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The following narrative is told of what occurred to an expedition sent by Admiral Keppel against the pirates of Sarawak:—

A FIGHT WITH PIRATES.

News came that a fleet of prahus had been hovering about Cape Dafit, and as the Dido's largest pinnace happened to be under repair, Mr. Brooke lent a large boat, which had been built under his orders by the natives at Sarawak and was called the Jolly Bachelor. There was no lack of volunteers from the Dido for pirate hunting, and a mate, two middies, six marines, and a dozen seamen were despatched, under the command of the second lieutenant, a Mr. Hunt. They hoisted a brass six-pounder into the Jolly Bachelor, and started in high spirits. About a week later, one of the middies returned, bearing in his arms the captured colours of an Illamin pirate, and this was the story he told:—"Three days after they got outside, they observed three boats in the offing, to which they immediately gave chase, but unsuccessfully. However, as soon as darkness came, the prahus could be made out creeping towards them, but the moment the Jolly Bachelor attempted to get near them, they scudded away. When this game had been played two or three times, the sailors grew tired and hungry, and resolved to pull in shore, light a fire, and cook their supper. This was eaten in peace, and they returned to their boat, hauled her out to her grapnel near some rocks for the night, and, having stacked their loaded muskets round the mainmast, laid down to sleep with their cutlasses beside them. Sentries and officers of the watch were duly placed, but each man was more tired than his neighbour, and soon all the Jolly Bachelors were sound asleep. At three o'clock next morning, Lieutenant Hunt chanced to awake, and thought he was still dreaming, when he saw a Malay brandishing his kris, and performing softly a private war-dance on the bit of a deck, being unable to restrain his ecstasies at having got possession of a fine trading boat. In the middle of the triumphant jig, the pirate turned, and saw Mr. Hunt's bare head and round astonished face, with the moonlight shining full upon it. In an instant he jumped overboard, and almost at the same moment a discharge from three or four cannon, only a few yards off, cut the Jolly Bachelor's rigging almost to pieces, and awoke her sleeping crew. It was fortunate that the men had been lying down when the volley of grape and canister came on board, for not one was hurt. When they sprang to their feet, they found a large prahu on each bow, lashed to the side by cables. In a moment these ropes were cut, the fire returned with interest, and the Jolly Bachelor backed astern to gain room. The struggle was both sharp and short, for a Malay pirate never expects or gives quarter, and fights as it were with a halter round his neck. The odds were fearfully against our men, for the prahus were protected with shot-proof barricades across the fore part of the boat, which had to be cut away before the fire from the swivel guns could take effect. They pressed hotly forward, knowing that the fate of the battle depended on the first five minutes; but discipline carried the day against numbers. The marines stood steady as rocks, loading and firing with coolness and precision, whilst the pirates wasted their strength in trying to board, only to be driven back, first by a volley and then by clubbed muskets. One pirate boat soon began to sink, and the other made off round a point, where they were joined by a larger boat in reserve, which took them in tow and out of sight as quickly as possible. When our men boarded the sinking prahu, ready as Jack ever is to be good to his enemy the moment he is down, they found nothing but three feet of blood and water, with dead and dying men lying across the thwarts, or heaped on each other in the ghastly pool beneath. Every pirate who could move had thrown himself overboard, never dreaming of mercy or pity being shown to a fallen foe."