

A few years before this a wild, reckless lad, named Robert Clive, had been sent to India as a clerk in the service of the



ROBERT CLIVE

East India Company. Clive disliked his clerkship and longed to distinguish himself as a soldier. His opportunity soon came. When the French threatened Madras, he resigned his position and took service as a volunteer. At the capture of the settlement he was taken prisoner, but made his escape. He soon became the life of the British party in India.

In 1748, the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle restored Madras to the British, but this did not stop the fighting between the two trading companies. Three years later, Clive resolved to put an end to the French plots, and with a small force suddenly appeared before Arcot, the most important place in southern India. The city was captured without difficulty, but Clive was in turn besieged by a mixed force of French and natives under Dupleix. Clive held out stubbornly in spite of the most desperate efforts to dislodge him, and inspired the natives with respect for his strength and skill. Dupleix was finally compelled to give up the siege and was recalled to France in disgrace. The defence of Arcot turned the tide in favour of the British, as the native princes were convinced that the officers and men of the East India Company could fight and hold their own.

There was peace for some years after the successful defence of Arcot. Clive had gone on a visit to England, and returned to India in 1756, just in time to receive the most startling news. Surajah Dowlah, the Nabob of Bengal, had attacked Calcutta and had captured one hundred and forty-six British. These he had imprisoned during a hot summer night in a room twenty feet square. No pen can picture the horrible sufferings of that night in the "Black Hole". In the