



THE MALAY KRISE

BY C. ASHTON SMITH

SAHIB," said the sword-dealer, "this blade, which came from far Singapore, has not its equal for sharpness in all Delhi."

He handed me the blade for inspection. It was a long kris, or Malay knife, with a curious boat-shaped hilt, and, as he had said, was very keen.

"I bought it of Sidi Hassen, a Singapore dealer into whose possession it came at the sale of Sultan Sujah Ali's weapons and effects after the Sultan's capture by the British. Hast heard the tale, sahib? No? It runs thus:

"Sujah Ali was the younger son of a great Sultan. There being little chance of his ever coming to the throne, he left his father's dominions, and becoming a pirate, set out to carve for himself a name and an empire. Though having at first but a few *prahus* (boats) and less than a hundred men, he made up this lack by his qualities of leadership, which brought him many victories, much plunder and considerable renown. His fame caused many men to join him, and his booty enabled him to build more *prahus*. Adding continually to his fleets, he soon swept the rivers of

the Peninsula, and then began to venture upon the sea. In a few years his ships were held in fear and respect by every Dutch merchantman or Chinese junk whose sails loomed above the waters of the China sea. Inland he began to overrun the dominions of the other Sultans, conquering, amongst others, that of his elder brother, who had succeeded to his father's throne. Sujah Ali's fame reached far, and its shadow lay upon many peoples.

"Then the English came to the Peninsula and built Singapore. Sujah Ali despatched ships to prey upon their vessels, many of whom he succeeded in capturing. The English sent big ships after him, bearing many heavy guns and many armed men.

The Sultan went to meet them in person, with the greater part of his fleet. It was a disastrous day for him. When the red sun sank into the sea, fully fifty of his best *prahus*, and thousands of his men, amongst whom he mourned several of his most noted captains, lay beneath the waters. He fled inland with the shattered remnant of his fleet.

"The British resolved to crush him decisively, sent boats up the rivers, and in numerous hard-fought battles they sunk most of Sujah Ali's remaining *prahus*, and cleared land and water of the infesting pirates. The Sultan himself, however, they sought in vain. He had fled to a well-nigh inaccessible hiding-place—a small village deep in a network of creeks, swamps, and jungle-covered islands. Here he remained with a few fighting-men while the English hunted unsuccessfully for the narrow, winding entrances.

"Amina, his favorite wife, was among those who had accompanied him to this refuge. She was passionately attached to the Sultan, and, although such was his

wish, had positively refused to be left behind.

"There was a beautiful girl in the village, with whom Sujah Ali became infatuated. He finally married her, and she exercised so great an influence over him that Amina, who had hitherto considered herself first in her husband's estimation, grew jealous. As time passed, and she perceived more clearly how complete was his infatuation, her jealousy grew more intense and violent, and at last prompted her to leave the village secretly one night, and to go to the captain of a British vessel which had been cruising up and down the river for weeks. To this man, one Rankling Sahib, she revealed the secret of Sujah Ali's hiding place. In thus betraying him, her desire was probably more for revenge upon her rival than upon the Sultan.

"Rankling Sahib, guided by Amina, passed at midnight through the network of creeks and jungles. He landed his crew and entered the village. The Malays, taken completely by surprise, offered little or no resistance. Many awoke only to find themselves confronted by loaded rifles, and surrendered without opposition.

"Sujah Ali, who had lain awake all evening wondering as to the cause of Amina's absence, rushed out of his hut with half a score of his men, and made a futile attempt at escape. A desperate fight ensued, in which he used his kris, the same that thou seest, with deadly effect. Two of the English he stretched dead, and a third he wounded severely.

"Rankling Sahib had given orders that the Sultan be taken alive, if possible. Finally, wounded, weary and surrounded by his foes on all sides, the Sultan was made prisoner. And the next morning was taken down river to Singapore."

This is the kris you see on the wall.

