



ON THE IRRAWADDY

G.A. Henty

On the Irrawaddy, A Story of the First Burmese War
by G. A. Henty (1832-1902)

“With the exception of the terrible retreat from Afghanistan, none of England’s many little wars have been so fatal—in proportion to the number of those engaged—as our first expedition to Burma. It was undertaken without any due comprehension of the difficulties to be encountered, from the effects of climate and the deficiency of transport; the power, and still more the obstinacy and arrogance of the court of Ava were altogether underrated; and it was considered that our possession of her ports would assuredly bring the enemy, who had wantonly forced the struggle upon us, to submission. Events, however, proved the completeness of the error. The Burman policy of carrying off every boat on the river, laying waste the whole country, and driving away the inhabitants and the herds, maintained our army as prisoners in Rangoon through the first wet season; and caused the loss of half the white officers and men first sent there. The subsequent campaign was no less fatal and, although large reinforcements had been sent, fifty percent of the whole died; so that less than two thousand fighting men remained in the ranks, when the expedition arrived within a short distance of Ava. Not until the last Burmese army had been scattered did the court of Ava submit to the by no means onerous terms we imposed.
(from the preface)

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