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A PRINCE OF MALAYA
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By Sir Hugh Clifford, G.C.M.G., G.B.E.

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A PRINCE OF MALAYA

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FOREWORD

This book was written more than twenty years ago and, now that for the first time it is making its appearance in a single volume, I have not attempted to rewrite or to revise it. To do so would have meant throwing the whole picture out of focus, for the tragedy of Saleh and the fashion in which it is here related alike belong to a period which has passed away. The last two decades have witnessed vaster revolutions in fact and in idea than have been packed into any corresponding space of time in recorded history; and in no directions have greater transformations been worked than in the moral and material progress of Malaya and in the attitude of thoughtful Europeans toward racial questions in the East. Yet both the one and the other, as they actually were during the closing years of the nineteenth century, are depicted in this book with relentless accuracy; and since they were the elements which, in combination, resulted in the catastrophe of which poor Saleh was the victim, the story must stand as it was originally written if historical fidelity to the time when the events occurred which are here recorded is to be preserved.

Joining the civil service of Malaya in 1883, at an unusually early age, it so chanced that for the best part of the two decades that followed I was stationed in some of the more remote and primitive districts of the Malayan Peninsula and, to a degree unequalled by any of my brother officers, lived among the people in almost complete isolation from men of my own race. For nearly two years I was posted at the court of a
Malayan Sultan of the old school, whose autocratic methods had not yet been subjected to any extraneous interference; and I was thus afforded an insight, rarely vouchsafed to a European, of the eccentricities and excesses of unfettered native rule. Having acquired the vernacular in much the same effortless manner in which a child learns a foreign language; living for long periods in native huts, on native diet and in the native fashion; and in familiar daily intercourse with Malays of all classes, I emerged from the experience possessed of a very intimate knowledge of the people, of their modes of thought and outlook upon life, and imbued with a deep sympathy and affection for them. Looking back upon those days, I reckon them as among the happiest and most interesting of my life; but the end of them found me a firm believer in the necessity for the intervention of Great Britain in Malaya which, in my own time, I had seen transform conditions bordering upon anarchy into those appropriate to a peaceful, prosperous and contented countryside. Even then, however, I was trying to look at and judge our work from the Malayan, and not exclusively from the European, point of view; and if, in spite of this, there breathes through the pages of this book a certain arrogant confidence in our ability and our achievement, that too was bred of an unique, first-hand experience of the clashing of a highly advanced with an ancient but very primitive civilization.

Hugh Clifford.
A PRINCE OF MALAYA

Part One
"DIVE? I should think so!" said his host to Jack Norris. "You just watch the little beggar dive!"

It was early morning, and the two men were stripping for a swim on board one of the big house-boats which lie eternally at their moorings on the right bank of the river near Thames Ditton. The place was littered with sweaters, towels, flannels, boat cushions, books, newspapers, pipes, and the varied accumulations of rubbish such as only a house-boat full of bachelors can collect when it lacks even the feminine influence of a char­woman. Without, seen through the wide oblong win­dows, the tawny waters ran cool and inviting under the glad sunshine of a bright summer morning. From a spring-board rigged in the bows men from time to time took running headers; in the middle of the narrow fairway five or six heads were bobbing, while arms and legs in number to correspond splashed gallantly. The cheery clamor of the bathers carried far over the water.

Presently another head broke through the surface of the river some twenty yards upstream—a head to which the wet hair clung sleek and black as the fur of an otter—and from it came a cry of defiance, the tone of which was somehow strangely familiar as it smote upon Jack Norris’s ears. The swimmers answered the chal­lenge with discordant chorus, and began to splash up against the current, with straining arms and legs, in the direction of the man who had uttered it. The latter waited until his pursuers had nearly surrounded him, were almost upon him, and then dived neatly,
leaving barely so much as a ripple behind him. Two or
three men went down headlong in pursuit, to reappear
in a minute or so, baffled and panting. A moment later,
first one and then another were drawn under, with
gurgles and splutterings of protest, by an invisible hand
that had gripped them by the heels. With renewed
splutterings each in turn came to the surface, laughing
and shouting, breathing forth threats of instant retribu-
tion. Dashing the water from their eyes, they looked
around, vainly seeking for some sign of their antag-
onist’s whereabouts, calling upon him by name the
while with humorous mock-wrath.

“Sally!” they cried. “Sally, you young ruffian! Sally!
Sally! Sally, you villain! We’ll pay you out
properly when we catch you!”

Again the head, with its close covering of straight
limp hair, came to the surface, far down river this time,
and well out of the reach of its pursuers. Again that
queer challenging cry came from it, and set Norris
tingling with old memories suddenly awakened.

“Why, he is a Malay!” he exclaimed. “No one but
a Malay ever used that lilting whoop. It is the sôrak
—their war-cry!”

“Of course he is a Malay,” said the part owner of the
house-boat. “He is Sally, you know—a Malay boss of
sorts. We all knew him when we were at Winchester.
He is being educated in England privately, not at the
school; but he is an awfully decent little chap, and was
very pally with a lot of us.”

Jack Norris stepped out on to the bows, and stood
for a minute in his bathing-pants, looking across the
river. The Englishmen had abandoned the hopeless
chase, and the little Malay was swimming back to them,
breasting the current with the unmistakable long over-