
Opening Extract from...

Sharpe's Tiger

Written by Bernard Cornwell

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SHARPE'S TIGER

Richard Sharpe and the Siege of Seringapatam, 1799

BERNARD CORNWELL

HARPER

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This novel is a work of fiction.
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Sharpe's Tiger is for
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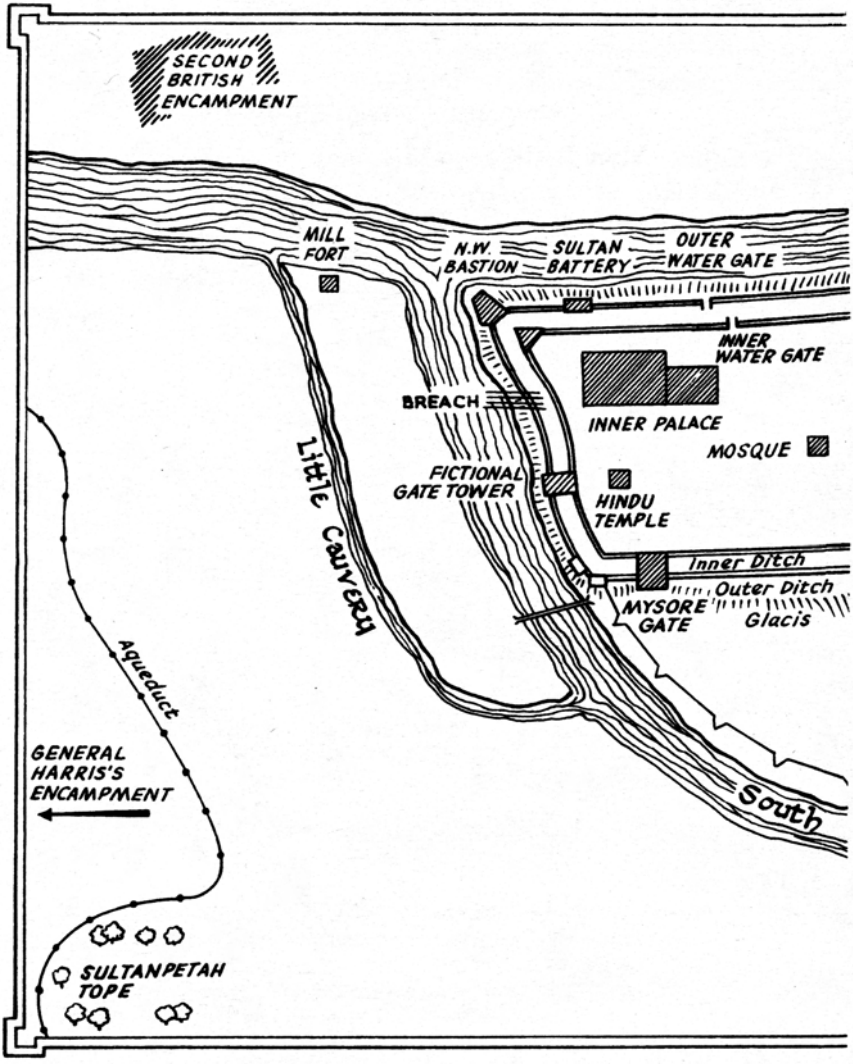
SECOND BRITISH ENCAMPMENT
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N.W. BASTION
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FICTIONAL GATE TOWER
HINDU TEMPLE
Little Cauvery
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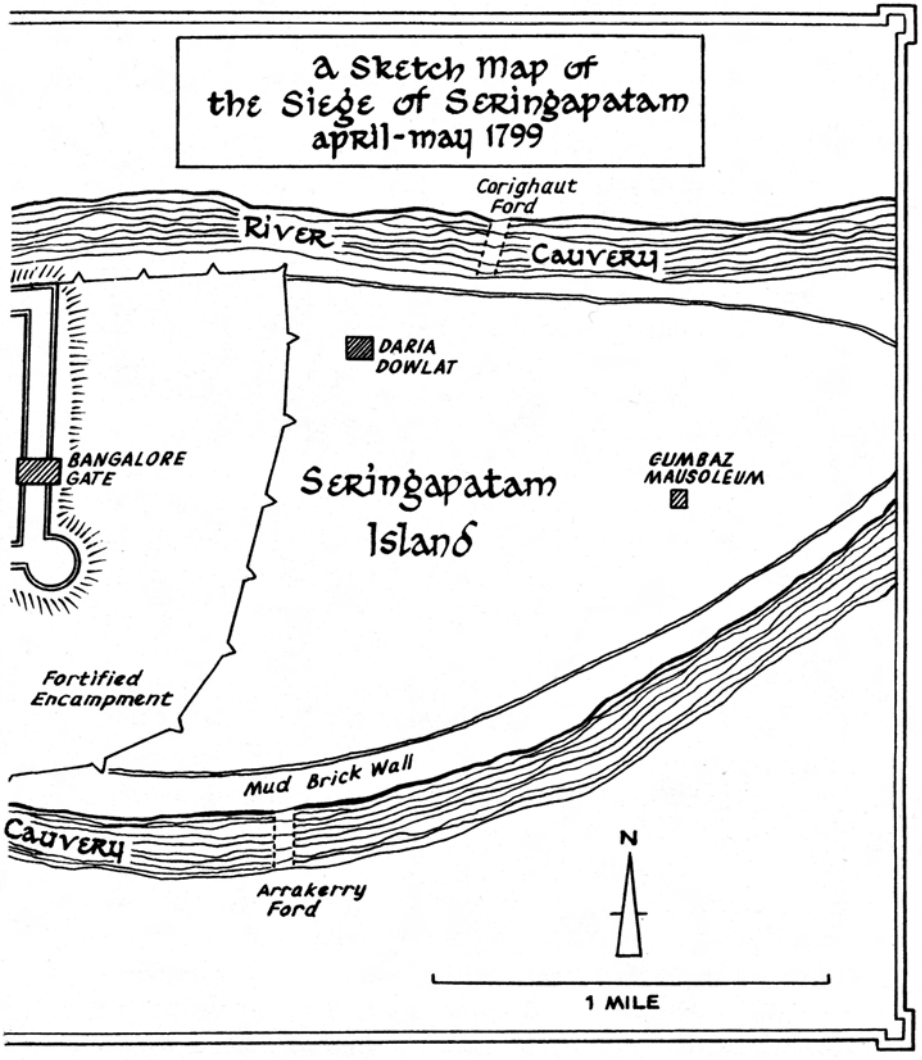
A Sketch Map of
the Siege of Seringapatam
April-May 1799
Corighaut
Ford
River
Cauvery
DARIA
DOWLAT
BANGALORE
GATE
Seringapatam
Island
GUMBAZ
MAUSOLEUM
Fortified
Encampment
Mud Brick Wall
Cauvery
Arrakerry
Ford
N
1 MILE

SHARPE'S TIGER

CHAPTER ONE

It was funny, Richard Sharpe thought, that there were no vultures in England. None that he had seen, anyway. Ugly things they were. Rats with wings.

He thought about vultures a lot, and he had a lot of time to think because he was a soldier, a private, and so the army insisted on doing a lot of his thinking for him. The army decided when he woke up, when he slept, when he ate, when he marched, and when he was to sit about doing nothing and that was what he did most of the time – nothing. Hurry up and do nothing, that was the army's way of doing things, and he was fed up with it. He was bored and thinking of running.

Him and Mary. Run away. Desert. He was thinking about it now, and it was an odd thing to worry about right now because the army was about to give Richard Sharpe his first proper battle. He had been in one fight, but that was five years ago and it had been a messy, confused business in fog, and no one had known why the 33rd Regiment was in Flanders or what they were supposed to be doing there, and in the end they had done nothing except fire some shots at the mist-shrouded French and the whole thing had been over almost before young Richard Sharpe had known it had begun. He had seen a couple of men killed. He remembered Sergeant Hawthorne's death best because the Sergeant had been hit by a musket ball that drove a rib clean

out of his red coat. There was hardly a drop of blood to be seen, just the white rib sticking out of the faded red cloth. 'You could hang your hat on that,' Hawthorne had said in a tone of wonder, then he had sobbed, and after that he had choked up blood and collapsed. Sharpe had gone on loading and firing, and then, just as he was beginning to enjoy himself, the battalion had marched away and sailed back to England. Some battle.

Now he was in India. He did not know why he was invading Mysore and nor did he particularly care. King George III wanted Richard Sharpe to be in India, so in India Richard Sharpe was, but Richard Sharpe had now become bored with the King's service. He was young and he reckoned life had more to offer than hurrying up and doing nothing. There was money to be made. He was not sure how to make money, except by thieving, but he did know that he was bored and that he could do better than stay on the bottom of the dungheap. That was where he was, he kept telling himself, the bottom of a dungheap and everyone knew what was piled on top of a dungheap. Better to run, he told himself. All that was needed to get ahead in the world was a bit of sense and the ability to kick a bastard faster than the bastard could kick you, and Richard Sharpe reckoned he had those talents right enough.

Though where to run in India? Half the natives seemed to be in British pay and those would turn you in for a handful of tin pice, and the pice was only worth a farthing, and the other Indians were all fighting against the British, or readying to fight them, and if he ran to them he would just be forced to serve in their armies. He would fetch more pay in a native army, probably far more than the tuppence a day Sharpe got now after stoppages, but why change one uniform for another? No, he would have to run to some place where the army would never find him, or else it would be the firing squad on some hot morning. A blast of musket shots, a scrape in the red earth

for a grave, and next day the rats with wings would be yanking the guts out of your belly like a bunch of blackbirds tugging worms out of a lawn.

That was why he was thinking about vultures. He was thinking that he wanted to run, but that he did not want to feed the vultures. Do not get caught. Rule number one in the army, and the only rule that mattered. Because if you got caught the bastards would flog you to death or else reorganize your ribs with musket balls, and either way the vultures got fat.

The vultures were always there, sometimes circling on long wings that tilted to the sudden winds of the warm upper air and sometimes standing hunched on branches. They fed on death and a marching army gave them a glutton's diet, and now, in this last year of the eighteenth century, two allied armies were crossing this hot fertile plain in southern India. One was a British army and the other belonged to a British ally, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and both armies provided a feast of vulture fodder. Horses died, oxen died, camels died, even two of the elephants that had seemed so indestructible had died, and then the people died. The twin armies had a tail ten times longer than themselves: a great sprawl of camp followers, merchants, herders, whores, wives, and children, and among all of those people, as it did among the armies themselves, the plagues ran riot. Men died with bloody dysentery, or shaking with a fever or choking on their own vomit. They died struggling for breath or drenched in sweat or raving like mad things or with skins blistered raw. Men, women and children all died, and whether they were buried or burned it did not matter because, in the end, the vultures fed on them anyway, for there was never enough time nor sufficient timber to make a proper funeral pyre and so the vultures would rip the half-cooked flesh off the scorched bones, and if the bodies were buried then no amount of stones heaped on the soil would stop the scavenging

beasts from digging up the swollen, rotting flesh and the vultures' hooked beaks took what the ravenous teeth left behind.

And this hot March day promised food in abundance and the vultures seemed to sense it for, as the early afternoon passed, more and more birds joined the spiring column of wings that circled above the marching men. The birds did not flap their wings, but simply soared in the warm air as they glided, tilted, slid and waited, always waited, as if they knew that death's succulence would fill their gullets soon enough. 'Ugly bastard birds,' Sharpe said, 'just rats with wings,' but no one in the 33rd's Light Company answered him. No one had the breath to answer him. The air was choking from the dust kicked up by the men ahead so that the rearward ranks stumbled through a warm, gritty mix that parched their throats and stung their eyes. Most of the men were not even aware of the vultures, while others were so weary that they had not even noticed the troop of cavalry that had suddenly appeared a half-mile to the north. The horsemen trotted beside a grove of trees that were bright with red blossom, then accelerated away. Their drawn sabres flashed reflected sunlight as they wheeled away from the infantrymen, but then, as inexplicably as they had hurried and swerved away, they suddenly stopped. Sharpe noticed them. British cavalry, they were. The fancy boys come to see how proper soldiers fought.

Ahead, from the low rise of land where a second group of horsemen was silhouetted against the furnace whiteness of the sky, a gun fired. The crack of the cannon was immense, a billow of sound that punched hollow and malignant across the plain. The gun's smoke billowed white as the heavy ball thrashed into some bushes, tore leaves and blossoms to tatters, struck dust from the baked ground, then ran on in ever decreasing bounces to lodge against a gnarled fallen tree from which a pale shower of decaying wood spurted. The shot had missed the red-coated infantry by a good two hundred paces, but the sound of the

cannon woke up the weary. 'Jesus!' a voice in the rear file said. 'What was that?'

'A bleeding camel farted, what the hell do you think it was?' a corporal answered.

'It was a bloody awful shot,' Sharpe said. 'My mother could lay a gun better than that.'

'I didn't think you had a mother,' Private Garrard said.

'Everyone's got a mother, Tom.'

'Not Sergeant Hakeswill,' Garrard said, then spat a mix of dust and spittle. The column of men had momentarily halted, not because of any orders, but rather because the cannon shot had unnerved the officer leading the front company who was no longer sure exactly where he was supposed to lead the battalion. 'Hakeswill wasn't born of a mother,' Garrard said vehemently. He took off his shako and used his sleeve to wipe the dust and sweat from his face. The woollen sleeve left a faint trace of red dye on his forehead. 'Hakeswill was spawned of the devil,' Garrard said, jamming the shako back on his white-powdered hair.

Sharpe wondered whether Tom Garrard would run with him. Two men might survive better than one. And what about Mary? Would she come? He thought about Mary a lot, when he was not thinking about everything else, except that Mary was inextricably twisted into everything else. It was confusing. She was Sergeant Bickerstaff's widow and she was half Indian and half English and she was twenty-two, which was the same age as Sharpe, or at least he thought it was the same age. It could be that he was twenty-one, or twenty-three; he was not really sure on account of not ever having had a mother to tell him. Of course he did have a mother, everyone had a mother, but not everyone had a Cat Lane whore for a mother who disappeared just after her son was born. The child had been named for the wealthy patron of the foundling home that had raised him, but the naming had not brought Richard Sharpe

any patronage, only brought him to the reeking bottom of the army's dungheap. Still, Sharpe reckoned, he could have a future, and Mary spoke one or two Indian languages which could be useful if he and Tom did run.

The cavalry off to Sharpe's right spurred into a trot again and disappeared beyond the red-blossomed trees, leaving only a drifting cloud of dust behind. Two galloper guns, light six-pounder cannons, followed them, bouncing dangerously on the uneven ground behind their teams of horses. Every other cannon in the army was drawn by oxen, but the galloper guns had horse teams that were three times as fast as the plodding draught cattle. The lone enemy cannon fired again, its brutal sound punching the warm air with an almost palpable impact. Sharpe could see more enemy guns on the ridge, but they were smaller than the gun that had just fired and Sharpe presumed they did not have the long range of the bigger cannon. Then he saw a trace of grey in the air, a flicker like a vertical pencil stroke drawn against the pale blue sky and he knew that the big gun's shot must be coming straight towards him, and he knew too that there was no wind to carry the heavy ball gently aside, and all that he realized in the second or so that the ball was in the air, too short a time to react, only to recognize death's approach, but then the ball slammed into the ground a dozen paces short of him and bounced on up over his head to run harmlessly into a field of sugar cane. 'I reckon the bastards have got your mother laying the gun now, Dick,' Garrard said.

'No talking now!' Sergeant Hakeswill's voice screeched suddenly. 'Save your godless breath. Was that you talking, Garrard?'

'Not me, Sarge. Ain't got the breath.'

'You ain't got the breath?' Sergeant Hakeswill came hurrying down the company's ranks and thrust his face up towards Garrard. 'You ain't got the breath? That means you're dead,

Private Garrard! Dead! No use to King or country if you's dead, but you never was any bleeding use anyway.' The Sergeant's malevolent eyes flicked to Sharpe. 'Was it you talking, Sharpie?'

'Not me, Sarge.'

'You ain't got orders to talk. If the King wanted you to have a conversation I'd have told you so. Says so in the scriptures. Give me your firelock, Sharpie. Quick now!'

Sharpe handed his musket to the Sergeant. It was Hakeswill's arrival in the company that had persuaded Sharpe that it was time to run from the army. He had been bored anyway, but Hakeswill had added injustice to boredom. Not that Sharpe cared about injustice, for only the rich had justice in this world, but Hakeswill's injustice was touched with such malevolence that there was hardly a man in the Light Company not ready to rebel, and all that kept them from mutiny was the knowledge that Hakeswill understood their desire, wanted it and wanted to punish them for it. He was a great man for provoking insolence and then punishing it. He was always two steps ahead of you, waiting round a corner with a bludgeon. He was a devil, was Hakeswill, a devil in a smart red coat decorated with a sergeant's badges.

Yet to look at Hakeswill was to see the perfect soldier. It was true that his oddly lumpy face twitched every few seconds as though an evil spirit was twisting and jerking just beneath his sun-reddened skin, but his eyes were blue, his hair was powdered as white as the snow that never fell on this land, and his uniform was as smart as though he stood guard at Windsor Castle. He performed drill like a Prussian, each movement so crisp and clean that it was a pleasure to watch, but then the face would twitch and his oddly childlike eyes would flicker a sideways glance and you could see the devil peering out. Back when he had been a recruiting sergeant Hakeswill had taken care not to let the devil show, and that was when Sharpe had first met him, but now, when the Sergeant no longer needed

to gull and trick young fools into the ranks, Hakeswill did not care who saw his malignancy.

Sharpe stood motionless as the Sergeant untied the scrap of rag that Sharpe used to protect his musket's lock from the insidious red dust. Hakeswill peered at the lock, found nothing wrong, then turned away from Sharpe so that the sun could fall full on the weapon. He peered again, cocked the gun, dry-fired it, then seemed to lose interest in the musket as a group of officers spurred their horses towards the head of the stalled column. 'Company!' Hakeswill shouted. 'Company! 'Shun!'

The men shuffled their feet together and straightened as the three officers galloped past. Hakeswill had stiffened into a grotesque pose; his right boot tucked behind his left, his legs straight, his head and shoulders thrown back, his belly thrust forward and his bent elbows straining to meet in the concavity at the small of his back. None of the other companies of the King's 33rd Regiment had been stood to attention in honour of the passing officers, but Hakeswill's gesture of respect was nevertheless ignored. The neglect had no effect on the Sergeant who, when the trio of officers had gone past, shouted at the company to stand easy and then peered again at Sharpe's musket.

'You'll not find 'owt wrong with it, Sarge,' Sharpe said.

Hakeswill, still standing at attention, did an elaborate about turn, his right boot thumping down to the ground. 'Did I hear me give you permission to speak, Sharpie?'

'No, Sarge.'

'No, Sarge. No, you did not. Flogging offence that, Sharpie.' Hakeswill's right cheek twitched with the involuntary spasm that disfigured his face every few seconds and the vehement evil of the face was suddenly so intense that the whole Light Company momentarily held its breath in expectation of Sharpe's arrest, but then the thumping discharge of the enemy cannon rolled across the countryside and the heavy ball

splashed and bounced and tore its way through a bright-green patch of growing rice, and the violence of the harmless missile served to distract Hakeswill who turned to watch as the ball rolled to a stop. 'Poor bloody shooting,' Hakeswill said scathingly. 'Heathens can't lay guns, I dare say. Or maybe they're toying with us. Toying!' The thought made him laugh. It was not, Sharpe suspected, the anticipation of excitement that had brought Sergeant Obadiah Hakeswill to this state of near joviality, but rather the thought that a battle would cause casualties and misery, and misery was the Sergeant's delight. He liked to see men cowed and frightened, for that made them biddable, and Sergeant Hakeswill was always at his happiest when he was in control of unhappy men.

The three officers had stopped their horses at the head of the column and now used telescopes to inspect the distant ridge which was clouded by a ragged fringe of smoke left from the last discharge of the enemy cannon. 'That's our Colonel, boys,' Hakeswill announced to the 33rd's Light Company, 'Colonel Arthur Wellesley himself, God bless him for a gentleman, which he is and you ain't. He's come to see you fight, so make sure you do. Fight like the Englishmen you are.'

'I'm a Scot,' a sour voice spoke from the rear rank.

'I heard that! Who said that?' Hakeswill glared at the company, his face twitching uncontrollably. In a less blithe mood the Sergeant would have ferreted out the speaker and punished him, but the excitement of pending battle persuaded him to let the offence pass. 'A Scot!' he said derisively instead. 'What is the finest thing a Scotsman ever saw? Answer me that!' No one did. 'The high road to England, that's what. Says so in the scriptures, so it must be true.' He hefted Sharpe's musket as he looked down the waiting ranks. 'I shall be watching you,' he snarled. 'You ain't none of you been in a proper fight before, not a proper fight, but on the other side of that bleeding hill there's a horde of

black-faced heathens what can't wait to lay their filthy hands on your womenfolk, so if so much as one of you turns his back I'll have the skin off the lot of you! Bare bones and blood, that's what you'll be. But you does your duty and obeys your orders and you can't go wrong. And who gives the orders?'

The Sergeant waited for an answer and eventually Private Mallinson offered one. 'The officers, Sergeant.'

'The officers! The officers!' Hakeswill spat his disgust at the answer. 'Officers are here to show us what we are fighting for. Gentlemen, they are. Proper gentlemen! Men of property and breeding, not broken potboys and scarlet-coated pickpockets like what you are. Sergeants give the orders. Sergeants is what the army is. Remember that, lads! You're about to go into battle against heathens and if you ignore me then you'll be dead men!' The face twitched grotesquely, its jaw wrenched suddenly sideways, and Sharpe, watching the Sergeant's face, wondered if it was nervousness that had made Hakeswill so voluble. 'But keeps your eyes on me, lads,' Hakeswill went on, 'and you'll be right as trivets. And you know why?' He cried the last word out in a high dramatic tone as he stalked down the Light Company's front rank. 'You know why?' he asked again, now sounding like some dissenting preacher ranting in a hedgerow. 'Because I cannot die, boys, I cannot die!' He was suddenly intense, his voice hoarse and full of fervour as he spoke. It was a speech that all the Light Company had heard many times before, but it was remarkable for all that, though Sergeant Green, who was outranked by Hakeswill, turned away in disgust. Hakeswill jeered at Green, then tugged at the tight constriction of the leather stock that circled his neck, pulling it down so that an old dark scar was visible at his throat. 'The hangman's noose, boys!' he cried. 'That's what marked me there, the hangman's noose! See it? See it? But I am alive, boys, alive and on two feet instead of being buried under the sod, proof as never was that

you needs not die!' His face twitched again as he released the stock. 'Marked by God,' he finished, his voice gruff with emotion, 'that's what I am, marked by God!'

'Mad as a hare,' Tom Garrard muttered.

'Did you speak, Sharpie!' Hakeswill whipped around to stare at Sharpe, but Sharpe was so palpably still and staring mutely ahead that his innocence was indisputable. Hakeswill paced back down the Light Company. 'I have watched men die, better men than any of you pieces of scum, proper men, but God has spared me! So you do what I says, boys, or else you'll be carrion.' He abruptly thrust the musket back into Sharpe's hands. 'Clean weapon, Sharpie. Well done, lad.' He paced smartly away and Sharpe, to his surprise, saw that the scrap of rag had been neatly retied about the lock.

The compliment to Sharpe had astonished all the Light Company. 'He's in a rare good mood,' Garrard said.

'I heard that, Private Garrard!' Hakeswill shouted over his shoulder. 'Got ears in the back of me head, I have. Silence now. Don't want no heathen horde thinking you're frit! You're white men, remember, bleached in the cleansing blood of the bleeding lamb, so no bleeding talking in the ranks! Nice and quiet, like them bleeding nuns what never utters a sound on account of having had their papist tongues cut out.' He suddenly crashed to attention once again and saluted by bringing his spear-tipped halberd across his body. 'Company all present, sir!' he shouted in a voice that must have been audible on the enemy-held ridge. 'All present and quiet, sir! Have their backs whipped bloody else, sir.'

Lieutenant William Lawford curbed his horse and nodded at Sergeant Hakeswill. Lawford was the Light Company's second officer, junior to Captain Morris and senior to the brace of young ensigns, but he was newly arrived in the battalion and was as frightened of Hakeswill as were the men in the ranks.

'The men can talk, Sergeant,' Lawford observed mildly. 'The other companies aren't silent.'

'No, sir. Must save their breath, sir. Too bleeding hot to talk, sir, and besides, they got heathens to kill, sir, mustn't waste breath on chit-chat, not when there are black-faced heathens to kill, sir. Says so in the scriptures, sir.'

'If you say so, Sergeant,' Lawford said, unwilling to provoke a confrontation, then he found he had nothing else to say and so, awkwardly aware of the scrutiny of the Light Company's seventy-six men, he stared at the enemy-held ridge. But he was also conscious of having ignominiously surrendered to the will of Sergeant Hakeswill and so he slowly coloured as he gazed towards the west. Lawford was popular, but thought to be weak, though Sharpe was not so sure of that judgement. He thought the Lieutenant was still finding his way among the strange and sometimes frightening human currents that made up the 33rd, and that in time Lawford would prove a tough and resilient officer. For now, though, William Lawford was twenty-four years old and had only recently purchased his lieutenancy, and that made him unsure of his authority.

Ensign Fitzgerald, who was only eighteen, strolled back from the column's head. He was whistling as he walked and slashing with a drawn sabre at tall weeds. 'Off in a moment, sir,' he called up cheerfully to Lawford, then seemed to become aware of the Light Company's ominous silence. 'Not frightened, are you?' he asked.

'Saving their breath, Mister Fitzgerald, sir,' Hakeswill snapped.

'They've got breath enough to sing a dozen songs and still beat the enemy,' Fitzgerald said scornfully. 'Ain't that so, lads?'

'We'll beat the bastards, sir,' Tom Garrard said.

'Then let me hear you sing,' Fitzgerald demanded. 'Can't bear silence. We'll have a quiet time in our tombs, lads, so we might as well make a noise now.' Fitzgerald had a fine tenor

voice that he used to start the song about the milkmaid and the rector, and by the time the Light Company had reached the verse that told how the naked rector, blindfolded by the milkmaid and thinking he was about to have his heart's desire, was being steered towards Bessie the cow, the whole company was bawling the song enthusiastically.

They never did reach the end. Captain Morris, the Light Company's commanding officer, rode back from the head of the battalion and interrupted the singing. 'Half-companies!' he shouted at Hakeswill.

'Half-companies it is, sir! At once, sir. Light Company! Stop your bleeding noise! You heard the officer!' Hakeswill bellowed. 'Sergeant Green! Take charge of the after ranks. Mister Fitzgerald! I'll trouble you to take your proper place on the left, sir. Forward ranks! Shoulder firelocks! Twenty paces, forward, march! Smartly now! Smartly!'

Hakeswill's face shuddered as the front ten ranks of the company marched twenty paces and halted, leaving the other nine ranks behind. All along the battalion column the companies were similarly dividing, their drill as crisp as though they were back on their Yorkshire parade ground. A quarter-mile off to the 33rd's left another six battalions were going through the same manoeuvre, and performing it with just as much precision. Those six battalions were all native soldiers in the service of the East India Company, though they wore red coats just like the King's men. The six sepoy battalions shook out their colours and Sharpe, seeing the bright flags, looked ahead to where the 33rd's two great regimental banners were being loosed from their leather tubes to the fierce Indian sun. The first, the King's Colour, was a British flag on which the regiment's battle honours were embroidered, while the second was the Regimental Colour and had the 33rd's badge displayed on a scarlet field, the same scarlet as the men's jacket facings. The

tasselled silk banners blazed, and the sight of them prompted a sudden cannonade from the ridge. Till now there had only been the one heavy gun firing, but abruptly six other cannon joined the fight. The new guns were smaller and their round shot fell well short of the seven battalions.

Major Shee, the Irishman who commanded the 33rd while its Colonel, Arthur Wellesley, had control of the whole brigade, cantered his horse back, spoke briefly to Morris, then wheeled away towards the head of the column. 'We're going to push the bastards off the ridge!' Morris shouted at the Light Company, then bent his head to light a cigar with a tinderbox. 'Any bastard that turns tail, Sergeant,' Morris went on when his cigar was properly alight, 'will be shot. You hear me?'

'Loud and clear, sir!' Hakeswill shouted. 'Shot, sir! Shot like the coward he is.' He turned and scowled at the two half-companies. 'Shot! And your names posted in your church porch at home as the cowards you are. So fight like Englishmen!'

'Scotsmen,' a voice growled behind Sharpe, but too softly for Hakeswill to hear.

'Irish,' another man said.

'We ain't none of us cowards,' Garrard said more loudly.

Sergeant Green, a decent man, hushed him. 'Quiet, lads. I know you'll do your duty.'

The front of the column was marching now, but the rearmost companies were kept waiting so that the battalion could advance with wide intervals between its twenty half-companies. Sharpe guessed that the scattered formation was intended to reduce any casualties caused by the enemy's bombardment which, because it was still being fired at extreme range, was doing no damage. Behind him, a long way behind, the rest of the allied armies were waiting for the ridge to be cleared. That mass looked like a formidable horde, but Sharpe knew that most of what he saw was the two armies' civilian tail: the chaos

of merchants, wives, sutlers and herdsmen who kept the fighting soldiers alive and whose supplies would make the siege of the enemy's capital possible. It needed more than six thousand oxen just to carry the cannonballs for the big siege guns, and all those oxen had to be herded and fed and the herdsmen all travelled with their families who, in turn, needed more oxen to carry their own supplies. Lieutenant Lawford had once remarked that the expedition did not look like an army on the march, but like a great migrating tribe. The vast horde of civilians and animals was encircled by a thin crust of red-coated infantry, most of them Indian sepoys, whose job was to protect the merchants, ammunition and draught animals from the quick-riding, hard-hitting light cavalry of the Tippoo Sultan.

The Tippoo Sultan. The enemy. The tyrant of Mysore and the man who was presumably directing the gunfire on the ridge. The Tippoo ruled Mysore and he was the enemy, but what he was, or why he was an enemy, or whether he was a tyrant, beast or demigod, Sharpe had no idea. Sharpe was here because he was a soldier and it was sufficient that he had been told that the Tippoo Sultan was his enemy and so he waited patiently under the Indian sun that was soaking his lean tall body in sweat.

Captain Morris leaned on his saddle's pommel. He took off his cocked hat and wiped sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief that had been soaked in cologne water. He had been drunk the previous night and his stomach was still churning with pain and wind. If the battalion had not been going into battle he would have galloped away, found a private spot and voided his bowels, but he could hardly do that now in case his men thought it a sign of weakness and so he raised his canteen instead and swallowed some arrack in the hope that the harsh spirit would calm the turmoil in his belly. 'Now, Sergeant!' he called when the company in front had moved sufficiently far ahead.