

They struck across the country to the south-west, until they came on a road between Magree and Cenopatam, and arrived within sight of the latter town just at daybreak. As they walked, Dick and Surajah had, with no small amount of pain, removed their beards and the patches of hair.

"You ought both to have shaved before you put those things on," Captain Holland said, as they muttered exclamations of pain. "You see, cobbler's wax, or whatever it is, sticks to what little down there is on your cheeks and chin, and I don't wonder that it hurts horribly, pulling it off. If you had shaved first, you would not have felt any of that."

"I will remember that, father, if I ever have to disguise myself again," Dick said. "I feel as if I were pulling the whole skin off my face."

The painful task was at last finished.

"I shall be glad to have a look at you in the morning, Dick," his father said, "so as to see what you are really like, of which I have not the least idea at present. You must feel a deal more comfortable now that you have got rid of the rope."

"I am, indeed. I am sure Surajah must be quite as much pleased at leaving his padding behind."

They stopped half a mile from the town, which was a place of considerable size. Dick took from the saddle-bag of the horse Ibrahim was leading the bottle of liquid with which he was in the habit of renewing his staining every few days, and darkened his father's face and hands. Then they took off their costumes as merchants, and put on their peasants' attire. Dick directed Ibrahim to make a *détour*, so as to avoid the town and come down on the road half a mile beyond it, and there wait until they rejoined them—for his father was to accompany Ibrahim.

It was growing light as Dick and Surajah entered the town, and in half-an-hour the streets became alive with people. After some search they found a man who had several horses to sell, and, after the proper amount of bargaining, they purchased

three fairly good animals. Another half-hour was occupied in procuring saddles and bridles, and, after riding through quiet streets to avoid questioning, they left the town, and soon rejoined their companions.

"Now, Surajah," Dick said, "we will be colonels again for a bit."

The saddle-bags were again opened, and in a few minutes they were transformed.

"Why, where on earth did you get those uniforms?" Captain Holland asked, in surprise. "Those sashes are the signs that their wearers are officers of the Palace, for I have seen them more than once at Kistnagherry; and the badges are those of colonels. There is nothing like impudence, Dick, but it seems to me it would have been safer if you had been contented with sub-officers' uniforms."

Dick laughed.

"We are wearing them because we have a right to them," Dick laughed. "We are both colonels in Tippoo's army, and officers of the Palace—that is, we were so until a month ago, though I expect since then our names have been struck off their army list. I will tell you about it as we ride."

"You had better tell me afterwards, Dick. I have never ridden a horse in my life, except when they were taking me from the coast to Mysore, and I shall have enough to do to keep my seat and attend to my steering, without trying to listen to you."

They rode all day, passed through Anicull and Oussoor, and halted for the night in a grove two or three miles farther on. They had not been questioned as, at a walk, they went through the town. Captain Holland had ridden behind with Ibrahim, and the latter had stopped and laid in a stock of provisions at Anicull.

"Thank goodness that is over!" Captain Holland said, as they dismounted. "I feel as if I had been beaten all over with sticks, and am as hungry as a hunter."

“ Ibrahim will have some food ready in half-an-hour, father, and I shall be glad of some myself; though, you know, we all had some chupatties he bought.”

“ They were better than nothing, Dick, but a pancake or two does not go very far with men who have been travelling since ten o'clock last night. Well, lad, I am glad that you have got rid of your beard, and that, except for that brown skin, I am able to have a look at you as you are. You will be bigger than I am, Dick—bigger by a good bit, I should say, and any father might be proud of you, much more so one who has been fetched out from a captivity from which he had given up all hope of escaping. As it is, lad, words can't tell how grateful I feel to God for giving me such a son.”

“ My dear father, it is mother's doing. It has been her plan, ever since she heard that you were wrecked, that we should come out here to find you, and she has had me regularly trained for it. I had masters for fencing and gymnastics, we always talked Hindustani when we were together, and she has encouraged me to fight with other boys, so that I should get strong and quick.”

That evening by the fire, Dick told his father the whole story of his life since he had been in India.

“ Well, my lad, you have done wonders,” his father said, when he had finished, “ and if I had as much enterprise and go as you have, I should have been out of this place years ago. But in the first place, I was very slow in picking up their lingo. You see, until within the last three or four years there have always been other Englishmen with me. Of course we talked together, and as most of them were able to speak a little of the lingo, there was no occasion for me to learn it. Then I was always, from the first, when they saw that I was handy at all sorts of things, kept at odd jobs, and so got less chance of picking up the language than those who were employed in drilling, or who had nothing to do but talk to their guards. But most of all, I did not try to escape be-

cause I found that if I did so it would certainly cost my companions their lives. That was the way that scoundrel Tippoo kept us from making attempts to get off.

“ Well, soon after the last of the other captives was murdered, we moved away to Kistnagherry, which was a very difficult place to escape from; and besides, very soon after we got there, I heard of the war with our people, and hoped that they would take the place. It was, as you may suppose, a terrible disappointment to me when they failed in their attack on it. Still, I hoped that they would finally thrash Tippoo, and that, somehow, I might get handed over to them. However, as you know, when peace was made, and Kistnagherry had to be given over, the governor got orders to evacuate it, without waiting for the English to come up to take possession. Well, since I have been at Savandroog I have thought often of trying to get away. By the time I got there I had learned to speak the language fairly enough to make my way across the country, and I have been living in hopes that, somehow or other, I might get possession of a rope long enough to let myself down the rocks. But, as I told you, I have never so much as seen one up there twenty feet long.

“ I did think of gradually buying enough cotton cloth to twist up and make a rope of; but you see, when one has been years in captivity, one loses a lot of one's energy. If I had been worse off, I should have set about the thing in earnest, but you see, I was not badly treated at all. I was always doing odd carpentering jobs for the colonel and officers, and armourer's work at the guns. Any odd time I had over, I did jobs for the soldiers and their wives. I got a good many little presents, enough to keep me in decent clothes and decent food—if you can call the food you have up there decent—and to provide me with tobacco, so that, except that I was a prisoner, and for the thought of my wife and you, I had really nothing to grumble about, and was indeed better off than any one in the fortress, except the officers. So you see,

I just existed, always making up my mind that some day I should see a good chance of making my escape, but not really making any preparations towards casting off my moorings. Now, Dick, it must be past twelve o'clock, and I am dog-tired. How far have we to ride to-morrow?"

"It is thirty-five miles from Oussoor to Kistnagherry, which will be far enough for us to go to-morrow, and then another five-and-twenty will take us down to Tripataly. As the horses have gone about forty miles, it would be a long journey for them to go right through to-morrow."

"I don't think I could do it, Dick, if they could. I expect I shall be stiffer to-morrow than I am now. Eager as I am to see your dear mother, I don't want to have to be lifted off my horse when I arrive there, almost speechless with fatigue."

The next day they rode on to Kistnagherry, passing a small frontier fort without question. They slept at the post-house there, Dick and Surajah having removed their scarves and emblems of rank as soon as they passed the frontier, in order to escape all inquiries. They started next morning at day-break, and arrived within sight of Tripataly at ten o'clock.

"Now, father, I will gallop on," Dick said. "I must break the news to mother before you arrive."

"Certainly, Dick," his father, who had scarcely spoken since they started, replied. "I have been feeling very anxious about it all the morning; for though, as you tell me, she has never lost faith in my being alive, my return cannot but be a great shock to her."

Dick rode on, and on arriving at the palace was met in the courtyard by the Rajah, who was on the point of going out on horseback. He dismounted at once.

"I am truly glad to see you back, Dick, for your mother has been in a sad state of anxiety about you. Eight days ago she started up from a nap she was taking in the middle of the day, and burst out crying, saying that she was certain

you were in some terrible danger, though whether you were killed or not she could not say. Since then she has been in a bad state; she has scarcely closed an eye, and has spent her whole time in walking restlessly up and down."

"It is quite true that I was in great danger, uncle, and I am sorry indeed that she is in this state, for my coming home will be a shock to her; and she has an even greater one to bear. Surajah and I have rescued my father, and he will be here in a few minutes."

"I congratulate you," the Rajah said warmly. "That is news, indeed—news that I, for one, never expected to hear. It is simply marvellous, Dick. However, I am sure that your mother is not fit to bear it at present. I will go up now, and tell Gholla to break your return gradually to her. I will say nothing about your father to your aunt. As soon as the news that you are here is broken, you must go to your mother. Tell her as little as possible. Pretend that you are hungry, and have a meal sent up, and persuade her to take some nourishment; then declare positively that you won't tell her anything about your adventures until she has had a long sleep. Gholla will prepare a sleeping-draught for her. In the meantime, I will ride off, directly I have seen my wife, to meet Surajah and your father, and bring him on here. I sha'n't tell any one who he is, in case a chance word should come to your mother's ears. If she wakes up again this evening, and asks for you, you must judge for yourself whether to tell her anything or to wait until morning. You might, perhaps, if she seems calm, gladden her with the news that, from what you have heard, you have very strong hopes that a prisoner in keeping at one of the hill-forts is your father. Then to-morrow morning you can tell her the whole truth. Now I will run up to Gholla; there is no time to be lost."

"I shall be in the dining-room, uncle, when I am wanted."

A few minutes later Gholla came in hastily.

"Your mother has fainted, Dick. I broke the news to her

very gently, but it was too much for her in her weak state. When she comes round again, and is able to talk, I will fetch you ; in the meantime, I will send Annie in to you."

Two minutes later the girl ran in with a flushed face, threw herself into Dick's arms, and kissed him.

"I can't help it, Dick," she said, "so it is of no use your scolding me. This is a surprise. Who would have thought of your coming back so soon? But it is lucky you did ; your mother has been in a sad way, and she was so sure that you had been in some terrible danger that I have been almost as anxious as she has. And now it seems that I need not have frightened myself at all."

"I was in great danger, Annie. Just at the time my mother dreamt about me, Surajah, Ibrahim, and I, were attacked by a party of Stranglers, disguised as merchants, and if it had not been that I had some strange suspicion of them, we should all have been murdered. As it was, we shot the whole gang, who, fortunately for us, had no fire-arms."

"It must have been your mother who warned you," Annie said gravely. "She told us that she dreamt you were in some terrible danger, though she could not remember what it was, and she tried with all her might to warn you."

"Perhaps it was that, Annie. I don't know why I suspected them so strongly—Surajah quite laughed at the idea. Anyhow it saved our lives. And how are you getting on, Annie? Are you happy?"

"Oh, so happy!" she exclaimed. "At least, I was until your mother got ill, and I was working very hard at my lessons ; but of course that has all been stopped, as far as taking them from her is concerned. But I have gone on working, and the Rajah's sons have been very good and helped me sometimes, and I begin to read words of two letters. And what has brought you back so soon?"

"That I can't tell you yet, Annie. I will only tell you that it is not bad news ; and no one but my uncle will know

more than that till I have told my mother—even my aunt won't hear it."

"Has Surajah come back too, Dick?"

"Yes ; I heard horses in the courtyard just now, and I have no doubt it was him. I rode on first, being anxious to see my mother."

They chatted for a few minutes ; then the Rajah came to the door and called Dick into the next room.

"I have settled your father in the room at the other end of the gallery, Dick. He agreed with me that it was better for him to keep there by himself until you have told your mother that he is here. I have just ordered a meal to be sent, and after that will send my barber in to shave him ; he says your mother will never recognise him with all that hair on his face. I am going to see if something cannot be done to take the stain off his face, and shall then set half a dozen tailors to work on some dark blue cloth, to turn him out a suit before to-morrow morning, in what he calls sailor fashion, so that he may appear before your mother in something like the style in which she remembers him."

A few minutes later Gholla came in, and said that Mrs. Holland was ready for Dick to go in to her.

Dick found his mother looking pale and weak ; but the joy of his coming had already brightened her eyes and given a faint flush to her cheeks.

"I have been so dreadfully anxious, Dick," she said, after the first embrace. "I was certain you had been in some terrible danger."

"I have been, but thank God I escaped, owing, I think, to the warning Annie says you tried to give me. But we must not talk about that now. I will tell you all the story to-morrow ; you are not fit to talk. You must take some broth, and some wine, and a sleeping-draught, and I hope you will go off and not wake up till to-morrow morning. Now, you do as I tell you. While you are drinking your broth I will go in and

take something to eat, for I have had nothing to-day, and am as hungry as a hunter; then I will come back and sit by you till you go off to sleep."

He was not long away, but he was met at the door by his aunt, who said,—

"She has gone off already, Dick. I have no doubt that she will sleep many hours, but if she wakes I will let you know at once."

"If that is the case, Gholla," the Rajah, who had come in at the same moment, said, "I can let you into a secret which no one but myself knows yet, but which, now that Margaret is asleep, can be told."

Gholla was very pleased when she heard the news, and Dick went off at once to his father. It was a great relief to the latter to know that his wife had gone off to sleep and would probably be well enough to have the news broken to her in the morning.

"I hear that you are preparing for the meeting, father, by getting yourself shaved, and having a blue cloth suit made?"

"Yes, Dick; I should like to be as much like my old self as possible."

"I don't think mother will care much what you look like, father. Still, it is very natural that you should want to get rid of all that hair."

"What bothers me, lad," Captain Holland went on, putting his hand to the back of his neck, "is this shaved spot here. Of course, with the turban on and the native rig, it was all right, but it will look a rum affair in English clothes."

Dick could not help laughing at his father's look of perplexity.

"Well, father, it is just the same with myself. I have not changed yet, but when I do, the hair above, which is now tucked up under the turban, will be quite long enough to come down to the nape of the neck, and hide that bare place till the hair grows again."

"Yes; I did not think of that. My hair is long enough to come down over my shoulders. I was going to tell the barber to cut it short all over, but I will see now that he allows for that."

"Now, father, do you mind my bringing in Annie Mansfield? I know she will be wanting to keep close to me all day, and I should never be able to get rid of her without telling her about you."

"Bring her in by all means, Dick; she must be a plucky young girl, by what you said about her."

"Where have you been, Dick?" Annie inquired, when Dick went out a few minutes later. "I have been looking for you everywhere; nobody had seen you, unless it was the Rajah. I asked him, and he said that little girls must not ask questions, and then laughed. You have not brought home another white girl?" she exclaimed suddenly.

"Would it not be very nice for you to have a companion, Annie?"

"No," she said sharply; "I should not like it at all."

"Well, I will take you in to see her, and I think you will like her. No; I am only joking," he broke off, as he saw tears start into her eyes; "it is not another girl. But you shall see for yourself."

He took her hand and led her to his father's room.

"There, Annie, this is the gentleman who has come back with me this time."

Annie looked at Captain Holland in surprise, and then turned her eyes to Dick for an explanation.

"He is a respectable-looking old native, isn't he, Annie?"

"Yes, he looks respectable," Annie said gravely; "but he doesn't look very old. Why has he come down with you, Dick? He can't have been a slave."

"But I have, lass," the captain said, in English, to Annie's intense astonishment. "I have been in their hands a year or so longer than you were."

Annie turned impulsively to Dick, and grasped his arm.

"Oh, Dick," she said, in an excited whisper. "Is it—is it your father, after all?"

"Ay, lass," the captain answered for him. "I am the boy's father, and a happy father, too, as you may guess, at finding I have such a son. And I hear he has been a good friend to you, too."

"Oh, he has, he has indeed!" Annie cried, running forward and seizing his hands in both of hers. "I don't think there ever was any one so kind and good."

"What bosh, Annie?" Dick exclaimed, almost crossly.

"Never mind what he says, my dear; you and I know all about it. Now we can do very well without him for a time; he can go and tell his uncle and cousins all about his adventures, which, I have no doubt, they are dying to hear, and you and I can sit here and exchange confidences until my barber comes. I don't look much like an Englishman now, but I hope that they will be able to get me something that will take this stain off my face."

Mrs. Holland did not wake till evening; she seemed very much better, and had a short chat with Dick. She would have got up had he not told her that he should be going to bed himself in a short time, and that all his story would keep very well until the morning, when he hoped to find her quite herself again.

By dint of the application of various unguents and a vast amount of hard scrubbing, Captain Holland restored his face to its original hue.

"I look a bit sunburnt," he said, "but I have often come back browner than this from some of my voyages."

"You look quite like yourself in your portrait at home, father," Dick said. "It is the shaving and cutting your hair, even more than getting off the dye, that has made the difference. I don't think you look much older than you did then, except that there are a few gray hairs."

"I shall look better to-morrow, Dick, when I get these outlandish things off. I have been trying on my new suit, and I think it will do first-rate. Those clothes that you wore on board ship, and handed to them as a model, gave them the idea of what I wanted."

And indeed, the next morning, when Captain Holland appeared in his new suit, Dick declared that he looked just as if he had walked down from his picture.

The ranee had agreed to break the news to Mrs. Holland as soon as she was dressed; she came into the room where the others were waiting for breakfast, and said to Captain Holland,—

"Come. She knows all, and has borne it well."

She led him to the door of Mrs. Holland's room, and opened it. As he entered there was a cry of,—

"Oh Jack! my Jack!" Then she closed it behind him, and left husband and wife together.

A few days afterwards there was a family consultation.

"Now, Dick," his father said, "we must settle about your plans. You know we have decided upon going home by the next ship, and taking Annie with us, without waiting for her father's letter. Of course I shall have no difficulty in finding out, when I get there, what his address is. I have promised your mother to give up the sea, and settle down again at Shadwell, where I can meet old friends and shall feel at home. We have had a long talk over what you said the other night, about your insisting that we should take the money those jewels of yours fetch. Well, we won't do that."

"Then I will sell them, father," Dick said positively, "and give the money to a hospital!"

"I have not finished yet, Dick. We won't take all the money, but we have agreed that we will take a quarter of it. Of course we could manage on my savings as your mother did when I was away. We shall lose the little allowance the Company made her, but I shall buy a share in a ship with my

money, which will bring in a good deal better rate of interest than she got for it in the funds, so we could still manage very well. Still, as we feel that it would please you, we agree to take a quarter of the money the jewels fetch; and that, with what I have, will give us an income well beyond our wants. So that is settled. Now about yourself: I really don't think that you can do better than what you proposed when we were talking of it yesterday. You would be like a fish out of water in England if you had nothing to occupy your time, and therefore can't do better than enter the Service here, and remain at any rate for a few years.

"As your commission was dated from the time you joined Lord Cornwallis, two and a half years ago, you won't be at the bottom of the tree, and while you are serving you will want no money here, and the interest of your capital will be accumulating. If I invest it in shipping for you, you will get eight or ten per cent. for it; and as I shall pick good ships, commanded by men I know, and will divide the money up in small shares, among half a dozen of them, there will be practically no risk—and of course the vessels will be insured. So that, at the end of ten years, by re-investing the profits, your money will be more than doubled, and you will have a nice fortune when you choose to come home, even if the jewels do not fetch anything like what you expect."

A week later the party journeyed down to Madras, where they stayed for a fortnight. Dick, on his arrival, called upon the governor, who congratulated him most heartily when he heard that he had succeeded in finding and releasing his father, and at once appointed him to one of the native cavalry regiments; and his parents had the satisfaction of seeing him in uniform before they started. Annie showed but little interest in the thought of going to England and being restored to her parents, being at the time too much distressed at parting from Dick to give any thought to other matters. But at last the good-byes were all said, and as the anchor was weighed

Dick returned on shore in a surf-boat, and next day joined his regiment.

Surajah had wanted to accompany him to Madras, and to enlist in any regiment to which he might be appointed, and the assurance that it might be a long time before he became a native officer, as these were always chosen from the ranks, except in the case of raising new regiments, had little influence with him. The Rajah, however, had finally persuaded him to stay, by the argument that his father, who was now getting on in years, would sorely miss him, that the captain of the troop would also be retiring shortly, and that he should, as a reward for his faithful services to his nephew, appoint him to the command as soon as it was vacant. Ibrahim entered the Rajah's service, preferring that to soldiering.

CHAPTER XXI

HOME

IT was early in December, 1792, that Dick Holland joined his regiment, which was stationed at Madras. There were but five other officers, and Dick found, to his satisfaction, that the junior of them had had four years' service; consequently, he did not step over any one's head, owing to his commission being dated nearly three years previously. As there were in the garrison many officers who had served on the general staff in the last war, Dick soon found some of his former acquaintances, and the story of his long search for his father, and its successful termination, soon spread, and gained for him a place in civil as well as military society. The next year passed peacefully, and was an unusually quiet time in India. That Tippoo intended to renew the war as soon as he was able was well known to the government, and one of its chief objects of