

with great boldness; but they were received with a fire so heavy and so well directed that it soon quelled the courage even of fanaticism and intoxication. The rear ranks of the English kept the front ranks supplied with a constant succession of loaded muskets, and every shot told on the living mass below. After three desperate onsets, the besiegers retired behind the ditch.

26. "The struggle lasted about an hour. Four hundred of the assailants fell. The garrison lost only five or six men. The besieged passed an anxious night, looking for a renewal of the attack. But when day broke the enemy were no more to be seen. They had retired, leaving the English several guns and a large quantity of ammunition.

27. "Clive immediately began offensive operations. Re-enforced by seven hundred English troops and sepoy from Madras, and effecting a junction with the auxiliary Mahratta force, he soon overran all the Northern Carnatic. He gained a complete victory over Rajah Sahib's army of five thousand natives and three hundred Frenchmen. At this time Major Lawrence arrived from England and assumed the command. An expedition marched to the assistance of Mohammed Ali at Trichinopoly. The besiegers were defeated, and Chunda Sahib was put to death by the Mahrattas, into whose hands he fell.

28. "The English were now masters of the Carnatic, and the French influence was broken. Steadily the English power was extended over the Deccan and all Southern India. Dupleix struggled against his fate in vain, no French armament came to his assistance. His company condemned his policy and furnished him with no aid. But still he persisted, bribed, intrigued, promised, lavished his private fortune, and everywhere tried to raise new enemies to the government at Madras, but

all to no purpose. At length, when his last hope for empire died out, broken in fortune and spirits, he returned to his native country to die obscure and neglected.

29. "Clive went back to England for a brief space, but after a year or two he returned to India as governor of Madras. His first service after his return was to rout out a nest of pirates which had for a long time maintained a stronghold upon the coast. He then turned his attention to reform in the company's business, and to strengthening British influence with the natives in all directions. Before two months had expired he received intelligence which called forth all the energies of his bold and active mind.

THE STORY OF THE BLACK HOLE.

30. "Of the large provinces into which the Mogul Empire was divided the wealthiest was Bengal. No part of India possessed such natural advantages, both for agriculture and commerce. The Ganges, rushing through a hundred channels to the sea, has formed a vast plain of rich mold which, even under the tropical sky, rivals the verdure of an English April. The rice-fields yield an increase such as is elsewhere unknown. Spices, sugar, vegetable oils are produced with marvelous exuberance. The rivers afford an inexhaustible supply of fish. The desolate islands along the sea-coast, overgrown with noxious vegetation and swarming with deer and tigers, supply the cultivated districts with salt. The great stream which fertilizes the soil is at the same time the chief highway of Eastern commerce. On its banks, and on those of its tributary waters, are the wealthiest marts, the most splendid capitals, and the most sacred shrines of India. In numbers its inhabitants exceed 60,000,000;

a population greater than that of England and France combined.

31. "The race by which this rich tract was peopled, enervated by a soft climate and accustomed to peaceful employments, bore the same relation to other Asiatics which the Asiatics generally bear to the bold and energetic children of Europe. Whatever the Bengalee does, he does languidly. His favorite pursuits are sedentary. He shrinks from bodily exertion, and, though voluble in dispute and able in the war of chicane, he seldom engages in a personal conflict, and scarcely ever enlists as a soldier. There never, perhaps, existed a people so thoroughly fitted by nature and by habit for a foreign yoke.

32. "The great commercial companies of Europe had long possessed factories in Bengal. The French, the Dutch, and the English had stations on the Hoogly, the chief branch of the Ganges. Of these the English Fort William, on the site of the present city of Calcutta, was nearest the sea. A church and ample warehouses rose in the vicinity, a row of spacious houses, belonging to the chief officers of the East India Company, lined the banks of the river, and in the neighborhood had sprung up a large and busy native town. For the ground on which the settlement stood, the English paid rent to the government, and were permitted to have practical control of their own domain.

33. "The province of Bengal had long been governed by a viceroy of the Mogul, who had become practically independent. In 1756 the sovereignty descended to a youth under twenty years of age, who bore the name of Surajah Dowlah. Oriental despots are perhaps the worst class of human beings, and this unhappy boy was one of the worst specimens of his class. His understanding was naturally feeble, and his temper unamiable. His educa-

tion had been such as would have enervated even a vigorous intellect, and perverted even a generous disposition. He was unreasonable, because nobody ever dared to reason with him, and selfish, because he had never been made to feel himself dependent on the good will of others.

34. "Early debauchery had unnerved his body and his mind. He indulged immoderately in the use of ardent spirits, which inflamed his weak brain almost to madness. His chosen companions were flatterers sprung from the dregs of the people. It is said that he had arrived at the last stage of human depravity, when cruelty becomes pleasing for its own sake, when the sight of pain as pain is an agreeable excitement. It had early been his amusement to torture beasts and birds, and when he grew up he enjoyed with still greater relish the misery of his fellow-creatures.

35. "From a child Surajah Dowlah had hated the English. It was his whim to do so; and his whims were never opposed. He had formed a very exaggerated notion of the wealth which might be obtained by plundering them, and his feeble mind could not perceive that the riches of Calcutta, however great, could not compensate him for what he must lose if the European trade should be driven by his violence to some other quarter. Pretexts for a quarrel were readily found, and Surajah Dowlah marched with a great army against Fort William.

36. "The servants of the company at Madras had been forced to become statesmen and soldiers. Those in Bengal were still mere traders, and were in no condition to defend themselves against the formidable attack. The fort was taken, after a feeble resistance, and nearly the whole English population fell into the hands of the conqueror. A few, including the governor, had saved themselves by taking refuge in the ships. The Nabob seated

himself with regal pomp in the principal hall of the factory and ordered Mr. Holwell, the first in rank among the prisoners, to be brought before him. His Highness talked about the insolence of the English, and grumbled at the smallness of the treasure he had found; but he promised to spare their lives, and retired to rest.

37. "Then was committed that great crime, memorable for its singular atrocity, memorable for the terrible retribution by which it was followed. The English captives were left to the mercy of the guards, and the guards determined to secure them for the night in the prison of the garrison, a chamber known by the fearful name of the Black Hole. The space was only twenty feet square. The air-holes were small and obstructed. It was the summer solstice, the season when the fierce heat of Bengal can scarcely be rendered tolerable to natives of England by lofty hills and by the constant waving of fans.

38. "The number of prisoners was one hundred and forty-six, and they were driven into the cell at the point of the sword. They cried for mercy. They strove to burst the door. Holwell offered large bribes to the jailers; but the answer was that nothing could be done without the Nabob's orders, and that the Nabob was asleep and would be angry if anybody waked him. Then the prisoners went mad with despair, and fought for places near the windows where they might obtain air. The jailers in the mean time held lights at the bars and shouted with laughter at the frantic struggles of their victims.

39. "At length the tumult died away in low gaspings and moanings. The day broke. The Nabob had slept off his debauch, and permitted the door to be opened. Twenty-three ghastly figures staggered out of the charnel-house, one hundred and twenty-three bodies were hastily thrown into a pit and covered up, and the Black Hole of

Calcutta has gone into history as a synonym for all that is dreadful and all that is possible in human suffering.

40. "The horror which daylight revealed awakened neither pity nor remorse in the bosom of the savage Nabob. He inflicted no punishment on the murderers. He showed no tenderness to the survivors. He sent letters to the Court of Delhi, describing his conquest in most pompous language. He placed a garrison at Fort William, and forbade Englishmen to dwell in the neighborhood.

CLIVE IN BENGAL.

41. "In August the news of the fall of Calcutta reached Madras, and excited the fiercest and bitterest resentment. The cry of the whole settlement was for vengeance. Within forty-eight hours after the arrival of the intelligence it was determined that an expedition should be sent to the Hoogly, and that Clive should be at the head of the land forces. The naval armament was under the command of Admiral Watson. Nine hundred English infantry and fifteen hundred Sepoys sailed to punish a prince who ruled over 60,000,000 of people. In October the expedition sailed; but it had to make its way against adverse winds, and did not reach Bengal until December.

42. "In the mean time the Surajah Dowlah was reveling in fancied security. He was so ignorant of the state of foreign countries that he often used to say that there were not ten thousand men in all Europe, and it never occurred to him that it was possible that the English would dare to invade his dominions. But while in no fear of the English, he began to miss them greatly. His revenues fell off, and his ministers at length made him understand that it was more profitable to protect traders than to

plunder them. He was disposed to permit the company to resume their operations when he heard of the arrival of Clive in the Hoogly. He instantly marched with his troops toward Calcutta.

43. "Clive commenced operations with his usual vigor. He routed the garrison at Fort William, recovered Calcutta, and stormed and sacked the Nabob's stations along the river. The Nabob, alarmed at this proof of power and spirit, made overtures of peace. He offered to restore the factory, and to give compensation to those whom he had despoiled.

44. "Clive, considering the disparity of his force and the uncertainty of war, consented to negotiate. The terms which he demanded were those which guaranteed much greater power to the English than they ever had before. His manner was cool and determined, as though conscious of possessing power sufficient to enforce his demands. The Nabob behaved with all the faithlessness of an Indian statesman and with all the levity of a boy. He promised, retracted, hesitated, evaded. At one time he advanced with his army in a threatening manner toward Calcutta, but when he saw the resolute front which the English presented, he fell back in alarm, and consented to make peace on their own terms.

45. "The treaty was no sooner concluded than he formed new designs against them. He intrigued with the French upon the Hoogly. He invited the French force in the Deccan to come and drive the English out of Bengal. All this was well known to Clive and Watson. They resolved to rid themselves of one source of danger before the Nabob's plans were consummated. They attacked the French factory upon the Hoogly. Watson directed the expedition by water, and Clive by land. Their success was rapid and complete. The fort, the

garrison, the artillery, the military stores, all fell into the hands of the English. Fresh from this victory Clive returned to his negotiations with the Surajah Dowlah.

46. "The Nabob was confounded by this sudden movement and the destruction of the French power. He regarded the English with still greater fear and still greater hatred. He oscillated between servility and insolence. One day he sent a large sum to Calcutta, as part of the compensation due for the wrongs he had committed. The next day he sent valuable jewels to Bussy, the French commander in the Deccan, imploring that officer to hasten and protect Bengal against Clive, whom 'may all bad fortune attend.' He ordered his army to march against the English. He countermanded his orders. He tore Clive's letters. He sent answers in the most florid language of compliment. He threatened to impale Mr. Watts, the English agent. He sent for Mr. Watts and begged pardon for the insult.

47. "In the mean time his folly, his vices, his dissolute manners, and his love of low company disgusted all classes of his own subjects, and a formidable conspiracy was formed against him in his own capital. The conspirators entered into negotiation with Clive, and he agreed to place Meer Jaffier, the head of the movement, upon the throne of Bengal. In his diplomacy Clive seems to have laid aside his character as a bluff soldier, and to have taken lessons from his wily and treacherous Indian foes. He intrigued and deceived until the last moment, when the conspiracy was ripe and his army ready.

48. "The moment for action came. Mr. Watts, the English agent, secretly fled and took refuge in Calcutta. Clive put his troops in motion, and wrote to the Nabob a letter in which he set forth the English wrongs, and concluded by saying that, as the rains were about to set in,

he and his men would do themselves the honor of waiting upon his Highness for an answer.

49. "Surajah Dowlah instantly assembled his whole force and marched to encounter the English. It had been arranged that Meer Jaffier should separate himself from the Nabob, and carry over his division to Clive. But as the decisive moment approached, the fears of the conspirator overcame his ambition. Clive advanced to the river which separated him from his foe. The Nabob lay with a mighty power a few miles off at Plassey. Meer Jaffier delayed, and returned evasive answers to the remonstrances of the English general.

THE BATTLE AND ITS RESULTS.

50. "Clive was in an anxious and painful situation. He could place no confidence in the sincerity or the courage of his confederate; and whatever confidence he might have in his own military talents, and in the valor and discipline of his troops, it was no light thing to engage an army twenty times as numerous as his own. Before him lay a river over which it was easy to advance, but over which, if things went ill, not one of his little band would return.

51. "On this occasion, for the first and for the last time, his dauntless spirit, during a few hours, shrank from the fearful responsibility of making a decision. He called a council of war. The majority pronounced against fighting, and Clive declared his concurrence with the majority. Long afterward he said that he had never called but one council of war, and that if he had taken their advice the British would never have been masters of Bengal. But scarcely had the meeting broke up than he was himself again. He retired alone under the shade of some trees,

and passed an hour there in thought. He came back determined to take the risk, and gave orders that all should be in readiness for passing the river on the morrow.

52. "The river was passed; and, at the close of a toilsome day's march, the army, long after sunset, took up its quarters in a grove of mango-trees near Plassey, within a mile of the enemy. Clive was unable to sleep; he heard through the night the sound of drums and cymbals from the vast camp of the Nabob. It is not strange that even his stout heart should now and then have sunk, when he reflected against what odds, and for what a prize, he was in a few hours to contend.

53. "Nor was the rest of Surajah Dowlah more peaceful. His mind, at once weak and stormy, was distracted by wild and horrible apprehensions. Appalled by the greatness and nearness of the crisis, distrusting his captains, dreading every one who approached him, dreading to be left alone, he sat gloomily in his tent, haunted, a Greek poet would have said, by the Furies of those who had cursed him with their last breath in the Black Hole.

54. "The day broke—the day which was to decide the fate of India. At sunrise the army of the Nabob, pouring through many openings of the camp, began to move toward the grove where the English lay. Forty thousand infantry, armed with firelocks, pikes, swords, bows and arrows, covered the plain. They were accompanied by fifty pieces of ordnance of the largest size, each tugged by a long team of white oxen, and each pushed on from behind by an elephant. Some smaller guns, under the direction of French soldiers, were perhaps more formidable.

55. "The cavalry were fifteen thousand, drawn from the bolder races which inhabit the northern provinces; and the practiced eye of Clive could perceive that the

men and horses were more powerful than those of the Carnatic. The force opposed to this great multitude consisted of only three thousand men; but of these, nearly one thousand were English, and all were led by English officers and trained in the English discipline.

56. "The battle commenced with a cannonade, in which the artillery of the Nabob did scarcely any execution, while the field-pieces of the English produced great effect. Several officers in Surajah Dowlah's service fell. Disorder began to spread through his ranks. His own terror increased every moment. One of the conspirators advised him to retreat. This advice, agreeing as it did with what his own terrors suggested, was readily received. He ordered his army to fall back, and this order decided his fate. Clive snatched the moment, and ordered his troops to advance.

57. "The confused and dispirited multitude gave way before the onset of disciplined valor. No mob attacked by regular soldiers was ever more completely routed. The little band of Frenchmen, who alone ventured to confront the English, were swept down the stream of the fugitives. In an hour the forces of Surajah Dowlah were dispersed, never to re-assemble. Only five hundred of the vanquished were slain; but their camp, their guns, their baggage, innumerable wagons, innumerable cattle, remained in the power of the conqueror. With a loss of twenty-two soldiers killed and fifty wounded, Clive had scattered an army of sixty thousand men, and had subdued an empire larger and more populous than Great Britain."

58. This brilliant success of Clive added Plassey as one of the battle-fields of the world which has shaped national destinies and decided the fate of millions of people. Though much was yet to be done before the fruits of

victory could be fully realized, Clive at once became almost supreme in authority. Surajah Dowlah fled in disguise, and disappeared from history in complete obscurity. Meer Jaffier held Clive in slavish awe. He once reproved a native of high rank for some trouble with the company's Sepoys. "Are you yet to learn," he said, "who Colonel Clive is, and in what station God has placed him?" The answer was: "I affront the colonel! I who never get up in the morning without making three low bows to his jackass!"

59. The policy inaugurated by Clive was continued by his successors. The British rule was extended by setting up native princes, or setting them aside, as expediency dictated, until the whole vast region south of the Himalayas passed under their control. The weak trading companies of 1755 have blossomed out into an empire.

60. British India to-day, in extent of territory and in absolute safety, is immeasurably greater than that of the Moguls in the height of their glory. The first wild exercise of irresponsible power has been corrected, and governmental affairs under British rule are now administered on the foundation of substantial justice. The peasant no longer flies from governmental officers to the more merciful companionship of the cobra and tiger, and all who toil find protection as never before. The races of the Orient have been brought face to face with the arts and sciences of the West, and untold millions have cause to bless the day when Robert Clive was forced to close the ledger and take up the sword.