

country will place you out of danger, at least until morning."

Big Jim was immediately ready, but shame at leaving their commander, had forced the others to a determination to stay and share their fate. Squire Harry opposed his commands, ordering them to watch over their wounded companion, adding—"there are too few successfully to resist, and already enough to die. Have two horses ready at the cross roads, where we formerly met, by an hour before day, and if we are not there at that time, leave us to our fate."

By another opening into the passage through which Squire Harry had at first been able to gain a knowledge of the character and force of their assailants, they departed, and, escaping observation, were soon hid in the darkness and the forest. On being left alone, Squire Harry and Cato busied themselves in strengthening their position, by piling large stones opposite the entrance to the castle, on a kind of large wooden frame, to which was attached an iron chain, which was fastened to the rock that covered the door.

The assailants had been endeavouring to force an entrance, but found their efforts unavailing to penetrate the solid rock, or even to force open or break the stone which covered the door. More than once they had gained entrance at the side of the rock to the levers and beams with which they were working, but the hopelessness of removing it, and the danger arising from the use the assailed took of this partial opening, to discharge their arms on the workmen, caused them to desist from this method of attack.

While within, Squire Harry and Cato were beginning to indulge hopes of safety, let us attend to what was passing without. In the midst of a number of men, engaged in loud and rather unintelligible conversation, were two men in the act of fastening to a tree a third, by a rope passing around his waist under the arms, which were also bound fast together at the wrists. In answer to their questions, he was protesting utter ignorance of the information they wished for, mingled with passionate entreaties for life, both of which seemed to be disbelieved or disregarded by his interrogators. Promises of reward, in case of giving the desired information, and threats of death on a continued refusal, had at length brought the unfortunate prisoner to listen to the propositions. The prisoner was no other than Big Jim, who, immediately on escaping into the forest by the secret passage, as we have seen, left his companions to take care of their wounded comrade, and fled in an opposite direction. Falling into the hands of those from whom he sought to escape, he was brought back, and on declining to discover the way in which he escaped, was placed in the situation in which we have just found him. Dread of their threatenings, and the desire of escape, had led him

to promise to reveal the secret passage to the cave, on condition of being allowed to live. Being unbound, though strictly guarded, he led them to the opposite side of the cave and showed them the passage through which he and his companions had escaped, but neither promises nor threats could induce him to enter and conduct them within. Several had entered, but returned, failing in their attempts to find their way through a passage barely sufficient to admit a man's dragging himself forward, while lying at full length on his breast, and which had been purposely made still more difficult, except to those familiar with its turnings. By dint of his descriptions and repeated trials, they had advanced far enough to hear the voices of those within, and several therefore were about entering to make sure of their prey on the first surprise.

Squire Harry and Cato, from the silence prevailing since the last attack, were congratulating themselves on their escape, when the flash of a pistol, and immediately after, the glance of torches showed them the impossibility of escaping. Retaining his self-possession, and resolved to sell his life as dearly as he could, Squire Harry retreated behind a projection of the cave, and awaited the first advance of the enemy. To the offer of life on surrender, he answered: "Come and take me!"

It was evident to his enemies that in his present situation, he who should first advance must fall a sacrifice to the fire of so desperate a foe. Their hesitation, and the absolute refusal of some, to be the probable victim of his fire, drew forth the taunts and laughter of Squire Harry, who, fearing treachery, had abandoned all hope of escape, and being determined never to be taken alive, was studying only revenge. His enemies still increasing, by entering through the secret passage, their courage grew proportionately to their numbers, and while they were meditating a rush to take him by a *coup de main*, they were terror struck by the voice of Squire Harry warning them, that the first movement of any to take them would be the signal for his setting fire to the store-room of powder by which he stood.

Several of the assailants nearest the passage immediately began to withdraw, and one after another of the party, destitute of any regular and acknowledged leader, unwilling to be the victim, re-entered the passage, till Squire Harry and Cato were again left alone. Again the assailants called a council of war, and it was resolved to build a fire at the mouth of the passage to reduce the enemy to terms. The smoke within soon became dense, and as a last resort Squire Harry was urging Cato to escape through another passage below the magazine too narrow to admit of his own body getting through. Again the attempt was made to squeeze his body into the smallest possible compass, but in vain. Though gaining admittance, the ragged corners