

went across. There was quite a large gathering, for not only had the wives of the officers in the other fort come over, but all those who had been there in the morning were again present, several of them prepared to make further purchases. Trade was as actively carried on as it had been before. When he judged it to be nearly eight o'clock, Dick nudged Surajah, who said, a minute afterwards, "We have forgotten the Benares cloth-of-gold. I am sure that will please the ladies for waistbands or for trimmings. It must have got into the other bales by mistake."

"I will go and fetch it," Dick said, and, rising, left the room. A figure was standing at the door when he reached the house.

"I was afraid you had forgotten me," the man said. "It is not quite eight o'clock yet, but as I found that you were both out, I began to be afraid that you might be detained until after I had to go; and you don't know how I long for a pipe of that tobacco: the very thought of it seems to bring old days back again."

By this time they had entered the house, and Dick shut the door behind him. He had left a light burning when they went out. Dick was so agitated that he felt unable to speak, but gazed earnestly in the man's face.

"What is it, old chap?" the latter said, surprised at the close scrutiny. "Is anything wrong with you?"

Dick took off his spectacles, rather to gain time than to see more clearly, for a plain glass had been substituted for the lenses.

"I want to ask you a question," he said. "Is your name Holland?"

The man started. "My name is Jack Holland," he said, "sure enough; though how you come to know it beats me altogether, for I am always called Jack, and except the governor, I don't think there is a man here knows my other name."

"You were captain of the *Hooghley*, wrecked on the Mala-

bar coast nine years ago," Dick said, this time speaking in English.

After an exclamation of startled surprise, the man stared at him in an astonishment too great for words.

"Are you English?" he said slowly, at last. "Yes, I was in command of the *Hooghley*. Who, in God's name, are you?"

Dick took his two hands. "Father," he said, "I am your son Dick."

The sailor gazed at him with a stupefied air. "Are you mad, or am I?" he said hoarsely.

"Neither of us, father. I am disguised as an old man, but really I am little more than eighteen. I have been searching for you for more than two years, and, thank God, I have found you at last;" and, bursting into tears, Dick would have thrown his arms round his father's neck, but the latter pushed him off with one hand, and held him at arm's distance, while his other hand plucked at his own throat, as if to loosen something that was choking him.

"It can't be true," he muttered to himself. "I am dreaming this. I shall wake presently and you will be gone."

"It is quite true, father. Mother is down at Tripataly waiting for me to bring you to her."

With a hoarse cry the sailor reeled, and would have fallen had not Dick caught him and allowed him to sink gradually to the ground, where he lay half-supported by one of the bales. Dick ran to one of the saddle-bags, where he carried a flask of brandy in case of emergencies, poured some into a cup and held it to his father's lips. The sailor gasped.

"It is brandy," he said suddenly. "I can't have dreamt that."

Then he broke into a violent sobbing. Dick knelt by his side and took his hand.

"It is assuredly no dream, father," he said gently. "I am really your son Dick. I am here with a trusty friend, and

now we have found you, you may be sure that we will in some way manage your escape. There is no time now to tell you all that has happened; that I can do afterwards. All that is important for you to know, is, that mother is quite well. She has never given up hope, and has always insisted that you were alive, for she said that she should surely have known if you had died. So she taught me her language, until I could speak like a native, and two years and a half ago she came out here with me. I accompanied the army with my uncle's troop, and searched every hill-fort they took, for you. Since they went back I have been up in Mysore with my friend Surajah, and, thank God, at last we have found you!"

"Thank God, indeed, my boy. I do thank Him, not only that you have found me, but that your mother, whom I had never hoped to see again, is alive and well, and also that He has given me so good a son."

"And now, father, about your escape. In the first place, have you given your parole not to try to get away?"

Captain Holland was himself now.

"No lad, no. At the fort, where I was for six years, there was no possibility of escape, and as I was a long time before I began to speak the language, even if I had got away I could never have made my way through the country. Then the governor—it was the same we have here—took me with him to Kistnagherry. I was the only white captive who went there with him. At Kistnagherry there were five or six others, but when Tippoo heard that an English army was coming up the ghauts, an order came that they were to be killed; but the governor is a kind-hearted old fellow, and as I had become almost a chum of his he chose to consider that the order did not apply to me, but only to those he had found at Kistnagherry—for I fancy my existence had been forgotten altogether. I had great hopes that the British would take the place. I think that is the only time I have hoped since I was made prisoner; but the old man is a good soldier, and beat them off."

"When peace was made, Kistnagherry was, as you know, given up, and the governor was ordered to evacuate the place and to come here. He brought me with him, making me dye my face before I started, so that in my native dress it would not be noticed in any town we passed through that I was a white; for had this been done, the news might have come to Tippoo's ears, and there would have been an end of me. Except that I am locked up at night, I am not treated as a prisoner; but the governor, who has a strong sense of duty, has a certain watch kept over me. He has a real friendship for me, and would do all in his power to save my life, short of disobedience to an actual order. But his view is that I have been confided to his care, and that if at any moment the Sultan should write to demand me of him, he would be bound to produce me."

"Well, father, it must be nearly half-past eight. I will go with you and see where you are confined—that is the first step. We will both, to-night, think over the best way of attempting your escape, and in the morning, when your guard is removed, if you will come straight here we will talk it over. I am afraid you will have to wait for your pigtail till we get to Madras."

Captain Holland laughed.

"I can afford to wait for that now. God bless you, my boy! I have never looked for such happiness as this again. But, as you say, it is time for me to be off. I have never been late yet, and if it were reported to the governor that I was so to-night, he might think that there was something in the wind."

Dick walked with his father across the fort.

"That is the house, in the corner," the captain said, pointing to one before which a group of soldiers were standing; "don't come any farther."

Dick stood looking after him, and heard a voice say,—

"You are late, Jack; I was beginning to wonder what had become of you."

"I don't think it is past the hour yet," Captain Holland replied. "I have been with those traders. They told me this afternoon they might be able to find me some English tobacco in their pack; but they have been too busy to look for it. I hope they will light on it to-morrow. If they do, I will give you half a pipeful; I won't give you more, for it is strong enough to blow your head off, after this tasteless stuff you smoke here."

Then Dick hurried off to the house, snatched up the stuff he was supposed to be looking for, and joined Surajah at the governor's.

It was another hour before the ladies had completed their purchases. Dick, on entering, had given a little nod to Surajah, to let him know that it was really his father whom he had discovered, and had then tried to keep his attention upon his work as a salesman; and Surajah, as he handed him the goods, had given a furtive squeeze to his hand in token of his sympathy.

"So it is really your father?" he said, as, carrying their greatly diminished pack, they walked across to their house.

"It is, indeed. You may imagine his surprise and joy when I told him who I was. Now we have got to talk over the best plan of getting him out."

When the door was shut, and they had seated themselves on two of the bales, Dick first repeated all that his father had told him, and then, for a long time, they discussed the best plan of attempting an escape. Both agreed at once that it would be next to impossible to get him down the road and out of the gate. In the first place, they would have to leave by daylight; and even could a disguise be contrived that would deceive the sentries and guard at the gate, all of whom were well acquainted with Captain Holland's figure and appearance, it was certain that as but two had come up the rock, a third would not be allowed to leave, unless he had a special order from the governor. They agreed, therefore, that the escape

must be made over the precipice. That this was a matter of great difficulty was evident from the fact that the captain had made no attempt to get away in that manner. Still, there was hope that, with the assistance of the silk rope Dick had brought with them, it might be managed.

There was, too, the initial difficulty of getting out from the fort to be faced.

"We can do nothing till we have had a long talk with my father," Dick said. "I have no doubt that he has thought all these things over, and has, long before this, made up his mind as to the point at which a descent would be easiest. As at present we know little except by the casual examination we made last time, we can decide on nothing by ourselves."

"I hope it won't be a long way to let oneself down," Surajah said, "for I am quite sure I could not hold on by that thin rope for any distance."

"Nor could I, Surajah, if I had to trust only to my hands. My father, as a sailor, will be able to put us up to the best way to do it. But at any rate he might let you down first; and I think that by twisting the rope two or three times round my body, and then holding it between my knees and feet, I might manage. But I dare say my father will hit on some better plan than that. And now we will lie down. I am so stiff that I can hardly stand, from squatting for so many hours behind those things of ours. I thought that I had got pretty well accustomed to it, but I never calculated on having to do it from ten in the morning until ten at night, with only two half-hours off."

Dick, however, had little sleep that night. He was too excited over the glorious success he had obtained to be capable of closing an eye, and it was not until day was breaking that he fell into a doze.

An hour later he started to his feet at a knock at the door. He was wide awake in a moment, and on running to it his father entered.

"You look older to-day than you did yesterday," the latter said, as he held his hand and gazed into Dick's face. "I fancy that neither of us has had any sleep to speak of. As for myself, I have not closed an eye."

"Nor did I, father, until day began to break. Now please let us talk over our plan of escape first, for we may be interrupted at any moment."

"Right you are, lad. Does your friend here speak English?—for I have never got to be a good hand at their lingo. I want to thank him too, but, as you say, time is precious, and we must postpone that."

"He understands it, father, and can talk it pretty fairly. We have been constantly together for nearly two years. Now, in the first place, is there any place where we can get down from the top here with the aid of a rope?"

"It would be a pretty tough job, anyhow, but at the farthest end of the rock is a place where it goes sharp down, as if cut with a knife; that would be the best place to try. I take it to be about two hundred feet deep; beyond, the ground seems to slope regularly away. If I could have got a rope I should have tried it, but they are pretty scarce commodities up here—in fact, I have never seen a piece twenty feet long since we came. What sort of rope have you got?"

Dick opened the front of his garment, and showed the rope round his body. Captain Holland gave a low whistle of dismay.

"I should not like to trust a child with that thing, Dick, much less a grown man. It is no thicker than a flag-halliard."

"It is thin, father, but there is no fear as to its strength. I tested every yard of it, and found it would bear six hundred-weight."

"Well, that is ample; but how is one to hold on to a cord like that?"

"That is just what we want you to tell us, father. There

must be some way of managing it, if one could but hit upon it."

"Yes, that is so, lad," the sailor said thoughtfully. "I will think it over. Anyhow, I think I could lower you both down, and by knotting it I might get hold enough to come down after you; but even the knots would be precious small."

"One might get over that, father, by fastening a short stick across every five or six feet, or every two or three feet if you like."

"Good, Dick. That would prevent one's coming down with a run certainly, and by keeping it between one's legs one could always get a rest. Yes, that will do, lad, if I can think of nothing better. There are a lot of spears stowed away in the room adjoining mine; if we were to cut them up into six-inch lengths, with one of a foot long to each ten, for sitting on, they would be just the thing."

"That is capital, father. I had a lot of practice in rope climbing before I came out, and I am sure that I could manage with the help that would give. I don't think Surajah could, but we could let him down first easily. Now as to your prison."

"There are bars to the windows," the captain said, "and a sentry is always on duty outside. The only way would be to escape at the rear. I have often thought it over, but it was of no use breaking out there if I could not get any farther. The wall is built of loose stone, without mortar. You see, it would have been a big job to bring up either mortar or bricks from down below, so most of the buildings are entirely of stone. The wall is two feet thick, but there would be no great difficulty in getting out the stones, and making a hole big enough to crawl through. I could not do it in my room, because they always look round to see that everything is safe before they lock me up, and it would take so long to do it noiselessly that half the night would be wasted before I could get out; but the magazine, where the spears are kept, communicates with my

room, and I could slip in there in the daytime when no one was looking, get behind the spears, which are piled against the wall, and work hidden by them. No one would be likely to go into my room during the day, and if he did he would not expect to find me there, as I am generally about the place. In that way I could get out enough stones to render it an easy job to finish it after I was locked up. A spear-head is as good a thing to help me prize them out as one could wish for."

"Very well, father. Then we had better settle that you shall get out in that way. Now, shall we go round on the outside and help you?"

"No; I don't say but that your help would make it easier to get the stones out without making a noise; still, your going round might be noticed."

"Well, then, father, shall we seize and gag the sentry? We have done such a thing before successfully."

"No, that wouldn't do, Dick; the guard-house is hard by, and the slightest noise would destroy us all. Besides, as they have not many sentries posted up here, they relieve guard every hour, so that the thing would be discovered in no time. No. When I get out I will creep along noiselessly by the wall. There are houses in the yard almost all along, and though the sentry would not be likely to see me in the shade of the wall, I will take care to cross the open spaces when his back is turned. I will then come straight here for you, and we will make for the wall behind the governor's house. There is no sentry on that side, for that steep ravine covers it from attack there; however, there are six or eight feet of level ground between the foot of the wall and the edge of the ravine. The walls are twenty feet in height. With fifty feet of that rope I will make a ladder, and will get hold of a piece of iron to make a grapple of. How much time can you give me?"

"I should think we could stay here to-day and to-morrow without seeming to be dawdling without reason. Do you think you could get ready by to-morrow night, father?"

"Yes, that will give me plenty of time. Let me see, there is the short ladder to make; that won't take me over an hour. There are a hundred bits to cut for the long ladder, putting them about two feet apart; that will be a longish job, for the spear-shafts are of very tough wood. However, I have a saw, and some oil, which will prevent it making a noise, and can make fairly quick work of it. I have several tools, for I very often do carpentering jobs of all sorts—that is what first made the governor take to me. I can get all that part of the work done to-day; to-night I will do the knotting. Of course I shall make it a goodish bit over two hundred feet long, for it may turn out that I have not judged the depth right, and that the cliff is higher than I thought it was. I don't think sawing up the spear-shafts will take more than an hour or two, so I shall be able to show myself about the place as usual; I will go over and take a good look at the rock again, and stick a spear-head into the ground at the point where it seems to me that it goes down straightest, and where there is the least chance of the rope getting rubbed against a sharp edge. I sha'n't begin at the wall until to-morrow, for I don't suppose I shall be able to get out the first few stones without making a bit of a noise, and it would not do to work at night."

"Now, lad, I think we can consider that as all settled, and I won't come near you again unless there is some change of plan. I shall be here to-morrow evening, I hope it will be by ten o'clock—that must depend upon how long it takes me to get down the outside layer of stone. If you should hear a sudden row, make at once for the wall behind the governor's house, and wait there for me to join you. You see, some of the stones may come down with a run, and if they do I shall give the rest a shove, and be out like a shot. I shall hear which side the sentry is running round the house, and shall bolt the other way. Of course he will see the stones and give the alarm; but in the darkness I have not much doubt of being able to slip away, and I will then make my way straight

to the wall. Of course I shall have the ladders tied up into bundles, and shall take care not to leave them behind me."

"All right, father; we will be ready to-morrow evening. We shall wait quietly for you until you come, unless we hear a sudden alarm. If we do, we will go round behind the governor's house and wait there for your coming."

"That is it, my lad. Now I will be going. I am glad that no one has come in while I have been here."

CHAPTER XX

THE ESCAPE

SOON after eight o'clock customers began to drop in, and throughout the day a brisk trade was carried on. Surajah was sent for in the course of the morning by the governor, who bought several silver bracelets, brooches, and ear-rings, for his wife. Most of the other officers came in during the day, and made similar purchases, and many trinkets were also sold to the soldiers, who considered them a good investment for their money; indeed, no small portion of the earnings of the natives of India are spent upon silver ornaments for their women, as they can at any time be converted into cash. The commoner cloths, knives, beads, and trinkets, were almost all disposed of by the end of the day, for as no traders had come up for six months, and as a long time might elapse before others did so, the garrison were glad to lay in a store of useful articles for themselves and families, especially as the prices of all the goods were at least as low as they could have been bought in a town.

"We sha'n't leave much behind us," Dick said, as he looked round after the last customer had left, and they had sat down to their evening meal. "Almost all the silver work and the better class of goods have gone, and I should say three-

quarters of the rest; I daresay we shall get rid of the remainder to-morrow. I don't suppose many of the soldiers stationed down by the gate have come up yet; but when they hear that we sell cheaply, some of them will be here to-morrow. We have made no money by the transaction, but at any rate we shall have got back the outlay. Of course, I should not have cared if we had got nothing back; still, it is satisfactory to have cleared oneself. I wonder how Ibrahim is getting on down in the wood."

"He won't be expecting us to-day," Surajah replied, "but I have no doubt he will begin to feel anxious by to-morrow night. I wish we could have seen some way of getting the horses down; it will be awkward doing without them."

"Yes. I hope we shall get a good start. Of course, we must put on our peasant's dresses again. I am glad enough to be rid of that rope, though I have had to put on two or three additional things to fill me out to the same size as before. Still, I don't feel so bound in as I did, though it is horribly hot."

"I am sure I shall be glad to get rid of all this stuffing," Surajah said. "I felt ready to faint to-day when the room was full."

"Well, we have only one more day of it," Dick said. "I do hope father will be able to get out by ten o'clock; then, before eleven we shall be at the edge of the rock. Say we are two hours in getting down and walking round to join Ibrahim. That will take us till one, and we shall have a good five hours before father's escape will be discovered. They will know that he can't have gone down the road, and it will take them fully two hours to search the fort, and all over the rock. It will be eight o'clock before they set out in pursuit, and by that time we ought to be well on the road between Cenopatam and Anicull. If we can manage to buy horses at Cenopatam, of course we will do so. We shall be there by five o'clock, and ought to be able to get them in a couple of hours. Once