

THE GOLDEN DAGON; OR, UP AND DOWN THE IRRAWADDY. *Sampson Low, Ludgate-hill.*—This is a narrative of the last Burmese war, by an American who served as surgeon on board the *Phlegethon*, one of the steam-ships engaged in hostilities with the Burmese. The book is pleasantly and fluently written; but the incidents respecting the war that it recounts are pretty generally known to the public through the medium of the newspapers. The author possesses descriptive powers of no mean calibre, and also the faculty of turning the most trivial occurrences into agreeable anecdote. He tells us of a fearful massacre that once happened on board an English ship, provoked by that supercilious disregard for the customs of other people which we regret to say is a characteristic of Englishmen.

A FATAL BLOW.

A British barque sailed, in the middle of October, from Hong-Kong for Calcutta, with a crew of Malays. She was commanded by an Englishman, with English warrant officers. The Malays, as is their custom, were under the control of a tindal—a sort of boatswain, elected from among their own number, next in authority to whom was a "second tindal" or boatswain's mate. These tindals exercised absolute discretion in respect of the corporal punishments to be inflicted on their countrymen. Blows to a free Malay can be struck only by a Malay; the nature of the offence must be stated to the tindal, who measures it by a standard subscribed to by his men, and dispenses the corresponding blows, or gagging, or confinement in the coal bunkers or double duty, as the case may be. Sometimes the obdurate are treated with mysterious indignities, the wholesomeness and force of which are appreciated only by themselves. Such is the universal organization of Malay crews in the Indian seas; and all Europeans must respect it, from Jemmy Ducks, the boy of many snubs, through boatswains and mates, up to the despot who takes the sun and says where she is to-day. The skipper who would venture to trice up a Malay and flog him with the cats, must be drunk or mad. Nor in confiding to the tindal the police administration of his own department does the "old man" incur the slightest risk of lax discipline. Left to themselves, the Malays rarely need punishment, or when they do, it is laid on with the heaviest hand, and with but little heed to the "regulations." Tindals stand not on the manner of pounding but pound at once; and from a purely disciplinary standpoint it is beautiful to see how patiently, and with what trained respect according to the board, the most tiger-like of these fierce fatalists submits to the bloody chastisement of his elected officer, often a slender youth, a mere strapping, to be strangled with a finger and thumb—for the tindal is chosen for his activity, intelligence, and seamanship, rather than his strength. The captain's wife made her home in the brig, and, of course, "worked the ship." A hen-pecking, sharp-tempered she-sailor, with an unaccountable aversion for Malays—who have a sort of indulgent contempt for women, and usually content themselves with letting them alone—she cowed the skipper and "horsed" the crew, letting slip no opportunity to have them punished for trivial or imagined misdemeanours, and in this making her husband the instrument of her spite. She found an ally in the mate, a dissolute fellow of ungovernable passions, often drunk and always reckless, who noisily braved the revengeful devil in the Malay blood, and boasted that "it just took him to bring the slippery niggers down to their work." There were six Europeans in the crew—an English carpenter, the cook, and a small boy, his assistant, and three ordinary seamen. There was also a lady-passenger, with an infant. One morning, a few days out from Hong-Kong, when the hatches were off to ventilate the hold, and the men, having just had supper, were smoking and chatting in squads about the deck, the second tindal seated himself thoughtlessly on the combings of the main hatch with a pipe in his mouth. The act was one of unpardonable carelessness, affording a dangerous example to the rest, for which he richly deserved punishment at the hands of his proper officer, and after the manner of Malays; but not as it was administered by the mate, who, coming up stealthily behind the man—all unconscious of the danger, and no doubt equally unconscious of his crime—struck him a savage blow on the back of the head with a belaying-pin, knocking him headlong into the hold. The Malay was cruelly hurt, and being lifted out by his companions, was carried forward in a hammock. The affair proceeded, at the time, no visible excitement among the Malays; they went about their

work as usual, betraying no more than a natural anxiety for the life of their officer, relieving each other in attendance upon him, and employing all their rude arts to heal his wounds.

At length the injured Malay was well enough to return on deck, and took the following fearful vengeance for the injury inflicted on him.

MASSACRE AT SEA.

At last, when they were within a day's sail of Singapore, as the captain sat near the binnacle in the moonlight, smoking, with his feet on the stern rail, and his back, of course, to his crew, the Malays, armed with knives and axes, came aft with their tindal at their head—all together, but so quietly that their approach was unheard by the skipper, who was somewhat deaf, and their dreadful purpose unsuspected by the carpenter and the boy, who were the only Europeans on deck. They mounted the poop-deck and stood close behind the shipper. With downright, steady brunt, the tindal buried the butt of his axe in the old man's brains, and while his astonished eyes still stared, they tossed him over, shivering, to the sharks. Then the tiger in the temper of each man of them sprung forward with a roar. The mate with the two women, still lingered over the supper-table in the cabin, when these wild beasts, fairly foaming, burst in upon them. The man was brave as well as brutal, and snatching a cutlass from the rack between the stern ports, as the women fled into a state-room, he stood at bay, his back against the door. But the tindal, lithe as a cat, and careless of the weapon as though he had as many lives, slipped under the blade before the mate had gathered his wits together, and, with teeth and nails, fastened on his throat. In a moment, a dozen others had grasped his sword-arm and twisted it out of the socket. Then they dragged him, cursing and biting, on deck and slung him in the rigging and set the second tindal, the avenger, at him. With barely strength enough to handle his sheath-knife, the Malay clung to his prey, gloatingly, jealously, restlessly, like a famished wild-cat over a reeking morsel, dissecting him piece-meal and daintily, with many a horrid interlude and obscene intercalation, down to the heart, while the other fiends were playing out their parts. With damnable mirth they dragged their foolish enemy, the skipper's shrew, half dead already, from her hiding-place. A little while, and bruised by "pioneers and all," and grotesquely mutilated, she was flung into one of the boats hanging at the davits. The lady-passenger and her babe were as yet unharmed; with even a degree of care they were placed in the boat along with the still gasping remains of the skipper's wife. It was believed by the carpenter, and afterward so declared by several of the Malays, that they did not mean to kill or hurt the lady, but only to set her adrift in the boat with her dying sister, to be picked up by some junk or European craft, in the track from Singapore to Hong-Kong. But even as they were in the act of "lowering away," the second tindal, drunk with blood, left his carcass, and rushing in among them with his knife, cut away the after fall, and so, the stern dropping with a jerk, threw the three wretches into the sea, and mother and babe, with that horrid thing, went down among the sharks. They had despatched, in the beginning, the four European seamen. The boy had hidden himself and was forgotten. The carpenter had been ever a favourite with them, so they merely bound him down to the deck between some ring-bolts, leaving him to be picked up by any passing craft. Then inverting [the ensign to attract attention, they took the boats, and made straight for Singapore, where they gave themselves up, being the first to tell their own horrid story. And they told it truly, looking to be admired for the fidelity with which they had done their law upon those who, spite of many a warning, had set it at defiance. They were told they would be hung, and they were hung, but they laughed at that to the last. Your Malay is your only sincere, practical fatalist; death is a matter about which he never "fashes" himself. The boy came out from his concealment when they had gone, and released the carpenter, and at dawn the two hailed a passing vessel, which took them off and carried them into Singapore. When we arrived, the Malays had been sent on to Penang for trial and execution—all except two, who were shipped with us to follow the others.

When the *Phlegethon* was engaged in the river Irrawaddy, she cast anchor off the village of Pontalong, and the captain sent his interpreter, Abdoolah, to seek for fresh provisions.

A SHAM FIGHT.

In a little while Abdoolah returned, sticking out all over, and, to a stranger, seeming not in the least inclined to laugh. Three uncomfortable-looking individuals, of whom it was hard to say whether they were most dirty or scared, followed after the jingling of his spurs. These pretended to be bewildered by the scene at which they unwillingly assisted, and begged to be told why the fierce general in the breech-cloth and buttons had commanded their presence, and by what wonderful dispensation such pariahs as they had attracted the attention of so tremendous a rajah. They were told we were in want of firewood and fowls, and that we expected Pontalong to provide both without delay. They swore they could not see what they had to do with that; that they were three of the most miserable of men, who barely managed, with infinite pains to keep body and soul together; that for their own funerals, if they died that hour, they had neither faggot nor pullet wherewith to burn their bodies or pay the ponghee; that the rich men of the town had gone off with the Dallah Woon (governor) and taken all the sticks and chickens with them. They implored permission to return to the miserable obscurity from which they had been dragged, no doubt by mistake. But the real ragamuffins of Pontalong—they who had never been seized of faggot or fowl in their lives except they stole it—protested vociferously, as they squatted about the deck, that Abdoolah's prisoners were, in spite of their pathos and dirt, the true Gilpias of the place, men of substance as well as renown—as, indeed, the superior quality of their tattooing betrayed—who counted their poultry by the hundred, and their fuel by the cord. So Abdoolah stormed exceedingly, and patted his dhar, and said "damn" a great many times—that potent monosyllable before which all obdurate barbarians soon learn to bow—and led his pathetic friends to a thirty-two pounder, and demanded the sticks and chickens in its name. Whereupon his victims confessed to their hen-roosts and wood-piles, and consented to fill up our coops and bunkers forthwith, provided we would assist in a bappy plan of theirs for the saving of their heads. They made it plain to us, that if they contributed "aid and comfort to the enemy,"—if they yielded to a forcible forage without resistance—their heads would fly from their shoulders immediately on the re-appearance of their myosugi or mayor, who would return immediately the ship left. Therefore they besought our aid in getting up a mock fight that night. They would bring off the wood and poultry in the afternoon, as much as they wanted; and when the moon rose we must fire into the town as good-naturedly as possible, and they would fire back, with a jinjal and some muskets, in a perfectly friendly manner. This funny programme was duly performed with brilliant effect; and the best of all was, they borrowed some of our powder for the occasion. Soon after dark—the fire-wood and fowls, as well as some pigs, and fish, and mangoes, having been shipped (and liberally paid for), in the midst of much merrymaking with the pretty mimas, who visited us cordially, the free interchange of toasts in rum and wine, and no end of mutual admiration—all the petroleum of Pontalong was brought into requisition; and a general illumination opened the spectacle. Then a mixed herd of citizens, abundantly greasy, but not at all fat, headed by Abdoolah's confidential friends, and having in their midst the biggest white flag the town could raise, as if still timid, to signify that their friendly sentiment was in proportion to its dimensions, ran down to the bank, yelling, and firing their muskets in the air. We opened the attack with one of our broadside-guns—of course with blank fire—and immediately their old jinjal uttered its small roar. For nearly an hour the set-to was smart and noisy. The moon was full, and very bright; the stars were out in unusual strength; the illumination by torches and bonfires was brilliant, and with a few blue-lights we contributed largely to the splendour of the scene. Altogether, our grand engagement at Pontalong was an uncommonly showy affair. When we had burned as much powder as we thought it necessary to expend for such a moral impression, we permitted our fire to be silenced, and retreated precipitately, according to arrangement, without fresh bursts of shouting, drawing gun-firing, and general glorifying on shore. Let us hope that when the myosugi returned, he treated our friends to the thanks of the city and a public dinner, made heroes of them off-hand, and postponed their decapitation, which was pretty sure to happen one day or another.