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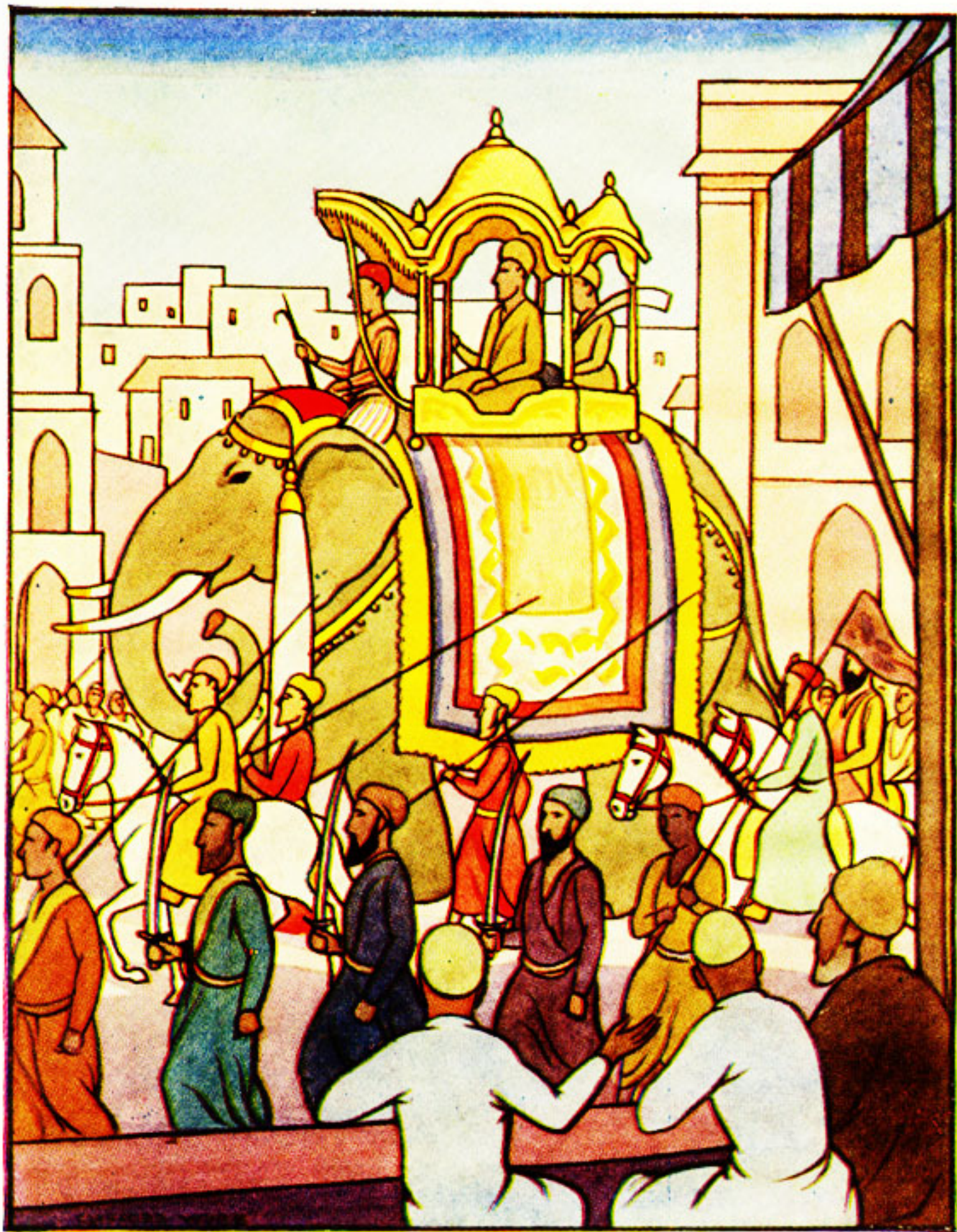
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BY
E. LUCIA TURNBULL, M.B.E.

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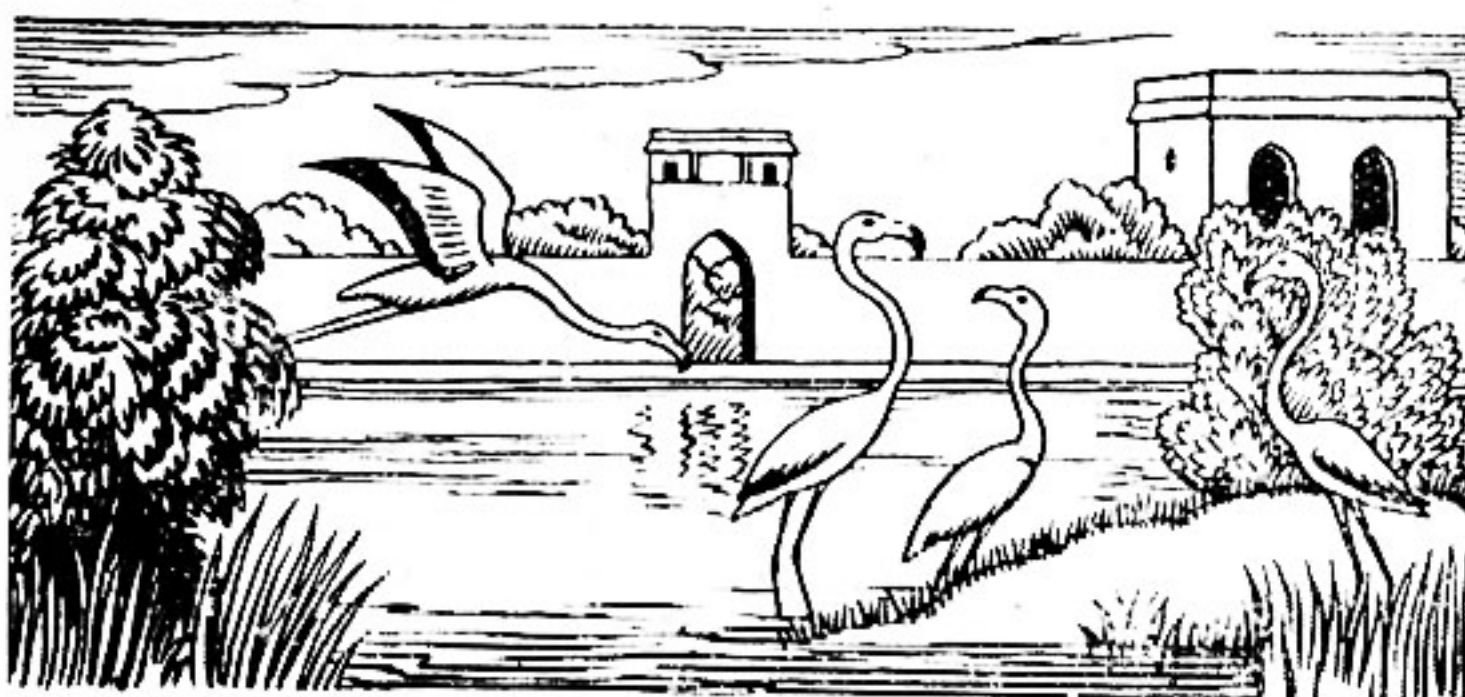
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CHAPTER I

INDIA

THE GOLDEN AGE : BEFORE AND AFTER

THERE is a bygone time of which we speak as “The Golden Age of India.” The kings who ruled then were of Gupta stock, and during their dynasty Northern India rose to heights of grandeur which it has never since surpassed.

These Gupta kings were mighty warriors, and had sons that even in boyhood were warriors too. And in this splendid age scholars and poets came to the king’s court and were welcome. Beauty was everywhere. Men trusted each other, and went about their duty in safety and peace.

Before the age of these splendid kings, and divided from them by a dark and dreary period,

came yet another fine group of Hindu rulers. These were the "Mighty Mauryas," the first of whom was Chandragupta, the grandfather of Asoka. The capital of the Mauryan kings was built at Pataliputra, on the site where Patna and Bankipore now stand. The royal palace was enclosed by a noble park, in which peacocks and other birds of gay plumage displayed themselves before the king. In this park, too, was a beautiful lake in which swam a number of fish. They were very large and tame. No one but the royal children were allowed to catch them.

The king was served in basins and goblets of gold studded with precious stones, and everything about his person was fine and costly.

Asoka's palace, which was built of stone, was so grand and beautiful that even seven hundred years afterwards, a Chinese pilgrim travelling in India thought that it was the work of the gods.

But it was built by the hands of men to please a human king's fancy, and to prove that all those centuries ago there were craftsmen in India of wondrous skill.

But grandeur was not all that these Hindu kings lived for. They made good laws, and cared

for the welfare of their humblest subjects. Even a poor man could get justice. Only the Brahmans might be scholars. Each man followed the trade of his father, and did not bother his head about anything else.

The people rarely saw their king, but when he chose to show himself in public it was a holiday for all.

A king of the Golden Age was carried in a golden palanquin. From this great tassels of pearls swung as the bearers moved. The king himself was dressed in muslin, so fine and light that eighteen yards of it could pass through a woman's ring. And hand-embroidery, in gold and purple silk, made of the muslin a work of art, which some busy fingers had taken a year or more to finish. Everything about the king's person was rich and gorgeous, and he seemed far away from common things.

Sometimes he would ride upon a horse, and then its harness would sparkle with gems, and a saddle-cloth of velvet hang to the ground with golden fringes. Or if the journey was long, the royal elephants with a howdah of crimson would step so proudly as if to say, "Make way, make way

for the King of kings," and then the people would fall upon their knees and bow their heads to the very dust the royal beast cast up from his great feet. And a great chant of welcome would spread before the coming of the king.

These were the great days of the Golden Age, and if all that has been written and remembered of them is true, how sad it is that they should fade. How sad it is to think that over the snowy passes of the Hindu Kush, wild bands of invaders poured into the peaceful plains and raged over Hindustan—raged over Pataliputra, the Imperial city, looted the temples and cast down the sacred figures, and all in the name of religion.

But then we must remember that long before this, the ancestors of these golden kings had come the same way; had been themselves invaders of Hindustan, driving the people they found there down to the unknown south. Beyond the Vindhya hills lay the flat high plain of the Deccan, and the range of the western Ghats running down to a land by the sea. Beyond the Vindhya hills lay the rich fertile country which we now know as Madras and Mysore, and the peaks of the western Ghats where they rise to the Nilgiri hills.

And in this southern land the people who settled there no longer found all their wealth in cattle or crops or land. They fished and they dragged for pearls, and built themselves boats to sail from harbour to harbour and down the great rivers which emptied themselves into the mighty Bay of Bengal. And in time traders from the West sailed into these harbours and paid for Indian pearls in gold from Greece and Rome.

And it is likely that these Western traders, seeing the prosperity and wealth of Southern India, seeing the fine temples that the Rajas had built to the honour of their gods, went back and spoke of these things. And in this way India became known to the people of the West as a rich and beautiful land, and worth a voyage even in a small sailing ship, to a man with his fortune to make.

And so in the south, too, strangers found a way in, not in great bands or with armies such as had come in by the north, but a few storm-tossed men in ships, willing to say "a friend comes here," if they met with friendship, or if they were given a chance to buy with their gold all the splendid things that India grew or that her people made. And so

it went on and on, until ships that came were so large that harbours had to be large too, to shelter them all from the storms. This is the tale of the south.

In the north, from the kingdoms that lay beyond the Hindu Kush, a constant stream of war-like adventurers marched into India. Many of them came to plunder and to destroy, returning with their booty to their own savage lands. When we read about some of these invaders, we may well wish that there had been no way into India from the north. And yet, on the other hand, without these invasions, India might have had no history worth the telling.

Alexander the Greek would never have attempted the conquest of Hindustan, or brought with him many ideas that were highly civilized and of great advantage to the rulers of India to learn. There would have been no Babur, the warrior poet, to teach the Hindus how beautiful a garden may be. There would have been no Sher Shah to establish good public services. There would have been no Akbar, than whom there has never been a greater king in India, although he had not a drop of Indian blood. There would have been no Shah-Jehan to

build the Taj Mahal, which to this day is one of the seven wonders of the world.

On the other hand, India would have been spared the horrors which followed in the train of cruel tyrants such as Timur and Tughlak. She would have kept the treasures of Somnath and Vijayanagar. Her idols would have remained unbroken, and no story such as the tragedy of the sack of Chitor would ever have been told.

And so, as we read, we shall learn that much that was good, and much that was bad came in with the stranger. We have to record the bad as well as the good, for history marches on like a soldier, and every country in the world has its tales of grief and glory. If, through the centuries, India has stood the brunt of terrible things, she has yet the memory of "The Golden Age."



CHAPTER II

THE GREEKS AND CHANDRAGUPTA

(In 326 B.C. Alexander the Great, the Greek King of Macedon, led his army through Persia and Afghanistan, over the Hindu Kush and across the river Indus into India.

On the banks of the river Jhelum he defeated the Indian King Poros. Then he set out to conquer the powerful kingdom of Magadha, the capital of which was then the famous city of Pataliputra, built on the site where Patna stands to-day.

Alexander is said to have met Chandragupta Maurya, a young warrior exiled from the court of the Nanda King of Magadha.

The Greek commander never reached Pataliputra, for when he arrived at the river Bias, his soldiers refused to go any farther, and he was obliged to turn back and retrace his steps. After heavy

losses and much suffering, Alexander and what was left of his army reached Babylon, where he died in 323 B.C. at the age of thirty-two.

About the time of Alexander's death, a revolution in Magadha gave Chandragupta Maurya the chance for which he was waiting. Collecting a powerful army, he won for himself that empire of which Alexander had dreamed. He became one of the greatest kings in the history of India; the first of the "Mighty Mauryas," and the grandfather of Asoka the Good.)

Over two thousand years ago there lived in Northern India a king called Mahapadma Nanda. He ruled over the ancient kingdom of Magadha, and his capital was Pataliputra, a beautiful city, upon the site of which Patna now stands.

Among those at the court of Mahapadma were an old Brahman sage called Chanakya, and a young warrior whose name was Chandragupta Maurya, a relative of the king.

These two, the scholar and the soldier, were great friends. When Chandragupta wanted any advice he went to Chanakya. Perhaps it was owing to the wise counsels of the Brahman that before

Chandragupta was twenty-five years old he held the position of first war-lord of Magadha.

The king was a mean and cruel man. He treated his subjects very badly. He even insulted the Brahman sage, who left the court in anger. Chandragupta took the part of his old friend, and fell into disgrace. He was sentenced to death, and only saved his life by a speedy flight.

At about this time, or a little afterwards, Alexander the Great had defeated the Indian King Poros on the banks of the Jhelum at the battle of the Hydaspes.

The Greek conqueror treated his fallen foe very generously. He restored to Poros all his lands, and even added more; in this way he gained a friend.

After the battle of the Hydaspes, Alexander marched towards Pataliputra, and perhaps it was on this march that he met Chandragupta, and that they came to an agreement to try to drive Mahapadma Nanda out of Magadha. Chandragupta may have said to himself, "The Greek conqueror has been generous to Poros and given him back his kingdom. He may do something for me."

But any hopes of help from Alexander came to an end, for when the Greek army reached the river

Bias, the soldiers refused to go on. Even the officers, brave men who had followed their leader across Persia and Afghanistan and over the Hindu Kush into India, wished to return. They were worn out with fighting and could go no farther.

Alexander was very disappointed, yet there was nothing to be done but to turn back. During the time that he had been marching from the river Jhelum to the river Bias, some of his officers whom he had left behind had built a fleet of about two thousand vessels. In these he embarked part of his army. The rest marched along the banks of the rivers, until after ten months the whole force reached the mouth of the Indus.

Then began a terrible journey through Baluchistan. Through the burning heat, fighting as they went, part of the Greek army, led by Alexander, returned through Persia until they came to Babylon. Here Alexander died.

When Chandragupta heard that the Greek conqueror was dead, and so would never return to India, he thought to himself, "There are only a few of these foreigners left in my country. Now that Alexander is no longer alive to lead them, it will be an easy matter to turn them out."



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He collected a large army from the warlike clans on the north-west frontier, but before he attacked the Greek garrisons (left by Alexander to defend what he had won) he took his revenge upon the King of Magadha. With the help of his old friend, Chanakya, he was able to overthrow Mahapadma Nanda and seize his throne.

Chandragupta was now King of Magadha and of its splendid city Pataliputra.

He next attacked the Greek garrisons and drove them out of India. He was now master of the Punjab, and had an army of 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 fighting elephants, as well as 600,000 foot soldiers. He also had a great number of light carriages, called chariots. These were drawn by horses, and were used to carry armed men into the front line of the battle.

With the departure of the Greeks, Chandragupta's empire stretched from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, and he had no rival in his own land. But in Western and Central Asia, on the other side of the great Hindu Kush, another Greek, almost as great as Alexander, had made a plan to invade India. This was Seleukos, afterwards known as Nikator (the Conqueror).

He, too, came over the mountains and crossed the Indus; but he got very little farther, for Chandragupta marched his great army out from Pataliputra, and defeated him. Scelucos was obliged to give up some small kingdoms he had conquered on the way, and to leave India. It is said that one of his daughters was married to Chandragupta.

Chandragupta could now call himself Emperor of India. He also ruled over Kabul and Herat. And all this he had won with the help of the clever Brahman, Chanakya, just as many hundreds of years afterwards, Akbar the Great Mogul owed much of his early success to his Moslem adviser, Bairam Khan.

With no rival to dispute his power, Chandragupta spent the rest of his reign in governing his great empire. He made good laws and appointed ministers to see that they were kept. His large army was well trained and well paid. He had a fine fleet of ships, which, although they were not used for war, were commanded by officers of the king.

Chandragupta worked as hard as any of his subjects. He spent very little time in pleasure. If he was not away from his capital, he appeared in

public every day. He would then listen to petitions and see that justice was done.

He was a very great king, but in spite of that he was not a happy man. His life was in constant danger, and it is told of him that every night he had to sleep in a different bed for fear someone might come and kill him in the dark. He was not guarded by men, but by a band of women who were very strong and fully armed.

His goblets were of gold, set with precious stones, and when he rode out his subjects fell down before him, but he was not "the father of his people." The time was still to come when his grandson, Asoka the Good, learned to rule by love and not by fear, through the teachings of the Holy Buddha.

CHAPTER III

ASOKA, THE LOVING-MINDED ONE

(The Emperor Asoka ruled for forty years, from 273 to 232 B.C. His empire extended over the whole of India except the south. When he had reigned twelve years he invaded the kingdom of Kalinga (Orissa). This was his first and last war, for he was so horrified at the results of his invasion, that he made up his mind to rule his great empire by the law of dharma or piety. About this time he came under the influence of the teachings of the Buddha, and spent the rest of his life in trying to make Buddhism one of the great religions of the world.

The law which he enjoined upon his subjects, he caused to be engraved upon rocks and pillars in various parts of India. These inscriptions are called "Rock Edicts." For more than two thousand years they have served to remind India of the great and good Emperor Asoka.)



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There is a story told about the birth of Asoka which is very pretty.

A Brahman had a beautiful daughter. At her birth an astrologer had foretold that she would marry and have two sons, one of whom would become a great king.

When she grew up her father took her to a royal city, built upon the banks of the Ganges. Here she was sent to the Emperor's palace to wait upon his queens. But when they heard of the prophecy they grew jealous of the Brahman's daughter and said, "We will degrade her, and make her do barber's work. The Emperor will then pass her by without looking at her." But the girl herself did not lose hope: she never forgot her good birth or what the astrologer had foretold.

One day she managed to speak to the Emperor and tell him who she was. She was so pretty and yet so modest that the Emperor took a great fancy to her, and decided to make her his wife. So all that the astrologer had prophesied came true. The young queen had two sons. One of them became a holy man, and the other was Asoka.

When Asoka was a little boy he offended the king, his father, by his bad manners. "I cannot

care for a son who does not know how to behave," said the king. "I shall send him early to the wars."

Some time later the city of Taxila in the Punjab revolted. Asoka, who had not learned how to please his father, was sent off to subdue Taxila. So little did the king care what happened to his son, that he let him depart without chariots or other war equipment. Asoka did not think of complaining. His father's commands were law. He left at once, and was successful in what he set out to do. He did not, after all, need either chariots or elephants. The people of Taxila submitted to him without fighting at all.

When his father died, Asoka became Emperor. We think of him now only as a good and just ruler. But he began very badly; he was born with a violent temper, which his father's harsh treatment made worse. He was brought up to think that, like his grandfather, the powerful Chandragupta, he could treat his subjects as he pleased, and that they must bow to his decree. As to his enemies, these he thought of as born to be crushed, and in early youth he was sometimes cruel to those who came under his displeasure.

When he had reigned for twelve years, he set

out to conquer the small kingdom of Kalinga, now known as Orissa. This was the first and last war of Asoka. Cut to the heart by the sufferings caused in his name, he then and there resolved to rule his empire by love and justice. The sight of the widows and orphans, the smoke from the burning homesteads, the ruin of what once had been a happy, peaceful kingdom filled Asoka with remorse.

He himself says so, and how ever afterwards he seemed to hear the wails of the women whose husbands and sons had perished. From this time he gave up war, and set himself to right the wrong he had done. About this time, too, he embraced Buddhism, the faith which taught him that it was far better to rule by love than fear, far better to preach justice and mercy than to lead an army into battle and allow men to kill and maim each other in the name of the king.

The feelings of kindness and pity that now filled the heart of Asoka were extended to all living creatures. Before this time animals of all kinds had been slaughtered for the royal table. By his orders this was stopped. Hunting, too, was given up. Instead of following the chase, Asoka went about his wide dominions to see to the welfare of his

subjects. During these royal tours preaching was encouraged and alms given to the holy men.

Wherever the Emperor went he set up a great pillar upon which were engraved his edicts, or laws, for behaviour. Sometimes these edicts were cut out upon a big rock. One of them speaks of the duty of children towards their parents and elders. It is written, as they all are, in the Pali language, and runs like this :

“Thus saith His Majesty : Father and Mother must be obeyed.”

In the same edict Asoka commands that “truth must be spoken”; and that “the teacher must be revered by the pupil.”

All these are wise and good rules, and as suitable to us to-day as they were two thousand years ago. The good Emperor asked nothing from his people, or those that came after them, but to be merciful, truthful and honest.

Among his many good acts the Emperor built hospitals, not only for mankind, but also for animals. Perhaps he was the first ruler of India to remember the dumb animals and to provide for them. From the highest to the lowest, he thought for all. He even remembered the poor jungle folk,

and wished them to know that he loved them as much as any of his subjects. Although he was the greatest king in India he was not proud, but thought of himself as a disciple of Buddha, and prayed that he might be of use to others while he lived.

His dearest wish was that all his subjects should be contented, and he taught them that if they wished to be happy then they must be good. Although he was such a great king, and had power over them all, he knew that even he could not make them good. He could only instruct them in the right way. But his example was the best lesson of all. He himself lived so nobly; he was so without sin that all who met him felt a wish to be like him.

During his reign, in which there was no more war, his people grew contented and prosperous. Treasuries and granaries were full. Good roads were made, and travellers were as safe as if they were at home. There has never been before or since any better ruler of India than Asoka. Others may have been grander, but their laws were no better, nor the prosperity of their subjects greater than in the days of this wise and good king.

CHAPTER IV

SAMUDRAGUPTA AND VIKRAMADITYA

(In the history of all civilized nations we often notice that a great and wise king is succeeded by a number of less gifted rulers; after the high tide, as it were, comes a low tide, which may last for many years or even centuries. So it was after the death of Asoka; there is little to tell about his successors. They continued to fight with the Greeks of the north-west, and made war upon the Indian kings of the south, but no great ruler was born amongst them, and after several generations, the Mauryan empire disappeared.

It was followed by that of the Sakas, a fair-skinned race from Western Asia. As the Greeks had done, they invaded India through the Khyber and other passes, and conquering the people they found there, built up an empire which lasted for four hundred years.

The power of the Sakas passed, and for over a hundred years no great kings appear in the history of India. Then, early in the fourth century, there grew up in Oudh the empire of the Guptas, known as "The Golden Age."

One of the earliest Gupta rulers was Samudragupta, a warrior king who made expeditions as far south as the country which is now known as the Madras Presidency. He was succeeded by Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II), during whose reign the great poet and dramatist Kalidasa is said to have lived.

Under the Guptas, Hindus lived peacefully, and in a way that was suited to their religion and tastes. Art was encouraged, science progressed, and trade flourished.)

Kumara Devi, the high-born Queen of Chandragupta, sat in her palace at Pataliputra. At her feet groups of noble Hindu maidens waited to fulfil her lightest demands. One knelt in front of the royal lady and gently stroked her small feet, another wove mogra blossoms among threads of silver into bracelets for her slender wrists. She was so lovely that the blood showed beneath her delicate skin, as a

light shines through very fine china. For eight hundred years her ancestors had been kings in India, and she had brought to her lord a great dowry in riches and power.

Her little son, Samudragupta, played round his mother's knee, teasing the girl with the flowers for her silver threads and some buds with which to make a gay ear ornament. And to please him, she laid aside the bracelets meant for the queen, who smiled and said :

“The queen must wait if a king asks to be served.”

When the toy of flowers was made, the little prince laughed with glee.

“Put it on, put it on!” he cried. “and bring me my horse, and then I will ride out to battle.”

“And with whom will you fight, my son?” asked the queen, while the maidens clapped their hands at the brave speech of the child. They were all the daughters of warriors, chiefs of the Gupta king.

“I will fight with kings,” cried the boy, and threw up his head.

“And why will you fight?” inquired his mother.

“To win fresh lands,” was the answer.

“Ah, then,” said Queen Kumara Devi, “I shall call you the ‘Kingdom-taker,’ my son.”

The maidens crowded round him and took up the name as if it had been the words of a song. “The Kingdom-taker, the Kingdom-taker!” they chanted, and pelted him with flowers.

“Let me go,” he cried, trying to burst through the ring they had made round him, “let me go. Don’t hold me. I want room to grow. Then, when I am a man, I will ride to the west; then to the east, and then,” he paused for breath, “to the south!”

“Not to the south, my lord,” said a girl. “There are demons in the south; demons with hairy skins and broad black faces who make human sacrifices.”

“Who cares?” cried the boy. “I’ve a sword, and those who follow me will have swords. We will cut off the head of the first demon we see, and the others will run away, or else”—and then he thought a little—“or else bring me presents,” he said with a triumphant laugh.

When he grew up, it all came to pass as he had said. He was Crown Prince and heir to the throne

of the Guptas, such an heir that his father cried aloud, "Here is a noble man!" and embraced him with tears of joy in his eyes.

The courtiers were amazed. When they saw the young man standing so proudly before them, they were carried away with excitement. They felt the king's words were true, and they raised a great shout, "O Ruler of Princes, protect the whole earth!"

When he was old enough to wear armour, he kept his fine boast. At the head of a great army he marched to the north, to the east, to the west, and the kings bowed down before him. Then he went down to the south, across the high hills and the rivers, through forests as black as night. And there he found out why the girl in his mother's service had spoken of demons. For the men of the forest tribes were wild, and had broad black faces. They wore no clothes except skins, and their gods lived in trees, and grew angry unless they were offered flesh on their altars.

And when a great prince came down from the north in shining armour, followed by men who looked like gods themselves, these poor forest creatures fled or fell down on their faces, asking

for mercy. They brought what they had, wild fruits and the honey from the comb of wild bees;



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skins and small gifts of toys, made out of wood or bone. And the king passed on.

Then he came to the place where now a splendid city stands, and where the broad fine streets of Madras run between buildings of stone. He found there were kings there, kings who knew how to fight. But he conquered them all and returned with rich treasure to Oudh. Then, to mark his homecoming and to celebrate his victories, he determined to revive the ancient custom of the horse-sacrifice (*asvamedha*), and so proclaim himself King of kings.

But perhaps the greatest reward the warrior-king won on his return home was the welcome of his son, who was afterwards to rule over the Gupta empire as Vikramaditya, "the Sun of Power."

He, too, was a mighty warrior and a great hunter. To his court came poets and scholars, and among them one who has become famous through all time. It is said that Kalidasa, who wrote the lovely story of *Shakuntala*, was one of the nine gems of Vikramaditya's crown.

Among the stories of the Golden Age is one of how two Chinese pilgrims came at different times to India. They were graciously received and entertained by the Gupta kings, and afterwards they

wrote about all that they had seen of the Gupta empire. Fortunately for us their writings have been preserved: if they had been lost we should have known scarcely anything at all about the Golden Age.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST KING OF THE GOLDEN AGE

(Harsha, known also as Siladitya, was born about A.D. 590 at Thanesar, a town about a hundred miles to the north of Delhi. Succeeding to the throne when he was sixteen years of age, he conquered Northern India, and became Lord Paramount of an empire which included most of Northern India down to the Narbada. During his reign the famous Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, came to India; and Bana, the celebrated poet and author, who was a friend of the king, wrote a work called the "Harshacarita" to celebrate his glorious deeds. Harsha died at Kanauj about the year 647, after a long and prosperous reign. With him ended the Golden Age of Hindu India.)

Harsha, the younger son of the Raja of Thanesar, stood with Skandagupta, the Captain of the Elephant Troop.

“Is it true,” he asked anxiously, “that my brother, Prince Rajyavardhana, is to wear armour, and lead the king’s army against the Huns?”

“It has been talked about,” replied Skandagupta, “for His Majesty of late has felt a fatigue upon the march. The Huns have once again crossed his borders and are plundering without mercy.”

“I am a strong boy,” said Harsha, “and quite old enough to wear armour. Do you think, Skandagupta, that if I asked the king, he would let me go too?”

“Who can tell what His Majesty will say?” answered the old soldier. “Already his orders have gone forth to bring in the fighting elephants. That means the march, and that I shall be on the move again.”

“Oh dear,” sighed Harsha, “it does look as if everyone would be able to go except me. I shall be left all alone. Even my sister has left us and will not return until her husband,

the Prince Grahavarman, comes back from the wars."

"The palace is not the same since she left us," said Skandagupta. "Neither is the king. She took light and sunshine with her to Kanauj."

"And she is a queen," said Harsha. "I wish I were a man and could go riding off every day to the wars."

"There's fine talk," laughed Skandagupta. "Once you've had a taste of war, you'll be glad to have some quiet days in Thanesar."

But Harsha did not believe this. He hated having nothing to do. He was full of life, and as brave as a lion, and he wanted to go out after the Huns and have some stirring adventures on the way.

So he went to his father and said, "Your Majesty, I pray you to give me a suit of armour and to let me ride out to war with my brother Rajyavardhana."

"Upon my word!" cried the king. "Here is a brave whelp. The old lion may stop in his den while his young punish the enemy."

And so Harsha had a suit of armour, and to his great delight was given the command of a body

of horse, at the head of which he rode out very proudly from Thanesar, while all the young maidens pelted him with flowers and sang songs in honour of the two princes.

Rajyavardhana, at the head of the king's army, easily defeated the Huns. But so that they should not find it easy to return, he pursued them far across the borders of Thanesar. While he was doing this, Harsha asked permission to go upon a hunting expedition. The slopes of the Himalayas abounded in game, both large and small, and he, with a few chosen companions, had splendid sport. But his pleasure did not last very long. A messenger arrived from the capital with the bad news that the king was dying. Harsha did not delay a moment.

"Bring me my horse," he cried to a groom, and, not waiting for an escort, galloped off towards the city. On the way he noticed that all the omens were very bad. Facing the sun, a crow on a bunted tree uttered a dreadful cry. A herd of deer rushed past him, coming from right to left; this foreboded that the death of the lion was near. Harsha knew that these signs meant the end of his father was coming very soon, but he rode on, never



pausing for rest. All night he was in the saddle, and did not reach the palace until noon of the next day.

He flung himself from his horse and seized the first person he saw by the arm.

“The king! the king!” he cried. “What of the king?”

Then he saw he was speaking to a young doctor, one who was very dear to all the royal family. He turned a sorrowful gaze upon the prince.

“His Majesty is no better,” he said; and added, “but when he sees your Highness, he may rally.”

Amidst the salutations of the chamberlains, Harsha slowly entered the palace. There he found people offering all they had to the family gods, in the hope that the gifts would be accepted, and the king's life spared.

Passing between rows of weeping servants, Harsha came to the sick-room. The sobs of the women came from behind the screen of the balcony. At the sight and sound of all this grief, Harsha's strength seemed to leave him. He could only just drag himself into the dying king's presence, where

he fell upon his knees, his head touching the ground.

By the side of the king's couch sat the queen. As her younger son came in she looked at him; she could not speak. But the king, weak as he was, half raised himself up, and stretching out his arms, cried with great tenderness :

“Come to me, come to me!”

Harsha ran to his father, who drew him to his breast, forgetting all his pain in the joy of seeing his son once more. Again and again he touched him; then, speaking with difficulty (for he was very weak), said :

“My boy, you are thin.”

Bhandi, the prince's cousin, came forward, and said in a low voice, “Your Majesty, out of grief and love for you, my lord, Harsha has not eaten for three days.”

“Out of love for me?” said the king. “How well I know his tender heart.” Turning to Harsha he continued, “But, son, you must have food. Until you have eaten, I will not eat.”

To please his father, Harsha let himself be led away, and did his best to swallow a little food. But each mouthful seemed as if it would choke

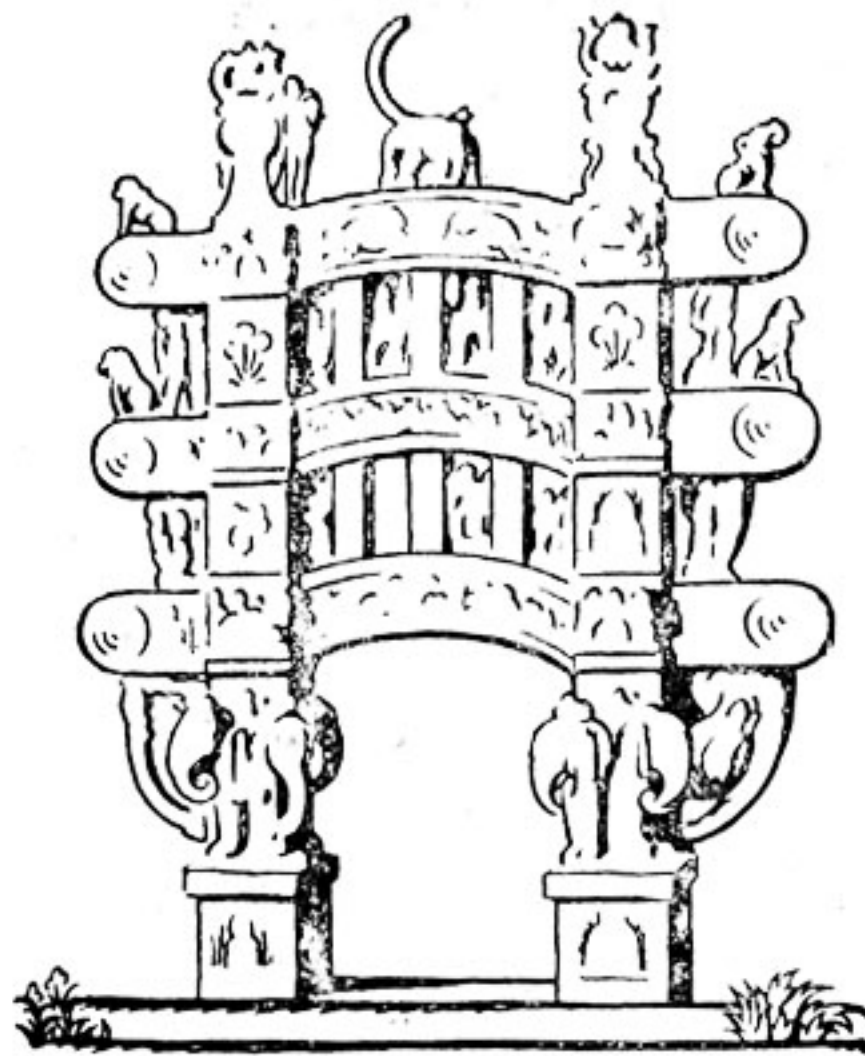
him. Suddenly he heard the cry of a red goose. Then he gave up all hope for his father's life. Next day the king died. His last message was for Harsha.

"Guard your dependents; protect the people. Support the burden of royalty," he said; and with these words on his lips the king closed his eyes, never to open them again.

His queen became *sati*. Harsha was left an orphan and alone, for Rajyavardhana was still absent, and it would be many days before he could reach the capital. During the time that went by before his arrival, the ministers came to Harsha and offered him the throne. Out of loyalty and love for his brother, the young prince refused it. But not long afterwards Rajyavardhana was killed by a traitor, and Harsha became king. His reign was a glorious one. He conquered nearly the whole of India. Only one king ever defeated him. This was Pulakesin, King of the South.

King Harsha was a great patron of the Arts. To his court came poets, artists, and musicians. Learned men were his friends, and he himself wrote poems and plays. As he grew older he made no more wars, but like the good Emperor Asoka, spent

his time in acts of piety and benevolence. When he died, his splendid empire passed away, and with it the Golden Age of India.



CHAPTER VI

RAJARAJA, THE SAILOR KING OF THE SOUTH

(When King Harsha died, Northern India fell upon bad times. In the south his great rival, Pulakesin the Second, lived some time longer, but his end was tragic. He was defeated and slain by the Pallava King of Kanchi, who then came into power. For about two hundred years, from the middle of the sixth to the middle of the eighth century, the Pallavas were the chief power in the far south. They defeated the Pandya, Chola and Chera kings. In their turn they were defeated by the Cholas, who in alliance with the Pandyas inflicted a severe defeat upon them at the end of the ninth century. In 985, Rajarajadeva, the greatest of the Chola kings, came into power. The most notable achievements of his reign were his naval exploits. He was India's first real sailor king.)

Rajaraja, the Chola ruler of Tanjore, sent for his ministers. When they came he said to them, "My kingdom is very small. The Pandyas and the Cheras have too much power in the south. Are we strong enough to make war upon them?"

The ministers thought the matter over, and then one of them came to the king and said, "Your Majesty, we are not strong enough to make war upon the Pandyas and the Cheras. It is true that they quarrel with each other, but if we attack either of them, they will join together to destroy us."

"Then we must wait a little longer," said Rajaraja. "In the meantime, let only the biggest and strongest men come into our army. We do not want anyone weak or small. Then we will train these men and arm them well. We will also pay them good wages, so that they will be contented."

The ministers listened to what the young king said, and it sounded a very sensible plan to form a stronger army.

"But it will take a long time," said the Chief Minister.

"Quite ten years," said another.

“What is ten years?” cried the king. “For over two hundred the Pallavas ruled the south until my ancestor Aditya conquered them. Are we to forget his victory, and let ourselves be crushed by either Pandya or Chera?”

The ministers were delighted to hear their king speak so bravely. They did not like the Cheras or the Pandyas. So they set themselves to help Rajaraja improve the Chola army. It took a long time. The ten years of which the king had spoken passed. Then the day came when the army was considered strong enough to attack the Pandyas. They were defeated, and Rajaraja took Coorg, their country.

He then pushed on to the Deccan and won fresh victories there. But the Cheras still defied him. At first he thought it would be a good idea to enter into an alliance with the Chera king. So he sent an ambassador to the Chera court with offers of friendship. But the Chera king was very proud. He treated the ambassador badly and sent a haughty refusal to Rajaraja.

“Very well,” thought the Chola king, “we must humble this rude Chera. He is laughing at me and my strong army now, because he thinks he

is protected by the dense forests and deep rivers which make it so difficult for an invader to move his troops about quickly. Let him laugh; he will soon find out that I am cleverer than he thinks."

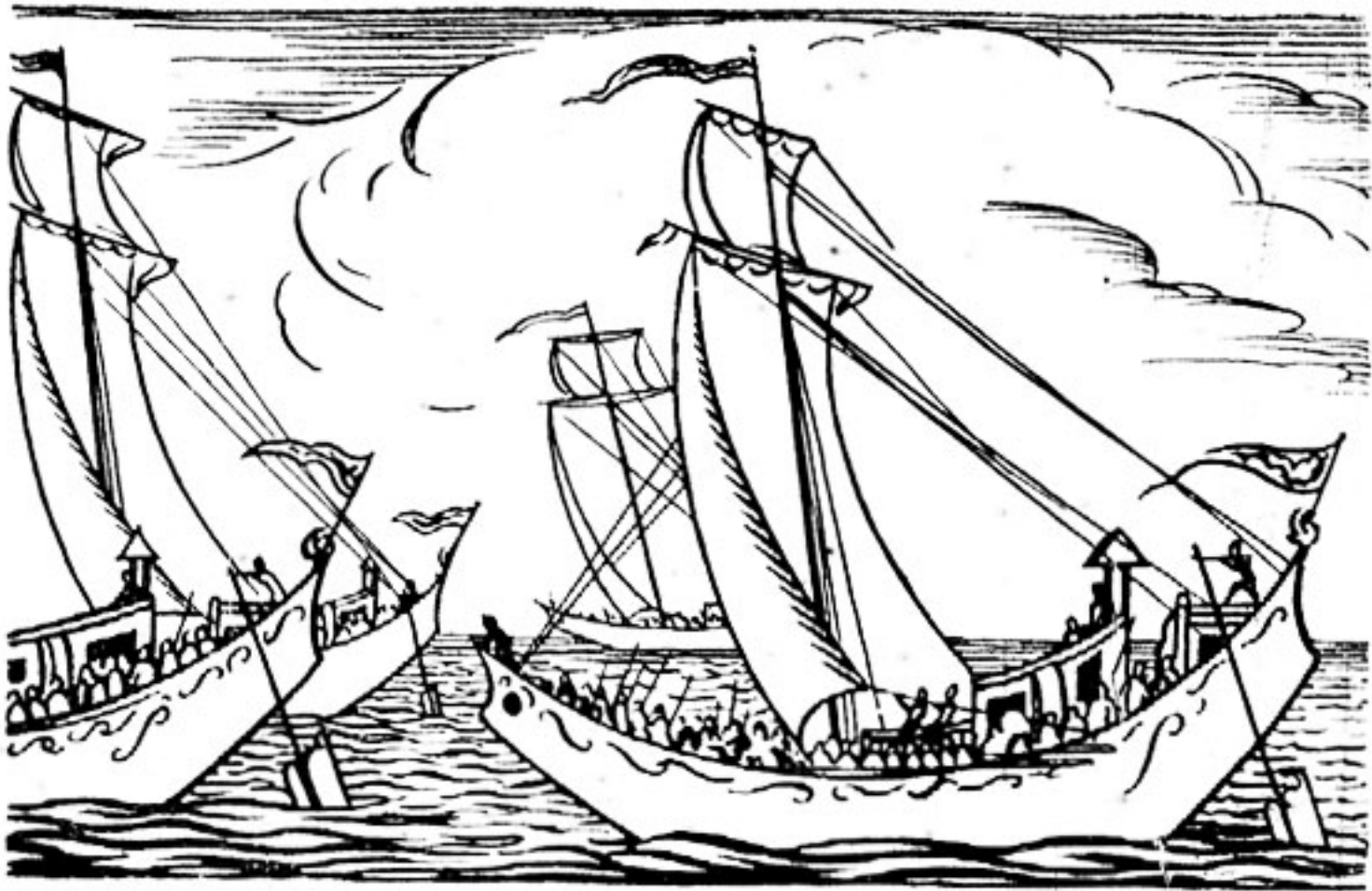
There is a story that a princess called Pandaia once owned all that part of India which is now known as Madras, Coorg and Mysore. She was very wealthy and powerful. Her greatest possession was her pearl fishery. The pearls from it were bought by merchants from Greece and Rome, who paid for them in gold.

Long after the Pandyan princess and her power had passed away, ships came in great numbers to the ports to trade in pearls and other things.

The Cholas themselves were good seamen. An early Chola king had sailed away as far as Ceylon, and brought back much treasure, and many prisoners to work for him. Rajaraja thought of all these things, and said to himself, "I will have ships in which to carry my army against the Chera king."

So he sent for the shipbuilder and said to him, "Build me a fleet. Let each ship be made of seasoned teak. For this you shall be richly rewarded, but say nothing to any man."

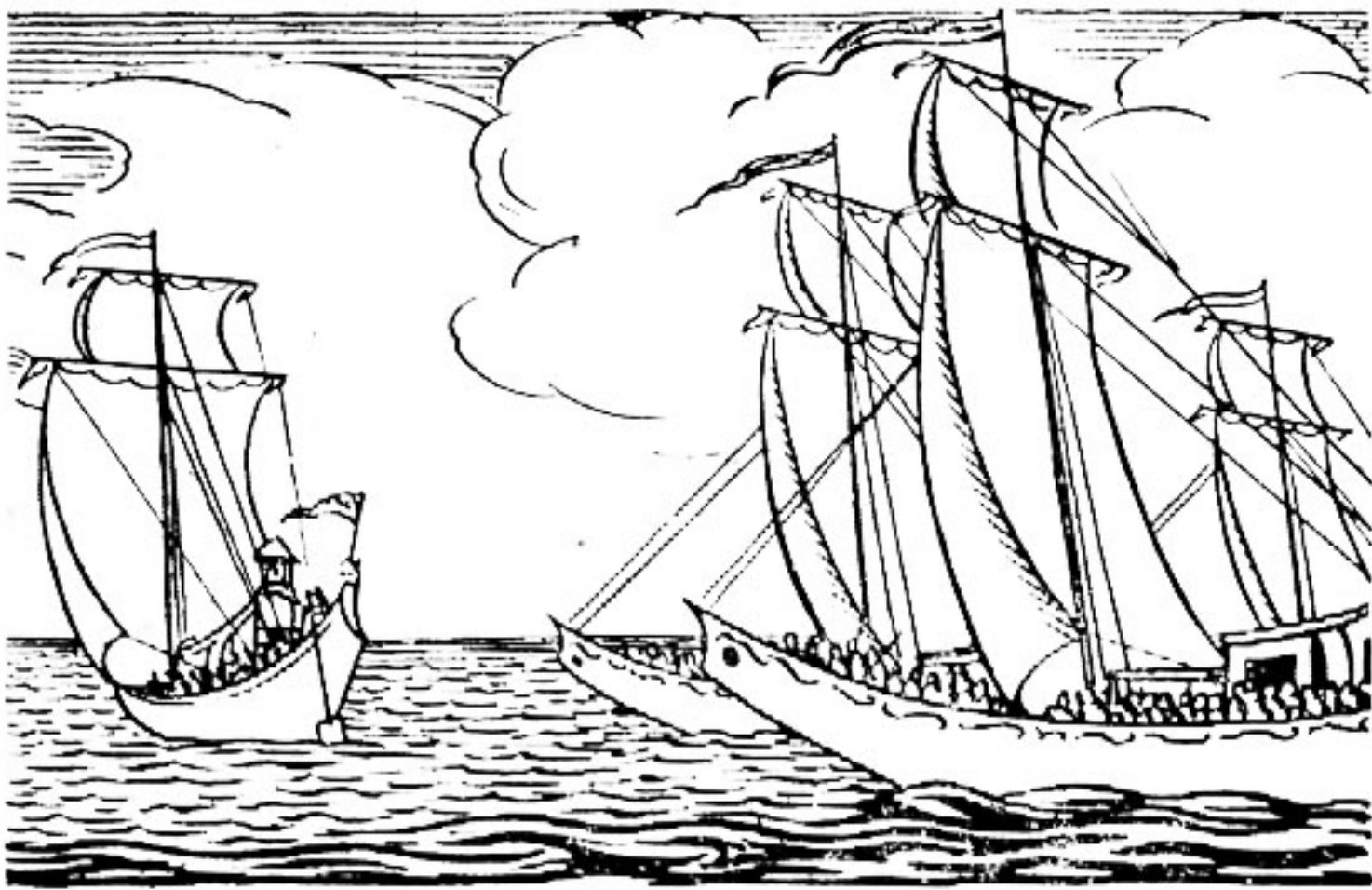
Then he sent for the sail-maker, and said to



him, "Weave me sails, so strong that even the winds of the monsoon cannot tear them. For this you shall be well paid. But say nothing to any man."

Secretly the ships were built, one after another; beautiful craft, strong and fast. Secretly the rowers were trained, until every man worked with the one in front of him as if he were a machine. And one ship, far more beautiful than any of the others, was made for the king himself. Its graceful sides were painted and inlaid with plates of burnished gold. Silk sails spread themselves before the wind, and upon the prow the figure of a god-like hero was carved.

And when the king went aboard, a party of



musicians played and sang, while festoons of gaily coloured flags decorated the rigging. As Rajaraja sat in the place of honour, his admiral and captains around him, his heart swelled with pride. He felt himself, what he really was, the first sailor king of India, for no other had yet boasted of such a splendid navy.

When all was in readiness, each vessel manned and ready to sail, the king reviewed the fleet. That day the Cholas were a proud people. They saw in this fine plan of their king something which set them above the arrogant Cheras. The streets of Tanjore and Trichinopoly were full of a joyful crowd. “Long live Rajarajadeva! Long live our king!” they all shouted. And as he rode to the

sea, mounted on an elephant, his subjects fell down before him and kissed the ground over which he would have to pass.

One night when there was no moon, and only a gentle breeze ruffled the water, the Chola fleet sailed away. In command was Rajaraja's most trusted commander, Abirayman.

At Kandalaur, on the west coast, the Chera fleet was moored. Not a rumour of the Chola king's intended attack had reached its commander. Round Cape Comorin and up the west coast crept the Chola ships. And suddenly they surprised the Cheras, appearing in their harbour as if by magic.

A great sea-fight took place, in which the Cheras were defeated, and the gallant Chola commander returned to Tanjore with all the honours of war. This was, perhaps, the first real naval battle that ever took place in Indian waters. It made Rajaraja the supreme ruler of the whole of Southern India, both upon land and at sea.

He had, however, one great desire, which the possession of a navy made it possible for him to carry out: this was to conquer Ceylon, then known as Lanka. So once more the Chola fleet sailed



away, this time to the south; and this time they carried the fighting elephants on board.

When the people of Ceylon saw a great number of ships approaching their island, all of which seemed to be filled with warriors and elephants, they fled in terror. Rajaraja landed without having to fight, and marched his army up to a place called Anuradhapura, famous for its Buddhist relics. Here he sacked and burned the town, and took the king and queen of the country prisoner, but he did not allow his royal captives to be hurt. He also respected the Buddhist temples.

From this time Rajaraja made one naval expedition after another, in all of which he was victorious. So great was his name in the south that he became known as "The King with the Three Crowns."

As he grew older, like so many Hindu kings, he grew weary of war, and left the conduct of his campaigns to his son, Rajendra the Yuvaraj. He himself passed the rest of his life in pious acts. The greatest of these was the building and endowment of the great temple at Tanjore. Upon its walls the story of his reign is written, and to this day he is revered as a good and great king.

CHAPTER VII

SULTAN MAHMUD OF GHAZNI

(Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni reigned from 1001 to 1030. He was the son of Amir Sabuktigin, who had been a slave, but who eventually became Chief of Ghazni.)

Sultan Mahmud made many raids into India, defeating in turn Jaipal, the Raja of the Punjab; Anandapal, his son and successor; Rajyapal, King of Kanauj; and the powerful Ganda Chandel, who assembled a huge army to withstand the tide of the Afghan invasion.

Sultan Mahmud's most daring expedition was his march into Gujarat, where he stormed the fortress of Somnath upon which the famous temple to Siva was built. After a desperate effort to defend the temple, the Hindus were overcome. Sultan Mahmud destroyed the great idol, and carried off portions of it to Ghazni.

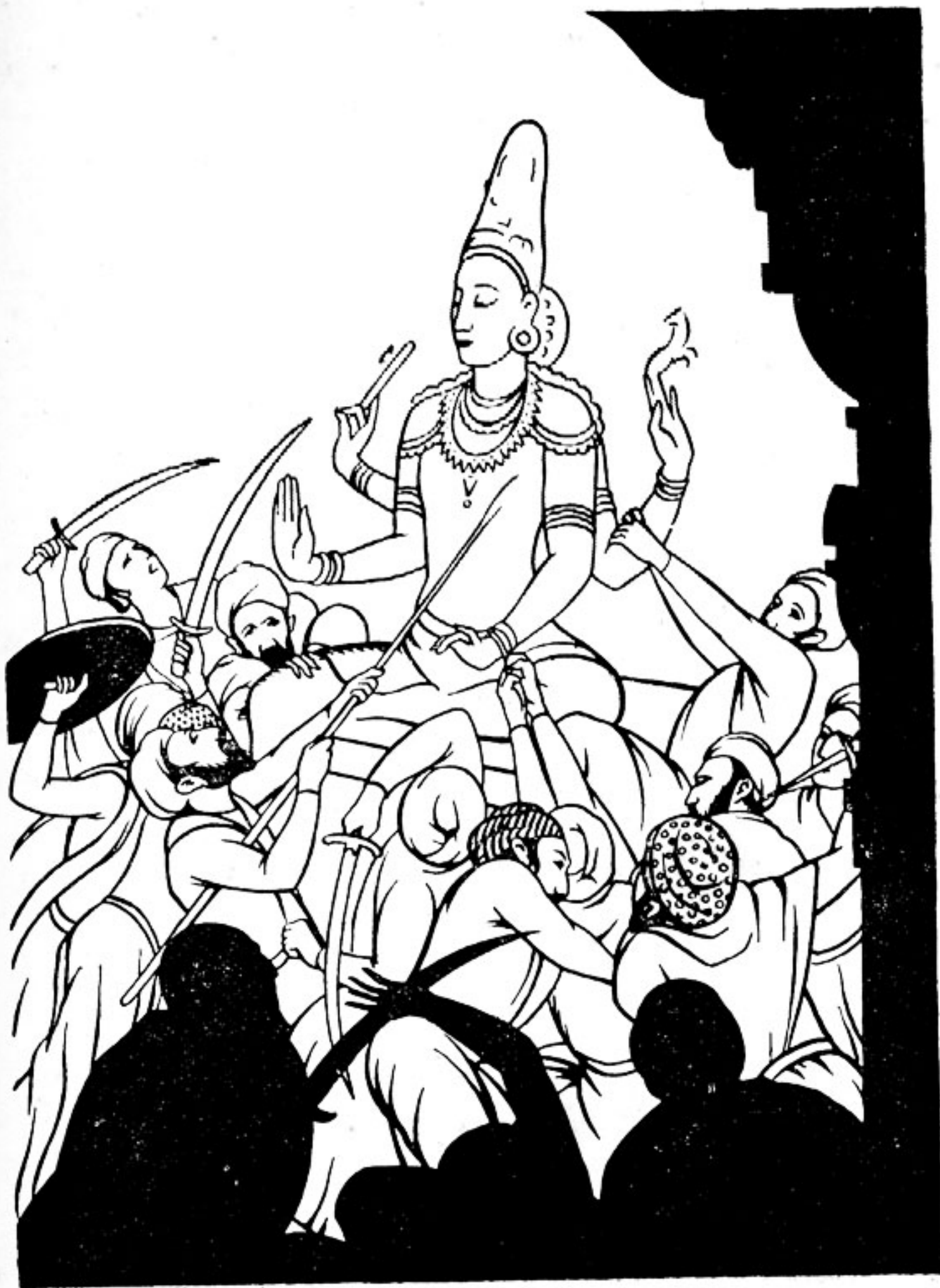
Sultan Mahmud is famous for the splendour of his court, and for the fine buildings which he caused to be built at Ghazni.

He was a patron of the Arts, and his name might have come down as that of a great and good ruler had he borne out the fine precept of the Prophet Mohammed—"To show mercy to the lowliest of God's creatures.")

In the mountains of Afghanistan to the north-west of India stand two tall minarets and a tomb. They are all that is left of the glory of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, who, over nine hundred years ago, swept down upon India in the name of the Prophet Mohammed.

Mahmud's father, Amir Sabuktigin, had been a slave in the service of the King of Bukhara. One night the slave dreamed that the Prophet stood beside him and said, "Be merciful, even to the lowliest of God's creatures, and in reward you shall gain a kingdom."

The kingdom came, but the precept of mercy was forgotten. Sabuktigin became Chief of Ghazni, and when he died his son Mahmud ruled with the title of Sultan.



He was a brave and clever young man, and he made Ghazni into a splendid city. His palace was full of beautiful things; books, paintings, and rich hangings of silk and brocade. But he was not content, for in his heart the desire for conquest burned like a fire. He also wished to make all men follow his own faith. He quite forgot the gentle teaching of the Prophet; conquest was more to him than compassion. And so, at the head of an army of men as fanatical as himself, he descended upon the peaceful plains of India.

There he found many beautiful temples where the people worshipped their gods.

“What is this?” he cried. “Idols of gold and silver, images of wood and stone! I will break them all, and destroy those who worship any but the true God.”

A terrible time followed. The Indian princes were defeated and killed or made prisoners, while their children were carried off and sold into slavery. Mahmud and his soldiers pulled down the beautiful temples and murdered the priests. They broke the sacred idols, and all this they did because they thought it was right to persecute any who did not follow their religion.

“This is my Holy War,” declared Mahmud, when by his orders thousands of innocent people had been slain, when his cavalry had trampled down the crops that were nearly ripe and his soldiers had brought him the treasures taken from the temples.

The Indian kings resisted him until they were overcome. Once he was nearly driven back by a brave Rajput prince called Anandapal. Mahmud’s camp was stormed, and three thousand of his men fell. The Hindus had almost won, when the elephant ridden by Anandapal turned and fled. The Hindu troops, thinking that this was a sign of defeat, gave way, and, like the elephant, fled. The Afghans pursued them, killing many thousands, and taking a great quantity of booty.

Again and again Sultan Mahmud returned to invade India. He never remained long there. With every victory he collected as much treasure as he could, and carried it off to enrich Ghazni. Then, when his army had rested, he would return. Again in the name of the Prophet he pursued his way, killing and plundering and burning, leaving only a heap of ruins where there had stood some fine temple or town.

The holiest and richest temple in India was

that built to the god Siva, at Somnath in Gujarat. Inside this temple the pillars were inlaid with precious stones; hangings of silk sewn with pearls decorated them; while a great bell, used to call the people to prayer, swung on a chain of solid gold.

When Mahmud of Ghazni heard of the riches of the temple of Siva, he said, "I will go again to India and pull down the great idol which stands in the temple at Somnath. I will teach those foolish people who bow down before it the wickedness of their ways."

Then some of his Amirs came to him and said, "The way to Somnath lies across a sandy desert where there is no water nor food for man or beast."

"Even if I die on the way, I will set out for Somnath," replied Mahmud of Ghazni; and true to his word he set off with a great army behind him.

Leaving Ghazni in the middle of December, the Afghans marched over difficult country, through Multan, Ajmere, and into Gujarat. On the way they burnt or pulled down every temple they saw, and, as before, left death and desolation in their track.

At last they came to the Hindu fortress where it stood, washed by the waves of the sea. The great gates were shut; behind them the garrison waited for the attack. They were prepared to die in defence of the temple.

For three days Sultan Mahmud and his army attacked the fortress. On the third day the defenders were winning, and the Afghans lost heart and turned to flee. Then Mahmud leapt from his horse, and swinging his great curved sword above his head, cried out, "Charge! Charge! In the name of God and the Prophet, charge!" With a yell the Afghans hurled themselves upon the Hindu line. It broke in disorder, and those of the defenders who were not killed, ran into the sea.

The Afghans swarmed into the temple where the priests stood before the great idol, and called upon it to deliver them from evil. But no help came; instead, the dreaded figure of Sultan Mahmud stood over them. They fell at his feet and begged him to spare the sacred idol. They offered him their store of hidden treasure, gold and jewels. But he did not even listen to them. "Cut down the idol," he shouted. "For on the day of judgment

I shall hear the call, 'Where is Mahmud, he who destroyed the idol?' and not 'Where is Mahmud, he who sold his soul for gold?'"

Then he brought down his mace upon the idol and smashed it in pieces. From its inside poured a glittering stream of gems. For years those who had worshipped in the temple had brought gifts. Rajas and merchants, rich and poor, all had come with their offerings to Siva. And now the idol was broken, its defenders slain or taken prisoner, and the temple desecrated. Never again would the great bell call the people to worship. They were all dead or slaves.

Carrying the treasures of Somnath with him, Mahmud the Idol-Breaker set off on his return march to Ghazni.

There is a story that some of the Brahman priests, who had served in the temple at Somnath, offered to show the Afghans the best way across the desert. After some days of terrible heat the army found itself lost among great ridges of sand, where the only water they could find was too salt to drink. Then Sultan Mahmud suspected that he had been tricked. He ordered that the false guides should be tortured. They died bravely enough, one

crying out, "Ah, Idol-Breaker, now you shall perish and our god will be avenged."

Some of the Afghans went mad with thirst. Others pressed around their leader beseeching him to give them just one drop of water to ease their pain. He fell upon his face in the sand and prayed aloud, "O God, give me a sign." All day he prayed, and when night fell a great light suddenly blazed in the sky. Rising from the sand, Mahmud rallied his fainting soldiers, and following the light to the north, led them to a place where water was found.

This was almost his last raid upon India. A few years afterwards he died; his splendid city was destroyed by Ala-ud-din, and to-day only a tomb recalls the memory of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST GREAT MOGUL

(Babur, the first Great Mogul, succeeded to the small kingdom of Ferghana in Turkestan when he was twelve years old. His whole boyhood was spent in wars. He twice lost his throne, but won it back, and, after many hardships and disappointments, made himself King of Kabul.

His great ambition was to follow in the footsteps of his famous ancestor, Timur the Great, and to invade India. In 1525 he crossed the Indus with an army of twelve thousand men, and in 1526, upon the famous plain of Panipat, some sixty miles north of Delhi, defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the Afghan King of Delhi, who was killed.

His great army of a hundred thousand men was routed, and Babur marched in triumph to Delhi. He was proclaimed Padishah, but did not live long

enough to develop his empire, for he died at Agra in 1530, aged forty-seven.)

THE BATTLE OF PANIPAT

The army of Ibrahim Lodi, Afghan King of Delhi, marched out northwards to the famous plain of Panipat. They were a hundred thousand strong. Against them was drawn up the army of Babur, King of Kabul. Babur had only twelve thousand men. Some of his troops were very afraid. "How can we defeat the Hindu host?" they said. "We have marched for many weeks, and endured bitter cold and scorching heat. The army that faces us fights on its own ground. For every man on our side the Afghan King has eight or more. He has a thousand elephants as well."

When Babur heard that some of his soldiers were afraid, he went amongst them and said, "It is true that the Afghan King has an army more than eight times the size of mine. It is true that he has a thousand fighting elephants; his officers, too, are brave men, and his troops fight for their home. All of this I know, but I am not afraid, for on our side we have the guns."

Up to this time battles in India had been fought with swords, bows and arrows, and maces. Men

had hand-to-hand fights, and the officers were mounted on war elephants. Babur was the first commander to use artillery; the Hindus knew nothing about cannons or guns. Babur also fortified his position very skilfully; he dug ditches and made defences of the boughs of trees. Behind these he placed gun-carriages. Behind the gun-carriages stood the match-lock men, ready to fire at the first movement of the enemy.

Ibrahim Lodi was a proud and haughty ruler. He did not treat his soldiers well; they were badly paid and badly fed. Babur was very good to the men who served him; he saw to their comfort, and shared their hardships. One time, when they were on the march, he refused the shelter of a tent, sleeping outside in the cold with his soldiers. When they saw what careful and clever defences Babur had made, the men who had shown fear began to take heart.

On the other side, Ibrahim Lodi's troops were sure they could easily defeat the small Mogul army. They thought that all they had to do was to charge with their elephants, and that Babur's soldiers would fly before them. Ibrahim Lodi thought so too. He took no trouble at all; he marched his huge

army on to the field, feeling sure that twelve thousand men could never defeat a hundred thousand.

The day of battle came. Before sunrise news was brought to Babur that the enemy was advancing. At once the Mogul soldiers put on their armour and their helmets, and, mounting their horses, set out to meet the foe. On they came, like a great cloud before a heavy storm. And on went Babur's little force undaunted. Suddenly the advance guard of Ibrahim Lodi's troops noticed Babur's strong defences. They saw, too, for the first time, the great guns. And behind the guns they saw row after row of match-lock men. The bright muzzles of their weapons shone as the sun rose over Panipat.

The Hindu host halted. They feared to advance. It was too late to retreat. Babur saw their confusion, and at once ordered an attack on the rear of the enemy. At the same time a shower of arrows from the Mogul bowmen fell upon the front line of the Sultan's advance. This bad beginning upset the Hindu commanders. They gave wild orders for a charge. The Mogul answer to this was a volley from the great guns. The

centre of the advance guard was broken, and the men fell back in disorder.

The Mogul army was much encouraged. The main battle was still to come, but already they had gained the first advantage. The sun was well up when the two armies became fully engaged; and the combat lasted until midday. By this time the victory was with Babur. Ibrahim Lodi lay dead, with thousands of his troops beside him. In this great battle of Panipat, forty or fifty thousand of his army are said to have fallen. The rest fled in terror, or were taken prisoners. Many elephants and much booty fell to the Mogul conqueror. But instead of feeling vain or proud, he at once thanked God for giving him the victory.

Directly the battle was over, Babur sent some of his chief officers to occupy Agra and take possession of the treasury. Others he dispatched to Delhi, ordering them to enter the fort, and there, too, seize the treasury. He himself followed quietly, resting for a while on the banks of the river Jumna. Then he marched towards Delhi, stopping by the way to visit the tombs of the famous Moslem conquerors who had sat upon the throne of Delhi.

That throne was now his. For years he had dreamed that he might be Emperor of Hindustan. That dream had now come true, and he was not arrogant, but humble and grateful. His first thought was to send messages to Kabul, where his ladies and children waited anxiously for news. He chose the most beautiful presents for them all; dresses, jewels, and two little Hindu dancing-girls to amuse his youngest daughter.

On reaching Delhi he took possession of the city, appointed trusty ministers, and then went on to Agra. There he was met by his eldest and best-loved son, Humayun. The prince had brought his father, as tribute, the finest diamond in the world. It had been given to Humayun by Bikramajit, Raja of Gwalior. He and his followers were in Agra when it fell to Babur. Humayun treated the Raja and his people very kindly. He protected their treasures, and gave them the honour due to their rank. Later, we shall learn that this prince was much loved by the Rajputs.

Babur would not accept the great diamond, but gave it as a present to Humayun, to reward him for his share in the victory of Panipat. He rewarded also all his Amirs and officers. He even



took care of Ibrahim Lodi's mother, making her a big present of money and giving her a palace to live in. She was not grateful. Her son was dead, and her heart was broken. All she lived for was to avenge him. Later she tried to kill Babur, bribing his cook to put poison in the Emperor's food. Babur very nearly died. But he was very strong, and in a few days was quite well again. All his life he took great risks, riding for miles when in a high fever, or plunging into an icy torrent.

When Babur arrived at Agra, he found that his people who had gone in front were quarrelling with the men of the place. It was terribly hot, and the soldiers, even the officers from Kabul, fell down in the road. Babur, quick to act wisely, sent any who wished it back to their homes. But he remained to face the worst, to face the dislike of the conquered Hindus, and the dust and the scorching heat of an Indian hot weather. How often he longed for the fresh breezes of his hill kingdom! How often he thought how nice it would be to drink from the cool springs of Kabul, and to taste the grapes and melons that grew there! He tells us so in his own words. But he had not faced and defeated an army of a hundred thousand men only

to turn back when all was won. If anyone wanted to go home he gave him leave. A few went; the rest remained to share in the coming glories of the new Emperor.

For a time, in spite of his complete victory, Babur had a very difficult task to subdue Hindustan. The terrible invasion of Timur the Great, his ancestor, had never been forgotten. It was some time before the Hindu people came to trust their new conqueror, but in time they did so. He was so just and wise, and yet so simple and good-hearted. They found him a very different king from the proud and cruel Ibrahim Lodi.

At last the day came when it was safe to send for the ladies of his family. When they were due to arrive, he rode out to meet them. But so great was his desire to see them once again, that when their caravan came in sight, he leapt from his horse and ran towards it on foot. Then he was just like a boy; he had forgotten his new and splendid empire, forgotten his grand new title of Padishah. He was no longer the first Great Mogul, but just a simple man, whose joy at seeing his loved ones brought tears to his eyes as he clasped his little daughter in his arms. There are many stories

about him, many of which show him as the gay and good companion he was. Others teach us that to him India owes the idea of beautiful gardens. For he loved flowers and trees. And he took note of everything he saw on his marches—every building, every lake or river, every bird; and not only these, but the colours of the sunrise and sunset, even when he faced the great army of Ibrahim Lodi on the field of Panipat.

CHAPTER IX

BABUR AND HUMAYUN

OF all his children, Babur loved his eldest son Humayun the best. The prince was the son of the Emperor's favourite wife, whom he called Maham. Moon Lady. And as the boy grew up, his father watched him with tender care, and was never happy when he was far away. Sometimes, as boys will, when Humayun was busy or enjoying himself very much, he would forget to write home to tell his parents of his doings. Then the Emperor would seek the Moon Lady, and together they would talk of their absent son, and wonder why he did not let them know how he was.

And if the prince did write, and the letter was not long or very well expressed, his royal father would sit down and answer him, saying, "Although I was very glad to get your letter, it was not well written. You must take more care and think of

what you are going to say, and how you are going to say it before you put it down on paper." Indeed, the Emperor Babur never seemed to remember that his eldest son was not a little boy. This was perhaps because he was so fond of him. He was most generous to all his children, but to Humayun he gave the best gifts of all. And a time came when he gave his life also for that of his beloved son.

The Emperor was at Agra when news came to him that Humayun was very ill of a fever which no doctor could cure. Babur, very much upset by these bad tidings, went at once to see Humayun's mother. He found her weeping, for she, too, had been told of her son's serious illness.

"If only he were here!" she said. "A mother's love can do so much."

The Emperor, seeing her grief, wept too. All that he had done and all that he had won seemed worthless if Humayun must die.

Then the Moon Lady tried to comfort him. "Why do you grieve?" she said. "You have other sons. I am sad because I have only this one."

And Babur replied, "Of all my sons I love none so well as your Humayun."



CLIFFORD WEBB

Then the anxious mother decided that she must go herself and bring her son to Agra. When she arrived at the place where he was lying he did not know her. But she had him placed very carefully in a boat, and so they brought him to the Emperor's palace at Agra. The court physicians used all their skill to save the precious life, but the prince grew weaker and weaker. It seemed as if the end was very near. Babur was almost distracted by grief. He spent the days in prayer for the life of his son.

Then one of his friends happened to say that perhaps if something most precious to one who loved the prince were offered in exchange for his life, that life might be saved.

And the devoted father replied at once, "My life is the most precious thing to Humayun, as his life is to me. I offer then, my life for his."

The friend who had first made the suggestion of sacrifice did his best to persuade Babur that he had meant a gift of some worldly possession, not of a life. He even suggested that the Emperor should offer the great diamond which had been given to him by Humayun on his entry into Agra. But Babur would not listen to this. He had quite made up his mind that he must die so that his son might

live, and went at once to the room where the prince lay unconscious.

Then, with his hands folded on his breast, he walked three times around Humayun's bed, saying over and over again in low clear tones, "On me be all that Humayun is suffering." And then with a look of joy he cried, "I have borne it away, I have borne it away!"

Humayun from that time grew better, and at last, to the great joy of his father and mother, was well enough to go back to Sambal, the place where he had been taken ill.

But from this time Babur failed in health. As his son grew stronger the father became weaker, until at last all those who loved him saw that he was going to die. And the Emperor knew, too, that his end was near. He was only forty-seven, but all his life he had worked very hard and never spared himself. He sent for Humayun, and called all his most trusted ministers around him. Then, taking Humayun's hand in his own, he said, "This is my heir, and the successor to all my dominions." And he commanded that Humayun should take his seat upon the throne, at the foot of which his own couch was placed. He then addressed those who

were gathered round him. He asked them to be faithful to their trust and to Humayun, and to help him to rule with justice and mercy. He begged them to protect the poor and weak, and to carry out his last wishes as well as they could.

His last request was to Humayun himself; this was that he should be kind and affectionate to his brothers.

Quite soon afterwards he died, having given his life for that of his dear son.

CHAPTER X

RANA SANGA

(Rana Sangram Singh, commonly called Sanga, was the ruler of the Rajput State of Chitor or Mewar, now known as Udaipur, from 1509 to 1527.

This State was then, as it is now, the first kingdom in Rajasthan, and its ruler the head of the Rajput princes.

Sanga, the son of Rana Raemall, had two brothers, Prithiraj and Jaimall. Owing to a feud with the former, he was exiled, and for many years led the life of a soldier of fortune. His adventures during this time read like a romance.

Under his rule Mewar reached her highest point of glory. In 1527 he led a great army against Babur, the conqueror of the Afghan Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi. At Khanua, a village to the west of Agra, after a desperate battle, the Hindus were completely

routed by the Moguls. It is said that the defeat of Sanga was brought about by the treachery of one of his own commanders. He escaped with his life, but died two years later in 1529. Upon his death Mewar fell upon bad times, until the accession of his grandson, the patriot Pratap Singh.)

Four horsemen rode down the rough path which led from the Rajput fortress of Chitor to the open country below. At a distance they were followed by a small escort, for the men who went first were princes of the royal house of Mewar. On the left rode Raja Surajmall, the Rana of Mewar's brother, and next to him the darling of the Rajputs, Prince Prithiraj. With his handsome face and splendid figure it is no wonder that many fine tales were told about him. Next to him, on the right, came his brother Sanga. Not so attractive in appearance as Prithiraj, this prince still wore the look of one born to command. His figure was broader and his glance calmer than that of his famous brother, and he spoke less on the way. Jaimall, the youngest brother, made up the party.

The uncle, Raja Surajmall, was a bluff and



heartly man of middle age, ready with a laugh or a rough word. He was not elegant like Prince Prithiraj, nor had he the look of quiet power which made his other nephew seem older than he was. Raja Surajmall was just a sturdy Rajput warrior, and sat in the saddle as if it were a chair.

As they rode, the four men talked of many things, especially of Babur, the ambitious King of Kabul, and of Sher Shah, the crafty Afghan adventurer, who seemed to have a foot in every camp.

Sanga, who was wise for his age, spoke of the need for Rajputs to support each other.

"If all our time," he said, "is spent in petty quarrels amongst ourselves, it will be easy for this Babur to come like a crow and carry off the bit of meat about which we are disputing."

But the romantic Prithiraj laughed at the thought of such a thing.

"While there are Rajput hearts and Rajput swords, no Moslem shall set foot in Mewar!" he cried in a ringing voice.

"Humph!" grunted his uncle. "And what of these great guns which this Babur has had invented for him? It will be a nice thing if he

brings them into India! A sword is a sword, and a Rajput sword better than any other, but when a man whom you cannot see shoots a great ball of lead into the air, and it falls on you, well, even a Rajput heart might stop beating, my brave nephew."

A laugh from Jaimall, who spoke seldom, greeted this speech.

"We might have some of these great guns," said Sanga thoughtfully, "mounted on our fortresses——"

"Never," broke in Prithiraj, "for when Rajput valour and Rajput steel fail to hold what they have won, let us pass away. I, for one, would bury my own sword in my heart before I would mount a gun on the sacred battlements of Chitor."

"Well, when you are Rana," said Surajmall slyly, "we will poke our swords through these iron toys that this Babur drags behind him."

Prithiraj flushed, and cast a look of disdain at the square figure of the elder man.

"When I am Rana," he said haughtily, "I will see to it that my Rajputs have not forgotten to fight like their fathers."

"That is all as it should be," replied his uncle.

Then his voice changed a little and grew harder. "Now if I should be Rana, I might try these guns, although I have as much love as you have, nephew, for the Rajput heart and Rajput sword. I agree with Sanga, one must fight a man with his own weapons."

"Never, I say never!" cried Prithiraj, and he spoke with such violence that his horse reared and almost threw him. But with swift grace he threw his weight forward, and forced the frightened creature to resume its ordinary position.

"Do not let us quarrel," said Sanga quietly, "at least about this King of Kabul or the arrogant Sher Shah. Whichever of us mounts the *gadi* will have a great, a noble task in front of him. The days of family quarrels are past. Foreign foes threaten our beloved land. We must combine against them into one great fighting family, loyal to each other and to Rajputana, our motherland."

"True, nephew," said Surajmall, "but let me first, I pray you, settle a few of my differences with some Rajput chiefs who annoy me. When I have cut off their insolent heads, then I shall be ready to listen to your good counsel."

"And so say I," cried Jaimall, who had never

thought of anything much except the hunt and the wine cup.

Sanga glanced at Jaimall, who was only his half-brother. He wondered if here was another rival for the throne of Mewar.

The Rana had not yet named his heir. Prithiraj, beloved by all, both rich and poor, would have been a happy choice. Sanga, the eldest son, was the rightful heir, while the uncle, Surajmall, would certainly do his best to seize the throne when it fell vacant. He was not without his supporters, although now he seemed content to ally himself with the Rana Raemall, his brother.

Of all these things Sanga thought as he rode along in silence, when suddenly Prithiraj cried out, "Yes, yes, I would die sooner than yield an inch of ground won by the swords of our noble ancestors."

Sanga sighed. He, too, felt the same burning love of his country, but in him wisdom and valour were mingled together. Prithiraj could think of nothing but Rajput glory. Sanga could see that the glory must pass unless the Rajputs moved with the times.

"And which of us will be chosen to rule over

Mewar? ” said Jaimall with a rough laugh. He, himself, did not much care so long as he could drink and fight.

Prithiraj threw up his handsome head as if he alone would be the choice of the gods, but his words were simple.

“ It is not for us to foretell the future,” he said.

“ No, not for us,” agreed Sanga thoughtfully, “ but there is one who may, the prophetess of the goddess Charani Devi.”

“ Who lives in a cave, the Tiger’s Mount? ” asked Surajmall.

“ Yes, at Nahra Magra to the east,” replied Sanga.

“ Then let us seek her,” cried the romantic Prithiraj. Anything in the way of an adventure pleased him.

“ Is it far? ” inquired Jaimall with a yawn, for he had spent the night with some wild companions, and had not been in bed until dawn.

“ About two miles down the valley road,” replied Sanga, “ and then up the eastern hillside. It is very steep; the horses may not be able to pick their way right up to the cave in which the priestess lives.”

“The escort can dismount and wait below,” said Surajmall. “There is no need to set their tongues wagging about our affairs.”

The four men then put their horses to the trot; the escort came on behind them, and in a few minutes they were at a gallop along the soft dry grass that bordered the road.

“See,” cried Sanga, “there is the hill to the right of us.”

“What!” exclaimed Jaimall, “and are we to scramble up a precipice?”

“The path is clear enough once you know it,” replied Sanga.

“Ah,” put in Surajmall, “you have been here before, nephew, peeping into the future!”

Sanga joined in the laugh against himself. “It is true that I have been here before, but it was not to learn who would rule over Mewar. I went to ask the prophetess what she knew about the Mogul Babur.”

“And what did she say?” asked Prithiraj.

“That one day I should meet him as a friend.”

“A friend,” cried the other three together, and Prithiraj added with a touch of scorn,

“Would you make a friend then, of this Moslem barbarian?”

“Listen,” said Sanga patiently. “The priestess said also, that at the last I should meet him as a foe.”

“Come, that’s better,” said Surajmall. “Well, here’s the path, and here we’d better leave the escort. One of us will return a future king.”

The escort dismounted, while the four horsemen rode on. The path up the hillside was very steep, and the horses slipped and stumbled, but their riders urged them on. After pushing through some thick jungle they came at last to an open space, and here Sanga told them to tether the horses. This they did; then with mixed feelings the four men went in single file down a narrow path which ended in a huge rock with a dark, narrow opening in it.

“And now,” asked Surajmall, “in what order do we enter?”

“Though I am the heir to ten thousand towns of Mewar,” said Sanga quietly, “yet will I trust my brothers to go first.” And he stood back while Prithiraj and Jaimall entered the cave. Then Sanga followed with Surajmall. They found themselves

in a small, dim room cut out of the solid rock. This led to another room from which came a faint glow.

Sanga, who had been there before, gave a summons, which was answered by a hollow voice which bade them enter. They went into the next cave, where the priestess, an aged woman with long white hair, gave to each man a long and searching look.

Then she said, "Let each son of the king take his appointed place."

"And I?" inquired Surajmall.

"That which is left," she replied simply, but with meaning.

Prithiraj looked round. Of seats there were none except a small pallet. He sat down upon this, and Jaimall sat beside him. Sanga, seeing no other raised seat, placed himself upon a panther skin which was spread on the ground.

"What will do for you, nephew, will do for me," said Surajmall; only, instead of sitting down, he knelt upon the panther skin.

"And what do you want of me?" said the prophetess.

"That you will consult the omens for a sign as

to which of us will rule over Mewar," replied Prithiraj.

"The future speaks," said the prophetess. "He who now sits upon the panther skin shall one day sit upon the *gadi*."

"And shall I make way for Sanga?" cried Prithiraj furiously, and he sprang up, drawing his sword.

"Stand back, stand back," commanded Surajmall, and he, too, drew his sword, and received the blow which Prithiraj had intended for his brother.

In a moment the cave was full of the sound of crossed steel. With a shriek of dismay the prophetess fled out into the jungle. Jaimall, who had no wish to die, also made his escape, and, mounting his horse, hurried off to Chitor, there to tell his father the Rana what had happened. In the meantime, Sanga, furious at the attack of Prithiraj, had rushed upon him, and after a fierce duel, overcome him. Surajmall, the peacemaker, had also fallen, exhausted by his wounds. Then, his wrath dying away, Sanga looked down at his brother whom he had loved; he who now lay with closed eyes as if dead. With a bitter cry he fled from the dreadful cave and made his way down the

other side of the hill. Wounded in five places, blinded in one eye, he sank down, where a Rajput chief found him and bound up his wounds. But before they could both ride on to safety, Jaimall came galloping up. He had an order from the Rana to pursue and arrest Sanga. The loyal chief threw himself before the wounded Sanga, who just managed to escape, while his good friend fell to save him.

For years Sanga remained an exile from Mewar, but Prithiraj and Jaimall both met violent ends, and upon the death of the Rana, Sanga was recalled to reign gloriously over Mewar.



CHAPTER XI

THE THRONE OF AKBAR

(After the death of Babur, his eldest son Humayun ascended the throne of Delhi. But owing to the jealousy and disloyalty of his three brothers, Kamran, Hindal and Askeri, he was unable to hold his inheritance. At one time his fortunes fell so low that he had to cross the Sind desert, a homeless wanderer. With him went his faithful wife, Hamida Begum. The sufferings endured by the royal pair were intense, and many of their escort died from thirst. At last they came to Umarkot, and were kindly received by the Raja, who gave them a refuge. Here Akbar, afterwards to be the greatest of the Mogul Emperors, was born. Eventually Humayun regained his crown. This was, in a great degree, due to the loyalty and military genius of Bairam Khan, his Commander-in-Chief. This great soldier was at hand to help

and advise the boy Prince Akbar, when, in his fifteenth year, he succeeded to the throne upon the death of his father. Humayun died in 1556, as the result of a fall.)

The moon shone brightly upon the waters of the river Indus, when a raft came gently into the bank. From it stepped a tall and graceful man, followed at a little distance by a group of Moslem officers. It was the Emperor Humayun, who, after a long exile, had come back to the kingdom that had been won for him by his father Babur.

As he once more set foot in Hindustan, he thought of his father; his lips moved in a silent blessing for the dead. Then he thought of his son, the brave young Prince Akbar; somewhere in the royal camp, on the river bank, the boy was waiting for him. Humayun thanked God that his son was now safe. Turning towards the setting moon, he sat down upon the dried grass of the river bank, and drew from the bosom of his tunic a well-worn copy of the Koran. Then he summoned an orderly, with a quiet gesture of his hand, and said, "I desire that the Prince Akbar should bathe and put on his robes of ceremony and come to me here."

When the prince heard that his father had arrived, and that he had sent for him, he was full of joy. His grand new clothes were ready. His old nurse, who had followed his fortunes through thick and thin, helped him to dress.

"Now the gold embroidered tunic," she said, stroking each garment before the boy put it on, "and now the necklace which the Emperor Babur himself wore." She hung the great chain, set with emeralds and other precious stones, round the sturdy brown neck of her foster-son.

"You look a king already," she cried proudly as he stood in front of her.

At her flattering words his face changed. "I wish that you had not said that," he said uneasily. But she could not unsay it. She had spoken.

Shining and scented, his sword at his side, the young prince strode down to the river bank. The Emperor, as he bent over the holy book, was at first unaware of his presence; but when his eyes fell upon the figure of his son he gave a cry of joy and pride. The boy looked so strong, so noble. Though short in height, he stood as bravely as a young lion, his small feet planted firmly on the ground. His large dark eyes glowed; he smiled



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very sweetly at his father. The Emperor rose and drew the boy to his heart. Then he sat down again, and bade the prince sit opposite him.

“This is the holy book,” he said, holding up the little copy of the Koran. “On this happy occasion I feel that it would be good to read some verses.”

The Emperor had a clear sweet voice, and after reading each verse he breathed upon his son, that being the Moslem form of benediction. Then, very happy and light of heart, he rose, and with a hand upon the shoulder of the prince, walked to the royal tent.

A few weeks later, the Emperor Humayun made a triumphal re-entry into Delhi. His troubles now seemed over. No longer had he to scurry from one place to another. No longer had he to hide from the persecutions of his wicked brother Kamran. That prince, blind and broken, had gone to Mecca. Humayun could now follow his natural inclinations and lead the life of a scholar.

Day after day he went to the royal library and spent happy hours amongst the beautiful books his father Babur had collected. But his son, Prince Akbar, never joined him there. He had no love

of learning. Indeed, at twelve years old he could neither read nor write. Distressed that his son and heir should be a dunce, the Emperor sent for his tutor.

The learned man came, very worried, and rubbing his hands in consternation. "Your Majesty," he said, "His Highness the prince will not pay any heed to me."

"You must punish him then," said the royal father.

The tutor looked uncomfortable. The prince was not a boy to stand in the corner with a pile of books on his head. He would be off and away through the door with a shout and a laugh. It was not at all an easy position to be the tutor of Prince Akbar. The Emperor became angry, and he sent for his son, who came to him with his usual frank and independent air.

"What is this I hear?" said his father. "That you will not learn to read? You, a king's son, cannot spell out a verse of the Koran."

"But I know it all by heart," replied Akbar. "Every day my *munshi* reads it to me while I polish my daggers. Why should I learn to read when there are those who can read to me?"

Humayun was firm, and replied severely, "How can you expect to rule with dignity and wisdom, you who can neither read nor write?"

The prince looked downcast, and then brightened up. "I can use a sword, a bow and a dagger," he cried. "I can ride the wildest horse, and wrestle with a grown man. What more does a king need than to be fearless and strong?"

Humayun sighed, remembering that because he had been weak he had nearly lost his kingdom. Then he said, "Life here at the palace is not good for you. You have too many wild companions. All your time is spent in hunting and in play. I have decided that you shall now be placed in a position of authority. Your play-days are over. It is my will that you be appointed Governor of the Punjab. Bairam Khan will accompany you as your new guardian."

The prince heard this news with trembling lip and flashing eyes. To be sent as Governor of the Punjab at such an early age was something. But then, Bairam Khan was to be really in power. Akbar, though so young, was very shrewd, and he saw in this decision of his father a plan to curb his freedom. But he knew that he would have to go.

In a way he liked Bairam Khan, and greatly admired the brave soldier. But he knew quite well that under his guardianship there would not be much time for amusement.

He, however, submitted with a good grace to his fate. The change was made, and farewells were said to his jolly companions in Delhi. He even showed a proper regret in bidding good-bye to his patient old *munshi*. Then one day he rode out, the centre of a gorgeous procession, as the Governor of the Punjab. He was mounted on a splendid elephant, whose trappings were of burnished gold. His own turban sparkled with gems, and his neck was hung with costly jewels. He would rather have ridden a horse, his falcon on his wrist. But there he sat, the heir-apparent to the throne of Delhi.

From the windows of the palace his father watched him go, and sighed because he would miss him so much. Behind the thin bamboo blinds of the Zenana, Hamida Begum, his mother, wept and waved her small hand. She was comforted a little by the splendid prophecies of the foster-mother.

"There rides the future Emperor of the world," said the old lady, and she fingered the jewel which the prince had given her in parting. Her own son

was in the royal suite. She was well pleased that morning.

Upon reaching the capital of his province, Akbar troubled himself very little about his duties. At thirteen the affairs of state had not much interest for him. He found much to amuse him in shooting and hunting. And he started a new sport too; he now kept a pet cheetah with which to hunt deer. In the meantime, Bairam Khan watched Sikandar Sur, the rival claimant to the throne. When fighting was likely, Akbar forsook his pleasures, and joined with a will in the operations against his rival.

Meanwhile in Delhi news reached the Emperor that his son and heir was upholding his honour in the field. The prince was evidently settling down to his responsibilities under the stern influence of Bairam Khan. And not a moment too soon.

One day the Emperor rose with the feeling that it was to be his last on earth. All day he spent in meditation and talk with his astrologers upon the roof of the palace. At sunset the call to prayer came. Humayun was just about to go downstairs. Always devout, he hastened to show his respect, and tried to sit down on the top step. His staff, which

he carried, slipped, and a fold of his long robe caught his foot. In vain he tried to save himself. It was no use. He fell down the whole flight of marble stairs, at the bottom of which he lay insensible. He never rallied. Three days later he died.

The supporters of Prince Akbar were in despair. The prince was far away, and if the news got abroad of the Emperor's tragic death, his son might never succeed him. It was all-important to get Akbar crowned as quickly and as secretly as possible.

Then someone thought of the plan to conceal Humayun's death until his son was crowned: a man, supposed to be like the dead Emperor, was dressed up in Humayun's clothes and sat in his place; and in the meantime messengers were hastily sent off to Kalanaur, where Akbar and Bairam Khan were. The boy, stunned by the tragic news of his father's end, was rallied by Bairam Khan's stern counsel.

"The King is dead. Long live the King!" he said in his hard way, but there was sadness in his tone, for he had dearly loved the charming Humayun. Then he continued, "This is no time for grief and tears. Sikandar Sur will rush to claim

the vacant throne. You, Prince, must be crowned to-night."

And so he was. A throne was built without delay. No gold or silver went to its making; plain bricks served for the first throne of Akbar, afterwards to be called "the Great."



CHAPTER XII

CHAND BIBI

(By 1596 Akbar could call himself master of the whole of Northern India. From the Bay of Bengal on the east to the Arabian Sea on the west he ruled supreme. Afghanistan was almost entirely under him, as well as the valley of the Indus. Only the south remained unconquered. The five Moham-medan kingdoms of the Deccan—Bijapur, Ahmed-nagar, Golconda (Hyderabad), Khandesh and Berar—remained independent.)

Chand Bibi, daughter of the Sultan of Ahmed-nagar, was married to Ali Adil Shah, Sultan of Bijapur, who gave his sister as bride to the Crown Prince of Ahmednagar. In this way an alliance was formed between the two principal kingdoms of the Deccan. Towards the close of Akbar's reign the Sultan of Ahmednagar died, leaving no

son. Four claimants to the throne came forward. The direct heir was a little child, the nephew of the late Sultan. To establish his claim, and also to prevent the conquest of Ahmednagar by Akbar, Chand Bibi undertook the defence of the fort. The siege of Ahmednagar took place in 1595.)

A fine procession wound its way over the hills that lie between Bijapur and Ahmednagar. In advance rode a body of cavalry, their lances gay with crimson flags.

In the centre of the procession Chand Bibi, "the Resplendent Queen," sat upon a beautiful white Arab horse. A picked force of the Bijapur army attended her.

When she was quite a girl Chand Bibi had ridden out to battle with the troops of Ahmednagar. She had worn a coat of mail over her silken gown and carried a lance into battle. In later years, after the death of her husband Adil Shah, she had ruled over Bijapur in the name of the boy king, her nephew, and been exiled through the ill-will of her Prime Minister. But she had come through all these troubles bravely, without losing her womanly sweetness. And now, just when she had hoped to

end her days in peace, fresh troubles had broken out in Ahmednagar. The king had died a raving madman, and there were four people for whom the throne was claimed. Of these, the little nephew of the dead king was the real heir. And it was to hold the throne for him that Chand Bibi was riding from Bijapur.

She was a brave woman to attempt such a task, for it was against the army of the Emperor Akbar that she would have to defend the fort. Already, under the command of the Emperor's son, Prince Murad, the Mogul forces were marching through the Deccan. There was no time to lose if Ahmednagar must be saved.

When she arrived at the fort, she at once made preparations to put it into a state of defence. The Ahmednagar gunners, already famous, were strengthened by a company of archers. On each bastion of the fort heavy guns were mounted. In addition, Chand Bibi laid in large supplies of stores, for she expected a long siege.

The garrison was small, but all the soldiers were devoted to her. They looked upon her as their commander, and had the greatest trust in her.

But however careful and wise her preparations were, she still knew she had far too few men. So she wrote to her nephew, the Sultan of Bijapur, saying, "Send me some more troops, for if I cannot hold Ahmednagar against Prince Murad, what is to prevent him from marching on to Bijapur?"

Her appeal touched the Sultan's heart. He saw that she was right to ask for reinforcements, and agreed to send a trained force under one of his most experienced generals. But this general was rather cautious, and moved slowly for fear of being cut off by the Mogul advance. And so it happened that he arrived too late. The enemy was already encamped in front of Ahmednagar. In the meantime Chand Bibi waited in vain for the promised help, until one morning she saw the enemy approaching like a great cloud. Then she knew that she was shut up inside the fort with her small band of faithful defenders. But she did not lose heart. Instead, she redoubled her efforts. Dressed in a light suit of armour over her robe, a steel helmet on her head, from which a soft veil floated, she went the rounds in person. Nothing escaped her keen eye, and she had a word of encouragement for all her soldiers.

The Moguls did not hurry to attack. Deliberately they prepared to mine the fort. So far as they could see, it could not hold out long. They had, however, reckoned without Chand Bibi.

These days of waiting were a great trial to the besieged. Not a shot was fired. Not a man could come in or go out. Even if the relief arrived from Bijapur, Chand Bibi knew it could not help her now. She felt as if she was in a trap, but she was determined to fight to the last.

One day a great rattle of drums announced the Mogul attack. A shot was fired, and answered from the walls of the fort by a volley from the Ahmednagar gunners. All day the thunder of the guns continued. At sunset the call to prayers mingled with the shouts of soldiers and groans of the dying. Chand Bibi never left the walls. Wherever there was most danger, her figure could be seen. And when night fell, and only an occasional shot broke the silence, she tended the wounded and eased their sufferings.

And so the siege went on, until one night as Chand Bibi went round the walls, a voice called from below, "Yield, brave brothers of the faith!

Yield, and prevent more bloodshed. Under the very walls where you stand, mines are laid, and will soon be fired. Surrender, and open the gates to admit the King of kings. This is the only way by which you can escape death."

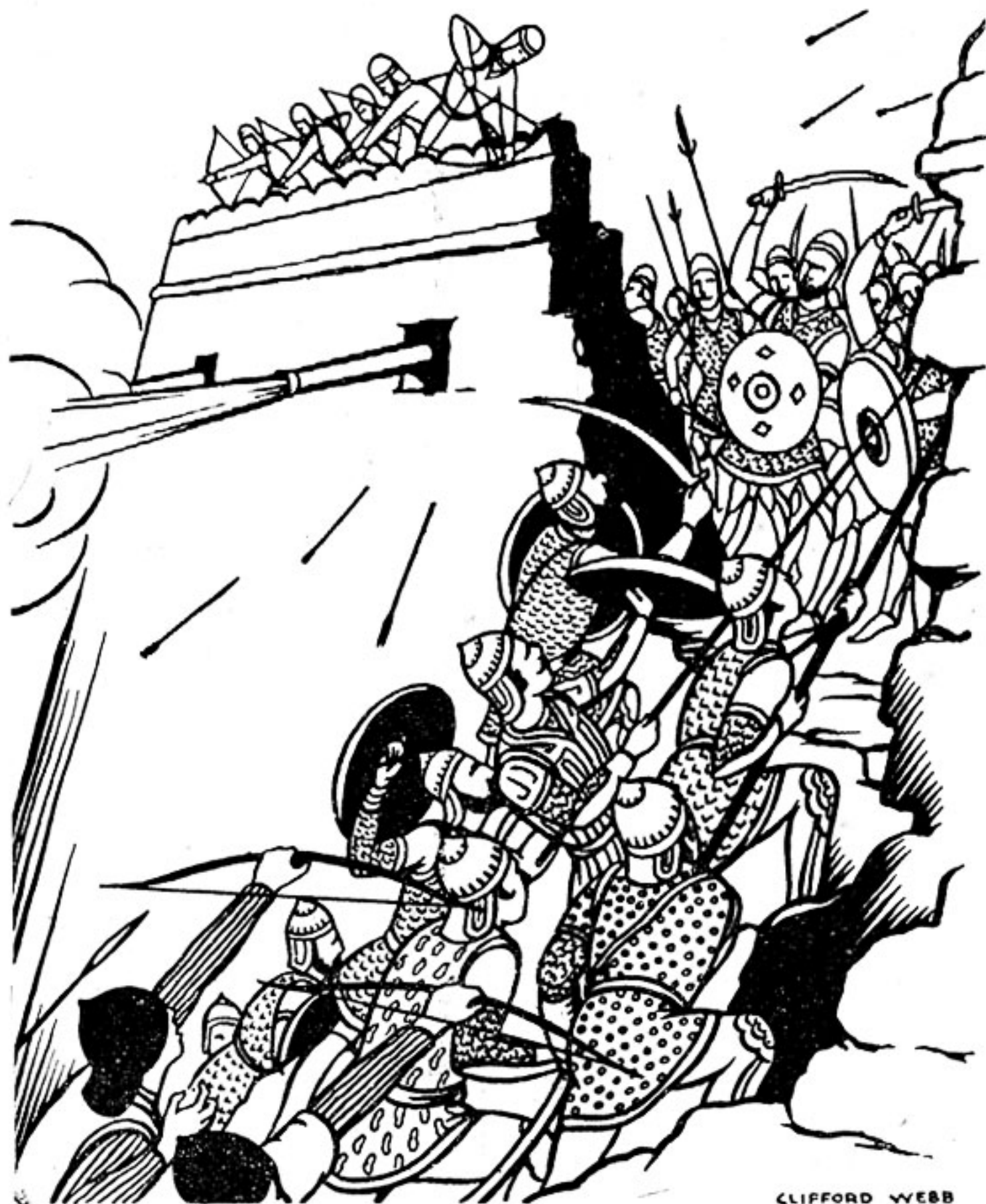
When the men of the garrison heard the words of this warning, they were very frightened. They ran at once to Chand Bibi, and begged her to open the gates to Prince Murad and his army. But she would not listen. Raising her voice so that all could hear her, she cried, "We will not yield. Victory is within our reach. With our lives we will defend the fort." Then turning to her soldiers she continued, "O my sons, will you then sacrifice all you have fought for to the Mogul soldiers? If we are brave, God will help us."

Encouraged by her words, the men of the garrison replied, "Noble Queen, we will die at our posts rather than desert you."

Without delay they began to dig counter-mines. Chand Bibi herself seized an axe and worked like a common soldier.

By daylight they discovered the mines. Two of these they laid bare, and took out all the gun-

powder. But before they could do this to the third, there was a loud explosion, and a portion of the wall



fell down. The Moguls rushed towards the gap, but Chand Bibi was ready for them.

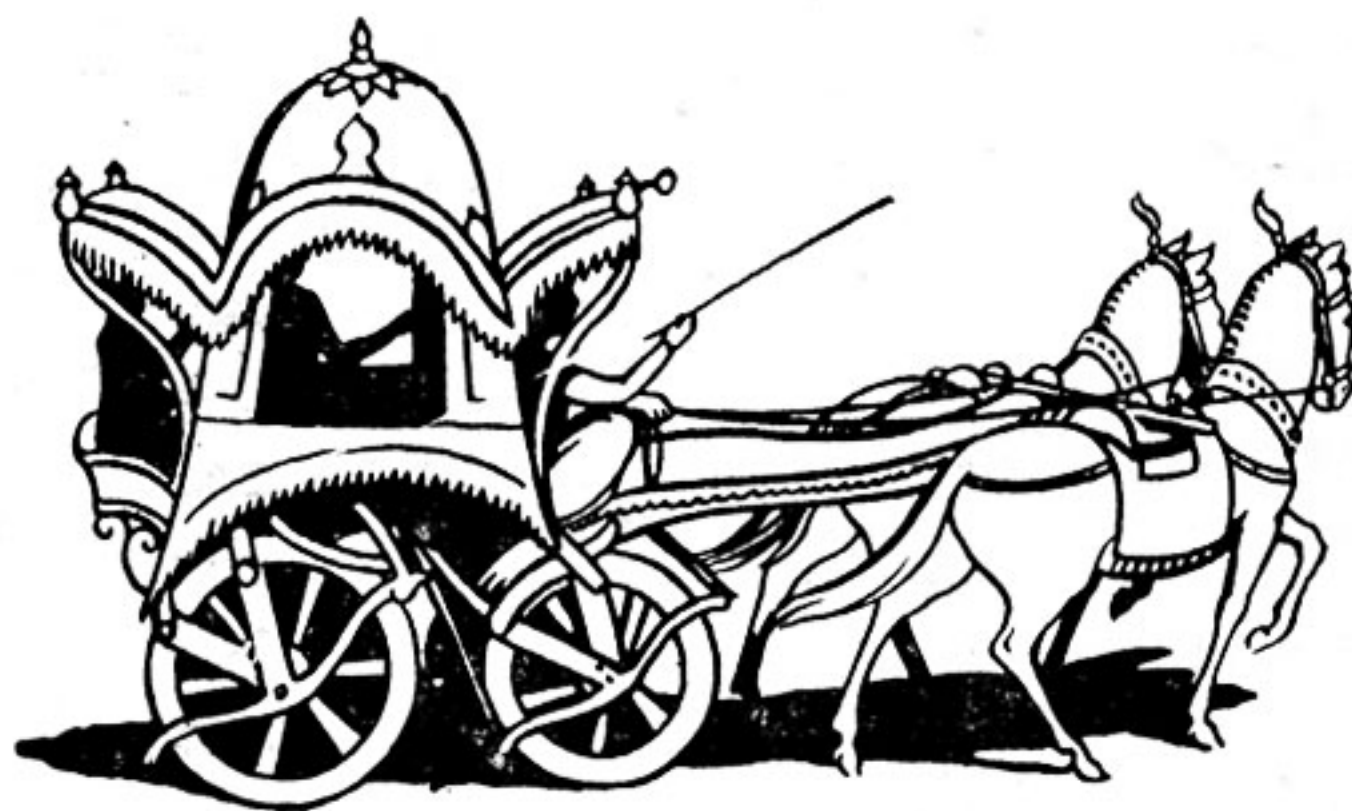
Waving her naked sword above her head, she

sprang into the breach, crying, "Who will follow my veil? Into the breach, my friends, death or victory!"

A dozen men leaped after her, then another and another, until she was the centre of a mass of gleaming steel. Standing at the head of the breach, she directed the defence. Not a Mogul got through, for as each man came up he was cut down. The attack failed, and for a day or two no other was made. But it was only the calm before the storm. Suddenly from the Mogul lines came a mass of men, armed with match-locks, maces, swords and heavy spears. Heedless of the fire from the walls, they surged on, chanting their war songs. As the first line fell another came on, until the ground between the fort and the Mogul camp was piled with the dead and dying. No retreat was possible, for those who turned were borne down by those advancing. All day the attack lasted, and yet the Moguls came on. They would not admit defeat.

Through the roar of the guns, and the shrieks of the wounded, Queen Chand remained calm. Her soldiers fought for her as if they were possessed, and by nightfall the victory was with the defenders. The breach was mended, and Prince Murad was

foiled. Thus ended the siege of Ahmednagar, made for ever famous by the heroic deeds of a woman; even to this day her name is revered, and she is known as "the Noble Queen."



CHAPTER XIII

SHIVAJI AND AURANGZEB

(Shivaji, the Maratha who defied the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb, and eventually made himself master of Maharashtra, was born at Shivner in the Deccan, early in the seventeenth century.

He was the son of Shahji Bhonsle, an officer in the service of the Nizam-Shahi Sultans of Ahmednagar. His mother, Jija Bai, a lady of noble birth, was deserted by her husband, who took another wife, upon whom he lavished all his wealth and affection.

Jija Bai was therefore left with the sole care of her little son, and for the first years of his life Shivaji saw nothing of his father.

From his mother he inherited a deeply religious spirit, and he became a devout Hindu. He also learned from her the ballads and tales of his

country's heroes, and became fired with a desire for glory. At nineteen he began a career of adventure. Collecting a small force of men as daring as himself, he seized several of the mountain forts in the neighbourhood of Poona.

For the rest of his life he was engaged in defying the aged Emperor Aurangzeb, and with such success that in 1674 he was crowned at Raigarh as Chhatrapati of the Hindus.

He died quite suddenly at the age of fifty-three, and the power that he had won crumbled away in the hands of his son Sambaji.)

The Hall of Public Audience in Agra Fort was splendidly decorated, for it was the birthday of the Emperor Aurangzeb.

The courtiers were dressed in their most gorgeous robes, and everything was ready for the weighing of the Emperor against silver and gold. This was a custom followed only by kings of imperial rank. And when the ceremony was over, the wealth which turned the scale against the royal person was given to the poor.

The highest in the land with their retainers stood in the places due to their rank, until the great

hall and the space on three sides of it were filled to overflowing.

Princes from every part of India had been invited on this great day. They had come from the north, riding on elephants, their bodyguard around them; they had come from the east and the west, each bringing a rich gift for the King of kings. They were all very splendid and very proud, men used to the court and its ceremony, each knowing what was due to his rank.

Among them there were Afghans, Turks and Arabs, and the proud Rajput chiefs who claimed descent from the sun and the moon. Over them all ruled Aurangzeb, the great-grandson of Akbar.

Into this splendid company came Shivaji, the Maratha, followed by his young son Sambaji and ten sturdy Maratha officers.

As he made his way between the rows of haughty nobles he looked a small and jungly figure. His fine new clothes did not fit his spare body, and the turban, with its plume of peacock



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feathers, which he wore, was far too big for him.

The Rajputs, resplendent in their full-skirted coats and head-dresses of golden gauze sparkling with jewels, stared at Shivaji in disdain.

“Ah, ha! Here comes the mountain rat,” said one in low tones, but Shivaji heard him. His face darkened, even as he was led up to the throne.

He had brought a splendid present to lay before the Emperor. Fifteen hundred pieces of gold and a bag heavy with rubies.

At the foot of the throne he glanced up at the face of the aged Emperor. It was cold and stern. Aurangzeb seemed to have forgotten Shivaji, and his eyes, dull as those of a lizard, looked right over the Maratha's head.

His salutation made and his offering presented, Shivaji was conducted back to his appointed place. He found, to his fresh disgust, that he had been put among nobles of the third class, the commanders of ten thousand.

“What!” he exclaimed in a loud voice, “my little son who is only seven years old is a commander of five thousand. Even my servant Netaji ranks as high. Am I, after all my services to the

Emperor, after coming all the way to Court, to be insulted? ”

“ Hush ! ” said the noble who had introduced him to the throne, “ the Emperor will hear you and trouble will follow.”

But Shivaji was beside himself with rage, and shouted, “ Who is the Chief in front of me? ”

“ That is Raja Rai Singh,” was the reply.

“ Rai Singh ! ” said Shivaji, “ Rai Singh, whom my soldiers have seen fly from the field. He to stand before me ! Give me a dagger and I will kill him. Then you will see who is the better man.”

Those near him held him back, and he struggled in vain to draw his sword. He was overpowered, but so great was his anger that he fell down in a swoon.

The noise of the squabble reached the ears of Aurangzeb.

“ Who disturbs the Darbar? ” he demanded sternly.

“ It is the Maratha, Shivaji, Your Majesty,” replied a courtier. “ Overcome by the heat and the grandeur, he has fallen down in a fit ”

“ Then carry him away,” commanded Aurang-

zeb, and then remembering the fifteen hundred pieces of gold, he added, "and sprinkle him with rosewater." Then, feeling he had done his duty by his troublesome visitor, the Emperor forgot about him.

But, when Shivaji recovered he was full of wrath, and swore he would rather have been put to death than be insulted before the whole Court of Aurangzeb.

His words were repeated to the Emperor, who thought to himself, "I shall have to shut this troublesome fellow up!" And Shivaji, who had come to Agra with such high hopes, found himself a prisoner.

He was shut up in a house just outside the city walls, and forbidden to appear at Court. But his son Sambaji was left free, and it was said that the boy was a great favourite with the daughter of the Emperor.

Shivaji was now in despair. He sent a petition to Aurangzeb, but the Emperor's answer to it was to double his guards, and it looked as if the mountain rat was caught in a trap.

For three months the Maratha planned and plotted to escape. ~~Sambaji~~ Sambaji was allowed to visit him

sometimes, and the father questioned him closely about what was going on at Court.

“The Emperor is very kind to me,” replied the boy. “I have a horse to ride, and the princess has given me some new clothes and a jewel for my turban.”

“Ah,” thought Shivaji bitterly, “they are bribing my own son to turn against me.”

Once more he sent a petition to the Emperor, but no notice was taken of it. Then he asked as a favour that his Maratha guard should be allowed to return home.

“That I will grant most gladly,” replied Aurangzeb. “The fewer of these Deccanis in Agra the better.”

From the window of his prison, Shivaji watched his escort ride past. As they caught sight of their Chief each man saluted. They knew why they had been sent back. The next to go were the civil officers from the Deccan, who had come with Shivaji.

“Now,” thought Aurangzeb, “the mountain rat is at my mercy. He has none of his own people to help him.”

Shivaji, almost alone and a prisoner, smiled

grimly to himself. With him had remained his brother-in-law, who was not unlike himself, either in looks or nature. His name was Hiraji, and he was a man of courage and deeply loyal to Shivaji.

“Now that my friends have gone, all except you, my brave Hiraji, my mind is easy,” said Shivaji. “I have a plan that may succeed. I want you to send Sambaji to me. The boy has grown too fond of life at the Court of Aurangzeb. Soon he will forget that he is a Maratha and that his father is a prisoner. Say that I am a little ailing, that I have fever every night.”

Sambaji came next day. He was full of a grand fête that had been given at the palace.

“That is all very well,” said his father, “but tell me, my son, have you forgotten your mother?”

The boy hung his head and made no reply. Shivaji went on, “Have you forgotten your home, high up among the rocks like that of an eagle? Have you forgotten your people, the rough frank men of the Deccan? Not courtiers dressed in red silk, but soldiers all ready to die for you and for me. What friends have we here in Agra? Who among those who wait near the throne would make you a king? I tell you the Emperor is evil, and the

more so when he smiles. For him every man has his price, and is yours to be a new dress, a jewel to stick in your turban, while mine is a stab in the dark? ”

The boy's eyes filled with tears, his lip trembled when he spoke.

“ I shall never see my mother or the hills of the Deccan again.”

“ Why? ” asked Shivaji.

“ Because they tell me,” said the lad, “ that if I try to escape, if I do not always remain with the Emperor——” He paused.

“ Go on, speak out,” commanded Shivaji harshly.

“ If I do not remain, they will cut off your head,” burst out Sambaji, and he wept bitterly.

“ My son, they will never cut off my head,” said Shivaji, “ nor shall you stay at the Court of Aurangzeb. Be comforted. The mountain rat will get out of the trap somehow.”

Sambaji sighed. He knew that outside the house in which his father was a prisoner a large guard of soldiers were on the watch night and day. He could not see how Shivaji could pass them. But Shivaji had already got an idea. It was a wild

and daring one, but then he had many a time in his youth carried out some bold scheme with success.

He gave out that he was ill, and even that he thought he was going to die.

“At such a time,” he said in a solemn voice, “a man’s thoughts should turn to holy things.”

He gave orders that presents of fruit and sweets should be sent to Brahmans, courtiers and beggars. These were taken from his house in great baskets, which the bearers slung over their shoulders.

At first the guards were very suspicious of these baskets, and stopped the bearers while a search was made. But as they found nothing but fruit and sweets for several days, they let them pass without even looking at them.

Shivaji was supposed to be very ill. He lay covered up with a quilt, nothing but his arm showing. On this he wore a gold bracelet. Sambaji watched by his side, while the faithful Hiraji attended to his needs.

One afternoon Hiraji went out to the guards and said, “The Raja is much worse. He lies without sense or movement. Let all be kept as



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quiet as possible," and he returned to the room where Shivaji lay.

When night came, Shivaji got up very quietly and Hiraji lay down in his place upon the bed, drew the quilt over him and stretched out his arm. From his own arm Shivaji took the gold bracelet and slipped it over that of his brother-in-law. Then without a sound he signed to Sambaji to get into one of the baskets which were waiting to be carried out, while he himself crouched down in the other. Very soon afterwards one of the guards looked in, saw the silent figure on the bed, and went out again.

"The Maratha is either dead or dying," he told his companions; "he lies without movement, his arm stretched out, stiff like that of a corpse."

"Then all his offerings to the priests and to the poor have not helped him," said another. "See, here come the bearers, bringing the last gift of Shivaji."

With a slow and steady tread the bearers with the baskets came out and took their usual way. Then came another pair of bearers, also carrying baskets. They, too, passed on. Then came a third pair.

"Hold!" cried the guards. "For a dying

man, your master is generous," and they ordered the bearers to put down the baskets, which were searched to the very bottom. But they only found fruit and flowers. For Shivaji and his son had escaped in the second pair of baskets from the clutches of the Emperor Aurangzeb, and were already far away on the road to Mathura.

