

G. A. Henty



*Tales from
the Works
of G. A. Henty*

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George Alfred Henty, war correspondent and author, was born at Trumpington, near Cambridge, on December 8, 1832. He was educated at Westminster School and Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Leaving Cambridge without a degree, he went to the Crimea during the war with Russia and served in the purveyor's department of the army. On being invalided home he was appointed purveyor to the forces, and in 1859 he went to Italy to organize the hospitals of the Italian legion. After his return he held similar home appointments for a time, but he resigned his commission later and engaged in mining operations in Wales and Sardinia. In 1865 he began his career as war correspondent for the *Standard* newspaper, and in this capacity went through the Austro-Italian, Abyssinian, Franco-German, Ashanti, and Turco-Servian campaigns. He was also in Paris during the Commune, and he accompanied Edward VII when, as Prince of Wales, he visited India. He described two of these campaigns in *The March to Magdala* (1868) and *The March to Coomassie* (1874). His death took place on his yacht in Weymouth harbour on November 16, 1902.

Henty wrote several novels of the orthodox type, but his reputation rests upon his stories for boys, which are full of adventure and are mostly based on famous historical events. Among them are: * Out on the Pampas* (1868); *The Young Franc-Tireurs* (1871), a Story of the Franco-German

War; *The Young Buglers*, a Tale of the Peninsular War (1879); *In Times of Peril*, a Tale of India (1881); *Under Drake's Flag* (1882); *With Clive in India* (1883); *Facing Death* (1883), treating of coal-mining; *The Young Colonists* (1884), a Story of the Transvaal Revolt and the Zulu War; *The Lion of the North* (1885), a Story of Gustavus Adolphus; *St. George for England*: a Tale of Cressy and Poitiers (1885); *In Freedom's Cause*: a Story of Wallace and Bruce (1885); *The Young Carthaginian* (1886), a Story of Hannibal; *With Wolfe in Canada* (1886); *Orange and Green*: a Tale of the Boyne and Limerick (1887); *Bonnie Prince Charlie*: a Tale of Fontenoy and Culloden (1887); *The Cat of Bubastes* (1888), treating of Life in Ancient Egypt; *Captain Bayley's Heir* (1888); *By Pike and Dyke* (1889), a Story of the Dutch War of Independence; *One of the 28th*: a Tale of Waterloo (1889); *Tales of Daring and Danger* (1889); *A Chapter of Adventures* (1890); *By Right of Conquest* (1890), a Story of the Conquest of Mexico; *The Tiger of Mysore* (1895), a Story of Tippoo Sahib; *Through Russian Snows* (1895), a Tale of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow; *The Reign of Terror* (1896); *With Moore at Corunna* (1897); *Both Sides the Border* (1898), a Story of Hotspur and Owen Glendower; *In the Irish Brigade* (1900); *With Roberts to Pretoria* (1902); *With Kitchener in the Soudan* (1903); and *With the Allies to Peking* (1904).

THE MATE'S STORY.

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FROM "THE PLAGUE SHIP."

(By kind permission of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.)

[Mr. Thompson, at one time second mate of the whaling ship *The Two Brothers*, was telling his three nieces the story of his last voyage in that ship. At Singapore, on her way home from the South Seas, she had taken on board, as passengers, a Mr. Williams and his wife and daughter. Mr. Williams had been working for twenty years among the Papuans as missionary. On the homeward voyage they had been blown down by a hurricane among the Malay Islands, and had been attacked by the Malays, but had beaten them off. Having told the story of that engagement, Mr. Thompson went on—]

The breeze for the next ten days was steady and favourable. We were fairly on our way now, and began to hope that our ill-luck was at an end, and that we were going to make a fast and comfortable homeward run. Ten days after we had left the island the look-out reported a sail. We were taking a slight breeze along with us, and we came up fast to the ship, which was lying becalmed.

"What can she be doing, Mr. Wilson?" the captain said. "She has got nothing above her topsails, although she must see that we are bringing down a breeze with us."

"Can't make her out, sir," Mr. Wilson replied. He fetched a glass from the companion and raised it to his eye. "Her ensign's reversed, sir," he exclaimed. "She is in distress somehow."

We bore down to her, and the skipper threw the barque up into the wind within a hundred yards of her. Till we got close we could not see a soul on deck, but now a head appeared above the bulwark.

"What's the matter with you?" the captain shouted.

"We have got fever on board. The captain and both mates are dead. There are only seven of us left alive, and two of them have got it. For God's sake help us!"

The men had shown themselves brave enough in their fight with the Malays, but standing as they were by the bulwark, watching the strange ship, there wasn't one but shrank back when he heard that hail. And well they might, for when the Indian fever gets on board a ship there is no saying what may come of it. There were white faces on the poop too, and I reckon that there wasn't one of us who didn't feel a cold thrill run through him.

"What's to be done?" the captain said in a low voice, more as if he was asking the question of himself than us.

At first no one spoke, and then Mr. Williams said:

"Our duty is clear. God has sent us here to their aid, and whatever be the risk, we must run it; we cannot sail away and leave them to perish."

"It is a terrible choice to have to make," the captain said huskily. "I am responsible for the lives of all on board this ship, passengers and crew. I know what these fevers are; they go right through a ship. There are but seven men alive now on yonder vessel; another day or two there may not be one. If we have dealings with them, their fate may be ours."

"We are all in God's hands," the clergyman said quietly. "I have over and over again risked the lives of my dear ones in

His service, and I am ready to do so again. You agree with me," he said, turning to his wife and daughter, "that, however great the danger, it is our duty to aid these poor creatures?"

Mrs. Williams glanced piteously at her daughter, and her lip quivered, but she bowed her head in assent, while Jane exclaimed:

"Of course, father; who could hesitate for a moment?"

THE MATE'S STORY.—II.

The skipper looked at the rest of us. Not one of us but would rather have met a score of prahus, crowded with Malays thirsting for our blood, than have boarded that ship; but after Jane Williams had spoken not one but was ashamed to say what he thought. At last, seeing none of the others would speak, I answered:

"If the ladies are ready to take the risk, sir, it is not for us men to draw back. As Mr. Williams says, we are all in God's hands, so let us do our duty."

"So be it," the captain said solemnly; and turning to the men, who were clustered in the waist, he ordered a boat to be lowered.

There was a general shout of "No! no! It will be throwing away our lives!"

Then an old sailor came forward.

"My mates have asked me, captain, to speak for them, and say that they are of one mind that it will be just throwing away our lives to board that ship. We are ready to obey you, Captain Peters, to do our duty like men in storm or calm, but we won't have the plague brought on board this ship."

There was a general chorus of assent, and some of the men sprang to the braces, and prepared to haul the yards aft and put her on her course again. We looked at the captain for orders. There were but three of us, for the trader and the parson couldn't be reckoned upon in a fight against the crew, and the passenger mate was still laid up with his leg.

"Men," the skipper said, "remember that there are seven sailors like yourselves on board that ship who must die if you don't go to their rescue. Think what your feelings would be if you were in their case, and a ship came up within hailing distance, and sailed away and left you to die."

"It comes to this, sir," the spokesman said. "Like enough they will die anyhow, whether they stop there or whether they come on board. It ain't a case of saving their lives, for maybe they wouldn't be saved after all; we should be just throwing away our lives for nothing."

Maybe the skipper was somewhat of the same opinion. Anyhow there was no good trying to use force, for they were eight to one against us. He half turned round, and wouldn't, I think, have said any more, when Jane Williams stepped forward to the poop rail.

"Men," she said, "my father has told me so much of English sailors, how brave they are, how ready to risk their

lives for others, that I cannot think you really mean to sail away and desert these poor people. We are ready, my father, mother, and I, to run the risk; surely you will do the same."

The men stood silent a minute, and then, one after another, turned away, as if they could not stand her pleading face. But I could see that they were still determined not to risk having the plague on board. The sailor said a word or two to his mates and then turned to her.

THE MATE'S STORY.—III.

"There is not a man of this crew, Miss," he said, "but would do anything for you. Not one but would risk his life for you in a right-down manful fight. But we are not ready to die like dogs, and that when maybe no good whatever would come of it; and we don't hold that, just on the chance of saving seven lives, we are called upon to risk losing thirty."

Jane turned round with a different expression on her face. I never saw any one look like it, and never shall again; but it seemed to me that her face all shone, and she said:

"Then, father, we at least can do our duty, and our place is there."

Her father understood her.

"You are right, Jane, quite right, my child. Captain, will you give us one of the boats? I and my wife and daughter

will go on board that ship. Will you leave our things at the Cape when you touch there, for us to pick up, if it is God's will we ever reach the land?"

The captain stood like one dumb; then I said: "Captain Peters, as it seems that there are no officers on board the ship, I will, if you will give me permission, go on board her also and take charge."

"Very well, Mr. Thompson; if such is your wish I shall certainly not oppose it, and I honour you for the proposal."

"Can you spare me four men, sir, if I can get them to volunteer?"

The captain nodded, and I turned to the men.

"My lads," I said, "Mr. Williams, his wife and daughter, are going on board that ship; they are going to leave *The Two Brothers* for good, and to throw in their lot with those poor wretches there. With the captain's permission I am going to take command of her, and I want four volunteers to go with me. I want no men with wives and children dependent upon them, for we shall be taking our lives in our hands. I want four men who have no one to grieve for them at home if they die in doing their duty. I want four true English hearts who will imitate the example set them by these ladies."

Eight of the men stepped forward at once. Sailors are curious creatures. There wasn't one of them but had shrunk from the idea, of the introduction of fever on board *The Two Brothers*; but to go on board the pest-stricken vessel was an act of heroism which they were ready to perform. Besides, though they had refused to respond to the appeal of Jane Williams, and had held together as a body, there was not one of them who did not at heart feel ashamed at being

beaten in courage by a girl. The eight men who stepped forward were, I believe, the only unmarried men among the crew, and I believe that had I asked them there wasn't a man but would have gone.

I chose four of them, and in a few minutes they had got their kits out of the fo'castle and placed them in one of the boats. The steward brought the boxes from the passengers' cabin, and the captain ordered a barrel of vinegar and a keg of powder to be hoisted into the boat. Just as the men were getting ready to lower her from the davits, the sailor who had acted as spokesman came forward.

"Captain Peters, the men wants me to say as they have changed their minds and are ready to go off and bring those men on board. It isn't in nature for men to stand by and see themselves beaten by two women."

We had a short consultation, but Mr. Williams pointed out that the plan arranged was the best, as only those who went on board the ship were running a risk; while if the men were brought on board *The Two Brothers* the whole crew might be carried off.

"Thank you, men, for your offer," he said to them, when we had talked it over; "but the other plan is clearly the best, and I ask each and all of you to offer up a prayer to Almighty God that He will protect us in this work which we undertake for His sake."

The clergyman uncovered, as did every man on board, and you could have heard a pin drop as he prayed. Then those who were to go took their places in the boat, and as the skipper handed in the ladies, every man stood bareheaded. Not a word was said. I don't think any one

could have trusted himself to speak. I gave the word, the boat was lowered, and the falls unhooked.

"God bless you all!" the captain said in a broken voice.

There was a sort of murmur from the rest, and I don't believe there was a dry eye on the ship as we rowed away.

THE MATE'S STORY.—IV.

"Now, lads," I said as we got near the vessel, "you must remember that the best preservative against the fever is to keep up your spirits. You must make up your minds that you have come on board to fight it, and you don't mean to be beaten, and with God's help and protection I think that we shall win the day. You were all cheery and confident when those Malays were coming on to attack us; we must fight the fever in just the same spirit."

A rope was thrown as we came alongside, and I mounted on to the deck; just as I did so there came a cheer from *The Two Brothers*. It was a strange sort of cheer, but we understood that while our messmates wanted to say good-bye to us, their voices were too much choked to come out clear and strong.

"Give them a cheer back, lads," I said; and though there were only six men, the shout we gave was a deal louder and heartier than that of the whole crew of *The Two Brothers*; the ladies waved their handkerchiefs. Then we heard the skipper's voice across the water giving orders; the yards

swung round, and *The Two Brothers* began to slip through the water again on her course. Then I jumped down from the rail on to the deck of the vessel. Four men were standing there. They looked ghastly and shrunken, as if they had scarce strength enough to haul at a rope.

"Now, my lads," I said, "I have been sent on board to take the command here. I have four hands with me, and two ladies and a clergyman have been brave enough to come to nurse and help you. Where are the others?"

"The two who are down with the fever are in their bunks; the other man is seeing after them."

"Are there any dead on board?"

"Yes; the captain and first mate are lying dead aft. One died yesterday, the other two days ago. There are two or three forward. It seemed no use to bury them."

The tone in which the man spoke showed how thoroughly he had lost heart.

"Well, my lads," I said, "now you have got to bestir yourselves. I shall not let my men come on board till the ship's cleared of dead. After that they will come and make things tidy and shipshape. Just fetch up an old sail and some needles; get some shot out of the rack. First of all I will give you each some quinine."

Two bottles were handed me up from the boat, and then I cast off the rope.

"Drop behind a hundred yards or so," I said to the men, "and don't come up until I hail you."

The thought that help was at hand cheered up the five sailors, and they set about the work with a will. One of them happened to be the sail-maker, and when the others

brought up the bodies from the cabin he sewed them up roughly in canvas, with a couple of shot at their feet. As fast as they were done up we hove them overboard. In an hour it was finished. Then I hailed the boat, and when it came up told the men to come on deck.

"Mr. Williams," I said, "I shall let you tow behind for a bit until I have got things pretty straight."

Then we set to work in earnest. I flashed off a lot of gunpowder in the cabins and fo'castle, and then sluiced everything with vinegar and water. We washed down the floors and decks and everything we could get at. Then, when we had done everything we could to get the ship sweet, we hauled the boat alongside, got our passengers up, hoisted up the boat, squared our sails, and laid her head on her course.

THE MATE'S STORY.—V.

We rigged up a sort of awning, and brought the two sick men out of the fo'castle, and slung cots for them under it, and the two ladies at once took charge of them. Then we set to work to get up a little tent for the ladies on the poop. We rigged an awning over the fo'castle for the rest of us, for I thought it better that no one should sleep below.

That night one of the sick men died, but the next day the other showed signs of mending. This was hopeful, for not one of those who had caught the fever before had