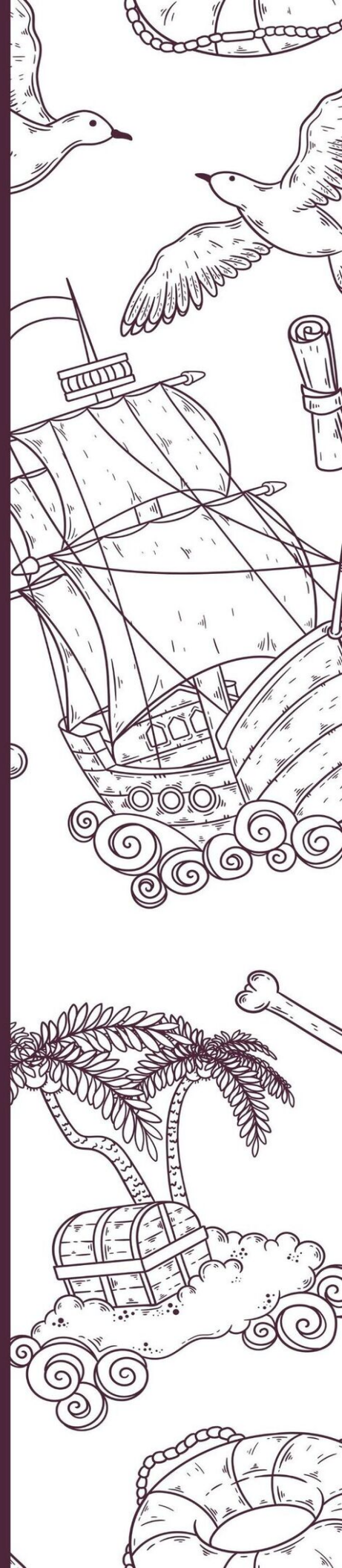


Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.

MALAY

AMONG
PIRATES AND OTHER STORIES

G. A. Henty



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Among Malay Pirates and Other Stories

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Among Malay Pirates

Chapter I



“I wish most heartily that something would happen,” Harry Parkhurst, a midshipman of some sixteen years of age, said to his chum, Dick Balderson, as they leaned on the rail of her majesty’s gunboat *Serpent*, and looked gloomily at the turbid stream that rolled past the ship as she lay at anchor.

“One day is just like another—one is in a state of perspiration from morning till night, and from night till morning. There seems to be always a mist upon the water; and if it were not that we get up steam every three or four days and run out for twenty-four hours for a breath of fresh air, I believe that we should be all eaten up with fever in no time. Of course, they are always talking of Malay pirates up the river kicking up a row; but it never seems to come off.”

“There is one thing, Harry—there is always something to look at, for there are canoes constantly going up and down, and there is plenty of variety among them—from the sluggish dhows, laden with up country produce, to the long canoes with a score of paddlers and some picturesque ruffian sitting in the stern. It adds to the interest when you know that the crews are cutthroats to a man, and would make but the shortest possible work of you if they had got you in their power.”

“Yes, Dick. Look at that canoe coming up stream; what a good looking chap that is in the stern, though by the way he scowls at us I can quite believe

he would, as you say, cut our throats if he had the chance. That is a pretty little child sitting by him, and what a gorgeous dress she has! There, you see, he can look pleasant enough when he speaks to her. I fancy they must have come from a long way up the river, for they look wilder than most of the fellows who pass us. If that fool who is steering her does not mind what he is about, Dick, he will either run into that canoe coming down or else get across our chain. There, I told you so."

The man at the tiller was in fact, looking, with mingled curiosity and hostility, at the gunboat that he was passing but a few yards away, and did not notice a canoe, manned by six rowers, that was coming down with the stream, taking an oblique course across the bows of the *Serpent*, and was indeed hidden from his view by the hull of the vessel, until he had passed beyond her. Then there was a sudden shout and a yell from a dozen throats, as the two canoes came into collision, the one proceeding up the river being struck on the quarter with a force that almost cut her in two, and in an instant her occupants were in the water. As the Malays were to a man almost as much at home in the water as on land, the accident would have had little effect beyond the loss of the boat and its contents, had it not been that the stern of the other craft struck the Malay chief with such force as to completely disable him, and he would have sunk at once had not two of the boatmen grasped him and kept his head above water.

"What has become of the child?" Harry Parkhurst exclaimed, and he and Dick Balderson both leaped on to the rail, throwing off their jackets as they shouted to the men to lower a boat. Nothing could be seen of the child until, after half a minute's suspense, a little face suddenly appeared in the swirl of the muddy water some fifteen yards from the vessel's side. It was gone again in an instant, but, as it disappeared, both lads sprang from the side and with a few

strokes reached the spot where they had seen the face disappear; then they dived under water and soon grasped her. As soon as they came to the surface a sailor, who had seized a coil of rope, flung it to them, and, grasping it, they were quickly by the side of the gunboat.

A minute later some sailors, who had at once tumbled into a boat on the alarm being given, came up. The child was first handed into it, then the midshipmen scrambled in, and, by their directions, two of the sailors, standing on the thwarts, lifted the child high above their heads to the hands of the men leaning over the bulwark.

“Take the little thing to the doctor,” Dick said. “Now, lads, row on; let’s pick up some of those Malay fellows.”

A babel of shouts and sounds rose from the water; the bow of the second canoe had been stove in, and she also had sunk to the water level; a fierce fight was going on between several of the Malays; the chief, who was being supported by two of his crew, was shouting furiously; and others of his men, in obedience to his orders, were diving under water. Harry turned to the gunboat, and called to the men to bring Soh Hay, the interpreter, to the side. A minute later the man was hustled to the rail.

“Tell that chief that we have got his child safely on board,” Harry shouted.

Again and again the interpreter called out; but it was some time before he could make the chief pay attention to him. As the latter caught the purport of his words his face changed at once, and, after calling to his men to desist from their search, his head sank on to the shoulder of one of the men supporting him, and he evidently lost consciousness.

“He is badly hurt, Dick; we had better get him on board, too. Old Horsley was wishing this morning that he had something to do beyond administering doses of quinine to the men.”

Taking the tiller, he brought the boat alongside the chief, and four of the sailors, directed by Dick, gently raised him from the water and laid him on the bottom of the boat. Blood was flowing freely from an ugly gash in his face, and it was evident from the manner in which his left arm hung limp, as they lifted him up, that either the shoulder or the arm itself was broken.

“Get him alongside at once, lads,” Dick said. “I expect he is more injured than we see. The other fellows will be all right; they can all swim like fish.”

In two or three minutes the injured man was laid down under an awning over the fore deck of the cruiser, and the surgeon at once came up.

“How is the child, Doctor?”

“She is still insensible,” he said, “but she will soon be all right. I can’t discover any injury, and I think it likely that it was the sudden shock, and perhaps a knock against the side of the boat, that stunned her; for I have no doubt she could swim, small as she is. This is a much more serious affair; he has an ugly gash in his temple, his collarbone is broken, and,” he went on, as he passed his hands down the patient’s side, “he has two, if not more ribs broken.”

“Well, we will leave him to you, Doctor; there are a lot of these fellows in the water, and I suppose they must be brought on board until we can get a boat to take them ashore.”

In a few minutes eighteen Malays were brought to the side, and the two canoes, which were floating level with the water, were towed up and fastened by a rope to the stern of the gunboat. Even when safely on deck, the two parties were still so infuriated that they had to be separated and placed under guards apart from each other. Three or four had been killed by the stabs of the deadly krises, and their bodies could be seen floating astern. Several of those rescued had wounds more or less severe.

“We should not have much chance with those fellows in the water, Mr. Parkhurst,” an old sailor said to Harry.

“No, indeed, Davis; they could swim round and round us, and our cutlasses would be very little good against those ugly looking krises. If we were to leave them to themselves, they would fight to the death; and, after all, it was no one’s fault in particular. Mr. Balderson and I were watching them; one was crossing the ship’s bow just as the other came out from her side, and they were into each other before either had time to hold their boat up.”

“That chap the doctor is bandaging up was in a nice taking about his child, sir; it was a lucky job that you and Mr. Balderson happened to catch sight of her.”

“Yes, poor little thing! It was only just a glimpse we got of her face; but as we were looking for her, and ready to dive, it was enough.”

“Lucky we are inside the bar, Mr. Parkhurst, or the sharks would have had half the fellows.”

“I did not think of it at the time, Davis, and it would not have made any difference if I had; we were only in the water a couple of minutes, and the Malays were making noise enough to frighten away any number of sharks. You will have the job of washing out our trousers again—we had only put them on clean half an hour before.”

“That aint no matter, sir, especially if you go down and change at once; the mud will come out easy enough if I leave them in a bucket of fresh water for half an hour.”

The two midshipmen joined the group of officers who were standing near the doctor; the latter had, on closer examination, announced that four of the ribs were broken. He had finished his work just as the lads came up. News had

been brought up by the steward that the little girl had opened her eyes; while he was speaking, the Malay conversed rapidly with the interpreter.

“What is he saying, Soh Hay?” the captain asked.

“He is asking why his daughter is not here, and if she is hurt, and how she came to be saved,” the man replied. “Me tell him she come up to see him soon; the doctor say she no hurt.”

Two minutes later the doctor reappeared, carrying the child in his arms. She looked round fearlessly at the white faces until her eye fell upon her father, when she slipped out of the doctor’s arms like an eel and ran to him. The grim features of the Malay lit up with a pleasant smile as he held out his right hand to her. She was a strange little figure, for the doctor had not waited to obtain any suitable garments for her, but had wrapped her up in one of the signal flags, which the child herself had wound round her waist and over her shoulder like a native sarong.

“You tell him, Soh Hay, that he must not talk to her,” the doctor said. “If he keeps quiet, he will get well in short time: if he talk, he ill many days; but I will let him say a few words to her now.”

The Malay’s eyes passed over the group of officers and rested on the two midshipmen, whose wet clothes showed that they were the officers who had, as the interpreter had told him, dived in and rescued the child. He said something to the interpreter.

“Malay man want to speak to you, young gentlemen,” the man said; “he wish to thank you.”

“Oh, tell him there is nothing to thank us for,” Harry said hastily; “it was nothing more than taking a bath.”

“Yes, officer, but he wishes to speak to you.”

Somewhat reluctantly, the two lads approached the side of the injured man; he took each of them by the hand, and, as he did so, said something which Soh Hay interpreted:

“The chief says that you have given him back what he loved best in the world, and that his life is yours whenever it may be of use to you; he may be of service to you, gentlemen, should you ever go up the river—a Malay never forgives an injury or forgets a service.”

“Tell him we are very glad to have brought his little girl out of the water,” Harry said, “and that if we ever go up the river, we will pay him a visit.”

The chief was now laid in a cot which was swung from the stanchions of the awning, while the little girl was carried away by the doctor, who laid her in a berth, gave her a cup of tea, which she drank obediently to his orders, but evidently regarded as being extremely nasty, and she was then told through the interpreter to go to sleep until her sarong was dried. A couple of hours later she was on deck again in her native garb and ornaments. The interpreter pointed out to her the two midshipmen who had rescued her, and she at once went up to them, and, slipping her hands into theirs, began to prattle freely; they were unable to understand what she said, but they took her round the ship, showing her the guns, and introduced her to Ponto, the captain’s great Newfoundland, who submitted gravely to be patted by her; to Jacko, the monkey, who was by no means disposed to be friendly, but chattered and showed his teeth; and to Julius Caesar, the negro cook, who grinned from ear to ear, and presented her with some cakes from a batch which he had just made for the captain’s table.

The rest of the Malays had already left the ship; two native boats had been hailed, and in these the two parties of Malays had taken their places, and, with their boats towing behind, had been rowed away, the captain giving strict

instructions that they were to be landed on opposite sides of the river. The little maid speedily became a general pet on board the *Serpent*, and was soon the proud possessor of several models of ships, two patchwork quilts, several carved tobacco boxes, and other specimens of sailors' handiwork. Small as she was, she had evidently a strong idea of her own importance, and received these presents and attentions with a pretty air of dignity which at once earned for her the title of the Princess.

On the second day after the accident, the chief's boat came off from the shore, the damage having been speedily and neatly repaired. Little Bahi stood on the top of the accommodation ladder as they approached, and addressed them with great asperity, using much gesticulation with her arms.

"What is she saying, Soh Hay?" Dick Balderson asked.

"She is telling them that they are bad men to let the boat be run down; that she is very angry with them, and they will all be punished."

"The men looked very crestfallen under their little mistress' reproaches, and held up their hands in a deprecating manner; while the helmsman stood up and, after salaaming deeply, entered upon a long explanation, which ended in his asking if he might come on board to see his chief. Permission was at once granted by the captain, upon the request being interpreted to him. When he mounted the steps, Bahi led him to the side of her father's cot. The doctor, however, interposed.

"Tell him he must not talk," he said to the interpreter; "the chief is ill and must not be allowed to excite himself. But he can say a few words, if he wants to."

The cot had been lowered to within a few inches of the deck in order that the chief might watch his daughter as she trotted about and romped with Ponto, who had now quite taken her into his friendship. The chief's face

expressed alarm when he first saw the great dog; but when he saw how gentle the animal was, and how, when one of the sailors placed the child on his back, it walked gravely up and down the deck, wagging its tail as if pleased with its novel burden, he was satisfied that no harm could come to her from this formidable looking animal. He had first spoken a few words sharply to the man in answer to his excuses, and, indeed, had the helmsman been minding his business instead of looking at the ship, the collision might have been prevented; but Hassan Jebash was at the present moment so well contented with the recovery of his child that he accepted the man's excuses, and the latter went back to his boat evidently greatly relieved.

In a few days the chief began to show signs of impatience, and through the interpreter constantly demanded of the doctor when he would be well enough to leave.

"You ask him, Soh Hay, whether he wishes to be able to lead his tribe in battle again, or to go through life unable to use a kris or hurl a spear. In another ten days, if he remains quiet, he will be able to go, and in a couple of months will be as strong and active as ever, if he will but keep quiet until the bones have knit. Surely a chief is not like an impatient child, ready to risk everything for the sake of avoiding a little trouble."

The chief, on this being translated to him, scowled angrily.

"Tell him it is of no use his scowling at me, Soh Hay. I am not doctoring him for my own amusement, but for his good, and because he is the father of that little child."

The chief, when this was translated to him, lay without speaking for two or three minutes, and then said quietly, "Tell the doctor I am sorry; he is right, and I have been foolish. I will stay till he says I may go."

Chapter II



Four or five days later the chief was allowed to get up and to walk quietly up and down the deck, and a week afterwards the doctor said, "You can go now, chief, if you desire it; but you must be content to keep quiet for another couple of months, and not make any great exertions or move quickly. How long will it take you to go up the river to your home?"

"Six days' easy paddling."

"Well, that is in your favor; but do not travel fast. Take it quietly, and be as long as you can on the voyage—lying in a canoe is as good a rest as you can take."

"Thank you, Doctor, I will obey your instructions. You have all been very kind to me, and a Malay chief never forgets benefits. I have been hostile to the white men, but now I see I have been mistaken, and that you are good and kind. Is it true that your boat is going up the river? Soh Hay tells me that it is so."

"Yes; one of the chiefs, Sehi Pandash, wishes to place himself under our protection, and he has sent to ask that the ship might go up and fire her big guns, that the tribes round may see that he has strong friends who can help him."

"It is two days' rowing up the river to my place from his, and when you are there I shall come down to see you. Sehi is not a good chief; he quarrels with

his neighbors, and shelters their slaves who run away to him; he is not a good man.”

“Well, we shall all be glad to see you, chief, and I hope that you will bring your daughter with you. She has won all our hearts, and we shall miss her sadly.”

“I will bring her if I can do so safely,” the chief said gravely; “but I am no friends with Sehi; he stops my trade as it comes down the river, and takes payment for all goods that pass down. It is because he knows that many of us are angered that he wishes to put himself under your protection. I think that you do not do well to aid so bad a fellow.”

“We did not know that he was a bad fellow, chief. The best plan will be for you and the other chiefs who are aggrieved to send down complaints against him, or to come down yourselves when we are up there and talk it over with our Captain, who will doubtless impress upon Sehi the necessity for abstaining from such practices, and that he cannot expect aid from us if he embroils himself with his neighbors by interfering with their trade. Is he strong?”

“He has many war prahus, which sometimes come down to the sea and return with plunder, either collected from the cultivators near the coast or from trading ships captured and burnt.”

“I will mention what you tell me to the Captain, and it will prepare him to listen to any complaint that may be made to him. But you must remember that he is only acting under the orders of the Governor of the Straits Settlements, and must refer all important matters to him.”

“I will come when you are there,” Hassan said gravely. “If nothing is done, there will be war.”

There was general regret on board the *Serpent* when the little princess said goodby to all her friends and went down the accommodation ladder to the

boat with her father. The chief had said but little to the two young midshipmen, for he saw that they preferred that the matter should not be alluded to, but he held their hands at parting, and said:

“I shall see you again before long; but if at any time you should want me, I will come, even if your summons reach me in the middle of a battle.”

“It is such nonsense, Doctor,” Harry said, as the boat pushed off, “to have so much made of such a thing as jumping into the water. If one had been alone, and had tried to save a man or a woman, in such a state of funk that there was a good chance of their throwing their arms round your neck and pulling you down with them, there might be something in it, though everyone takes his chance of that when he jumps in to save anyone from drowning; but with a little child, and two of us to do it, and the ship close at hand, it was not worth thinking of for a moment.”

“No, Parkhurst, from your point of view the thing was not, as you say, worth giving a thought to; but, you see, that is not the point of view of the chief. To him it is nothing whether your exploit was a gallant one or not, or whether you ran any danger; the point simply is, his child would have been drowned had you not seen her and fished her out, and that it is to you that he owes her life. I think you have reason to congratulate yourselves on having made a friend who may be very useful to you. It may be that there will be trouble up the river; and if so, he might possibly be of real service to you. But in any case he may be able to give you some good hunting and fishing, and show you things that you would never have had an opportunity of seeing without his friendship and assistance.”

“I did not think of that, Doctor; yes, that would certainly be a great thing.”

“I can assure you I look at it in that light myself, Parkhurst, and I am looking forward to paying him a visit, as, under his protection, I should get