank, and Susan was lounging in the veranda alone, whilst the khansamah was superintending the preparations for breakfast. Phyllis ran up the steps, and, holding out her hand to Susan, said laughingly: "Felix has gained a march on me, and yet I did so want to see him."

"Is it customary in Madras for young ladies to pay such early visits to their bachelor acquaintances?" said Susan coldly.

Phyllis flushed crimson. "My father brought me in," she answered, "because the business is of importance and must be seen to at once. Besides," she continued, "we three are rather more than acquaintances. You forget, or you do not perhaps know, Miss Burgess, that Frank, Felix, and I have worked together for over six months; we are friends. I never thought I was doing anything strange in coming to see Felix on business. I am sorry to have shocked you," she added quickly.

"Oh I dare say it's all right!" said Susan with a short laugh. "You are very primitive here in India, calling each other by your Christian names; and, after all, your father is only my cousin's clerk. We make distinctions in England."

Phyllis's eyes opened wide. The vulgarity of the whole thing was so appalling! She felt inclined to laugh, but she restrained herself, and said quite carelessly:

"I suppose we are less punctilious than in England. I had almost forgotten; we have gone through so much in the last year that we have grown careless of the little etiquettes of life and the difference of stations. That sort of thing seems so trifling when people are dying round you, and the whole atmosphere is laden, so to speak, with tears. You have never felt like this, so you cannot understand; but it must be my excuse if I have seemed over bold with your brother and cousin. We have been thrown so much together; we have worked and thought and planned together. Even now I cannot do without them; I should be sorry if I could. I must ask you, as I cannot see Felix, to tell him that there is something wrong with the roof at the Orphanage, and I should be glad if he would send a workman to look at it. Goodbye!"

This time she did not hold out her hand, but just nodded her head, ran down the steps of the veranda, and sprang on to her pony, which a syce had been holding, and so rode away. She soon recovered herself, and was rather amused than offended with what had just occurred.

"She's very young, and only a schoolgirl," she thought; "she knows nothing of life. I suppose I do not know much myself! Possibly to a certain extent she may be right. Frank and Felix and I have grown very familiar with each other, but I am sure there is nothing wrong in that; and we have been very happy. I suppose we shall have to pay more attention to our manners, and I shall have to remember that I am only the clerk's daughter! I don't mind that." She gave her head a little toss, touched her pony with the whip, and rode on. If anyone had looked critically at her, they might have

seen that the blue eyes were clouded. She turned a corner sharply, and there, coming at a quick trot, were both Felix and Frank. They reined up beside her.

"Anything wrong, Phyllis?" asked Felix.

"Only something with the pipes and the roof," she answered. "And so I rode in with father to speak to you about them. I wish you would send a man to see after them, Mr. Carmichael."

"Of course I will; but I'll come round and have a look at them myself first," he said. "But why are you turning your back to the house, and why am I Mr. Carmichael? We are hurrying in to breakfast. Come with us; Susan will be down. It is no longer a bachelor establishment, you know, but a respectable family house." And both he and Frank laughed.

"Thanks! not to-day," answered Phyllis. "I saw Miss Burgess, and I gave her my message for you. Goodbye!" And, nodding her head, she rode away.

"Something has gone wrong with Phyllis," said Felix. "I wonder whether the two girls have quarrelled."

"More than likely," answered Frank. "I noticed that Susan was inclined to be condescending and snappish with Phyllis the other day. After all, we must remember Susan is only just seventeen and a schoolgirl; her present exalted position may have partially turned her head. I shall have to give her a talking to. I heard her saying to mother: 'Phyllis Rayner; she's only the clerk's daughter, but she gives herself ridiculous airs of familiarity with both Cousin Felix and Frank. I think you ought to speak to her. It is not decent for her to call them plain Frank and Felix.'"

"And what did your mother answer?" asked Felix with a note of irritation in his voice.

"I did not hear properly, only something about, 'She could not really be troubled.' I made up my mind then to give Susan a talking to. We cannot let Phyllis be molested."

"Certainly not," answered Felix; "and I'm of opinion that she has had a bad time of it this morning. There was a look in her eyes I did not like." With that they both rode on in silence.

But another event of still greater importance happened a few days later, which threw everything else into the shade.

Felix was at work in his office one morning, when Raman opened the door and came up softly to him, saying: "Sahib, there is a strange man asking for you!"

"Well, show him in. What's his name?" said Felix.

"Dr. Fergusson, he says," answered Raman doubtfully.

"Fergusson? I seem to have heard the name before. Show him in."

A second later and a tall man, with grizzled beard, tired face, and travel-stained clothes stood before him.

"You are Felix Carmichael?" he asked, holding out his hand.

The young man took it instantly.

"I am Felix Carmichael," he answered; "and who may you be, sir?"

"Dr. Fergusson, an old friend of your mother's. I have crossed India to tell you that your sister is living."

"Ursula!" exclaimed Felix. He had risen to meet his guest. Now he staggered and laid hold of a chair

to steady himself. Unceremoniously the doctor pushed him into it.

"I am an old fool!" he said. "I might have known it would be a shock to you. But joy is said not to kill; you will be all right in a few seconds."

"Indeed I'm all right now," answered Felix. "Pray sit down and tell me all you have to tell me. I do not understand rightly, I fear. Have you really seen Ursula?"

His voice trembled, and there were tears in his eyes as he asked the question.

Without hesitation the doctor answered him. "I have both seen and spoken with the child. Do you think I would have come half across India if there had been any doubt in my mind as to who she is?"

So saying he let himself fall into the chair Felix had pushed towards him, and told his story—how he had met Ursula, and how he had recognized her.

"It is marvellous," said Felix; "it sounds like a fairy tale. Do you really mean to say she has been living all this time at Scindia's Court, and that she has forgotten all about us and her past life?"

"That is the case," answered Dr. Fergusson. "She must have experienced a very severe shock, and was kept under opiates, which not only destroyed her health, but affected the tissues of her brain. Fortunately a very clever Frenchman who has been a long time in India, and had become acquainted with Indian remedies, came across her. I cannot tell you all the particulars now. He administered certain medicines which restored her health, but not her memory, or only partially. Besides, that woman Krishna has been careful to keep her as much as possible in the dark, never speaking English to her, or reminding her of anything

in the past. The Frenchmen (by the by there were two of them), agents from the French king, on the contrary, always spoke their own language with her, and she evidently understood them from the first. They are both splendid men, and perfect gentlemen; in fact, men of noble birth, who, like so many others, have been driven to seek their fortunes in India as adventurers. An accident which crippled André St. Lubin caused me to be very intimate with them both; indeed it is due to him that we obtained our liberty, and, following him to Agra, discovered your sister. I have told you that I knew your mother when she was a girl even younger than Ursula. The likeness is striking; I could not be mistaken."

"Why did you not bring her away with you?" said Felix.

"How could I?" answered the doctor. "Krishna told me you had been all killed, and that she had saved the child. I came to see how far this was true. I knew the firm must be still in existence, and there were the child's rights to be considered."

"Of course," said Felix. "If you will allow me, I will call my cousin, Frank Burgess, and we will consult together. He has been my right hand through all this trouble. Until within the last month or two we have been alone together. Then my father's sister came out with her daughter. She started for India before my father's death, and only knew of our misfortunes after her arrival. It has been a great shock to her."

"It has been a veritable tragedy," said the doctor.

"Yes, and all in the space of one short year," said Felix, as he rang the bell.

Dr. Fergusson had come to the office when from enquiries which he made he found out that the son of Robert Carmichael was living and at the head of the

business. He had only arrived the day before, after a long and wearisome journey across country.

To the man who had answered his summons Felix said:

"Tell Mr. Bennett that I want him at once, and send to the house for Mr. Frank Burgess. Ask him also to come without delay."

Bennett was soon on the spot, was introduced to Dr. Fergusson, and heard the tale.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed; "our little girl will come back to us; but Krishna, how can she have dared do such a thing?"

"I think," answered the doctor, "her first idea must have been to save the child's life. Then, her Indian nature gaining the ascendancy, and Scindia coming upon the scene, she thought she would make a great queen or goddess of her. Why she adminstered opium to the degree she did I cannot quite imagine—from ignorance, I should surmise—she could not know the effect on so delicate an organization. Of course the child must have died or gone mad if it had not been for Count Raymond and young André St. Lubin. They saved her, but I warn you she has not recovered her memory, she does not remember her former life, she is conscious only of all her present surroundings. She speaks French and Hindustani, but very little English; indeed I believe that myself and Sandy are the only persons who have spoken English to her. She was generally believed to be French."

"And you do not think she will know us?" said Felix.

At that moment Frank came in, and again the story had to be retold.

"The only thing to be done," he said, "is for you and for me to go and bring her back, Felix. Of

course the doctor had no authority to act. They probably would not have let him take her. We will start without delay. You will go back with us, sir?" he said, turning to Dr. Fergusson.

"You must give me breathing time," he answered. "I have been travelling for over six weeks, and I am wellnigh done up. The difficulties are considerable for travellers in these times. We never know whether we are with enemies or friends, whether the countries we are passing through are favourable to the English or not. Fortunately Scindia sent an escort with me, so we managed to get through. Now it will be the going back again."

"Will a week's rest suffice you?" said Frank eagerly.

"We will do all we can for you," added Felix. "My house is at your service. If you will accompany us now I will take you there and introduce you to my aunt; and my own servant, Raman, will see that you lack for nothing.

"It will take us nearly a week to make our arrangements," he continued. "Bennett, I turn everything over to you. It is a good thing you are my partner."

"I will do my best," said Bennett. "To see that child's face again will repay me for any trouble or anxiety." And he turned away to hide the tears which filled his eyes.

So the doctor was taken to the house, and there was not an individual who would not have served him on his knees. "He had seen the 'baba Ursula'. He knew where she was, and they were going to fetch her home." The news spread far and wide, the house was besieged with enquiries, but on no account was the doctor allowed to be disturbed.

Two men of the escort Scindia had given him had

come as far as Madras with him, and would return with them. Every possible arrangement for a rapid and easy journey was made: relays of horses, the Government gharry-daks were ordered to meet them at every station on the road, letters from the Governor-General recommending them to the native chiefs and rajahs were procured, and so, in ten days from the time Dr. Fergusson first saw Felix, they were on their way to Agra.

CHAPTER XVIII

Count Raymond

André was now no longer master of his actions. He was installed in a palace of his own; every honour was paid him; he had troops of servants; Scindia himself consulted him on every subject. He was presented to the whole army as their commander-in-chief; the people, as he passed along the street, bowed down in homage before him; his every movement was watched; guards filled his courtyard; he was verily, as he said, nothing better than a state prisoner.

One thing he had insisted upon immediately, and that was that a messenger should be sent to Count Raymond desiring that he would come to him at Agra. With his own hand André had written to him:

"Dear Cousin,

"A wonderful thing has happened. It is impossible for me to tell it to you by writing, but your presence is absolutely necessary. Sufficient to say that the command of the army of the Mahratta Confederacy has been given to me, and nothing I can say or do will persuade them to understand that I am not fitted for the position. When you receive this do not hesitate an hour, but come straight back with the messengers. Do not trouble about your journey; everything will be prepared for you. Horses or elephants will be at your command. Materially your fortune is made, and mine

too, if we survive this period of trial. The doctor and Sandy are still with me, but the doctor will probably have started for Madras before your arrival. Sandy I will never part with, though he resents everything, and is mightily angry at the turn events have taken.

"I will write you no more. I only entreat you to come with all speed.

"Your cousin,

"André St. Lubin."

And so Count Raymond came with all possible speed. He was hurried on by the messengers sent for him; relays of horses, elephants, and palkis awaited him at every station. He was served with royal state, but he had to move on. The same feeling grew upon him as André had experienced; he was a part of a cause, he no longer belonged to himself. When he entered Agra all the great men of the city came out to meet him; he was conducted to André's palace as if he too had been a royal personage.

He was confounded when he heard the story of what had taken place, but his maturer mind seized the position as André's could not; and when the two at last found themselves alone, he, as it were, unravelled the difficulties which lay before them.

"It is a splendid thing," he said to St. Lubin; "we have before us opportunities such as we could never have imagined falling to our lot, and we must make the most of them. Scindia has concluded a sort of peace with the English, but it will not last, and then there are all the neighbouring provinces with their rajahs, who envy the Mahrattas, and keep up a sort of petty warfare with them; they must be reduced

to submission. Tippoo Sahib is now the great man. He is master since the fall of Bednore and the treaty to which the rulers of Madras have consented as a termination of their struggle with that monster. He has insulted the English commissioners. Such was their fear of him that, after being detained weeks before they could obtain admission to his presence, they planned to escape to the English ships lying in the roads. Now, however, a treaty has been made, and Tippoo has caused the following inscription to be put up on the walls of Seringapatam: 'The English commissioners stood with their heads uncovered, and the treaty in their hands, for two hours, using every form of flattery and supplication to induce compliance. The vakeels of Poona and Haidarabad united in the most abject entreaties, and His Majesty, the Shadow of God, was at last softened into assent.' The basis of this treaty was the restoration of mutual conquests. British prisoners were all released, no fewer than 180 officers, 9000 British soldiers, and 2000 sepoys were rescued from the dungeons of Seringapatam. Their accounts of the treatment they had received are beyond measure horrible.

"Thus it is that Tippoo Sahib is for the present master, but it will not last. The feeble rulers of Madras will be removed, the English will not stand such humiliation, and there is a man, Warren Hastings, who will change the face of all things. We must therefore profit by the present state of things, and crush the King of Mysore. The English want money, they must have it, and they will drain all the petty rajahs of India to obtain it. Scindia will hold his own, and we must help him. That is our policy; do you understand?"

"I believe I do," said St. Lubin; "I shall depend upon you entirely for counsel. This idea, that I am an 'incarnation' sent by their gods to lead them to battle and to conquest, obliges me to keep the exalted position I have been placed in. I shall be commander-in-chief in name, you *de facto*. The great thing now is to train these Mahrattas into organized bodies of soldiers. Their cavalry is, we know, magnificent; the English themselves say it is the one great thing they dread; we must make the most of it. And now," he said, with something of a return to his old self, "it is no use troubling; I feel a different man since you are by me. Let us speak of something which lies nearer my heart. We have found out to whom Ursula belongs, and how she came amongst the Mahrattas, and the doctor has been dispatched to Madras to make sure there is no mistake. She is said to be the daughter of Robert Carmichael, merchant and banker at Madras." And then he told Count Raymond what we already know. "The doctor saw Ursula before he left," he continued, "and he talked to her, speaking of things which he knew must be familiar to her, and by degrees the past came back to her, not quite clearly evidently, but sufficiently to arouse her feelings. She has not been told that her father was killed; we will leave that to her own people. The doctor was sent by Scindia, accompanied by a troop of horse, as a messenger from him to the Governor of Madras. By this means the doctor's personal safety was secured. No one would touch an ambassador, and so he is sure to reach Madras with speed, and probably will return with some of the family to fetch the child. Scindia has behaved well towards her,

and this will certainly be to his advantage. Ursula lives in a house outside the walls. At first I had considerable difficulty about seeing her, and could only do so by becoming her teacher, but now I have no such trouble. She is not looked upon as an ordinary Indian girl; from the first she was surrounded with a strange superstition, as you will remember. She was considered to have been sent to Scindia by the gods. Up to the time of her coming, his wife had borne him no children; now they have a son, and it is believed that she has brought them this blessing. Then it was Ursula who found this wonderful hand of mine, and again it is said that the gods showed it to her. They call her 'The Blessed One'. Scindia fears greatly that the people will rise and will not allow her to be taken from them. Himself he is unwilling to part with her, and when it is spoken of before his wife, the Princess Laily, she weeps and will not hear of it; so I expect we shall have some difficulty. However, if her people are determined to take her, they will have to let her go, or there will be trouble with England.

"Will you go with me to see her to-morrow morning early, before the people are abroad? Sandy will take care the road is clear; for I can assure you I can hardly move without being followed."

Thus it happened that Ursula was surprised at an early hour on the following day to see Count Raymond, André, and Sandy coming across the compound. She had been sitting listlessly on the veranda; since the doctor had talked to her and tried to awaken her memory she had often sat thus, striving to reconstruct the past. She found great difficulty in making Krishna speak to her of it.

"They will take you away," she said, "and you will not be happy. Your life is lovely here; what do you need? If you go back to your own people, it will be cold and dreary, you will have to learn all manner of things which will weary you, you will no longer sit idle amongst your flowers and birds, you will have no beautiful palace to live in, they will part you from the princess and the babe."

At this Ursula wept, and Krishna continued: "The English hate the French. They will not let you speak with the young Count, and yet he has saved your life; he is your friend."

"Yes," said Ursula, "he is my friend," and a sweet smile came over her face, and she remained thoughtful.

That was what she was doing now, still in her Indian dress of glimmering blue and silver, falling in graceful folds to her sandalled feet. As we have said, she had grown tall and slim, the child disappearing in the girl; and, strange to tell, Sandy, who was bitter towards everyone, hating the Hindus, detesting the life he was called upon to lead, loved this child. He was her slave, never content but when he was fetching and carrying for her. He flattered Krishna, offered to do all manner of services for her, brought her choice fruits from the bazaar, and was always at hand to help in the house or the garden, if only he might see his idol.

When the doctor had left for Madras he thought that Sandy would accompany him, but he did not.

"Those two young people may want me," he said. "They have got nothing but the darkies about them; an honest white face won't come amiss." And so he had remained.

When Ursula saw the three coming, she rose and moved languidly down the steps of the veranda to meet them. She had been very languid of late; the weather was hot, and she felt it, and yet there was no question of going away to higher regions She was so weary sometimes she could scarcely move, and lay whole days on a couch with the punkah giving her what air there was.

"You are tired, little one," said André, coming up to her.

"Yes, I am tired," she said, "oh, so tired, André!"

"You must go up into the hills," he said; "I will see to it. Here is my cousin, Raymond." Ursula held out her hand to the Count.

She spoke French with that delicate intonation of voice which makes a language, of itself sweet, sweeter. The Count bowed over the small, white hand.

Then they went back to the veranda, and Krishna brought the early breakfast, consisting of coffee, chapatees, and all manner of good things, but Ursula once more laid herself down on the couch listlessly, and would not partake of anything but a cup of coffee which Sandy brought her, saying coaxingly:

"Drink ye this, missie; it will do you good."

He always spoke English to her, he and the doctor, and somehow, without being aware of it, she understood. The doctor had observed this to André one day. "You see," he said, "the knowledge is not gone; it is only dormant. She must have had a great shock, and only what she has heard and seen since has come back to her; but it is all there, as occasion offers it will return."

"And you think she will remember everything?" said André.

"Not everything, perhaps," answered the doctor, "but most things."

Count Raymond could not but notice the beauty of their surroundings. The lawns and gardens were exquisite; the great trees waved to and fro, creating a natural breeze, scented by flowers. The little house itself was trellised with creeping plants, oriental flowering shrubs grew in clumps here and there. And then the stillness! Save for the singing of the birds it was dreamlike. There seemed to be no world beyond the precincts of that garden. He understood that the child was loath to leave it. She had, so to speak, passed through a cloud, from which she had emerged into light. She had no desire to go forth again; children seldom have any desire to leave their homes. So he sat down beside her, and spoke to her soothingly.

"You will be leaving us," he said, "and André will be sad. Why must you go? The people love you; your life is pleasant to you; stay with us."

"But the doctor says," she answered, "that these are not my people, and that my own have been sorrowing for me; so if they come to fetch me, I shall have to go."

"Not of necessity," said Count Raymond. "You have but to say a word to Scindia and he will send you with the princess to one of his other palaces up in the north among the hills, and they will not find you."

"Then my people will be angry," said Ursula, "and they will make war with Scindia, and there will be battles and bloodshed. Ah!" she said, rising suddenly, "I remember. They came with spears and fire, and

I saw men fall to the ground wounded, and then there were the flames, and shrieks fell upon my ears, and—and—I forget." She dropped back into her seat and covered her face with her hands. "I will have no fighting," she murmured, "no bloodshed." After that she did not speak again for some time. Then she looked at André and said: "Sing to me, André. You know, the morning song, the *Te Deum*." And André sang to her with his full, clear voice, and when he had finished they looked at her, and she was asleep.

Count Raymond bent over her, examined her face and touched her hands; then, lifting himself up, he said:

"Let her sleep; it is nature doing its own work. She is struggling and striving, and nature is helping her, but," he added, "she is very fragile. Whether she will be strong enough to bear the struggle is another question. Let her sleep."

Softly they all left her, and she remained alone on the veranda, and Krishna sat on a cushion beside her, and flicked away the flies, and crooned an old Hindoo ditty, and Ursula slept through the long hours of that day. She awoke for neither food nor drink.

Where had her soul flown to? And, when it returned to her, would she remember?

The day was over, the sun was set. Two men in European dress pushed open the great gate leading into the garden. Another man followed them, an elderly man. He touched one of his companions on the arm.

"There she is," he said.

The two went quickly forward. A cry escaped Krishna; she sprang from her seat, and ran away, crying: "Sahib Felix! Sahib Frank!" But they both held up their hands. The child was still sleeping.

Then Felix went forward and bent over her. His eyes were full of tears as he gazed at that beautiful vision. She looked so fragile, as if she would have passed away with a breath; but she was smiling in her sleep. The troubling and the weariness which had been there when she lay down were gone now; she was rested.

"My little sister!" Felix whispered, and straightway she opened her eyes.

He fell on his knees beside her. Still she looked at him.

"My little sister!" he repeated once more, and she lifted her hands. The smile grew brighter. She said quite clearly:

"Felix! Dear Felix!"

Then he took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Thank God I have found you, Ursula!" he said.

"Yes, thank God!" she answered.

With Indian hospitalities Scindia entertained them; indeed he and Felix became great friends. It seemed for the time being as if they had all forgotten their national and political existences and were friends and equals. Count Raymond and St. Lubin fraternized with the newcomers, and naturally they talked not a little of the wonderful things which had befallen St. Lubin, and the position which he had suddenly attained to.

"I cannot understand it in the least," said André to Frank, "and I cannot say I like it. There is some mystery which is so far unfathomable. This hand," and he showed him the silver hand, "must have been modelled upon my own; it is exactly the same. The mechanism is marvellous." He touched the knob in the palm, and removed it, showing him all the strings, which worked so easily. "I can hold my reins, I can

guide my horse, I can do anything now with this hand," he said, "and when I have my glove over it no one would know but that it is my own. Yet I cannot discover who made it, or how it came to be in the place where we found it. Myself I believe that woman Krishna and the Brahmin priest to be at the bottom of it. The whole of the Mahratta army are so fully persuaded of its power that they will not go out to the smallest skirmish unless I am at their head, and when I am with them there is nothing they will not dare to do."

"Then we shall have to reckon with you," said Felix, laughing, "if Scindia turns his arms against us again."

"Which I will do my best to prevent," said St. Lubin, "at least in so far as the native chiefs are concerned; but of course I am not responsible; I can only go where I am bidden, and personal feelings cannot regulate our actions."

"Of course not," answered Felix; "but I pray you to remember that if ever you are in any difficulties, and care to apply to me, I will take your case up to the Government and do my best to extricate you. If you are made prisoner by any of the rajahs or nabobs we English have means at our disposal which we will immediately use in your favour. I can never do too much after what you have done for my sister."

"Ah," said André, "you must not say that! She has been like an angel to me, and when she goes out of my life she will be still in my heart. I shall never forget her."

Very gently Felix and Frank broke the inevitable to Ursula; for, knowing how attached she was to the princess and her surroundings, they feared the effect of parting upon her. But they were mistaken, for when

URSULA RIDES OUT OF AGRA ESCORTED BY SCINDIA AND ST. LUBIN

they told her that they must return to Madras, she answered them quite calmly:

"Of course you must go, and I must go with you."

All her reason had come back to her; her mind, which apparently had been dormant, suddenly awoke. The strong religious influence which André had exerted over her showed itself. She picked up her former life with Frank quite naturally, she told him how she had always remembered that the gods of the Indians were not her gods, but that St. Lubin's God and his Christ had always seemed her own. What had appeared mystical about her was, in fact, the development of a strong spiritual nature. Frank recognized this; he recognized also in her what exists in few: an intense love of all that was holy, all that was pure. It was an untrained nature, but it was a nature such as God had created it, perfectly unspoilt. Through all the varying changes of her young life she had remained "unspotted from the world". She knew no evil and she thought no evil; all things to her were good.

The Indians to her were the same as the Europeans. Had they not loved her and cared for her, and should not she love and care for them?

But now, without teaching, without telling, there came to her the intuitive knowledge that she must follow her own people. They had come to fetch her, and she was bound to go with them.

So, though she wept bitterly at parting with the princess and the baby prince, though she clung to St. Lubin, and leaned against him as she had so often done when she was tired, still she did not demur. Their paths lay apart; she must follow Felix.

The news of who she was, indeed her whole story, had spread quickly throughout the city of Agra, and

it came to pass that on the day of her departure a great concourse of people hung about the streets waiting to bid her farewell. Had not her coming amongst them been blest? A son had been born to Scindia; she had found the Silver Hand; the prophecy was fulfilled; St. Lubin was in their midst to lead them to victory!

She rode out of Agra on her dear horse, Mirza, and Scindia and St. Lubin rode on either side of her. They accompanied her a whole day's journey, then they bade her farewell.

Ursula bore herself bravely. If tears filled her eyes, she brushed them away and smiled her *au revoir*.

Dr. Fergusson returned to Madras, but not Sandy MacIvor. He would not leave St. Lubin. His motto was: "Faithful unto death!"

CHAPTER XIX

In the Jungle

The travellers had hoped to slip quietly through the country, but they soon became aware that even during the comparatively short time of their residence in Agra the country had become far more turbulent. A spirit of rebellion had manifested itself among the native chiefs, and the whole country was in a state of restlessness and disorder. The principal object of detestation was Shah Allum, the great Mogul, and Nabob of Oudh, who was now virtually a prisoner in the hands of these petty chiefs.

Scindia had known something of this before his friends left Agra, and he had done his best for their protection by giving them a guard of twenty men to conduct them on their way. The doctor, Frank, Felix, Ursula, Krishna, and their personal attendants, brought their number up to thirty. They had tents and all the necessary appliances for camping out. Every precaution had been taken to avoid friction and to ensure their safety; Felix was provided with papers signed by both Scindia and St. Lubin of the "Silver Hand", for by that name he was now well known. He had also taken the precaution, before leaving Madras, to procure letters of commendation to all the petty rajahs and chiefs through whose dominions they might have to pass. Nevertheless they were aware, especially the doctor, that if a wild band of Mahrattas or of any other hostile tribe were to attack

them, these papers would be of little or no use. Besides there were the dacoits to be reckoned with, and possibly a still more dangerous enemy, namely, a people known throughout India as forest and hill tribes, a wandering people, not mingling with others, and speaking a dialect of their own. They were something like the European gipsies.

They were divided into two tribes, Korahams and Korackas. There was very little difference between them, but the Korama considered himself more respectable than his brother Koracho.

They lived in camps consisting of a score or more little huts made of strips of bamboo, with matting stretched over a framework of poles. The whole front was open, and constituted the doorway, outside which the women had their cooking place.

Pigs, dogs, and fowls wandered about, making a constant din.

"Above it all the piercing tones of women's voices rise from time to time, as a fierce battle of words is waged. Quarrels wage all day."

These gipsies were highway robbers, devil worshippers, polygamists, and hardened drunkards.

Their business was to kill travellers, as did the Thugs. They would get them into conversation, find out if they had any valuables, and, if they had, they would give signs to each other, something would be spoken of, something dropped. Then suddenly the folds of a woman's cloth would cover the traveller's head, and he would either be strangled or hacked to death by the men's hooked knives.

This was one of the great dangers of the jungle, to which the doctor knew the party would be especially exposed. For the women's sake they travelled slowly,

camping out at night when they could not reach a village or group of houses before sunset.

As she thus travelled a faint remembrance of her journeying with Scindia came back to Ursula, but with him she had experienced no sense of danger. She had seen camp fires and wild men and women, but they had not come near to them. At sight of Scindia they had prostrated themselves, and he had passed on.

But now fear once more took possession of her; from the moment she parted from André her soul was troubled. She even doubted Krishna. Frank and Felix were as strangers to her; the doctor's was the only face which was really familiar to her, and him she trusted.

"Stay by me," she said one night when they had had a more than usually rough journey, and had pitched their tents not far from a gipsy encampment.

They were in the very heart of the jungle. All day they had at different times heard the growlings of angry beasts, tigers and bears. Once a whole herd of elephants had come tearing and tramping within a short distance of them, tossing their trunks in the air in angry defiance. Every time they had rested to take food, troops of monkeys had gathered round them, jabbering and making faces.

Ursula hid her face in her hands and wept.

If only her friend André had been with her! It seemed to her she would not have been afraid then. In vain Krishna tried to make her go into the tent prepared for them; she shrank away from her. It was then that the doctor spoke to her; he was growing very fond of her for her own sake. The

likeness which had at first attracted him was being merged in her own individual charm, and he spoke softly to her. "You must not be afraid," he said; "nothing shall harm you, little one."

For answer she stretched out her hand and laid hold on him, saying:

"Stay with me."

"Do not fear; I will not leave you," he answered; and when Krishna came again, entreating her to take shelter in the tent, he told her to "fetch coverings and pillows; the Missy Sahibah will lie out beneath the stars; it is better so. I will watch over her," he said; and she was fain to obey, though reluctantly.

The doctor made Ursula lie down on cushions, and covered her up, and talked cheerfully to her all the while. Frank and Felix came also and lay at her feet; and so, surrounded by loving hearts, she closed her eyes and passed into the land of dreams.

Krishna crept away, anger and rage in her heart. She had striven to keep her away from her own people in the hope of seeing her an Indian princess, but now it was useless.

She stole to the back of the tent, and out of the shadow of the trees a man stepped forth, and they spoke together. The man was angry, and threatened her, and she gave him gold; but all the time she looked behind her, evidently in great fear. At last she said something which seemed to satisfy the man, for he disappeared, and Krishna fled into the tent. So the evil thought she had conceived was killed in the bud.

It was still early, but their Indian guides were already preparing for the day's journeying, when they were startled by seeing a company of sepoys, headed by British officers, riding towards them.

Felix instantly rose and went to meet them. The first officer saluted. "Are you Mr. Felix Carmichael?" he asked. "I am," answered Felix.

The officer held out his hand. "Mr. Warren Hastings, the Governor, heard that you were in the neighbourhood, and has sent us to ask you to come to him. He has been called upon to settle the disputes between Shah Allum and the tribesmen, and is now on his way to Lucknow. He thinks that you may help him by your knowledge of the people, and begs you will not delay; we have had considerable difficulty in finding you." Whilst talking, he and the two other officers had dismounted. "I am Major Frith," he said, "and these gentlemen are Lieutenants Carol and Keith."

"Well, gentlemen," said Felix, shaking hands with them, "before we talk business, suppose you refresh yourselves; you must have had a long ride."

"We left the Governor's camp last night," said the major; "he is impatient to see you, and would brook no delay. Is it true that you have found your sister?"

"Quite true," answered Felix; "and here is Dr. Fergusson, of the Scottish Highlanders. He and one other man alone escaped from Bednore."

"That was a terrible affair, a great mistake," said the major. "If you will allow me, I will give orders to my sepoys to pile arms and rest themselves."

During the late troubles in Madras both Felix and Frank had distinguished themselves by the active parts they had taken in organizing assistance. Felix was known to have suffered great pecuniary losses, to say nothing of his domestic misfortunes; the brave

face he put upon things won for him the sympathy of every class.

The two young men themselves hardly realized how popular they had become. Pecuniarily Felix gave largely of his substance, without taking into account his own losses. Sometimes John Bennett was almost roused to anger at what he called his lavish generosity. "What can it signify," Felix would say, "as long as we keep afloat? there will be always more than I shall require." It was for all these reasons combined that Warren Hastings had decided to send for him. He knew that he had ventured into the lion's den, namely, Scindia's capital of Agra, and he hoped that the experience the young man had gained there would serve them now in good stead.

After officers and men had rested themselves, and had partaken of what hospitality Felix was able to offer them, there was a grand consultation, and Dr. Fergusson proposed they should start for the Governor's camp at sunset. Supposing they rested a couple of hours after midnight, he reckoned they would still reach their destination in the morning, before the heat had set in. There was naturally considerable curiosity with regard to Ursula, but she remained in her tent till it was time to start, and then, mounted on Scindia's horse, Mirza, she rode between Felix and the doctor. Naturally she attracted not a little attention; her story was so well known, and her beauty caused every man's eye to turn upon her. She was received with respect and honour by the Governor, Warren Hastings, who insisted upon giving up his tent to her. He thanked Felix for turning out of his way to consult with him upon a subject which, after all, did not concern him.

"Indeed you are wrong there, sir; the settlement of the country concerns us Anglo-Indians deeply," answered Felix. He then told him of his visit to Agra, and of the noble character and high courage of the chief Scindia. He also told him of the two Frenchmen, who were virtually in command of the Mahratta army. "I am of opinion that you should take them into your counsel. Scindia's great ambition is to unite all these petty Mahratta tribes into one body under his own governance. Let England help him to this by herself remaining neutral, in return for which Scindia shall agree to leave the English unmolested."

Many other points were discussed between them, and the Governor was quick to perceive and appreciate Felix's recognition of the many difficulties with which he had to contend. Felix had often heard his father discuss the jealousy and ill-treatment to which Clive had been subjected, so that his sympathies were wholly with the Governor.

It was therefore decided to send a messenger to Scindia, asking him to meet the Governor at Lucknow. This was done, and proved a most satisfactory conclusion. Scindia came to Lucknow, and a treaty was signed, by which he agreed to assist and protect the Nabob and the East Indian Company against the hordes of petty chiefs which infested the country. From this time forth Scindia's power increased enormously.

He required neither encouragement nor assistance from the British; it was quite sufficient for him that they should remain neutral. This they did, leaving to him the power and glory of holding in check all the petty native rajahs.

At the head of the Mahratta forces, leading them

to battle, training them in times of peace, were the two cousins, Raymond de Senlis and St. Lubin of the Silver Hand; the Mahrattas never doubted that it was the presence of that Silver Hand which gave victory to their arms.

A few weeks later the travellers arrived at Madras, and Ursula stood once more a stranger in her father's house. Her aunt and Susan received her with every token of affection. Her "poor lost lamb" Aunt Louisa called her.

CHAPTER XX

Untrained

THE whole of Madras vied one with another in welcoming Ursula home. As a little motherless child, her father's darling, she had been immensely popular, a plaything petted beyond measure. Her brightness, her beauty, had charmed everyone, and now it was no longer the child Ursula, full of play and laughter, who had returned, but a slim maiden, unusually tall for her age, with a far-away expression in her eyes, as if they had looked on strange things and could not forget. She was very gentle, suffered her aunt to caress her, and received Susan's advances quietly, but without any show of pleasure. They attributed this partially to her imperfect understanding of English.

It was coming back gradually to her, even as she was remembering people and places. She was very happy when alone with Frank and Felix, but she liked best of all being with the doctor. She watched for his coming, she almost wept when he left her. Either Frank or the doctor fetched her every morning, and took her for long drives or rides into the country. But still the happy look did not come back to her face; it was evident she was fretting.

Mrs. Burgess, or Aunt Louisa as she was usually called, could not manage her at all. She could not understand this nature, as gentle as a dove's but with a persistent determination; she had a will of her own

under that quiet exterior. Aunt Louisa realized this first when, about a fortnight after her return, she went into her room with her Indian maid, carrying a little black frock, and, holding it out to Ursula, said, not unkindly:

"You will wear this, my child; it is right and proper you should do so."

Now Ursula had not been told of her father's death, and she had not asked. She recognized things and persons when she saw them, but she could not gather up the threads of the past. What she did not see she did not understand. So she pushed the frock away, saying quickly:

"No, I will not."

Now, that evening Mrs. Burgess knew some of the fashionable ladies of Madras were coming to congratulate Felix and to see Ursula, and she had taken great pains to have this frock made after the orthodox fashion for little girls. She had succeeded in getting Ursula to leave off the sari—or, rather, Felix and Dr. Fergusson had talked to her. Felix had himself bought her a soft, white silk, which had pleased her, and she was wearing it when her aunt brought in the black frock. But nothing could move her. She would not let them touch her. For the first time she grew angry, stamped her feet, and cried out:

"Take it away, the ugly thing!"

Frank was passing, heard her, and came in.

"What is the matter, mother?" he asked sternly. "What are you doing to the child?"

"Only trying to make her like other children. She must be civilized. You all spoil her so that if I do not take her in hand she will be soon unbearable. She must wear mourning for her father; it is only decent."

"Hush, mother!" said Frank. "Our Ursula 'un-

bearable'! You cannot mean that. Little bear (Ursa)," he continued, using the old familiar nickname, "why are you so naughty?" And he put his arm round her.

"I am not naughty," she answered, "but I will not wear that—" she hesitated, then added quickly, "thing. She," pointing to her aunt, "is in black always. Susan is in black. I will not; it is ugly. For my father?" she said. "Where is my father?" She passed her hand across her brow, while a strange, puzzled look, almost as if she were in pain, came over her face. She was striving to remember, and it hurt her.

At that moment Dr. Fergusson came in, and, seeing that something unusual was going on, of which Ursula was evidently the centre, he asked, looking at Frank:

"Has anything happened?"

In an instant Ursula was beside him, and, holding up her hands, she said:

"My father? for my father? Who is he? Where is he? I cannot understand!"

"Don't try," said the doctor sharply.

"But I ought to; I must! My father!" She repeated the words slowly.

"Ursula, you know when I tell you not to think, you must not. You have been ill. I am making you well, or rather the good God through me; but if you trouble, or try to think unless I tell you, you will never get well. Now go and tell Krishna to put your riding dress on. I will order Mirza to be saddled, and we will ride together."

Obediently she left the room. The doctor turned to Frank, and asked:

"What have you done to her?"

"I have done nothing," answered Frank, "but my mother, thinking she ought to wear mourning for her

father, bought her that frock, and I suppose they quarrelled over it. Ursula hates it."

"Naturally!" answered the doctor. "Madam," he continued, turning to Mrs. Burgess, "I must ask you not to interfere with my patient. She is accustomed to wear white. Let her continue to do so, and do not mention her father to her. I fear you have already done her much mischief." And with that he went out.

"Now I will take you to see something," he said as he lifted Ursula on to her horse.

He noticed that the sweet face was unusually sad; so, as they rode, he told her about Phyllis, and all she had done for the Indian children during the time of famine and pestilence.

"Have I seen her?" asked Ursula.

"Yes, she has been to the house two or three times; that tall, fair girl with the bright hair," said the doctor.

"Oh, I remember!" she answered; "she has a kind face and a gentle voice. I think I could love her."

"Well, we will go and see her," said the doctor.

So after a good ride in the surrounding country, long enough to quiet the child's nerves, he stopped before the new orphanage. Felix had improved it greatly, adding a small annexe on to the original building for kitchen and other purposes; also the ventilation had been improved, and partitions made. A porch had been added, which was already covered with verdure.

As Phyllis heard the horses' tramp she came out and stood in the shade waiting for them, a tall, slim woman with a pale, thoughtful face, and eyes which seemed to be searching in other faces for what they might need. As Ursula's horse drew up before the porch she stepped out and herself lifted the child down and kissed her.

"It is good of you to come and see me," she said.

"I brought her, Miss Phyllis, because she wants comforting," the doctor called out, as he too dismounted and the syce led away the horses.

"Wants comforting?" repeated Phyllis. "Come and see my babies then." And she put her arms round Ursula and led her into the long, cool room. The wide-open windows were shaded by blinds of scented matting, through which the breeze came, for it was evening time. There were only a few of the elder girls about, tidying up the room, but the children's voices were heard in the compound, playing their last game before bedtime.

Ursula stood for a moment astonished; then she said seriously, holding fast by Phyllis's hand:

"Are they all yours?"

Phyllis laughed.

"Yes, they are all mine," she answered, and, picking up a little black urchin rolling on a mat at her feet, she tossed it in the air.

"They are not white children, and yet you love them?" continued Ursula.

"Oh yes, I love them!" answered Phyllis. "I never think whether they are English or Indian. They are God's children, outcasts from the world."

"As I was, only I was white; and yet they took me in and loved me," said Ursula, adding: "I will ask Felix to let me come and live with you," And before they knew what she was doing she ran up to one of the Indian girls about her own age, threw her arms round her, and kissed her, saying in pure Hindustani:

"Take me out there; let me play with you," and she pointed to the compound.

The girl nodded, took her hand, and ran out with her.

In a second she was in the midst of the children,

playing as the doctor had never thought she could play, singing snatches of little native songs, and clapping her hands in sheer joy. And the children gathered round her and kissed her hands; some even knelt to her. They could not have told why. It was pure gracious nature.

Tears filled Phyllis's eyes, and looking at the doctor she saw him brush his hands across his eyes.

"I told you she wanted comforting," he said. "Children die for lack of mothering. She is a grown child; she has a big soul; she cannot live without love. She is starved up there at the big house between those two women. She will die if we do not rescue her. Look at her!"

The prayer bell was ringing from the little turret, silence had fallen upon the children as they ranged themselves by twos and threes and marched into the hall. Last of all came Ursula, between two tiny children, holding each by the hand.

A short prayer, a simple little hymn translated into Hindustani, that was the evening service.

As it died out, a voice, sweet and clear as a silver bell, came floating on the air. The language was strange to their ears, for it was the old Latin version of the *Nunc Dimittis*: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace", &c., which Phyllis and the doctor recognized. They held their breath, listening in wonder, until the last word dropped, as it were, from heaven to earth, and there was silence. Then there arose a murmur of many voices, and the dark children gathered round their white sister, clung to her, knelt to her.

"Stay with us!" they cried.

"She will come back to us," said Phyllis, putting her

arms round the slim, white figure. "Let her be now, and go to bed, all of you, thanking God for your new friend. Good night, children; good night!"

And they obeyed her, the women and elder girls taking the little ones. So they dispersed, Ursula, watching them and waving her hands, wished them good night.

CHAPTER XXI

A Caged Bird

"SHE is as untrained as a savage, and everyone makes such a fuss over her! I have no authority. What shall I do with her? I am at my wits' end. If we were in England I should send her to school," said Mrs. Burgess with a deep sigh.

"Oh, let her alone, mother! you will never make anything of her," answered Susan. "Felix and Frank are both silly over her, and as for the doctor, I won't say what I think! It is a great pity she was ever found; she was much better with her Hindus."

"And I think it a great pity we ever came out here," answered her mother. "I have lost Bob, and I do not believe you are making any way with Felix. Yet you ought to get married."

"How can I when you have refused to go into society, and therefore see so few people? I have not been to a ball yet! After all, I do not care much. I mean to marry Cousin Felix, and not a poor officer."

"Well, you had better look out, for that girl, Phyllis Rayner, is a serious rival."

"Oh no!" answered Susan; "I have settled that long ago. She was overbold, so I let her know that men like Felix did not marry their clerk's daughter. Besides, she is really too plain."

This conversation had been carried on in the drawing-room, a luxuriously furnished apartment opening

out on to the veranda. Ursula was lying in a hammock swung from the roof, but they did not know she was there. She heard only the first part of the conversation concerning herself, then noiselessly she flung herself to the ground, and ran and threw herself on the grass under the shadow of a great overspreading tree. She lay, face downwards, upon her crossed arms.

Thus Phyllis found her. She did not often come to the house now. Susan had made herself intensely unpleasant, so she avoided her. Both Frank and Felix suspected the reason why she kept away, but they did not care to remark upon it, fearing to raise a storm.

Men are cowards where women's quarrels are concerned.

So they just contented themselves by visiting the bungalow more frequently; indeed they felt more at home there than in the big house under present circumstances.

The doctor, however, thought of Ursula more than of anyone else, and spoke to Phyllis about her.

"The child will die if she is not rescued from those two women," he said.

So Phyllis plucked up her courage and rode over to see her. She dismounted outside the entrance gate, telling the syce to wait for her there, and she went round by the shrubbery.

She had not gone far when she perceived something white lying in the grass. She went up to it, and, to her surprise, saw it was Ursula. She sat down beside her on the ground and asked:

"What are you doing here, childie, and why are you crying?"

"I want to go back home to my dear princess and

her Baba. They loved me," answered Ursula with a sob.

"We love you also," said Phyllis. "Your place is here, Ursula, because you are an English girl. If you knew how Felix and Frank grieved when you were lost! They are different men since you have come home, and they are sorry because you are not happy."

"But they," and Ursula pointed to the house, "wish I had never been found. They do not love me." She did not say: "They hate me", because she did not know what hatred meant.

"But they will learn to love you," said Phyllis.

Ursula shook her head. She looked up into her face, and nestled up to her, whispering:

"Take me with you! If I stay here I shall die!"

"But I cannot. Your home is here," answered Phyllis.

"Then I shall die!" repeated Ursula, and she lay down again.

"Who talks of dying? Surely not my little sweetheart?" And Felix came forward. At one glance he saw what was wrong, and guessed the cause.

He and Frank had come to the conclusion that it was hopeless to expect Mrs. Burgess and Susan to understand a nature like Ursula's. They had lived in a groove—a most proper groove,—beyond which they had no idea of extending their experience; but it did not reach Ursula's needs, and they were sorely puzzled. They saw the friction increasing day by day, and they could not check it.

Matters were made worse by the doctor's assurance that, if it continued, Ursula would fall ill again. Krishna scowled at them both, and one day she even ventured to stop Felix and say to him: "Did I not tell you,

Sahib, she could not live where the north wind blows?" And then she passed on.

Now he picked Ursula up, and sat down with her in his arms on the ground beside Phyllis.

"My little girlie, what do you want? Why cannot you be happy?"

She put up her hand and stroked his face.

"I do not know," she answered. "I am afraid. Let me go with Phyllis. She will love me."

"But you must live with me, Ursula, my little sister. My home must be your home."

"Not with Aunt Louisa and Susan. I will not live with them. Krishna says she will carry me back to Agra, and I would gladly go, but still I love you, Felix, my brother. I love you, Felix, and Phyllis, and Frank." And she began weeping again.

"Will you have her, Phyllis?" asked Felix. "I see nothing else for it, at least for a time."

"Indeed I will; at once, if you like," answered Phyllis, for she was frightened at the deathlike whiteness of the child's face.

"Very well. It is just like you, Phyllis. You are always there when one needs you. Listen, Ursula. You will stay with Phyllis, and I will go to the stables and order the dogcart; then I will drive you to the bungalow. I saw your horse at the gate, Phyllis, so I knew you were here. I will also warn Krishna to follow with her clothes. Now, keep quiet till I return."

He put Ursula down beside Phyllis and left them.

"I will do everything you tell me," said Ursula; "I am not afraid of you, because you will love me!"

"Yes, I will love you," answered Phyllis, "and I will teach you, and you will become what you really are—an English girl."

"Am I very different?" she asked.

Phyllis smiled, kissed her, and said: "I never knew anyone at all like you, Ursula dear; you are just your own sweet self."

At that moment Felix drove up in the dogcart. Krishna was with him, radiant. "It is well; all will be well now, my bird," she whispered, as Ursula was lifted into the cart.

"Quick!" said Felix. "I want to get away quietly; I can explain when I come back." He led the horse to the gate, helped Phyllis to mount, and drove away, as pleased and excited as if he had been a boy getting away from school.

The inhabitants of the bungalow were not a little surprised at this unexpected invasion, though for some time past they had felt the clouds gathering—John Bennett especially.

"It can never last," he said to Mrs. Rayner. "If Ursula were like other children it would not so much matter; but she is not, nor ever will be; so there will be a regular breakup one day." But he had not expected it would be so soon.

Frank undertook to make the necessary explanations to his mother.

"You do not understand Ursula, mother. She is not like other girls; she has gone through so much. She is a wild bird suddenly caged. When she is tamed, no doubt you will understand each other better; in the meantime she has taken a fancy to Phyllis, and Felix chooses to humour her. We can have nothing to say against his doing as he thinks right. After all he is her legal guardian.

"The young lady has played her game well," said Susan. "We shall be hearing of a wedding soon."

"Not yours, I am afraid, my poor Frank," said his mother. "Miss Rayner will soar higher. You are a poor man; Felix is rich. Your chances are small, I am happy to say. I should hardly be content for my son to marry his cousin's clerk's daughter."

"Well, mother, as you say, I do not think I shall have the chance," answered Frank. "In the meantime I should feel obliged if you would be civil to Miss Rayner. She is a girl I respect above all others. She has done splendid work, we have been great friends, and I hope we shall continue on the same footing always. We will talk no more on the subject; what is to be will be." And he went his way.

But henceforth the position was a strained one. Mrs. Burgess was aggrieved, and she openly complained to her friends. "I came to India at my brother's request, to keep his house and superintend the education of his daughter, and she is taken away from me and given to a stranger. She is a spoilt child, with shocking Indian habits, quite untrained, and with a dreadful temper, but both Felix and my own son think her perfect, and humour her every whim. They will not allow her to be contradicted. She has taken a fancy to Miss Rayner, so she has gone to stay with her for a time. Of course it cannot last." Such was the plaint she made to everyone who enquired after Ursula. She herself posed as a martyr. But Susan went further. To her girl friends she more than insinuated that Phyllis was playing her part well.

"Phyllis means to marry Cousin Felix," she said; "and, as mother did not like her being always about the house, she coaxed Ursula to live with her. Naturally both Felix and Frank are continually at the bungalow. It is very dull for us." Thus she also claimed her

share of pity, and the general opinion was that Mrs. Burgess ought to have had the management of Ursula, and that the two young men were simply infatuated. Still, it was agreed Ursula could get only good from Phyllis.

It was strange, and an unusual thing, that everyone thought well of Phyllis. She had won all hearts, and every voice was raised in her favour. She worked so hard; she was so modest! Her father had been unfortunate, and she had turned to and done the best she could; and though many of the girls would have welcomed Felix or Frank as suitors, they were agreed that Phyllis had the first claim. She had worked with and for them in the time of trouble, and they were all three such good friends! Which of the two would she have? That was the question.

A year slipped by, and Ursula grew and prospered. She was quite happy now; everyone took such care of her and loved her.

The doctor taught her, Frank taught her, and for what they could not undertake she had masters. She was so fragile, she was never allowed to tire herself. To all intents and purposes she was like other girls, yet there was a difference, and everyone felt so. There was a spirituality about her, an undefinable something, which lent a wonderful charm to a very marked personality. Every day she accompanied Phyllis to the Orphanage, and taught and played with the little ones, and they loved her. Her beauty was the beauty of a rose leaf! At long intervals a messenger would come from André St. Lubin, bringing a gift for her; a jewel of great value, perfect of its kind. And she laid it by, unless it were a pearl; that she added to the rope of pearls which had been her father's gift

to her as a child, and which she always wore. She had never been distinctly told of his death, but she divined it. A word dropped now and again, his portrait, all this enlightened her, but she never spoke of him. Only, if his name was mentioned, she would listen eagerly; and to fatherless children she was even more tender than to others.

Like Phyllis she learnt what love meant in the highways and hedges, and among the sick and the forsaken.

News came from Bob. He was doing well, and loved his life, his chiefs, and the men under him. His name was frequently to be seen in the dispatches which came from different parts of India, where the British were contending for Empire.

Scindia kept his word. He grew great and powerful, until even Tippoo Sahib had to retreat before him, and he held the petty tribes under his control. He gained many great battles; but it was well known that they were due, in a great measure, to the military genius of the two Frenchmen who were his Commanders-in-Chief, Count Raymond de Senlis and André de St. Lubin of the Silver Hand.

CHAPTER XXII

Her Hero

URSULA and Phyllis were busily engaged cutting out and preparing clothes for their large family. They were laughing and making merry over it. Krishna was also busy, tacking and putting the garments together.

Since they had come to live at the bungalow she had been a different creature, content and happy. She was devoted to Frank Burgess, went to church, and attended his classes; but she was very reticent, and kept her future intentions to herself, though Ursula said more than once:

"She'll be asking you to baptise her one day, Frank."

"I hope so," answered Frank, and there the subject dropped.

It was still quite early in the day. Everything worth doing is done in the morning in India; but nevertheless Ursula exclaimed, when Felix stood in the open French window, which looked out on to the veranda:

"Well, you are early, and I can't ride this morning, we are so busy," she said.

Felix laughed. "I don't want you to; I've come to talk," he said. "Good morning, Phyllis!"

"Good morning!" she answered; "what news?"

"I wish you'd try and guess!" he answered,

"I never guessed anything in my life," answered Phyllis; "and at this moment, what with gores, and hems, and right and wrong sides, it would be foolish even to try."

"It's worth trying, though," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

Phyllis looked up at him. Something in his voice struck her, but what struck her still more was that he was looking so handsome. He had improved greatly in appearance during the last year or two. Naturally fair, the Indian sun had bronzed his face, and, since Ursula had been found, the old happy look had come back; and so many interests had cropped up round and about him that the terrible days seemed far away. Frank had proved right: in caring for others he had found happiness himself.

"You won't try, then?" he asked.

"No," answered Phyllis, and she turned away.

Ursula had been looking steadily at her brother with those wonderful eyes of hers, which seemed to read the thoughts of others.

"Shall I try, Felix?" she asked, dropping her scissors. And, going up to him, she put her arm round his neck and sat down on his knee.

"You! you little witch! I believe you have guessed already!" he answered.

"Aunt Louisa has decided to go back to England," she said quietly.

"Just so," answered Frank. "Susan has finally accepted young Philip Dunraven. He is to go to England as representative of the firm of Dunraven & Son. He will probably be absent from Madras for two or three years travelling; and so, as my aunt puts it, she is of no further use here, and will sail

with them immediately after the wedding. Hurrah! If she only knew what that means to me!"

"What does it mean?" said Ursula seriously.

"Great happiness, for which I seem to have been waiting a very long time," he answered, looking at Phyllis.

"Poor Felix!" said Ursula. "I ran away, but you stayed on. It was very brave of you. I think we shall all be much happier now."

"Phyllis, put your scissors down, and get into your habit; I want you. We will ride." And peremptorily Felix took the offending scissors out of her hands. "You will be quick," he said; "won't you?"

"Are you in such a very great hurry?" she asked.

"Yes, I am," he answered. Without any further observation she went. Krishna and Ursula also disappeared. Nothing was left for Felix to do but to pace up and down the room. This he did.

As fate would have it, his back was turned to the door when he heard a voice say: "I'm ready, Felix." In a second he was beside her.

"To be my wife?" he asked.

"That is rather sudden," she answered, colouring.

"Oh no, it is not! You have known my desire this long while, Phyllis; only I could not turn my father's sister out. She is going out of her own accord, so I can ask you to walk in. Will you come, Phyllis dear? You know I love you; and you will bring warmth and love into that cold house, and make it home!"

"I will try to," she answered, tears filling her eyes.

But Felix did not let them fall. Then he led her out, lifted her on her horse, and they rode away together, happy, so happy!

It was agreed between them that nothing should be

said of the engagement until the Burgess marriage was over and Aunt Louisa and the happy couple had set sail for England. Only Ursula and Frank were told. Frank was of course prepared for it, and Ursula's delight was great that Phyllis would really be her sister.

It was not easy to hide their joy from others, and doubtless many guessed at it. Of course, father, and mother, and John Bennett were in the secret; so it was virtually confined to the bungalow.

At the big house they were so engaged in their own concerns that they had not much time or observation to waste upon others.

Susan's was a very grand marriage when it did come off. Felix spared no expense. "We can do with less because we have the real thing," he said to Phyllis. And indeed, when the time came for their union, it took place early one morning, with only the doctor, John Bennett, and Ursula as witnesses.

A month previously Mr. Rayner had died almost suddenly. He had been ailing for some time, and the doctor who was attending him told his wife it was a weak heart, which might carry him off at any moment. This proved true. He passed away in his sleep, without suffering, leaving his wife and daughter penniless. A month later, as we have said, Phyllis and Felix were married; and Ursula went home with them to Carmichael House. The settling of Mrs. Rayner's affairs was equally expeditious. The bungalow was virtually John Bennett's, and he had no difficulty in persuading Mrs. Rayner to remain and keep house for him. The doctor was also growing old, and he asked to be taken in; and no one ever thought of refusing the doctor anything. There re-

mained only Frank to settle. His mother had tried to persuade him to return with them to England, but he would not; he decided to remain for the present in Madras. He and Felix were like brothers; he had plenty of work to do, and was content. So Mrs. Rayner had to extend her hospitality to him. The bachelor establishment was thus complete. She had the comfort of remaining in her own home, and feeling she was a burden to no one.

Her health had improved wonderfully. The freedom from anxiety had tended to this, and the interest she had taken in Phyllis's work had roused her, so that she was quite fit to undertake the management of her large household. Indeed they had all passed through rough waters together; now the sea was calm, the sunshine of love and happiness shone down upon them. There was still war and rumours of war beyond, but it did not come nigh them.

In this atmosphere of love and peace Ursula grew, a tall fair maiden, loving and beloved, adored especially by the Indian population. Somehow she seemed to belong to them.

Did she not speak their language as if it had been her own? Had not Krishna told them how Prince Scindia and his wife had honoured her? The Hindu population looked upon her with reverence.

The story of the Silver Hand was familiar to them all. Had not she found it in Buddha's lap? Surely, therefore, she was beloved of their gods. In the Orphanage the little children looked up to her. She was with them every day; she taught, she evangelized them. Somehow she reached their little souls as no one else could. Frank said it was marvellous what power she had over them. A word, a look, from

her sufficed to reduce the most refractory to submission. To both Felix and Phyllis she was a necessity; they loved her beyond measure.

As she grew older there was some talk of her going to England to finish her education, but she only laughed. "The doctor and Frank know quite enough for me," she said. And they were all so happy together; what more could they want?

So they let her be. A little learning, more or less, was not worth taking into account against the pain it would have given them all to part with her. Somehow they all knew that her heart was with André St. Lubin. She did not often speak of him, but when she did, a glow of gladness lighted up her face, and there was a new intonation in her voice. She studied French with delight. Every day a professor came to her and taught her, not only the language, but the history of the nation.

For several months every year they went up into the hills, and so life was made possible for her and for them. Children were born to Felix and Phyllis, and that also was a joy. Each child was another link in the chain of love, and so Ursula grew into a fair maiden; but she retained her child's soul, which was reflected in a face of ideal loveliness. Truly beloved she was by old and young, by the white and the brown, by all who came within her radius.

Now and again news would come to them of the Mahrattas, and of the success of the Confederacy; they were, as Warren Hastings said, far more difficult to hold in hand than even Tippoo Sahib. Their army grew in strength and discipline, the names of Count Raymond and St. Lubin with the Silver Hand

were a terror to all the petty nations of the north and south. Tippoo Sahib himself retreated before it.

In Europe the French Revolution was horrifying and astonishing the nations. Royal and noble blood flowed from the guillotine, deluging the land from north to south. The news penetrated to India. Many were the French who came to seek refuge in the east, and awful were the tales they told: there was no king, no God, nothing left in the land; only a faithful few in La Vendée and in Brittany remained steadfast to their God and to their king.

It happened that one day Felix was in his town house with only Frank to keep him company—for his wife and children and Ursula were in the country house he had built for them,—when he was surprised to see riding into the compound two horsemen, one, a little in advance of the other, wearing the rich uniform of a Mahratta commander. As soon as this one saw Frank and Felix he threw himself off his horse, and advanced on foot up the steps of the veranda, leaving his horse in the care of his companion. Raising his helmet, he said in French: "Do you not know me?" and in the bronzed face, somewhat aged from the rough life of warfare he had led, they recognized André St. Lubin. They rose at once, and went forward, holding out their hands to greet him.

In a few seconds he was seated with them on the veranda, servants were summoned, and the horses taken round to the stables. Sandy had accompanied St. Lubin, and was made welcome.

"You are a great man to-day, and a brave soldier," said Felix, as they shook hands. And so Sandy

MacIvor with quiet dignity took the place he had won for himself by faithfulness and bravery.

Till late into the night they sat talking.

"I have thrown up my command," said St. Lubin, "but my cousin has remained behind, and my absence for the present has been kept secret. There would have been an insurrection if the army had known that I was leaving."

"Why have you done so?" asked Felix.

"Because I have had a call," answered St. Lubin.

"My place is not here now, but in my own country. I am a French nobleman, the last of my race, and I am going to shed my blood for my God, my king, and my country."

"Is it not folly," said Felix; "has not blood enough been shed on the guillotine that you must give yours?"

St. Lubin smiled.

"I shall try to avoid the guillotine," he said, "but I will join la Charette and la Rochefoucauld."

"The white cockade?" said Felix.

"Yes, the white cockade," answered St. Lubin.

'I wish you all success," said Frank; "it is a noble cause you will be fighting for. France needed reforming, and has had it with a vengeance. I trust you will win peace and honour."

"I am afraid we have not nearly seen the end yet," answered St. Lubin.

"And you, MacIvor, do you accompany Monsieur?" asked Felix.

"Yes," answered Sandy, "I have fought too long beside my general to leave him now, and it is, as you say, a good cause, for God and the king."

They remained talking almost till day dawned. They rested for a few hours, and then rode out to the house,

some half-dozen miles in the country, where Ursula and Phyllis spent much time with the children.

"You will not find Ursula much changed. Will he, Frank?" remarked Felix as they rode.

"No," answered Frank, "I see no change in her at all; she has only grown a woman."

"If I remember rightly, hers is not a face to change; her soul is so pure, she will always keep the face of a child," said André.

"That is just what it is," said Frank.

So Ursula and André met again, and it was to them, as it must ever be with true friends, as if they had never been parted. They picked up the fallen links and put them together, and the only difference André recognized in her was the growth of her mind and her power of thought. In that he saw the budding out of womanhood. Her mind was as clear as the waters of a running stream, all clouds had been swept away, she was what he had always dreamt she would be. He was surprised to find how she had followed with interest the terrible events which had taken place in France, and she quite understood and appreciated his chivalrous expedition.

"Of course you are quite right; you must go and fight for your king and country, even as your ancestors have done for centuries," she said.

"I am the last of my race," answered André. "If I fall in battle, or on the guillotine, the old château, and the forest and villages which claim me as their seigneur, will pass to strangers, or to my cousin Raymond. I have left them to him, but I doubt whether he will ever forsake his adventurous life here to become a simple landowner in France, even if the château and the land remain in the family, and are not confiscated."

Two happy days they spent together, and then he went, for his ship was to sail from Madras. Sandy's adoration for Ursula had not waned; to him she was like a creature of another world. To Phyllis he confided how he had tried to prevent St. Lubin from taking this step.

"I have entreated him to throw up his command in Prince Scindia's army, to come here to Madras, and, if she would have him, take our little lady for his wife; for he has never thought of anyone but her. He answered me: 'When I have done my duty to my God and to my king, then I will think of that. So far in my life I have fought unreasoning battles. I have lived, so to speak, under false pretences with my silver hand. Now I will fight in a cause worthy of a Christian knight, and when it is over I will claim my reward."

When she heard this, Phyllis wept. She would have so gladly seen Ursula a happy wife as she was; but the thought never seemed to come to the girl herself.

St. Lubin was her hero, her knight, her lover he had always been in perfect innocence. So she let him go, as he said, at the call of duty.

Both he and Sandy, before leaving, had a long consultation with Felix, and deposited in his hands large sums of money and jewels of immense value; both of them also made their wills. Felix did not know the contents of either; he simply held them in trust, to be opened by him in case of death.

As the ship bore them out of the harbour, a group of friends stood watching them, waving their farewell; but André's eyes saw only a girl's tall figure in a white gown, her hands folded across her bosom, hiding, he alone knew what—a silver cross of marvellous workmanship,—his last gift to her.

During the next few years, letters came at long intervals from France, telling of the civil war which was rending that unhappy country—the eternal battle of right against wrong.

It is needless to say that in that distant Indian home news was eagerly waited for, and the letters, when they came, were read with intense interest.

At last there was a prolonged silence. Except what they gathered from the public papers, and in those days they were few and far between, they knew nothing of what was going on in the Western world. Personal news, or rather individual news, they had none.

Ursula grew very restless. A far-away look came into her eyes. Had her friend been killed, and so passed out of human ken? If so, surely Sandy would have written. Had he too laid down his life in his master's cause? She remembered the words: "Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friend". So she waited.

One day a casket was delivered into her hands. It had been packed with great care, and been brought by a French vessel which had touched at Madras. With Phyllis standing beside her, she opened it. And there, lying on a crimson velvet cushion, was—The Silver Hand.

And Ursula bowed her head over it, and wept bitterly.

> Who soar aloft and sink not? He alone
> Who has laid hold upon that golden chain
> Of love, fast linked to God's eternal throne—
> The golden chain from heaven to earth let down
> That we might rise by it, nor fear to sink again.