

dent that every one of the ladies who had been in the room when the tiger burst in, had contributed a token of her gratitude. Many of the more valuable gems had been evidently taken from their settings, as if the donors did not care that jewels they had worn should be exposed to view. One parcel contained twenty superb pearls, another a magnificent diamond and ten rubies, and so on, down to the more humble gifts—although these were valuable—of those of lower rank. Dick's presents were much more costly than those of his companion, and as soon as this was seen to be the case, Dick proposed that they should all be put together, and divided equally. This, however, Surajah would not hear of.

"The whole thing is due to you," he said. "It would never have occurred to me to interfere at all. I had no part in the matter, beyond aiding to kill a wounded tiger, and it was no more than I have done many times among our hills, and thought nothing of. These jewels are vastly more than I deserve for my share in the affair. I do not know much about the value of gems, but they must be worth a large sum, and nothing will induce me to take any of those that you have so well earned."

"I wonder whether Tippoo knows what they have given us," Dick said, after in vain trying to alter his companion's decision.

"I don't suppose he troubled himself about it," Surajah replied. "No doubt he was asked for permission for each to make a present to us. The jewels in the harem must be of enormous value, as for the last fifteen years Tippoo has been gathering spoil from all southern India, having swept the land right up to the gates of Madras. They say that his treasures are fabulous, and no doubt the ladies of his harem have shared largely in the spoils. The question is, What had we best do with these caskets? We know that, in the course of our adventures, it may very well happen that we shall be closely searched, and it would never do to risk having such valuables found upon us."

"No; I should say that we had best bury them somewhere. Some of these merchants here may be honest enough for us to leave the jewels in their care without anxiety, but as they themselves may at any moment be seized and compelled to give up their last penny, these things would be no safer with them than with us. As to Pertaub, I have absolute faith in him, but he himself is liable to be seized at any moment. However, I should say we had better consult him. If we were to bury them, say, under the floor of his house, we might leave them there for a time. If we saw any chance of this place being some day captured by our people, we could wait till then for their recovery; but the war may not be renewed for years. Possibly Pertaub may be able to arrange to send them down, only entrusting a portion at a time to a messenger, so that, if he got into trouble, we should only lose what he had upon him. We will put the caskets into our box and lock it up for the present, and take them down to Pertaub tomorrow evening, after it gets dark. It will be as well to get them off our minds as soon as possible, for although just at present we are in high favour, there is no saying how long it may last, or when it may be necessary for us to move."

CHAPTER XIII

OFFICERS OF THE PALACE

THE next morning, just as they had finished their early breakfast, they were sent for by Fazli Ali.

"You had better accompany me on my rounds," he said. "I shall not commit any special duties to you until I see whether the sultan intends that you shall remain with me, or whether, as is far more likely, he assigns other work to you. Were you placed in separate charge in the Palace, I should have to fill your places if you left; therefore I propose that at

present you shall assist me in general supervision. We will first go to the kitchens ; these give me more trouble than any other part of my duties. In the first place, one has to see that the contractors do their work properly, that the number of carcasses sent in is correct, the flesh of good quality, and that the list of game is correct. Then one has to check the amount of rice and other grain sent in from the storehouses, the issue of spices, and other articles of that kind. These matters do not require doing every day ; the kitchen officers are responsible for them ; but once or twice a week I take care to be present to see that all is right. Then I ascertain that everything is in good and proper order in the kitchen, listen to complaints, and decide disputes.

“When we have done there, we will see that the requisitions from the harem are properly complied with, and that the sweetmeats, perfumes, silks, and muslins, as required, are furnished. The payment of salaries does not come into my department ; that is one of the functions of the treasurer of the Palace, who also discharges all accounts upon my signature that they are correct. Then I take a general tour of the Palace, to see that the attendants have done their duties, and that everything is clean and in order. As a rule, I have finished everything before the morning meal is served. The details of making up the accounts are of course done by clerks. After that my duties depend entirely upon the sultan. If there is any state ceremonial in the Palace I summon those whose duty it is to attend, and see that everything is properly arranged and in order ; if not, I am generally at his Highness's disposal.

“Unless you receive any instructions from me, you will be free to occupy yourselves as you like. You will, of course, take part in all public ceremonials. You will be among the officers who accompany the sultan when he goes out, and will be liable to be summoned to attend him at all times. Therefore, although free to go into the town or ride beyond the island, it is well that you should never be long absent, and that,

if you wish to be away for more than two hours at a time, you should first let me know, as I may be able to tell you if the sultan is likely to require you. He has fixed your pay at four hundred rupees a month.”

Dick, as he accompanied the chamberlain on his tour through the Palace, was struck with the order and method that prevailed in every department, and the chamberlain told him that Tippoo himself inquired closely into details, and that, large as was the daily expenditure, no waste of any kind was allowed. The splendour of some of the apartments was surprising, especially the throne-room. The throne itself was of extraordinary magnificence ; it was of gold, thickly inlaid with gems. On the apex stood a jewelled peacock, covered entirely with diamonds, emeralds, and rubies, with pendants of pearls. In front of it stood a golden tiger's head, which served as a footstool. On either side were standards of purple silk, having a sun with gold rays in the centre. The spear-heads were of gold set with jewels.

When the work of inspection was finished, they went back to their room, where their attendant, soon afterwards, with an air of great exultation, brought their meal, which consisted of nine dishes each, a proof of the high favour with which Tippoo regarded them. After this meal was eaten they went down to the stables and were pleased indeed with the mounts provided for them. They were fine animals, with handsome saddles and trappings, and Dick and Surajah at once mounted and rode through the town to the other extremity of the island. As they wore scarves that had been furnished them by Fazli Ali, showing that they were officers of the Palace, they were everywhere greeted with deep salaams.

“I hope,” Dick said, as they returned from their ride, “that Tippoo will not be long before he finds us some other duties ; there is nothing very interesting in counting carcasses, or seeing rice measured.”

“That is true enough,” Surajah agreed. “But we must

not be impatient. Fortune has befriended us marvellously, and I have great faith that it will continue to do so. We must be content to wait."

"Yes, I know that, Surajah, but I think it is all the more difficult to do so because we have done so much in a short time. It seems as if one ought to go on at the same rate."

That evening they went down, as they had arranged, with ordinary wraps round their gay attire, to Pertaub's, taking with them the caskets of gems. The Hindoo received them warmly.

"I saw you ride through the streets this morning, although you did not notice me; truly, you made a good appearance, and were well-mounted. I have heard from one of our people, who is a servant in the Palace, that you stand in high favour."

"We have brought you down these two caskets of gems," Dick said; "they were given us by the ladies of the harem, and many of the stones Surajah thinks are very valuable. We don't know what to do with them, and wanted to know whether you could arrange to send them down to Tripataly for us."

"I would not undertake to do so if they are valuable," Pertaub said. "The prospects of fresh troubles are stronger every day, and the roads are so closely watched, especially those through the passes, that it would be running a terrible risk to trust valuables to any one."

"In that case, Pertaub, we thought you might bury them in the ground under your house. But first look at some of the stones, and tell us what you think of them."

The Hindoo opened Surajah's casket, and undid many of the little parcels.

"Assuredly they are valuable," he said; "some of them much more so than others; but if all are like these that I have opened, they must be worth at least fifty thousand rupees."

"Now look at this casket, Pertaub."

The Hindoo uttered an exclamation of surprise as he opened some of the packets, and, taking out some of the larger gems, he examined them by the light of his lamp.

"I could not place a value on these," he said at last. "The ladies must indeed have felt that they owed their lives to you. The gems are a fortune. Doubtless they are the spoils of a score of districts, and Tippoo must have distributed them lavishly among his wives, or they could never have made such rich presents. I would bury them, Sahib, for surely they could not be entrusted even to the most faithful messengers, in times like these. But though, if you like, I will hide them here, I think it would be far safer for you to take them across the river and bury them in a wood, marking well the trees, that you may know the place again; for although methinks Tippoo's agents believe that they have squeezed the last rupee from me, one can never tell—I might again be tortured, and none can say that they are brave enough to bear the agonies that Tippoo's executioners inflict. I will bury them for to-night; but I pray you give me notice the first time you cross the river. I will be at the other side of the ford with the jewels hidden in a sack on an ass; this I will drive forward when I see you crossing the ford. You will follow me till I enter a wood. I will have the tools, and when you join me, you can go on a short distance and bury them. I do not wish to see where you hide them, but will move about to make sure that none can hear you when so engaged. You had best take out a few small stones, which you will find as good as money, and much more easily concealed, for in every town or large village you will find a jeweller who will give you silver for them."

"I think that will be a very good plan, Pertaub, and will certainly carry it out."

A month passed without any change in their work. They rode with other officers behind Tippoo's palanquin when he

went out, which he did almost every day, to inspect the progress of the fortifications, and were among the brilliant circle behind his throne when he gave orders. By this time they had come to know most of the other Court officials, and were able to inquire cautiously about the prisons. They could learn nothing, however, of any English prisoners in Seringapatam, save those they had seen in the hut in the fort.

Six weeks after their appointment as Palace officers, Dick and Surajah were sent for by Tippoo.

"I am about to employ you," the sultan said, when they appeared before him, "on a mission. You are strangers here and are unconnected with any of my officers, and I can, therefore, place greater reliance on your reports than upon those of men who have other interests than my own to serve. I desire you to go and inspect the hill-forts, to see how the repairs of the fortifications injured by the English are progressing, and to make sure that the cannon are in good order, and the supply of ammunition plentiful. You have shown that you are quick-sighted and sharp; look round the defences, and if you see aught that can be done to strengthen them, confer with the governors, learn their opinions on the subject, and if they agree with you, they will be authorised to take men from the country round to strengthen the fortifications, and I will forward at once such guns and stores as may be required. After the inspection of each fort you will despatch a mounted messenger to me with your report; and you will state which fort you will next visit, in order that I may despatch there any order that I may have to give you.

"Do your duty well, and I shall know how to reward you. In order that your authority may be increased, you are both named colonels in the army. Fazli will furnish you with a written copy of the orders I have given you and with authority under my seal to enter and inspect all fortresses and to consult with the governors as to everything considered by them as necessary for their better defence. The last time the English

came they captured Nundidroog and other hill-fortresses that we had regarded as impregnable, simply because the governors were over-confident, and the defences had been neglected. This must not occur again, and if there is failure in the defences I shall hold you responsible. Therefore, take care that you do not neglect not only to see that the repairs are being well carried out, but to recommend additions to the fortifications wherever it seems to you that there is even a possibility of an enemy making his way up. You will take with you twenty troopers as an escort, but these are not to enter any of the fortresses with you, for treachery is always possible, and no one save the garrisons must be acquainted with the defences of the hill-forts."

Surajah expressed his thanks to the sultan for entrusting them with the mission, and assured him that their inspection of the forts should be careful and complete, and that they would start in an hour's time.

When they reached their own room, Dick threw up his turban in delight.

"Was there ever such a stroke of good fortune?" he exclaimed. "The tiger business was as nothing to this; Tippoo has given us the mission of all others that will enable us to carry out our search. Our work is as good as done; that is to say," he added, more gravely, "we are at least pretty sure to find my father out, if he is alive. Besides, we may get information that will be of great use if the war is renewed. Now we had better, in the first place, go and see Fazli and get our instructions; we will order our horses to be in readiness to start as soon as we have had our meal—we may not get another chance of eating to-day. I should like to take Ibrahim with us. He is a capital servant and a strong, active fellow; I believe he is fond of us, and we shall want some one who can cook for us, and buy things, and so on. I will speak to Fazli about it."

The chamberlain looked up as they entered the room where he was engaged in dictating to a clerk.

"I congratulate you on your mission," he said. "It will involve a great deal of hard work, but as you have told me how you longed for some duty outside the Palace, you will not mind that; Tippoo consulted me before sending for you. I told him you were diligent in the service, and I felt sure you would do your best in the present matter, and that as you were accustomed, in the pursuit of game, to ascend mountains and scale precipices, you were far more likely to find the weak spots in the forts than an old officer, who would be likely to take everything for granted. There is no doubt that many of the garrisons are very far from being efficient. They have been stationed in the forts for many years; discipline, both among officers and men, is sure to have become lax, and there will be much that young men, going freshly into the matter, will see needs amendment. That the walls are often weak, and the cannon so old as to be almost useless, I am well aware, for sometimes newly-appointed governors have sent in strong protests and urgent requests that they might be furnished with new cannon, and that walls and defences might be renewed. But what with the wars, the removal of the capital, and the building and fortification of this place, these matters have been neglected; and it is only now that the sultan sees the necessity of putting the fortifications of all these places in good repair. I have had the papers prepared and signed; your escort has been ordered. Is there anything else you can think of?"

"We should like to take our Palace attendant with us," Surajah said; "he is a good man, and, starting so suddenly, we should have a difficulty in hiring servants we could rely on."

"I have thought of that," the chamberlain replied, "and have ordered a horse to be got in readiness for him, together with a spare animal to carry food and necessaries for your journey. You will need them on your marches, and may even be glad of them in some of the smaller forts, where the fare will be very rough."

When they returned to their room they found Ibrahim awaiting them. He was evidently delighted at the prospect of accompanying them.

"My lords," he said, "I have the pack-horse saddled in the stable, with two great sacks and ropes. Is it your pleasure that I should go down at once to the market and buy flour and rice, spices, and other things necessary?"

"Certainly, Ibrahim. But it will not be necessary to buy much meat; it will not keep, and we ought always to be able to buy a sheep or a fowl from villagers. Get some thick, wadded sleeping rugs, some cooking pots, and whatever you think is necessary. Do not waste any time, for we shall start immediately after our meal."

As soon as the man had left, Dick said to Surajah, "I will hurry down to the town and see Pertaub. You had best remain here, in case Tippoo should send for us to give us final instructions. You can say, should he ask, that I have gone down to the town to get a supply of powder and ball for our pistols, writing materials, and other things that we may require, which will be true enough. It is most lucky that we buried our jewels in the forest ten days ago, for we should not have had time to do it now."

Dick returned in time for the meal, which was brought up by another servant.

"Pertaub was delighted to hear of our good fortune," he said, on his return. "He will keep our disguises by him, and if we have occasion for them will either bring them himself with the merchandise, or will send them by a trusty messenger, to any place we may mention, directly he hears from us. I do not think there is any chance of our wanting them, but it is as well to prepare for any contingency that may occur."

Half-an-hour later they started at the head of an escort of twenty troopers, Ibrahim riding in the rear, leading the pack-horse, which carried a change of clothes, and thick cloths to keep out the night dews, as well as the stock of provisions.

Ibrahim had also purchased two very large, dark blankets that could be used for a temporary shelter. Surajah now felt quite at home, for he was engaged in the same sort of duty he performed at Tripataly, and more than one pair of dark eyes glanced admiringly at the two young officers as they rode down to the ford. They had been furnished by Fazli with a list of the forts they were to visit, and the order in which they were to take them, the first on the list being Savandroog, fifty miles north-east of the city. After a ride of twenty miles, they halted at a village. To the surprise of the troopers, Surajah gave orders that nothing was to be taken by force, as he was prepared to pay for all provisions required. As soon as the villagers understood this, ample supplies were brought in. Rice, grain, and fowls were purchased for the soldiers, and forage for the horses, and after seeing that all were well provided for, the two officers went to a room that had been placed at their service in the principal house in the village. Ibrahim justified his assertion that he was a good cook, by turning out an excellent curry. By the time they had finished this it was getting dark, and after again visiting the troopers and seeing that their own horses were fed and well groomed, they retired to bed.

An early start was made, and at ten o'clock they approached Savandroog. It was one of the most formidable of the hill-forts of Mysore, and stood upon the summit of an enormous mass of granite, covering a base of eight miles in circuit and rising in ragged precipices to the height of 2,500 feet. The summit of the rock was divided by a deep chasm into two peaks, each of which was crowned with strong works, and capable of separate defence. The lower part of the hill was, wherever ascent seemed possible, protected by walls one behind the other. The natives had regarded the fort as absolutely impregnable until it was stormed by the troops under Lord Cornwallis.

Dick looked with intense interest at the great rock with its

numerous fortifications. The damages committed by the British guns could not be seen at this distance, and it seemed to him well-nigh impossible that the place could have been captured. They rode on until they neared an entrance in the wall that encircled the fort at the side at which alone access was considered possible.

They were challenged as they approached. Ordering the troopers to remain behind, Dick and Surajah rode forward. "We are the bearers," Surajah cried out, as they reined in their horses within twenty yards of the gate, "of an order from the sultan for our admittance, and of a letter to Mirzah Mohammed Bukshy, the governor."

"I will send up word to him," an officer on the wall replied. "I can admit no one until I have received his orders to do so."

"How long will it be before we receive an answer?"

"An hour and a half at the earliest. I regret that your Excellencies will be inconvenienced, but my orders are absolute."

"I do not blame you," Surajah replied. "It is necessary that you should always be vigilant;" and they retired under the shade of a tree, a hundred and fifty yards from the gate. Ibrahim spread out the rugs, and then proceeded to light the fire and to prepare a pillau of rice and fowl, while Dick and his companion regarded the rock with fixed attention, and conversed together as to the possibility of ascending at any of the points so steep as to be left undefended by walls. They concluded at last that it would be next to impossible to climb the rock anywhere on the side that faced them, save by scaling several walls. They had just finished their luncheon when the gate opened and an officer and four soldiers issued out. They at once rose and went to meet them.

"I have the governor's order to admit you on the production of the sultan's pass."

Surajah produced the document. The officer at once recognised the seal, and carried it to his forehead, salaaming

deeply. "Your troopers can enter at the gate, but cannot proceed farther than the second wall."

"Can we ride up, or must we walk?" Dick asked.

"You can ride," he replied. "The road is steep, but nowhere so steep that horses cannot mount it."

After the party had entered the gate it was at once closed and bolted. The troopers dismounted, and were led to a small barrack, while Surajah and Dick, accompanied by the officer and four soldiers on foot, rode on. The road was a better one than Dick had expected; it was just wide enough for a cart to proceed up it, and was cut out of the solid rock. It turned and zigzagged continually, and at each angle was a small fort whose guns swept the approach. They passed under a score of gateways, each defended by guns, and after upwards of an hour's climbing, at a quick pace, they approached one of the forts on its summit. The governor met them at the gate.

"You will pardon my not descending to meet you below," he said, "but I am not so young as I used to be, and the journey up and down fatigues me much."

Dick and Surajah dismounted, and the former presented the two documents. The governor, after reading the pass, bowed, and led the way into the interior of the fort, and they were soon seated on a divan in his quarters, when he read the circular letter.

"I am glad indeed," he said, when he had finished, "that the sultan is pleased to take into consideration the many demands I have made for cannon and ammunition. A large number of the pieces are past service, and they would be as dangerous to those who fired them as to those at whom they were aimed; while I have scarcely powder enough to furnish three rounds for each. As to the defences, I have done my best to strengthen them. Idleness is bad for all men, most of all for soldiers, and I have kept them well employed at repairing the effects of the English fire. Still, there is much to do yet before they are finished, and there are points where fortifi-

cations might be added with advantage; these I will gladly point out to you. They have been beyond our means here, for, as you will perceive, it will need blasting in many places to scarp the rock, and to render inaccessible several points at which active men can now climb up. For this work powder is required. And I would submit that for such hard work it will be needful to supply extra rations to the troops, for the present scale scarcely suffices to keep the men efficient, especially as most of them have their wives and families dependent on them."

"I have no doubt that the sultan will accede to any reasonable requests, your Excellency; he is anxious that the walls of the forts should be placed in the best possible condition for defence. No one doubts that we shall ere long be again at war with England, and although the sultan relies much upon large reinforcements that have been promised by France, with whom he has entered into an alliance, they have not yet arrived, and he may have to bear the brunt of the attack of the English by himself."

"I have heard of this," the governor said, "and regret that we shall again have the Feringhees upon us. As for the Marhattas or the Nizam, I heed them not—they are dust, whom the sultan could sweep from his path; but these English are terrible soldiers. I have fought against them under Hyder, and in the last war they again showed their valour; and the strangest thing is that they make the natives under them fight as bravely as they do themselves. As to forts, nothing is safe from them. Were all the troops of the Nizam and the Marhattas combined to besiege us, I should feel perfectly safe, while were there but five hundred Englishmen, I should tremble for the safety of the fortress. You have come up the hill and have seen for yourselves how strong it is; and yet they took the place without the loss of a single man. I was not here, for I was in command of Kistnagherry at that time, and succeeded in holding it against their assaults. When the war was

over, and Kistnagherry was ceded to them, I was appointed to this fortress, which seems to me to be even stronger than that was.

“The commander was a brave man, the garrison was strong, there was no suspicion of treachery; and though at last the troops were seized with a panic, as they might well be when they saw that they were unable to arrest the advance of the enemy, the defence up to that time had been stout. The English brought up guns where it was thought no guns could be taken; they knocked the defences to pieces; and, after winning their way to the top, in one day captured this fort and that on the hill yonder. It seems miraculous.”

Coffee was brought in, and pipes, for although Tippoo was violently opposed to smoking, and no one would venture upon the use of tobacco in the Palace or fort, old officers like the governor, in distant commands, did not relinquish tobacco.

“It is necessary here,” the governor said, as he filled his pipe. “The country round is terribly unhealthy, and the air is full of fever. I do not discourage its use among the men, for they would die off like flies did they not smoke to keep out the bad air. The climate is indeed the best protection to the fort, for an army that sat down for any length of time before it, would speedily melt away.” He opened a box that stood on the divan beside him. “I have copies here,” he said, taking some papers out, “of the memorials that I have sent in to the sultan, as to the guns. This is the last; it was sent in two months ago. You see I asked for forty-nine heavy pieces. Of these, thirty are to replace guns that are honeycombed, or split; the other eleven are for new works. I asked for thirty-two lighter ones, or howitzers, and a hundred wall guns. Of course I could do with less; but to place the fort in a perfect state of defence, that is the number that I and my artillery officer think are requisite. Of powder we have not more than a ton and a half, and if the siege were to be a long one we might require ten times as much; we have not more

than eight rounds of shot for each gun, and we ought to have at least fifty for the heavy pieces, and twenty for those defending the path up the hill.”

Dick made a note of the figures in a pocket-book he had bought for the purpose.

“As for provisions,” the governor went on, “we ought to have large stores of rice and grain. The magazines are nearly empty, and as we have eight hundred men in garrison, and perhaps twice as many women and children, we should require a large store were we blockaded for any time.”

“Are the troops in good condition?” Surajah asked.

The governor shook his head. “Many of them are past the term of service; but until I get reinforcements to supply their places, I shall not venture to discharge them. Many others are wasted by fever, and, I must say, from insufficient rations, which not only weakens their bodies, but lowers their spirits. As long as there was no fear of attack this mattered little; but if the English are coming again we shall want well-fed and contented men to oppose them. I see by the stars on your turbans that you are both colonels as well as officers of the Palace. You are fortunate in obtaining that rank so young.”

“It was due to the sultan’s favour,” Surajah said. “The other day at the sports a tiger burst into the sultan’s zenana, and we were lucky enough to kill it—that is, my friend did most of the killing; I only gave the brute the final *coup*.”

“Ah, it was you who performed that deed!” the governor said warmly. “I heard the news from one of my officers who was on leave, and returned yesterday. Truly it was a gallant action, and one quickly done. No wonder that you obtained the sultan’s favour and your rank as colonel. I was a sportsman in my young days. But I think I should have been more frightened at the thought of taking a peep into the sultan’s zenana than I should have been of fighting the tiger.”

“I did not think anything about it,” Dick said, “until it

was all over. I heard some women scream, and, being quite close, went to their assistance, without a thought whether they might be the ladies of the zenana or servants of the Palace; but indeed, I saw nothing save the tiger, and only vaguely observed that there were women there at all."

"It was well that the sultan took the view he did of the matter," the governor said. "I have known men put to death for deeds that were but trifles in comparison to looking into the zenana. Now, Colonel, I will send for my artillery officer and the horses, and we will ride round the fortifications on the brow of the hill, inspect the two forts closely, and will point out to you the spots where it appears to us the defences ought to be strengthened."

CHAPTER XIV

A SURPRISE

DICK was much pleased with the governor. He was evidently an outspoken old soldier, and, though rough, his bearded face had an honest and kindly expression, and he thought to himself, "If my father fell into his hands I don't think he would be treated with any unnecessary hardship, though no doubt the sultan's orders would be obeyed." When a soldier came in to say that the horses were at the door they went out. An officer was standing beside them, and the governor presented him as his chief artillery officer.

"You have not brought your horse," he said.

"No, your Excellency, the distance is not great, and we should need to dismount so many times to get a view from the walls that it would not be worth while to ride."

"In that case, we may as well walk also," Dick said.

"I would rather do so too," the governor said. "I proposed riding because I thought you might be tired. As Bakir

Meeram says, the distance is not great; the walls themselves, with the exception of those of the two forts, are not more than half a mile in extent, for in most places the rocks go sheer down, and there defences are of course unnecessary. We will inspect this fort first."

They went the round of the walls, Dick and his companion listening to the suggestions of the two officers. The principal one was that a wall should be raised inside the gate.

"The English last time got in here by rushing in at the tail of the fugitives from below. They were in before the gates could be closed, and took our men so completely by surprise that they were seized with a panic. Were we to raise a semi-circular wall behind the gateway, such a thing could not occur again," the governor said. "Of course there would be a gate in the inner wall, but not immediately behind the outer gateway, as if so placed it might be destroyed by the cannon-shots that battered the outer gate in. I should, therefore, put it at one end of the inner wall. This gate would be generally open, but in case of a siege I should have it blocked up with stones piled behind it, placing a number of ladders by which men, running in, could get on to the walls, and, however closely they were pursued, could make a stand there until the ladders were pulled up."

"That would be an excellent idea," Surajah said gravely, "and I will certainly lay it before the sultan. I suppose you would propose the same for the other fort?"

"Just the same."

"The only thing that I would observe," Dick said, "is that if an enemy once got a footing on the top here, you could not hope to make a long defence of these forts."

"That is so," the governor agreed. "The strength of the defence is not here, but on the upward road, and if the English once gained the top the forts must fall; but at least it shall not be said, as long as I am governor, that Savandroog fell almost bloodlessly. In these forts we can at least die