

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

**Assault on the 4th of May—Capture of the fort—Surrender of the palace—Tippu's two sons sent to Harris' camp—Tippu's dead body discovered and sent to the palace—A night of horrors.**

On the 3rd May the breach was reported practicable. At this time a scarcity approaching to famine prevailed throughout the English camp. Many of the fighting men had been placed on half rations, of the camp followers several were dead or dying and similarly all the bullocks of the army were either dead or worn out by fatigue and want of food. In addition to these difficulties, there was a strong probability from the appearance of the weather that the rains which usually commence in the month of May would swell the river into an insurmountable obstacle to the operations of the besieging army. General Harris in these circumstances thought it essential that the assault on the fort should no longer be delayed and fixed the next day for it. His choice to lead the assaulting party fell on General Baird who had spent a number of years in the fort as a prisoner and was consequently well acquainted with the place. A body of troops consisting of 2,494 Europeans and 1,892 sepoys, total 4,376 men, was placed under the orders of General Baird on the afternoon of the 3rd May and instructions were given to him to direct the different corps to proceed to the trenches at such hours during the night and in such succession as he thought fit a little before daybreak. On the night of this day, the passage of the river adjacent to the breach was examined by Lieut. Lalor and found to be 280 yards in breadth. The bottom was very rocky and rugged but there was no great depth of water, although there were many deep pools. Scaling ladders and materials were placed in the advanced approaches to make a lodgment if necessary, after storming the fort the following day.

When the momentous 4th of May which decided Tippu's fate and the future destiny of Mysore dawned, it was found that without exciting suspicion of any extraordinary action on that day the storming party had been placed in their several places and they

awaited only the signal to rush forward. The fire from the English batteries and from the guns of the fort was commenced and kept up as on the preceding days, except that the Mysoreans discharged an increased quantity of rockets into the English trenches which they observed to be more crowded than usual. The object of the British cannonade on this morning was to extend the breadth of the breach, to demolish any remaining defences and to destroy any repairs which the besieged might have effected during the preceding night. Some time later in the morning, General Baird received intimation from the commander-in-chief that the assault on the fort was to begin at 1 p.m. and this hour was fixed as it was supposed that the Mysore troops would be occupied in taking their refreshments and having some repose, least expecting that the Europeans were capable under a severe midday sun of the exertions needed for storming the fort. At about 11 o'clock Baird intimated to the troops in the trenches calling on them to be ready to proceed to the attack at 1 o'clock. Each European received a cheering dram of liquor and a biscuit, and arrangement and formation of the attack immediately commenced. It was determined to make the assault in two places at the same time, namely, on the right and left of the breach, the former point of attack being on the southern rampart and the latter on the northern. Colonel Sherbrook and Lt.-Col. Dunlop were placed in respective command of these two divisions, Lieut. Lalor undertaking the guidance of the troops across the Kaveri. A forlorn hope of twelve men and a sergeant with a party of officers was also formed ready to advance to the breach in front of each division. Preceding the hour of attack, the storming party waited with anxiety considering that their own existence and that of the British interests in India alike depended on the issue of the enterprise before them. Equally with others General Harris was not without anxiety. It is related that sometime prior to the attack Harris was found by Captain (afterwards Sir John) Malcolm seated alone in his tent, rapped in deep thought, and that thereupon Malcolm in a vein of pleasantry hinting at chances of a peerage for Harris addressed him,—“Why, my Lord, so thoughtful?” “Malcolm,” the General is reported to have said sternly, “this is no time for compliments. We have serious work on hand. Don't you

see that the European sentry over my tent is so weak from want of food and exhaustion that a sepoy could push him down. We must take this fort or perish in the attempt. I have ordered General Baird to persevere in the attack to the last extremity. If he is beaten off, Wellesley is to proceed with the troops from the trenches. If he also should not succeed, I shall put myself at the head of the remainder of the army, for success is essential to our existence."

Before proceeding to a description of the attack on the fort by the British troops, it will be convenient here to dwell at some length on how Tippu was engaged during the period of the siege. On the day of General Harris' final encampment before Seringapatam, Tippu caused a small tent to be pitched for personal accommodation on the south of the fort, whence he directed the operations of his troops. When General Stuart passed the river to the northward, the Sultan moved his headquarters to the western angle, whence he superintended the operations undertaken to dislodge that army from its northern position. On the opening of the first English batteries, he removed himself from this exposed situation and fixed his headquarters in the northern face in an apartment formed by an old gateway which had for some years been closed by an exterior revetment. The troops on duty inside the fort at several works numbering 13,750 were regularly relieved and the general charge of the angle attacked had been committed to Syed Sahib assisted by Syed Gaffar who was formerly in a British regiment but subsequently had taken service under Tippu. The Sultan's eldest son Fathe Haidar with the whole of the cavalry and Silledar horse numbering 4,300 assisted by Purnaiya commanded a detached corps to disturb the northern attack and were encamped at Karighat. Tippu's second son commanded the Mysore gate of the fort on the southern side, while Kamruddin was detached with a body of 4,000 troops to cut off the supplies and reinforcements of the English and their confederates.

On the eventful morning of the 4th Syed Gaffar's keen eye detected that the British trenches were unusually crowded and that it would not be very long before the assault was delivered. His warnings however went unheeded and Tippu contented himself by

merely saying that it was proper to be on the alert but that the attack would, he believed, be made in the night and not during the day. At about 9 o'clock in the morning Tippu proceeded to his palace, bathed and presented a number of gifts to mendicants and various other people. Having finished these ceremonies about the hour of noon, he returned to his tent and had eaten but a morsel of food, when intelligence was brought to him of the death of Syed Gaffar. The Sultan abstained from further eating, washed his hands and hastened towards the breach along the northern rampart.

When the hour 1 p.m. fixed for storming the fort arrived, General Baird sprang upon the parapet, drew his sword and stood for an instant on the top attracting the attention of his men by his splendid soldier-like figure and bidding them follow him, he rushed to the river bank. As the stormers, according to the account of an eye-witness, made their way splashing through the water, they were met by a very heavy fire of musketry and one or two discharges of grape from the fort. Among the first to be wounded was John Best, a servant of General Harris who had joined the storming party as a volunteer but who nevertheless sat on a boulder and cheered on the attackers as they passed him. The ditch was found to be filled to a large extent by debris and presented no serious obstacle to the survivors of the forlorn hope who now hastened panting up the slope of the debris towards the summit of the breach. To meet them, a number of gallant Mysoreans came down and bayonet clashed with sword as defenders and stormers met in a fierce hand to hand conflict. Few of the forlorn hope survived to reach their goal but Sergeant Graham of the Bombay army, Union Jack in one hand and sword in the other, hacked his way to the top of the slope and planting the end of the flag-pole firmly in the rubbish at the summit of the breach cried out exultingly: "Here is success to Lieutenant Graham" and with that was shot dead. Within six minutes of leaving the trenches, the Union Jack was placed on the summit of the breach and in a few minutes more, the breach a hundred feet in width was thronged with breathless, sweating, excited soldiery who after being hurriedly reorganised into two parties were despatched one to the right under Colonel Sherbrook and another to the left along the ramparts under

Lt.-Col. Dunlop according to General Baird's instructions, the General himself accompanying the right column.

The attack being so sudden and even unexpected, made as it was in the broad noon of the day and at the general hour of dinner for Indians, the assailants met with no very considerable resistance, though the left column had not such an easy way as the right column. General Baird who accompanied the right column discovered a second ditch full of water within the outer wall and was at first staggered with this insurmountable difficulty of overcoming this new impediment. Fortunately as the column marched forward along the ramparts, a scaffolding was discovered raised for the use of the workmen repairing the wall. General Baird readily availed himself of this Godsend and thereby crossing the inner ditch reached in less than an hour the Bangalore gate in the centre of the eastern face of the fortress, where he halted his men to allow them breathing time and to have some refreshments.

The left column which was to scour the western and northern ramparts was more vigorously opposed than the right column on account of Tippu's presence in this part of the fortifications. Lt.-Col. Dunlop commanding this column was severely wounded in a personal combat with a Mysorean swordsman as he climbed up the slope to the breach and the senior officers who in turn took his place being also disabled, the command devolved upon Lieut. Farquhar who led the attack till he was killed. His place was then taken by Lieut. Lambton who led the column till the end. The Mysoreans fiercely contested the possession of a number of traverses on these western and northern ramparts but they were taken in reverse by a body of troops led by Captain Goodall who had succeeded in crossing from the outer rampart to the inner one which ran parallel to the outer rampart throughout the defences.

We may turn now to Tippu who, as we already know, had left his tent and proceeded in the direction of the breach on hearing that the assault had begun. As the British troops advanced, he had to fall back from traverse to traverse along the northern face of the fort. At one of these places Tippu complained of pain in one of

his legs, the result of a wound received in years gone by. He could have easily escaped from the fort through the water-gate which was nearby. But apparently he did not want to do so. Mounting his horse, he proceeded towards the gateway leading from the centre of the northern ramparts to the interior of the fortress. On arriving at the gateway however, he became exposed to the fire not only of the assailants on the northern rampart but also of Captain Goodall's detachment which had worked round until they could fire into the gateway from the inner side. Under this fire the Sultan's horse fell dead and the Sultan himself received another wound in the chest, in addition to those he had already received. Half fainting as he was, he was placed by his attendants in a sitting position on the edge of his palanquin. The scene here now grew horrible. The assailants who were now in possession of the major portion of the ramparts turned the guns of the ramparts upon Tippu's broken and flying ranks who now from all quarters indiscriminately rushed to the gateway where Tippu was and dropped from the broken walls or threw themselves into the ditch. At the same time, crowds of the terrified inhabitants mixing with the soldiery and pressing to the gates attempted to quit the town and were indiscriminately slaughtered, so that the place became heaped up with the killed and the wounded. In this gateway as well as in other places the dresses of the dead catching fire from the paper of the cartridges of English soldiers blazed forth with a violence equal to that of an immense furnace and continued burning till the gates and the mangled mass of bodies piled up against them were consumed together.

The palanquin in which the Sultan was placed by some of his surviving adherents was kept under the arch on one side of the gateway and he had scarcely been there for a few minutes, when some British soldiers entered the gateway and one of them attempted to snatch the Sultan's sword-belt which was of value. Furious with rage, the Sultan made a cut with his sword inflicting a wound on the knee of his assailant who promptly raised his musket and shot him dead. Among other important men who lost their lives on this day were Syed Sahib and Mir Sadak. While three officers of the British general staff Majors. Allan, Beatson and Dallas were

passing along the northern rampart, they observed two men lying desperately wounded near the inner ditch, one of whom by his dress appeared to be of distinction. Suspecting that it might be the Sultan, they descended to the place for the purpose of closer examination, but Major Dallas recognised him as Syed Sahib whom he had seen at Mangalore in 1784. Syed Sahib, it is stated, supported by the officers raised himself and clung round Major Dallas' knees in the most affecting manner imploring compassion for himself and for his family. The officers were in the act of placing him in his palanquin which had tumbled down into the ditch and had sent for a surgeon to dress his wounds, when a renewal of a heavy fire of musketry compelled them to attend to other duties and he soon afterwards expired. Mir Sadak, according to Kirmani, wishing to quit the fort about the time Tippu and his horse were wounded near the sallyport or the gateway arrived at the Ganjam gate, where he was attacked by a man who abusing him in foul language for all his misdemeanours cut off his head with his sword and threw his body into a heap of filth closeby. Here every passerby who noticed it, it is stated, spat at it and that some also loaded it with shoes.

The only place not now in the possession of the British was the palace. Tippu's fate at the hands of an unknown soldier not having been noticed by any persons on the side of the British, it was suspected that Tippu was in his palace and that there he would make his last stand. From one of the bastions on the south side it was observed that several persons were assembled in the palace, many of whom from their dress and appearance seemed to be of distinction and one person was noticed prostrating himself before he sat down, from which circumstance it was concluded that Tippu with such of his officers as had escaped from the assault had taken shelter in the palace. General Baird now finding that his men had been refreshed and had some rest directed Major Allan to proceed with a detachment to the palace and inform the inmates that their lives would be spared on condition of their immediate surrender but that the least resistance would prove fatal to every person within the palace walls. Major Allan having fastened a white cloth to a Sergeant's pike proceeded to the palace and found that several of

Tippu's people were in a balcony and communicated to them the instructions given to him by General Baird. In a short time the Killedar Nadeem Khan who was an officer of consequence came over with a servant to the terrace of the front building and descended by an unfinished part of the wall. Allan pressed on the Killedar the danger of their situation and the necessity of allowing him to enter the palace on his pledge of protection for him and for those inside. The Killedar however was averse to this proposal but Major Allan insisted on his going with him as it was no time for indecision. Allan with two other officers then ascended by the broken wall and all three lowered themselves down on a terrace, where a large body of armed men were found assembled. Major Allan explained to them through one of the officers accompanying him who spoke Hindusthani well that the flag which he held in his hand was a pledge of security provided no resistance was made and strongly to impress them with this belief, he took off his sword and insisted on their receiving it. The Killedar and many others affirmed that the princes and the family of Tippu were in the palace but not the Sultan. On Major Allan plainly informing them that they were surrounded by a body of infuriated troops for whose conduct he could not make himself responsible, they left him and soon after people were observed moving forwards and backwards in the interior of the palace. The people on the terrace begged Major Allan to hold the flag in a conspicuous place in order to give confidence to those in the palace and prevent the English troops from forcing the gates. Long delay having occurred on the part of the Killedar in bringing back an answer, Major Allan sent word to the princes warning them of their critical situation and intimated to them that his time was limited and the answer came back that they would receive him as soon as a carpet was spread for the purpose. Shortly after, the Killedar came to conduct Major Allan to the presence of the princes, two of whom he found seated on the carpet surrounded by a great many attendants. The succeeding part of the story may now be given directly in the words of Major Allan.

“They desired me to sit down, which I did in front of them. The recollection of one of the princes Mohiuddin whom on a former occasion I had seen delivered up with his brother as hostages to



On the gates of the palace being opened, it was found that General Baird had arrived with several officers and a large body of troops. Baird seemed to be much irritated and extremely incensed and said he would not enter the gate and insisted on the princes being brought out to him and that Tipu should be found or he would search every part of the palace and no soul should escape alive. There were not wanting persons who urged on General Baird to put his threat into execution at once and a crowd of officers also attempted to rush into the palace. Major Allan stopped them and told General Baird that he had pledged his word to the

assurances I had given them." Marguis Cornwallis, the sad reverse of their fortunes, the thought that however much their father deserved our resentment they were blameless, their fears which notwithstanding their struggles to conceal were but too evident excited the strongest emotions of compassion in my mind. I took Mohiuddin to whom the attendants principally directed their attention by the hand and endeavoured by every means in my power to remove his fears and to persuade him that no violence would be offered to him or his brother nor to any other person in the palace. I then entreated him as the only means to preserve his father's life whose escape was impracticable, to inform me where he was concealed. Mohiuddin after some conversation with his attendants assured me that the Padscha was not in the palace. I requested him to allow the gates to be opened. All were alarmed at this proposal and the princes were reluctant to take such a step but by the authority of their father to whom they proposed to send. At length, having promised that I would post a guard of their own sepoy within and a party of Europeans outside, having given them the strongest assurances that no person should enter the palace but by my authority and that I would return and remain with them until General Baird arrived, I convinced them of the necessity of compliance. I wrote a note in their presence which I begged Captain Fraser one of the officers with me to deliver to General Baird as soon as possible. I again spoke to them to quiet the mind of the princes and I was happy to observe that they as well as their attendants appeared to rely with confidence on the

princes that no one should enter the palace except by his authority and begged that he might be permitted to return to the palace with Colonel Close and bring out the princes to him. Now resuming the narrative in Major Allan's own words,———"On their being apprised of the General's wishes, the princes showed great alarm and repeatedly objected to go out of the palace. It required considerable argument to overcome their alarm and at last they were persuaded to give their consent. On catching sight of the princes who were approaching him, General Baird though scarcely yet cooled from the fury of the storm showed rare moderation and humanity in receiving them. He repeatedly assured them that no violence or insult would be offered to them and then he gave them in charge to Colonel Agnew and Captain Marriot to conduct them to the camp of the commander-in-chief escorted by a body of troops. As the princes passed, the troops were ordered to pay them the compliment of presenting arms. It should however be stated that as neither a horse nor a palanquin could be procured, the princes were obliged to proceed to the commander-in-chief's camp on foot. The several gates of the fort being on fire and no regular path attainable, it became necessary for them to climb over the breach, wade the ditches and the river and make their way through the batteries and trenches in the midst of a shocking spectacle of the killed and the wounded which everywhere struck their attention. The princes who generally had not walked a hundred yards were now forced to walk on foot a distance of about 4 miles thoroughly fatigued by the time they arrived at their destination late at midnight."

For General Baird it was important to know where Tippu was or the fate that had overtaken him. He accordingly determined to search all parts of the palace and as a precaution all of Tippu's troops who were in the palace precincts were disarmed. Though the closest search was made even by bursting open many of the apartments, Tippu's whereabouts remained unknown. The Killedar was then threatened that if he had any regard for his life he must disclose the place of concealment of Tippu. But this officer putting his hand on the hilt of the sword of Major Allan solemnly swore that the Sultan was not in the palace, at the same time revealing that he was lying wounded in the gateway on the northside of the fort,

General Baird on obtaining this information lost no time in proceeding to the place mentioned by the Killedar, which was however covered with many hundreds of the slain. The number of the dead and the darkness of the place made it difficult to distinguish one another and the scene was altogether shocking. As the political importance of the confirmation of Tippu's death was great, the bodies were ordered to be dragged out for examination. This task however appeared to be endless and as it was becoming quite dark, a light was procured and Major Allan proceeded to the gateway with the Killedar. During the search here, a wounded person was discovered who was afterwards identified as Raja Khan, one of Tippu's most confidential servants and who had attended his master during the whole of the day, and this man on being made acquainted with the object of the search pointed out the spot where the Sultan lay. It was however difficult for the Killedar to recognise the features in the faint glimmering light, but the body being brought out was satisfactorily proved to be that of the fallen Sultan. The eyes were still open and the body was so warm that for a few moments a doubt arose as to whether the Sultan was not still alive but that doubt was removed on feeling the pulse and the heart. He had three wounds in the body and one in the temple, the ball having entered a little above the right ear and lodged in his left cheek. His dress consisted of a jacket of fine white linen, loose drawers of flowered chintz and a crimson cloth of silk and cotton round his waist. A handsome pouch with a red and green silk tassel hung across his shoulder. His head was uncovered, his turban evidently being lost in the confusion. He had an amulet on his arm but no ornament whatever. A little Koran enclosed in a silver case was also found lying closeby which the Sultan used to constantly wear round his neck. The body was placed in a palanquin and sent to the palace where it was deposited for the night and where it was recognised as that of the Padsha. Thus terminated, it is written, the glory of a man who had left the palace in the morning as a powerful Sovereign of an independent State but who was brought back at night as a mere lump of clay bereft of consciousness, his kingdom overthrown, his capital taken and his palace occupied by his enemies.

Major Allan after Tippu's body was deposited in the palace went back to his tent in the British camp and reached it about midnight. His reflections contained in his diary afford sad reading. On ruminating on the events of the day, he says, they looked more like fictions of the brain than realities and that it was impossible at the time to form a calm and connected idea of them. General Baird who had been very much exhausted laid down for rest on the verandah of the palace. But he had hardly gone to sleep, when he was awakened and was informed that several fires had been started, that the camp followers had broken into the town and that looting was taking place on a wholesale scale. But his efforts to restrain the plunderers proved of little avail. Many of the troops after the storming left their ranks, and the followers of the camp under pretext of taking refreshment to their masters also poured into the town and the whole of the night was occupied by them in plunder. Many persons were beaten and threatened with death in order to force them to disclose their property. The women collected in the streets and stood there all night in large groups with a view of preventing any insults to them by their exposed situation. The soldiers and sepoy's possessed themselves in a few hours after entering the town, of very valuable effects in gold and jewels, the houses of the chief sirdars and shroffs being completely pillaged. Though guards were placed in charge of Tippu's treasury where an immense amount of treasure and jewels existed, several of the troops managed to break into this treasury by an unguarded entrance and the officers themselves were found, while running about and shouting to their men to stop looting, filling their own pockets with valuables.