THE FURTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

SIR HUGH CLIFFORD





THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®



Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized for Microsoft Corporation
by the Internet Archive in 2007.
From University of California Libraries.
May be used for non-commercial, personal, research,
or educational purposes, or any fair use.
May not be indexed in a commercial service.

40

THE FURTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Malayan Monochromes

The Downfall of the Gods

Further India

Studies in Brown Humanity

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The Further Side of Silence

By
Sir Hugh Clifford, K. C. M. G.



Garden City, New York, Toronto
Doubleday, Page & Company
1922

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Copyright, 1916, 1922, by
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

All rights reserved, including that of translation into foreign languages, including the Scandinavian

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES
AT
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

College
Library
PR
6005
C609f
1922

TO MY WIFE

Je vois bien vos mains
Fermées au mal, ouvertes au bien,
Vos mains puissantes et douces
Comme une branche sous la mousse.

Je vois bien vos mains,
Vos mains fidèles,
Qui me montrent le chemin,
Mais je ne vois pas vos ailes.

Christiansborg Castle
Gold Coast, May 10, 1916

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®
1164020

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

PREFACE

NOBODY, I am assured, ever reads a preface. I consider, therefore, that I may safely regard this foreword as a confidential document, written for the sole purpose of salving my own sensitive conscience. From this point of view I regard it as necessary, for it seems to me that the imposture involved in issuing as a work of fiction a volume which is in the main a record of fact, should be frankly confessed from the outset. A knowledge of the truth that these initial pages will remain to some extent a secret between me, the proofreader, and the printer, will enable me, however, to write of personal things with a larger measure of freedom than I should otherwise be bold enough to use.

The stories composing this book, with a single exception—"The Ghoul," which reached me at second hand—are all relations of incidents in which I have had a part, or in which the principal actors have been familiarly known to me. They faithfully reproduce conditions of life as they existed in the Malayan Peninsula before the white men took a hand in the government of the native states, or immediately after our coming—things as I knew them between 1883 and 1903—the twenty years that I passed in that most beautiful and at one time little frequented

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

corner of Asia. They are written with a full appreciation of the native point of view, and of a people for whom I entertain much affection and sympathy. Incidentally, however, they will perhaps help to explain why British civil servants in the East occasionally lay themselves open to the charge of being animated by "a hungry acquisitiveness" and a passion for annexing the territory of their native neighbours.

Fate and a rather courageous Colonial Governor ordained that I should be sent on a special mission to the Sultan of Pahang—a large Malayan state on the eastern seaboard of the Peninsula—before I was quite one and twenty years of age. This course was not, at the time, as reckless and desperate as it sounds. I had already more than three years' service and had acquired what was reckoned an unusual acquaintance with the vernacular. The mission would entail a long overland journey and an absence of more than three months' duration. Senior men who possessed the necessary qualifications could not be spared for so protracted a period, and thus the choice fell upon me, to my very great content.

My object was to obtain from the Sultan the promise of a treaty surrendering the management of his foreign relations to the British Government, and accepting the appointment of a Political Agent at his court. This I obtained and bore in triumph to Singapore, whence I immediately returned to negotiate the details of the treaty, and subsequently

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

to reside at the Sultan's court as the Agent in question.

This meant that I was privileged to live for nearly two years in complete isolation among the Malays in a native state which was annually cut off from the outside world from October to March by the fury of the northeast monsoon; that this befell me at perhaps the most impressionable period of my life; that having already acquired considerable familiarity with the people, their ideas and their language, I was afforded an unusual opportunity of completing and perfecting my knowledge; and that circumstances compelled me to live in a native hut, on native food, and in native fashion, in the company of a couple of dozen Malays—friends of mine, from the western side of the Peninsula, who had elected to follow my fortunes. Rarely seeing a white face or speaking a word of my own tongue, it thus fell to my lot to be admitted to *les coulisses* of life in a native state, as it was before the influence of Europeans had tampered with its eccentricities.

Pahang, when I entered it in 1887, presented an almost exact counterpart to the feudal kingdoms of mediæval Europe. I saw it pass under the "protection" of Great Britain, which in this case was barely distinguishable from "annexation." I subsequently spent a year or so fighting in dense forests to make that protection a permanency, for some of the chiefs resented our encroachment upon their prerogatives; and when I quitted the land a decade and a half later, it was as safe and al-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

most as peaceful and orderly as an English countryside.

Thus at a preposterously early age I was the principal instrument in adding 15,000 square miles of territory to the British dependencies in the East; and this fact forces me to the conclusion that my share in the business stands in need of some explanation and defence, if readers who are not themselves Britishers are to be persuaded that I am not merely a thief upon a rather large scale. The stories and sketches contained in this book supply me with both. I, who write, have with my own eyes seen the Malayan prison; have lived at a Malayan court; have shared the life of the people of all ranks and classes in their towns and villages, in their rice-fields, on their rivers, and in the magnificent forests which cover the face of their country. I have travelled with them on foot, by boats, and raft. I have fought with and against them. I have camped with the downtrodden aboriginal tribes of jungle-dwelling Sâkai and Sĕmang, and have heard from their own lips the tales of their miseries. I have watched at close quarters, and in intolerable impotency to aid or save, the lives which all these people lived before the white men came to defend their weakness against the oppression and the wrong wrought to them by tyrants of their own race; and I have seen them gradually emerge from the dark shadow in which their days were passed, into the daylight of a personal freedom such as white men prize above most mundane things.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a recent British Prime Minister, once gave vent to the aphorism that "good government can never be a satisfactory substitute for self-government." That may or may not be true; but the Malays, be it remembered, never possessed "self-government." The rule of their *râjas* and chiefs was one of the most absolute and cynical autocracies that the mind of man has conceived; and the people living under it were mercilessly exploited, and possessed no rights either of person or of property. To their case, therefore, the phrase quoted above has only the most remote and academical application; but no words or sentiments, no matter how generous or beautiful, would avail to staunch the blood which I saw flow, or to dry the tears which I saw shed in Pahang when I lived in that native state under its own administration.

If, then, my stories move you at all, and if they inspire in you any measure of pity or of desire to see the weak protected and their wrongs avenged, you may judge how passionate was the determination to make the recurrence of such things impossible whereby I and my fellow workers in Malaya were inspired. For we, alas, lived in the midst of the happenings of which you only read.

HUGH CLIFFORD,

Government House,
The Gold Coast,
British West Africa.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

CONTENTS

		PAGE
Preface		vii
I.	The Further Side of Silence	3
II.	The Were-tiger	40
III.	The Experiences of Râja Haji Hamid	56
IV.	*Droit Du Seigneur*	65
V.	In the Valley of the Tĕlom	77
VI.	The Inner Apartment	103
VII.	The Ghoul	115
VIII.	A Malayan Prison	135
IX.	He of the Hairy Face	148
X.	The Flight of Chêp, the Bird	166
XI.	A Daughter of the Muhammadans	187
XII.	The Lone-hand Raid of Kûlop Sûmbing	215
XIII.	The Flight of the Jungle-folk	244
XIV.	One Who Had Eaten My Rice	272
XV.	At a Malayan Court	299
XVI.	The Âmok of Dâto' Kâja Bîji Dĕrja	319
XVII.	A Malayan Actor-manager	341
XVIII.	Tûkang Bûrok's Story	358
XIX.	In Chains	375
	L'Envoi	406

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

SIR HUGH CLIFFORD

By RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

THOUGH these powerful and beautiful stories have already reached a wide audience, they deserve a wider, and readers to whom they are still unknown are missing an imaginative pleasure such as can be found in no other writers of my acquaintance except Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Joseph Conrad, with whom, because of his subject-matter, it is natural to class Sir Hugh Clifford; as I see James Huneker has done before me. So far as treatment is concerned, however, Sir Hugh Clifford owes nothing to those writers. His method is his own and his experience, out of which his stories, as he tells us, have sprung, is perhaps even more his own than theirs. For, with the one exception of "The Ghoul"—as Sir Hugh Clifford tells us in his own preface, itself a thrilling document—these stories are veritable stuff of his own life as a British Government official. He has seen these happenings with his own eyes, and known the actors in them. To have done that, when little more than a boy, is a romance in itself, one of those romantic opportunities which more than once have repaid the servants of the "far-flung" British Empire for the hazards

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and the ennui of a service, the loyalty and efficiency of which have made that empire. Thus, as Sir Hugh Clifford himself laughingly observes, "at a preposterously early age," he was "the principal instrument in adding 15,000 square miles of territory to the British dependencies in the East;" while incidentally, as has so often happened in England's "island story," finding himself, in the interval of his governmental occupations, as a literary artist. A book might well be written of governors, cavalry officers, and civil servants, of his Britannic Majesty, who have thus light-heartedly won distinction, by amusing themselves with their pens in the exile of their lonely out-posts, doing the thing only for fun, regarding themselves merely as amateurs, and discovering their gifts by chance. Far from amateurs indeed they have often proved, but on the contrary lineal descendants of those "complete" men and gentlemen of old time, to whom the sword and the pen came alike naturally, such as was, to name but one, that Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, who wrote at sea, while commanding the British fleet, one of the most fascinating sea-songs in the language—

> To all you ladies now at land
> We men at sea indite.

One would like to be introduced to the "professional writer" who could write a love-story stranger and more beautiful with such a poignant heart-break in it, and with so magical a setting, as that

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

which gives the title to this volume—"The Further Side of Silence." Mr. W. H. Hudson himself in "Green Mansions" has not given us a lovelier "belle sauvage" than Pi-Noi as she first blossoms on the eyes of her future lover, Kria, from the primeval forest, while he paddles up the Tĕlom River one fateful day:

"A clear, bell-like call thrilled from out the first, so close at hand that the surprise of it made Kria jump and nearly drop his paddle; and then came a ripple of words, like little drops of crystal, which made even the rude Sâkai tongue a thing of music, freshness, and youth. Next the shrubs on the bank were parted by human hands, and Pi-Noi—Breeze of the Forest—emerging suddenly, stepped straightway into Kria's life and into the innermost heart of him."

The story is here for the reader to enjoy and study for himself, for it is worth studying as well as enjoying for the subtle, modulated treatment of the wild soul of little Pi-Noi, for whom the creatures of the forest and the forest itself are more her comrades and intimates than any human beings, and whose necessity to play truant with them at intervals even from her lover makes so piteous a tragedy.

One other observation suggests itself—how the "civilizing" work on which Sir Hugh Clifford was engaged inevitably destroys the romance which he thus perpetuates; for alas! that romance can only live so long as the superstition and cruelty which it was the British Commissioner's business to

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

up-root survive in their native dramatic combinations. With the abolition of such tyrants as we read of in "Droit du Seigneur," the Malay Peninsula becomes, to use Sir Hugh Clifford's own words, "as safe and almost as peaceful and orderly as an English countryside." But the trouble with making the world safe for democracy and other things is that it makes it entirely unsafe for Romance. Sir Hugh Clifford did his governmental work so well in Pahang that probably if he returned there to-day he would find no stories to write!

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE FURTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE FURTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

I

SOME years before the impassive British Government came to disturb the peace of primitive nature and to put an end to the strife of primitive man, Kria, son of Mat, a young Malay from one of the western states, sneaked up into the Tĕlom and established himself as a trader on its banks well within the fringe of the Sâkai country.

Aided by a few Sâkai—feeble and timid jungle-folk, the aboriginal possessors of the Peninsula—but mainly with his own hands, he built himself a house with walls of thick, brown bark, raised to a height of some six feet above the ground on stout, rough-hewn uprights, and securely thatched with bĕrtam palm leaves. It was a rude enough affair, as Malay houses go, but compared with the primitive and lopsided architecture of the Sâkai it was palatial. The fact that this stranger had planned and built such a mansion impressed the fact of his innate racial superiority upon the jungle-dwellers once and for all. Here, they saw, was Genius, no less; though their language (which among other things has only three numerals and as many names for colours) contained no word even remotely conveying any such

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

idea. The mere fact that their poor vocabulary was straightway beggared by the effort to express their admiration, left them mentally gasping; wherefore Kria, son of Mat, a very ordinary young Malay, endowed, as it chanced, with few of the forceful qualities of his race, found himself of a sudden an object of almost superstitious hero-worship.

Kria presently made the discovery anent solitude which is attributed to Adam. He was a Malay and a Muhammadan, to whom the naked, pantheistical Sâkai is a dog of indescribable uncleanliness. Thirty miles down river there was a Malay village where many maidens of his own breed were to be had, almost for the asking, from their grateful parents by a man so well-to-do as Kria had now become; but these ladies were hard-bit, ill-favoured young women, prematurely gnarled by labour in the rice-fields and tanned to the colour of the bottom of a cooking-pot by exposure to sun and weather. Ordinarily, however, the aggressive plainness of these damsels might not have affected the issue; but it chanced that the particular devil whose province it is to look after *mésalliances* was as busy here in this hidden nook of the forest as ever he is in Mayfair. It was surely by his contrivance that Kria, Malay and Muhammadan that he was, fixed his heart upon a Sâkai girl—herself the daughter of Sâkai, nude, barbarous, and disreputable—and the blame may with greater certainty be allotted to him, because Kria's first meeting with her was in no sense of his seeking.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

He had come up the Tĕlom one day from his new house in a dugout imported from down-country, whose finish converted it, in the eyes of his neighbours, into a floating miracle. Kria sat lordly in the stern, steering the little craft with a heavy wooden paddle, while two sweating and straining Sâkai punted her forward against the rush of the current. He wore the loose blouse, serviceable short pants, huddled, many-coloured waistcloth, and the variegated cotton headkerchief which constitute the costume of the average up-country Malay; but judged by debased, local standards, Solomon in all his glory could hardly be held to owe a heavier debt of gratitude to his tailor. The two men who worked his boat, for example, wore nothing save a dirty strip of bark cloth twisted carelessly about their loins, more, it would appear, for the advantage of having about the person something into which to stick a woodknife, or a tobacco-bamboo, than to subserve any end connected with propriety. Their bodies were scaly with leprous-looking skin disease, and the shaggy shocks of their hair stood out around their heads in regrettable halos. They were smeared with the gray dust of wood ashes, for it is the manner of these hill-folk to go to bed in their fireplaces, whereof the smoke, as their own proverb has it, is their coverlet. This, on their lips, is not a complaint, but a boast. Standards of comfort differ widely, and the Sâkai, simple soul, is genuinely impressed by the extraordinary convenience of thus being able to keep warm o' nights.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Suddenly, as the canoe crept round a bend in the bank, something plunged headlong out of the shadows and dived into the forest on the left. It leaped with a speed so startling, and was swallowed up so instantly, that it was gone before Kria had time even to reach for his musket; but the Sâkai boatmen, who, like the rest of their people, had the gift of sight through the back of their heads, at once set up a succession of queer animal calls and cries which spluttered off presently into the hiccoughing monosyllables which serve these folk as speech. A moment later a clear, bell-like call thrilled from out the forest, so close at hand that the surprise of it made Kria jump and nearly drop his paddle; and then came a ripple of words, like little drops of crystal, which made even the rude Sâkai tongue a thing of music, freshness, and youth. Next the shrubs on the bank were parted by human hands, and Pi-Noi—Breeze of the Forest—emerging suddenly, stepped straightway into Kria's life and into the innermost heart of him.

She was a Sâkai girl of about fifteen years of age, naked save for a girdle of dried, black water weed, a string of red berries round her neck, and a scarlet blossom stuck in her hair. She stood there, poised lightly upon her feet, in the agile pose which enables the jungle-folk instantly to convert absolute immobility into a wondrous activity. Her figure, just budding into womanhood, was perfect in every line, from the slender neck to the rounded hips, the cleanly shaped limbs and the small, delicate feet,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the whole displayed with a divine unconsciousness which is above mere modesty.

Her skin, smooth as velvet and with much the same downy softness of surface, was an even yellow-brown, without fleck or blemish, and upon it diamond points of water glistened in the sunlight. Her black and glossy hair was twisted carelessly into a magnificent knot at the nape of her neck, little rounded curls straying here and there to soften cheek and forehead. Her face, an oval of great purity, glowed with youth and life. Her lips had something of the pretty pout of childhood. Her chin was firmly modelled; her nose was straight, with nostrils rather wide, quivering, and sensitive; her little ears nestled beneath the glory of her hair.

But it was the eyes of this child which chiefly seized and held the attention. Marvellously large and round, they were black as night, with irises set in whites that had a faint blue tinge, and with well-defined, black eyebrows arching above them. Their expression was one rarely seen in the human face, though it may be noted now and again in the eyes of wild creatures which have learned to know and partially to trust mankind. It was at once shy and bold, inviting and defiant; friendly, too, within limits; but, above all, watchful and on the alert for flight or for defence at the least hint of danger. Her gaze was bent upon Kria, and it seemed to him the most alluring thing that he had ever seen. As he looked, he caught his breath with an audible gasp of astonishment and delight.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Love at first sight is a disease very prevalent in Asia, for with the Oriental the lust of the eye is ever the mightiest of forces, and the sorry pretence that the mind rules the passions is not recognized by him as a tenet subscription to which is demanded by self-respect. The Malays name it "*the* madness," and by this Kria now was smitten, suddenly and without warning, as men sometimes are stricken down by the stroke of a vertical sun. Pi-Noi might be a daughter of the despised jungle-folk, an infidel, an eater of unclean things, a creature of the forest almost as wild as the beasts with which she shared a common home; but to Kria she was what the first woman was to the first man. She was more. Standing thus upon the river's brink, with her feet in the crystal ripples, with the tangle of vegetation making for her lithe figure a wondrous background, with the sunlight playing in and out of the swaying, green canopy above her head and dappling her clear skin with shifting splashes of brightness and shadow, she symbolized for him the eternal triumph of her sex—the tyrannous, unsought power of woman.

Pi-Noi, after looking curiously at the Malay, spoke to her countrymen in their own language, and Kria, who had acquired a working knowledge of the primitive jungle jargon, answered her himself:

"We are going up-stream to Chĕ-ba' Pĕr-lau-i. The boat is large and your little body will not sink it. We will bear you with us. Come!"

She looked at him quizzically, and her face was softened by a little ripple of laughter. It was the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

first time that she had heard her native tongue spoken with a foreign accent, and the oddity of the thing amused her. Then she stepped lightly into the canoe and squatted in the bow.

The boat resumed its journey up-river, warring with the current; was tugged and hauled over fallen trees and round threatening ridges of rock; was towed up difficult places by long lines of rattan; was manœuvred inch by inch up rapids, where the waters roared furiously; or glided in obedience to the punters along the smooth, sun-dappled reaches; and all that dreamy afternoon Pi-Noi sat in the bow, her back turned to Kria, her face averted. She was almost motionless, yet to the Malay, whose eyes pursued her, she conveyed an extraordinary impression of being at once absorbed and keenly alert. Nothing that was happening, or that had happened recently in the jungle all about her, was hidden from Pi-Noi, though she seemed barely to move her head, and once she lifted her voice in a thrilling imitation of a bird's call and was answered at once from both sides of the stream. Though she sat consentingly in Kria's boat, he was subtly conscious that she was, in some strange fashion, an integral part of the forest that surrounded them; that she was a stranger to the life of mankind, as he understood it—the life of folk of his own race—who, at best, are only trespassers upon Nature's vast domain. He held his breath fearfully, possessed by the idea that at any moment this girl might vanish whence she had come, and thereafter be lost to him

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

forever. He felt her to be as free as the jungle breeze, whose name she bore, and as little to be held a prisoner by the hand of man. This added at once a dread and a new attraction to her physical beauty. Kria forgot the inherited contempt of the Malay for the Sâkai, the disgust of the Muhammadan for the devourer of unclean things, the conviction of his people that union with a jungle-dweller is an unspeakable abomination. He only remembered that he was a man, hot with love; that she was a woman, elusive and desirable.

II

Kria's brief wooing was purely a commercial transaction, in which Pi-Noi herself was the last person any one dreamed of consulting. The naked jungle-folk who were her papa and mamma developed unsuspected business aptitude at this juncture of their affairs, the number of knife-blades, cooking-pots, rolls of red twill, flints and steels, and the like, which they demanded, maintaining a nice proportion to Kria's growing passion for the girl. As this became hotter day by day, there was little haggling on his part, and presently an amazing sum (from first to last it cannot have fallen far short of fifteen shillings sterling) was paid to Pi-Noi's parents, to their great honour, glory, and satisfaction, and during an unforgettable forenoon the Sâkai of all ages and both sexes gorged themselves to repletion at Kria's expense. Then Pi-Noi was placed upon an ant heap, and a shaggy pack of hiccoughing

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

male relatives girt the place about in attitudes of defence. It was now Kria's task to touch the girl's hand in spite of the resistance of her defenders. This is all that survives among the hill-people of the old-time custom of marriage by capture; and when the bridegroom is one of their own folk it still happens sometimes that he carries a sore and bleeding head and a badly bruised body to his marriage bed. The bride, at such times, darts hither and thither within the ring of her kinsmen, with real or simulated desire to evade her conqueror, till the latter has the luck to touch her hand or to bring her to the ground by a well-aimed blow from his club.

Kria, however, had an unusually easy time of it, for the Sâkai hold all Malays in awe, and Pi-Noi was hampered by the unaccustomed silk garments with which her husband's generosity had clothed her. Very soon, therefore, Kria, his eyes blazing, gave a great cry as he won a grip upon her wrist, and at once Pi-Noi, in obedience to established custom, submitted herself to his control. Hand in hand, the man and wife sped across the clearing in the direction of the river, with a string of hooting, gesticulating, shock-headed, naked savages trailing out behind them. Below the high bank Kria's canoe was moored, and leaping into her, they pushed out into midstream. Then the current caught them; the dugout became suddenly a thing instinct with life; a bend hid the Sâkai camp from view; and, amid the immense, hushed stillness of the forest

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

afternoon, these two set out upon the oldest and newest of all pilgrimages.

With the strong current aiding them, they had only a journey of a few hours to make, a time short enough for any lovers' transit, though Kria was busy steering the boat, and Pi-Noi sat in the bows helping to direct its course by an occasional timely punt. He had won his heart's desire, and the home to which he was bearing his love lay close at hand; yet even during this honeymoon journeying down the clear, rapid-beset river and through the heart of that magnificent wilderness of woodland, Kria had leisure in which to experience the assaults of a mysterious and perplexing jealousy. He was as utterly alone with the girl as if they two were the first or the last of their kind to wander across the face of the earth; yet he had an uneasy consciousness that Pi-Noi had companions, invisible and inaudible to him, in whose presence he knew himself to be *de trop*. In spite of her silence and immobility, he knew instinctively that always she was holding intimate commune with animate nature in a language which had its beginning upon the further side of silence. It was not only a tongue which he could not *hear*. It seemed to cleave an abyss between them; to wrench her from his grasp ere ever he had securely won her; to lift her out of his life; to leave him yearning after her with piteous, imploring face upturned and impotent, outstretched arms.

Suddenly the thought of this girl's elusiveness shook him with a panic that checked his heartbeats.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

She was journeying with him now of her own free will, but what if her will should veer? What if the lures of the jungle should prove too strong for such spells as his poor love and longing could lend him wit to work? What if that cruel wilderness whence she had come should yawn and once more engulf her? As Kria steered the boat with mechanical skill, and, watching the girl with hungry eyes, knew himself to be by her totally forgotten, he experienced with new force and reason the dread which alloys the delight of many a lover even in the supreme moment of possession—the haunting terror of loss. Kria went in fear, not only of Time and Death, those two grim highwaymen who lie in wait for love; there was also the Forest. Every last, least twig of it, every creature that moved unseen beneath its shade, was his enemy, and it was through long files of such foemen that he bore the bride they threatened to ravish from him. And thus—the girl abstracted and aloof, the man a prey to besetting, though as yet vaguely formulated, fears—Kria and Pi-Noi wended their way downstream, through the wonder of the tropical afternoon, to begin in their new home the difficult experiment of married life.

III

Pi-Noi was very much a child, and, childlike, she found delight in new toys. The palatial house which now was hers; the wealth of cooking-pots; the beautiful Malay silks which Kria had given to her; the abundance of good food, and Kria's extrav-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

agant kindness, were all new and very pleasant things. She was playing at being a Malay housewife with all the elaborate make-believe which is a special faculty of the child mind. She would load her small body with gay clothes, clamp ornaments of gold about her wrists, stick long silver pins in her glossy hair, and strut about, laughing rapturously at this new, fantastic game. But throughout she was only mimicking Malayan ways for her own distraction and amusement; she was not seriously attempting to adapt herself to her husband's conception of femininity. She would often cross-question Kria as to the practices of his womenfolk, and would immediately imitate their shining example with a humorous completeness. This pleased him, for he interpreted all this irresponsible child's play as the pathetic efforts of a woman to fulfil the expectations of the man she loves.

The illusion was short lived. Very soon Pi-Noi, the novelty of her new grandeur wearing thin, began to be irked by the tyranny of Malayan garments. All her life she had gone nude, with limbs fetterless as the wings of a bird. For a space the love of personal adornment, which is implanted in the heart of even the most primitive of feminine creatures, did battle with bodily discomfort; but the hour came when ease defeated vanity. Kria, returning home from a short trip upstream, found his wife, who did not expect him, clothed only in her waterweed girdle, lying prone in the sun-baked dust before their dwelling, crooning a strange ditty to

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

herself, and kicking two rebellious bare legs joyously in the air.

He was horribly shocked and outraged; for though a naked Sâkai girl was one of the commonest sights in the valley, this girl was his wife, and he had been hugging to his heart the belief that she was rapidly developing into a decorous Malayan lady. Also his eye, which had become accustomed to see her clad with the elaborate modesty of his own womenkind, saw in her pristine nudity an amazing impropriety. Feeling wrathful and disgraced, he rushed at her and tried to seize her, but she leaped to her feet in the twinkling of an eye and eluded him with forest-bred ease. He brought up short, panting hard, after an inglorious chase; and much petting, coaxing, and pleading were needed before he could lure her back into the house and persuade her to don even one short Malayan waist skirt. He had to fight his every instinct, for he longed to take a stick to her, being imbued with the Malay man's unshakable belief in the ability of the rod to inspire in a wife a proper sense of subordination; but he did not dare. Malayan women accept such happenings with the meekness which experience reserves for the inevitable; but in the forest Pi-Noi had a protector—a protector who never left her.

The compromise of the short waist skirt duly effected, things again went on smoothly for a space. Kria suspected that Pi-Noi broke the inadequate compact unblushingly whenever he was absent; but he loved the girl more madly every day, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

was not looking for trouble, if it might by any means be shirked.

Some ten days later another incident occurred to break upon his peace. Pi-Noi, in common with all the people of her race and other nocturnal animals, was a restless bedfellow, waking at frequent intervals through the night, and being given at such times to prowling about the house in search of scraps of food to eat and tobacco to smoke. Kria detested this peculiarity, since it emphasized the difference of race and of degrees of civilization which yawned between him and his wife, but he ignored it until one evening, when he had waked to find her gone, and had wide-eyed awaited her return for something over an hour. Then he went in search of her.

He hunted through the hut in vain; passed to the door, and finding it open, climbed down the stair-ladder into the moonlight night. A big fire had been lighted that evening, to the windward of the house, in order that the smoke might drive away the sand-flies, and in the warm, raked-out wood ashes Kria found his wife. She was sleeping "as the devils sleep," with her little, perfectly formed body, draped only by the offending girdle, stretched at ease upon its breast, and with her face nestling cozily upon her folded arms. All about her the soft gray ashes were heaped, and her skin was seen, even in the moonlight, to be plastered thickly with great smears of the stuff. To Kria, a Malay of the Malays, whose only conception of comfort, propriety, and civilization was that prevailing among his people, this

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

discarding of his roof tree, this turning of the back upon decency and cleanliness and convention, was an incomprehensible madness, but also an act of unspeakable perversity and naughtiness. White with anger, he looked at the sleeping girl, and even as he looked, warned by the marvellous jungle-instinct, she awoke with a leap that bore her a dozen feet away from him. One glance she cast at his set face, then plunged headlong into covert.

Wrath died down within him on the instant, and was replaced by a great fear. Frantically he ran to the spot where she had vanished, calling upon her by name. In vain search he wandered to the edge of the clearing, and so out into the forest, pleading with her to return, vowing that he would not harm a hair of her head, cajoling, entreating, beseeching, and now and again breaking forth into uncontrollable rage and threat. All night he sought for her. The cold gray dawn, creeping up through banks of mist, to look chillingly upon a dew-drenched world, found him, with blank despair in his heart, with soaked clothes and sodden flesh tattered by the jungle thorns, making his way back to his empty house with the plodding pain of a man in a nightmare. A last hope was kindled as he drew near—the hope that Pi-Noi might have crept homeward while he wandered through the night looking for her—but it flickered up for an instant only to die, as the fire had died above the gray ashes which still bore the imprint of her little body.

Kria, sitting lonely in his hut, looked forth upon

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

a barren world, and saw how desolate is life when love has fled.

IV

As soon as Kria had pulled himself together sufficiently to enable him to think out a course of action, he set off for the Sâkai camp, whence he had taken his wife; but her people had, or professed to have, no news of her. She had always been *lîar*, they averred—more *lîar* even than the rest of her people. (*Lîar* means "wild," as animals which defy capture are wild.)

"The portals of the jungle are open to her," said her father indifferently. He was squatting on the ground, holding between his crooked knees a big, conical, basketwork fish-trap which he was fashioning. He spoke thickly through half a dozen lengths of rattan which he held in his mouth, the ends hanging down on either side like a monstrous and disreputable moustache, and he did not so much as raise his eyes to look at his son-in-law. "She will come to no harm," he grunted. "Perhaps presently she will return."

But Kria did not want his wife "presently" or "perhaps"; he wanted her now, at once, without a moment's delay. He explained this to the assembled Sâkai with considerable vehemence.

"That which is in the jungle is in the jungle," they said oracularly. Folk who are *lîar*, they explained, are very difficult to catch, resent capture, and if brought back before their wanderlust is an

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

expended passion, are very apt to run away again. Then the laborious business of tracking and catching them has to be undertaken anew, to the immense fatigue and annoyance of every one concerned. It is better, they urged, to let such people grow weary of the jungle at their leisure; then, in the fullness of time, they will return of their own free will.

The limitations of their intellects and vocabularies made it impossible for the Sâkai to express themselves quite as clearly as this, but the above represents the gist of their dispassionate opinions. They took several torturing hours and innumerable monosyllables to explain them to Kria, who gnashed and raved in his impatience.

"Pi-Noi is so excessively *lîar*," said that young woman's mamma, speaking with a sort of dreamy indifference while, with noisy nails, she tore at her scaly hide. "She is so incurably *lîar* that it would be better, *Inché*, to abandon her to the jungle and to take one of her sisters to wife in her stead. Jag-ok^{N} here," she added, indicating with outthrust chin a splay-faced little girl, who, in awful fashion, was cleaning fish with her fingers, "Jag-ok^{N} is hardly to be called *lîar* at all. Besides, she hates being beaten, and if you use a rod to her, she would make, I am convinced, a very obedient and amenable wife. We will let you have Jag-ok^{N} very cheap—say half the price you paid for Pi-Noi, her sister."

But Kria did not want Jag-ok^{N}, who was ill favoured and covered from tip to toe with skin diseases, at any price at all. He wanted her sister, who was still

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

to him the only woman in the world. The slack indifference of the Sâkai maddened him, and in the end he threatened to trounce his father-in-law soundly if that worthy elder did not forthwith aid him in tracking the recalcitrant Pi-Noi.

In an instant Â-Gap, the Rhinoceros, as Pi-Noi's papa was named, was standing before Kria, shaking as a leaf is shaken, for the Sâkai's inherited fear of the Malay is an emotion which has for its justification a sound historical basis. Immediately the whole camp was in a turmoil; the danger call was sounding, and those of the Sâkai to whom escape was open were melting into the forest as swiftly and noiselessly as flitting shadows. Â-Gap and two younger men, however, squealing dismally, were clutched by their frowsy elf-locks, hustled on board Kria's canoe, and soon were paddling rapidly downstream in the direction of his house. The hour of their arrival was too late for anything further to be done that day, so Kria spent a miserable night, and awoke next morning to find that the three Sâkai had disappeared. They had cut a hole in the bamboo floor, and had dropped noiselessly through it on to the earth beneath, what time Kria had been tossing upon the mat which he had placed athwart the doorway. They had arrived at two conclusions: firstly, that Kria was mad, which made him a highly undesirable companion; and, secondly, that if he caught Pi-Noi he would very certainly kill her. They were convinced of his insanity because he was making such an absurd fuss about the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

recovery of a particular girl, when all the time, as everybody knew, there were hundreds and hundreds of others, just as good, to be had for the asking. Their reasonable fears for Pi-Noi's safety were based upon the argument that a person who would beat a man would certainly kill a woman. On the whole, they concluded, it would be at once more wholesome and more pleasant to go away now, and to avoid Kria for the future.

Kria, unaided, tried some very amateurish tracking on his own account, his great love setting at naught the Malay's instinctive horror of entering the jungle unaccompanied. He succeeded only in getting hopelessly bushed, and at last won his way back to his house, almost by a miracle. He was worn out with anxiety and fatigue, foot-sore, heart-sore, weary soul and body, and nearly starved to death. The Sâkai seemed to have vanished from the forest for twenty miles around; his trading was at a standstill; he was humiliated to the dust; and his utter impotence was like a load of galling fetters clamped about his soul. Yet all the while his love of Pi-Noi and his hungry longing for her were only intensified by her absence and her heartlessness. He missed her—was haunted by the sound of her voice—was tortured by elusive wraiths of her which emerged suddenly to mock him from the forest's pitiless depths.

V

The moon had been near the full on the night when the wanderlust, as the Sâkai called it, had

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

come to Pi-Noi. A little crescent was hanging just above the forest in the wake of the sunset before Kria received any hint of her continued existence. Returning one evening to his house from a visit to his fish-weir, he found on the threshold a small heap of jungle-offerings—wild *dûri-an* and other fruit, the edible shoot of the *îbul* palm, and a collection of similar miscellaneous trash. At this sight the blood flew to Kria's face, then stormed back into a heart that pumped and leaped. These things shouted their meaning in his ears.

Trembling with joyful agitation, Kria passed to the inner room of the house, and examined Pi-Noi's store of clothes. Not only a silk waistcloth, but a long blouse, such as Malayan women wear as an upper garment, were missing. Evidently Pi-Noi was bent upon doing the thing handsomely now that she had decided upon submission, and to that end was pandering with a generous completeness to his absurd prejudices on the subject of wearing apparel. Also she must be close at hand, for it was unlikely that she would stray far into the jungle clad in those delicate silks.

Pi-Noi's surrender was an instant victory for her. No sooner had Kria made his discovery than, with a wildly beating heart, he was standing in the doorway, calling softly, in a voice that shook and failed him, using a pet name known only to Pi-Noi and to himself. All his rage, all his humiliations, all his sufferings were forgotten. He only knew that Pi-Noi had come back to him, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

that all at once he was thankful and tearful and glad.

"Chêp!" (Little Bird!) he cried. "Chêp! Are you there, Fruit of my Heart? Come to me, Little One! Come, O come!"

From somewhere in the brushwood near at hand came the sound of musical laughter—the laughter of a woman who knows her power, and finds in its tyrannous exercise a triumph and delight.

"Is there space in the house for me?" she inquired demurely, tilting her head and gazing at him in mockery, while again a ripple of light laughter broke from her lips. "Or shall I go to my other house . . . the forest?"

Kria, his withers wrung by the conviction of her elusiveness and his own impotence, tortured, too, by a fear lest even now some capricious perversity might induce her again to desert him, could only stammer out wild protestations of love and welcome. The girl was thoroughly aware that she was complete mistress of the situation, and even Kria was tempted to believe that he, not she, was the wrong-doer. In moments of rage, during her absence, he had often promised himself that, if he ever laid hands upon her again, he would give her the very soundest whipping that the forest had ever seen administered to an erring wife; but now these vows were forgotten. All he desired was to have her back, on any terms, at any price, at no matter what sacrifice, of pride, of honour, of self-respect. Even in that instant of passion and emotion he saw,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

though dimly, that this woman was killing his soul.

Reassured at last as to the amiability of Kria's intentions, Pi-Noi drew near him after the manner of other wild forest creatures, her every muscle braced for flight; and then she was in his arms, and he had borne her up the stair-ladder with infinite tenderness, crooning and weeping over her with broken words of love.

VI

Thus began the years of Kria's slavery—only three little years of life, as men count time, but an eternity; no less, if judged by the number and violence of the emotions packed within them. While they lasted, periods of almost delirious delight alternated with seasons of acute mental suffering and moral struggle. Sometimes for six weeks or more at a time Pi-Noi would live contentedly under his roof, and he would strive to trick himself into the belief that the wanderlust was dead in her. Then, upon a certain day, his watchful eyes would note a subtle change. She would be lost to him, sitting in the doorway of the hut with parted lips, while into her eyes there crept a dreamy, faraway mystery. The depths of her absorption would be so profound that she would take no heed of words addressed to her; and Kria would know, in his miserable heart, that she was listening to the voices which begin upon the further side of silence, and was holding inaudible commune with the forest world. He would guard her

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

then stealthily, sleeplessly, so that his business was neglected, and his body was parched with the fever bred of anxiety and want of rest; but sooner or later nature would overcome him, and he would awake with a shock from the sleep of exhaustion to see Pi-Noi's scattered garments heaped about the floor, and to find that the girl herself had once more eluded his vigilance.

Then would pass weeks of misery, of fierce jealousy, of rage, of longing, of fear, for he was racked always by the dread lest this time she should not come back. But through all he loved her, hating and crying shame upon himself because of his love; and so often as she returned to him, so often was her sinning ignored. He dared not punish her with word or blow. The forest was her ally and his bitter enemy. It afforded her a refuge too accessible, secure and final.

It was during one of these periods of anguish that Kria received the first visit that had been paid to him by men of his own breed since his arrival in the valley. After days of watchfulness Pi-Noi had eluded him that morning, a little before the dawn, and when Kria had awaked from slumberings which had been a mere ravel of nightmares, it had been to the knowledge that the grim forest had swallowed her, and that yet another season of misery, of torturing imaginings, and of suspense lay before him. A couple of hours later his unexpected visitors arrived.

The party consisted of three Malays—Kûlop Rîau, a native of Pêrak, who in those days was reputed to

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

be the most noted master of jungle-lore in the Peninsula, and two young men from the Jĕlai Valley in Pahang. They had come to search for gutta in the forests of the Tĕlom, and for loot in the Sâkai camps.

With the frankness which distinguishes Malays, and a lonely man's craving for sympathy, Kria forthwith related to these strangers the story of his married life and all the ignominy which was his, at the same time asking their advice as to the action which he might most fittingly take. Kûlop Rîau was cynical.

"She is only a Sâkai," he said. "Why do you not kill her and thereafter seek a wife among the maidens of the Jĕlai Valley? That were more proper than to suffer yourself to be thus villainously entreated by this jungle-wench."

Kria hung his head. He could not bring himself to reveal the shameful secret of his love; but Kûlop Rîau, whose experiences were not confined to the forest, looked at him and understood.

"These jungle hussies," he declared with the dogmatic assertion proper to an expert, "these jungle hussies are often deeply skilled in witchcraft, and it is plainly to be discerned that this wench has cast a glamour over you. Brother, I apprehend that it would be wise to slay her, for your soul's sake, as speedily as may be, else surely you will be a thrall to her magic in life, and in death you will most unquestionably go to stoke the fires of the Terrible Place. Therefore, it were wise and whole-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

some and not unpleasant to kill her with as much speed, thoroughness, and circumspection as may be possible."

But Kria, who loved the girl, not only in spite of her heartlessness, but *because* she so tortured him, would have naught of counsels such as this. If Pi-Noi had abided with him after the constant fashion of other wives, it is possible that his passion would have spent itself, and their union would have become a mere embodiment of the commonplace. Despite her beauty and grace, he might easily have grown weary of this woman of a lesser breed if he had ever possessed her utterly, but the very insecurity of his tenure of her lent to her an added and irresistible fascination.

Something of this, vaguely, and gropingly, was forced upon the understanding of old Kûlop Rîau, who was thereby completely convinced of the accuracy of his original diagnosis. That the witch should be a Sâkai, an eater of unclean things, foredoomed in common with all her race to burn eternally in Hell by the wise decree of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate, and that her victim should be a Malay and True Believer, shocked his every racial and religious prejudice. Though, on his own account, he had constant dealings with jungle demons —the which is an abomination—he suddenly recalled the fact that he was a Muhammadan, and as such recognized that Kria's position was at once humiliating and highly improper.

"In any event, it were well to know how she passes

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the days during which the jungle claims her," he said. "It seems to me that this hussy has kept you too long in ignorance of the naughtiness of her heart, the degradation and ignominy of her behaviour, and the extraordinary vileness and impropriety of her carriage."

"I would very willingly learn why she thus leaves me and what she does at such seasons," said poor Kria. "But the forests are vast, and she vanishes into their depths even as a stone sinks through still waters and is lost to sight. She is one of the wild things of the jungle, and if she has a mind to keep her secret, who shall wrest it from her?"

"It is very plainly to be seen, brother, that you are village-bred," said Kûlop Rîau with immense contempt. "The portals of the jungle are not flung wide for you. The Spectre Huntsman and the Forest Fiends do not count you among the tale of their children. If this were not so. . . . But the thing is too simple to demand explanation!"

"But you . . ." cried Kria breathlessly. "You, could you track her? Could you answer for me all these intolerable questions?"

"That could I, and with ease, were I minded to take so much trouble," said Kûlop scornfully. "But I have come hither to transact business of mine own. However, such is the love I bear you, little brother" (the two had met for the first time that day) "that I might turn me aside from mine own affairs to do you this service—at a price."

The concluding words awoke Kria's keen com-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

mercial instincts, and a very pretty piece of haggling forthwith ensued. But even here Pi-Noi shackled him. He loved her, and his necessity was old Kûlop's opportunity, as that astute worthy very perfectly perceived; wherefore the price, paid in rubber, which Kria drew with many sighs from his hoarded store, proved in the end to be frankly extortionate. He longed to lay at rest, once for all, the cruel ghosts of the imagination which had haunted him, but now that the chance of discovery had come to him, he was oppressed by terror at the thought of what it might reveal.

Time was precious if Pi-Noi's trail was to be struck while it was still fresh, and a short hour sufficed for preparations. Then the party, Kûlop Rîau leading, with his long muzzle-loader on his shoulder, Kria following, and the two Jĕlai youngsters bringing up the rear, left the clearing and entered the forest. Old Kûlop had made a cast round the clearing while the others were busy packing the rice and the cooking-pots, and he had hit off the line which Pi-Noi had taken at the first attempt. A trail once struck by a man of Kûlop's skill and knowledge of forest-lore, few accidents less efficient than an earthquake or a cyclone would suffice to check or stay him.

VII

Pi-Noi's spoor proved at the first singularly clear. She had so long been convinced of her complete immunity from pursuit that she had become care-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

less, and had made use of none of the precautions for the confusion of her trail such as are supplied by the baffling woodcraft of her people. This was as well, and saved the trackers much time; for the very existence of the Sâkai, it must be remembered, has depended for hundreds of years upon their ability to evade Malay slave-hunters.

At a distance of some eight miles from her starting point (it took Kûlop Rîau and his party nearly five hours to reach it) she had stopped in a little open glade of the forest to dance ecstatically with her slender, bare feet upon the rich, cool grasses beside a stream, which tumbled downward, with a mighty chattering, in the direction of the Tĕlom. Here she had bathed luxuriously in the running water, had stretched herself to enjoy a sun-bath upon a flat rock in midstream, and thence had pounced upon and captured with her hands a huge, fruit-eating *krai* fish. She had carried the creature ashore, had cleaned it and scraped off its scales, and pulled some rattan from the jungle, and had fashioned therefrom a knapsack into which she had stowed the fish. Thereafter she had climbed a *hibiscus* to rob it of its blossoms for her hair, had danced again in sheer joy of being alive, and then had continued her wanderings.

The tracks, as old Kûlop Rîau pointed them out to Kria, one by one, told the story of this little halting with such distinctness of detail that Pi-Noi's husband could picture to himself every act and motion of his wayward wife; could almost visualize

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

her, alone and wild with joy, in that hidden nook of the jungle; and found himself understanding for the first time something of the exaltation and exhilaration of spirit that had been hers as she entered once more into her birthright of forest freedom.

At this point Kûlop Rîau found it difficult to pick up the trail afresh. He took wide casts up and down stream, examining both banks closely, but for nearly an hour he was at fault. He quested like a hound, his shoulders hunched, his head low-stooping from his thick neck, his eyes intent, fixed for the most part on the ground, but throwing now and again quick glances to the right or left. All the while he maintained with himself a monotonous, unintelligible, mumbled monologue. Kria, following him closely and straining his ears to listen, could catch here and there a familiar word, but the speech as a whole was an archaic jargon from which no single strand of connected thought was to be unravelled, and the old tracker was seemingly deaf to all the eager questions addressed to him.

The Jĕlai lads, shuddering a little, whispered to Kria that the Jungle Demons had entered into and possessed the body of the old tracker, and one of them fell to repeating the names of Allah and his Prophet fearfully, under his breath. It was a nerve-sawing experience to find one's self thus cast away in the trackless forest with this inspired demoniac for one's sole guide and leader; but Kria was not greatly impressed. He knew Pi-Noi.

At last, about a mile upstream, Kûlop Rîau sud-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

denly became rigid as a pointer, and stood glaring at a spot on the left bank where a hanging leaf oozed sap from a bruised twig. He broke forth into a low rumble of unintelligible gibberish, and drew himself with many grunts out of the bed of the stream. No other sign of Pi-Noi's passage was visible to his companions, but Kûlop Rîau, though he still muttered ceaselessly, trudged forward now with confidence. A quarter of a mile farther on he drew Kria's attention, by a gesture, to a tiny mucous smear on the bark of a tree. The fish, bulging through the meshes of the knapsack, had left that mark. The trail was Pi-Noi's.

The afternoon was now far advanced, and when next he struck a stream, Kûlop called a halt and bade his companions cook the evening meal. He himself crossed the rivulet and entered the forest beyond, returning later with word that the trail was easier over yonder, and that he had learned its general trend.

The meal was eaten almost in silence, for Kûlop Rîau, when possessed by his Jungle Spirits, was an awe-inspiring companion. Kria and the Jĕlai lads, too, were fagged and weary, but since the moon was near the full, their leader would not suffer them to rest. Pi-Noi had gained a long start of them, which they must try to recover.

Kria, worn out body and soul, was racked by an agony of baffled curiosity as he stumbled on and on, and watched the old tracker bristling, with many growls and grumblings, over each fresh secret that

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the spoor revealed to him. It was evident that he was reading in the invisible signs which he alone had the power to interpret, some story that excited him strangely, but he did not heed and seemed not even to hear the eager questions with which Kria plied him.

About midnight he called a halt.

"There is still plenty of light," Kria protested.

"Here we will camp," Kûlop Rîau reiterated with a snarl.

"But——" Kria began, when the other cut him short.

"When you are in childbed, do as the midwife bids you," he said; and ten minutes later the old man was fast asleep, though even in his slumber he still muttered restlessly.

The dawn broke wan and cheerless, the feeble daylight thrusting sad and irresolute fingers through the network of boughs and leaves overhead. A dank, chill, woebegone depression hung over the wilderness. The riot and the glory of the night were ended; the long ordeal of the hot and breathless day was about to begin. The forest was settling itself with scant content to its uneasy slumbering.

After the manner of all jungle-people, Kûlop Rîau awoke with the dawn, and an hour later the morning rice had been cooked and eaten. The old tracker prepared himself a quid of betel nut with great deliberation, and sat chewing it mechanically, his body swinging slowly to and fro, his eyes nearly closed, his lips busy, though none save vague sounds

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

came from them. Kria, watching him with growing irritation, for a while was fearful to disturb him; but at last, unable longer to endure the delay and suspense, he burst out with an eager question.

"When do we take up the trial anew?" he asked.

Kûlop Rîau, coming up to the surface slowly from the depths of his abstraction, gazed at Kria for a space through unseeing eyes, while the question that had been spoken filtered through the clouds obscuring his brain. Then he jerked out an answer of five words:

"When you are in childbed!" and closed his mouth with a snap, not even troubling himself to complete the proverb.

Once more Kria knew himself to be impotent. Here again he had no course open to him but to sit and wait.

The long, still, stifling day wore toward evening, minute by minute and hour by hour, while the four men lay under the shelter of a rough lean-to of thatch, inactive but restless, and Kria thought bitterly of the amount and value of the rubber which he in his folly and trustfulness had handed over to Kûlop Rîau in advance. Late in the afternoon that worthy spoke to his companions for the first time for many hours, bidding them prepare food, and a little before the sunset, after the meal had been despatched, he rose to his feet, hiccoughed loudly, stretched himself elaborately, and made ready to resume his march. In an instant Kria was by his side, with an expression of joyful relief,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

but Kûlop told him curtly to bide where he was.

"This time," he said, "I go forward alone. One may not scout in this forest with three pairs of feet crashing through the underwood at one's heels like a troop of wild kine. Stay here till I return."

Without another word, he lounged off, with his long musket over his shoulder, and was soon lost to view. He went, as the Sâkai themselves go, flitting through the trees as noiselessly as a bat.

"Did I not say truly that he is possessed by the Demons of the Forest?" said one of the Jĕlai youths. "*Ya Allah!* Fancy going into this wilderness alone for choice, and with the darkness about to fall!"

Thereafter followed for Kria a miserable night, for while the Jĕlai lads slept beside him, he lay awake, a prey to a thousand torturing thoughts and memories, and oppressed by a load of vague forebodings.

VIII

Kria awoke in broad daylight to find old Kûlop Rîau, his dew-drenched clothes soiled with the earth of the jungle, bending over him with a light of wild excitement and exultation blazing in his eyes.

"Come, brother," he said. "I have found the wench. Come!"

Without another word, he turned away into the forest, Kria following him as best he might, binding about his waist as he ran the belt from which hung his heavy woodknife.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Kûlop strode along at a great pace for a matter of two or three miles, now and again directing Kria's attention to some trifling mark on earth or trunk or shrub which told of the passing of Pi-Noi.

"See here, brother," he said, indicating a place where the grass had much the appearance of a large hare's form. "There was one awaiting her. He sat there for a long time, listening for her coming, and there was much joy in that meeting. Behold here, and here, and here, how they danced together, as young fawns caper and leap—the hussy, your wife, and this youth of her own people. Like goes to like, brother, and a wild woman seeks ever a wild man, in no wise respecting the laws of wedlock. This wench has betrayed you. See, here they cooked food, yams of his gathering and the fish that she had brought, and he fashioned a nose-flute to make beast noises with, and thereafter there was more dancing, ere they bathed together in the stream, the shameless ones! and moved forward again, heading always for the Great Salt Lick!"

Kria, rent by devils of jealousy and rage, his face drawn and ghastly, his hands opening and clenching convulsively, said never a word; but his eyes took in each detail of the story recorded by the clear imprints upon grass and earth, and the yielding mud at the river's brink. Mechanically he followed Kûlop Rîau when the latter once more dived into the underwood.

"From this point," the old man was saying, "I abided no longer by the trail. They were making

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

for the Great Salt Lick, and thither went I by a circuitous path of mine own contrivance. This time we go by a shorter route. Come."

Five miles farther on the forest thinned out suddenly and gave place to an irregular space, roughly circular in shape, the surface of which resembled a ploughed field. Though the red soil was rich, barely so much as a tuft of grass grew upon it—a strange sight in a land where green things sprout into lusty life almost as you watch them; for this was one of the natural saline deposits not infrequently found in Malayan jungles. Hither flock all the beasts of the forest, from the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the tiger to the red dogs, the tiny mouse-deer no larger than a rabbit, and even the stoats and weasels, to lick the salt and to knead and trample the earth with countless pads and claws and hoofs.

Kria looked out upon the place, and as he looked his heart stood still, while for a moment all things were blotted out in a blinding, swirling mist of blood-stained darkness. He reeled against a trunk, and stood there sobbing and shaking ere he could muster force to look again.

At the foot of a big tree some twenty yards away the body of Pi-Noi, its aspect strangely delicate and childlike, lay coiled up in death. There was a little blue hole below her left breast where the cruel bullet had entered, and the wild swine and the hungry red dogs had already been busy.

Kria, reeling like a drunken man, staggered across the open space toward the dead body of his wife.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Kûlop Rîau stood looking on with the air of a craftsman surveying his masterpieces.

Dazed and broken-hearted, Kria stood for a space gazing down upon his wife's peaceful face. It seemed to him as though she slept, as he so often had seen her sleeping in that house to which her fitful presence had brought such an intoxication of delight; and suddenly all anger was dead within him, and there surged up in its place all manner of tender and endearing memories of this dead girl who had been to him at once his torture and his joy.

With a face livid and working, he turned savagely upon Kûlop Rîau.

"And the man," he cried. "What of the man?"

"He lies yonder," said Kûlop Rîau, with the triumphant air of an artist whose work can defy criticism, and he pointed with his chin, Malayan fashion, in the direction of a clump of bush near the edge of the salt lick. "I shot him as he fled. See, they were camped for the night in the mannest which they had built for themselves in the tree fork up there, animals and strangers to modesty that they were!" He expectorated emphatically in token of his unutterable disgust.

Kria strode to the spot, gazed for an instant, and then gave a great cry of pain and rage and misery.

"The man is her brother," he yelled. "And you —you have killed her who was guiltless of all sin!"

"Is that so?" said Kûlop calmly. "Then, very certainly, it was so decreed by Fate, the inscrutable, and by Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Also you are well rid of this jungle hussy who, in the end, would, beyond all doubt, have dragged your soul to. . . . Have done! Let be! Are you mad? Arrrrgh. . . ."

But Kûlop Rîau spoke no other word in life.

When the Jĕlai lads tracked and found them, both men were dead and stiff. Kûlop still grasped the woodknife which he had plunged again and again into Kria's body; but the latter's fingers were locked in the old tracker's throat in a grip which, even in death, no force could relax. None the less, though they could not separate them, they buried them both —since they were Muhammadans, and, as such, claimed that service at the hands of their fellows. But Pi-Noi's little body they left to the beasts of the forest which in life had been her playmates.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE WERE-TIGER

I

IN THE more remote parts of the Malay Peninsula five and twenty years ago we lived in the Middle Ages, surrounded by all the appropriate accessories of the dark centuries. Magic and evil spirits, witchcraft and sorcery, spells and love-potions, charms and incantations are, to the mind of the unsophisticated native, as much a matter of everyday life, and almost as commonplace, as is the miracle of the growing rice or the mystery of the reproduction of species. This basic fact must be realized by the European, if the native's view of human existence is to be understood, for it underlies all his conceptions of things as they are. Tales of the marvellous and of the supernatural excite interest and it may be fear in a Malayan audience, but they occasion no surprise. Malays, were they given to such abstract discussions, would probably dispute the accuracy of the term "supernatural" as applied to much that white men would place unhesitatingly in that category. They *know* that strange things have happened in the past and are daily occurring to them and to their fellows. Such experiences are not common to all, just as one man here and there may be struck by lightning while

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

his neighbours go unscathed; but the manifestations of electric force do not appeal to them as less or more unnatural than other inexplicable phenomena which fill human life with awe.

The white man and the white man's justice are placed by this in a position at once anomalous and embarrassing. Unshaken native testimony, we hold, provides evidence which justifies us in sentencing a fellow creature to death or to a long term of imprisonment; yet we hesitate to accept it or to regard it as equally conclusive when it points, no less unerringly, to the proved existence of, say, the Malayan *loup garou*. The Malays of Sâiyong, in the Pêrak Valley, for instance, know how Haji Abdullah, the native of the little state of Korinchi, in Sumatra, was caught stark naked in a tiger-trap, and thereafter purchased his liberty at the price of the buffaloes he had slain while he marauded in the likeness of a beast. The Malays of other parts of the Peninsula know of numerous instances of Korinchi men who have vomited feathers, after feasting upon fowls, when for the nonce they had assumed the likeness of tigers; and of other men of the same race who have left their garments and their trading-packs in thickets, whence presently a tiger has emerged. The Malay, however, does not know that his strange belief finds its exact counterpart in almost every quarter of the globe where man has found himself in close association with beasts of prey, but such knowledge would neither strengthen nor weaken his faith in that which he regards as a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

proven fact. The white man, on the other hand, may see in the universality of this superstition nothing more than an illustration of the effect of an abiding fear upon the human mind; but that explanation—if explanation it can, indeed, be called—does not carry him much farther along the path of discovery. Meanwhile, he has to shoulder aside as worthless masses of native evidence, which in any other connection he would accept as final.

II

The Slim valley lies across the mountain range which divides Pahang from Pêrak. It used to be peopled by Malays of various races—Râwas and Mĕnangkâbaus from Sumatra, men with high-sounding titles and vain boasts wherewith to carry off their squalid, dirty poverty; Pêrak Malays from the fair Kinta Valley, prospecting for tin or trading skilfully; fugitives from troublous Pahang, long settled in the district; and the sweepings of Java, Sumatra, and the Peninsula.

Into the Slim Valley, some thirty years ago, there came a Korinchi trader named Haji Ali, and his two sons, Abdulrahman and Abas. They came, as is the manner of their people, laden with heavy packs of *sárong*—the native skirt or waistcloth—trudging in single file through the forest and through the villages, hawking their goods among the natives of the place, driving hard bargains and haggling cunningly. But though they came to trade, they stayed long after they had disposed of the contents of their

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

packs, for Haji Ali took a fancy to the place. In those days, of course, land was to be had almost for the asking; wherefore he and his two sons set to work to clear a compound, to build a house, with a grove of young cocoanut trees planted around it, and to cultivate a rice swamp. They were quiet, well-behaved people; they were regular in their attendance at the mosque for the Friday congregational prayers; and as they were wealthy and prosperous, they found favour in the eyes of their poorer neighbours. Accordingly, when Haji Ali let it be known that he desired to find a wife, there was a bustle in the villages among the parents of marriageable daughters, and though he was a man well past middle life, a wide range of choice was offered to him.

The girl he finally selected was named Patîmah, the daughter of poor folk, peasants who lived on their little patch of land in one of the neighbouring villages. She was a comely maiden, plump and round and light of colour, with a merry face to cheer, and willing fingers wherewith to serve a husband. The wedding-portion was paid; a feast proportionate to Haji Ali's wealth was held to celebrate the occasion; and the bride, after a decent interval, was carried off to her husband's house among the newly planted fruit trees and palm groves. This was not the general custom of the land, for among Malays the husband usually shares his father-in-law's home for a long period after his marriage. But Haji Ali had a fine new house, brave with wattled walls

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

stained cunningly in black and white, and with a luxuriant covering of thatch. Moreover, he had taken the daughter of a poor man to wife, and could dictate his own terms, in most matters, to her and to her parents.

The girl went willingly enough, for she was exchanging poverty for wealth, a miserable hovel for a handsome home, and parents who knew how to get out of her the last ounce of work of which she was capable, for a husband who seemed ever kind, generous, and indulgent. She had also the satisfaction of knowing that she had made an exceedingly good marriage, and was an object of envy to all her contemporaries. None the less, three days later, at the hour when the dawn was breaking, she was found beating upon the door of her father's house, screaming to be taken in, trembling in every limb, with her hair disordered, her garments drenched with dew from the underwood through which she had rushed, and in a state of panic bordering on dementia.

Her story—the first act in the drama of the were-tiger of Slim—ran in this wise:

She had gone home with Haji Ali to the house in which he lived with his two sons, Abdulrahman and Abas, and all had treated her kindly and with courtesy. The first day she had cooked the rice insufficiently, and though the young men had grumbled Haji Ali had said no word of blame, when she had expected a slapping, such as would have fallen to the lot of most wives in similar circumstances.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

She had, she declared, no complaint to make of her husband's treatment of her; but she had fled his roof forever, and her parents might "hang her on high, sell her in a far land, scorch her with the sun's rays, immerse her in water, burn her with fire," ere aught should induce her to return to one who hunted by night in the likeness of a were-tiger.

Every evening, after the hour of evening prayer, Haji Ali had left the house on one pretext or another, and had not returned until an hour before the dawn. Twice she had not been aware of his return until she had found him lying on the sleeping-mat by her side; but on the third night she had remained awake until a noise without told her that her husband was at hand. Then she had arisen and had hastened to unbar the door, which she had fastened on the inside after Abdulrahman and Abas had fallen asleep. The moon was behind a cloud and the light she cast was dim, but Patîmah had seen clearly enough the sight which had driven her mad with terror.

On the topmost rung of the ladder, which in this, as in all Malay houses, led from the ground to the threshold of the door, there rested the head of a full-grown tiger. Patîmah could see the bold, black stripes that marked his hide, the bristling wires of whisker, the long, cruel teeth, the fierce green light in the beast's eyes. A round pad, with long curved claws partially concealed, lay on the ladder-rung, one on each side of the monster's head; and the lower portion of the body, reaching to the ground,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

was so foreshortened that, to the girl, it looked like the body of a man. Patîmah stood gazing at the tiger from the distance of only a foot or two, for she was too paralyzed with fear and could neither move nor cry out; and as she looked, a gradual transformation took place in the creature at her feet. Much as one sees a ripple of cool air pass over the surface of molten metal, the tiger's features palpitated and were changed, until the horrified girl saw the face of her husband come up through that of the beast, just as that of a diver comes up from the depths through still waters. In another moment Patîmah understood that it was Haji Ali, her husband, who was ascending the ladder of his house, and the spell which had held her motionless was snapped. The first use which she made of her recovered power to move was to leap past him through the doorway, and to plunge into the jungle which edged the compound.

Malays do not love to travel singly through the forest, even when the sun is high, and in ordinary circumstances no woman could by any means be prevailed upon to do such a thing. But Patîmah was distraught with fear; and though she was alone, though the moonlight was dim and the dawn had not yet come, she preferred the terror-haunted depths of the jungle to the home of her were-tiger husband. Thus she forced her way through the brushwood, tearing her clothes, scarifying her flesh with thorns, catching her feet in creepers and trailing vines, drenching herself to the skin with dew,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and so running and falling, and rising to run and fall again, she made her way to her father's house, there to tell the tale of her appalling experience.

The story of what had occurred was speedily noised abroad through the villages, and was duly reported to the nearest white man, who heard it with the white man's usual scepticism; while the parents of marriageable daughters, who had been mortified by Haji Ali's choice of a wife, hastened to assure Patîmah's papa and mamma that they had always anticipated something of the sort.

A really remarkable fact, however, was that Haji Ali made no attempt to regain possession of his wife; and this acquires a special significance owing to the extraordinary tenacity which characterizes all Sumatra Malays in relation to their rights in property. His neighbours drew a natural inference from his inaction, and shunned him so sedulously that thenceforth he and his sons were compelled to live in almost complete isolation.

But the drama of the were-tiger of Slim was to have a final act.

One night a fine young water-buffalo, the property of the Headman, Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh, was killed by a tiger, and its owner, saying no word to any man, constructed a cunningly arranged spring-gun over the carcase. The trigger-lines were so set that if the tiger returned to finish his meal—which, after the manner of his kind, he had begun by tearing a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

couple of hurried mouthfuls out of the rump—he must infallibly be wounded or killed by the bolts and slugs with which the gun was charged.

Next night a loud report, breaking in clanging echoes through the stillness an hour or two before the dawn was due, apprised Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh that some animal had fouled the trigger-lines. The chances were that it was the tiger; and if he were wounded, he would not be a pleasant creature to meet on a dark night. Accordingly, Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh lay still until morning.

In a Malayan village all are astir very shortly after daybreak. As soon as it is light enough to see to walk, the doors of the houses open one by one, and the people of the village come forth, huddled to the chin in their *sĕlîmut*, or coverlets. Each man makes his way down to the river to perform his morning ablutions, or stands or squats on the bank of the stream, staring sleepily at nothing in particular, a motionless figure outlined dimly against the broad ruddiness of a Malayan dawn. Presently the women of the village emerge from their houses, in little knots of three or four, with the children astride upon their hips or pattering at their heels. They carry clusters of gourds in their hands, for it is their duty to fill them from the running stream with the water which will be needed during the day. It is not until the sun begins to make its power felt through the mists of morning, when ablutions have been carefully performed and the drowsiness of the waking-hour has departed from heavy eyes,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

that the people of the village turn their indolent thoughts toward the business of the day.

Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh arose that morning and went through his usual daily routine before he set to work to collect a party of Malays to aid him in his search for the wounded tiger. He had no difficulty in finding men who were willing to share the excitement of the adventure, for most Malays are endowed with sporting instincts; and he presently started on his quest with a ragged following of nearly a dozen at his heels, armed with spears and *kris* and having among them a couple of muskets. On arrival at the spot where the spring-gun had been set, they found that beyond a doubt the tiger had returned to his kill. The tracks left by the great pads were fresh, and the tearing up of the earth on one side of the dead buffalo, in a spot where the grass was thickly flecked with blood, showed that the shot had taken effect.

Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh and his people then set down steadily to follow the trail of the wounded tiger. This was an easy matter, for the beast had gone heavily on three legs, the off hind-leg dragging uselessly. In places, too, a clot of blood showed red among the dew-drenched leaves and grasses. None the less, the Pĕnghûlu and his party followed slowly and with caution. They knew that a wounded tiger is an ill beast to tackle at any time, and that even when he has only three legs with which to spring upon his enemies, he can on occasion arrange for a large escort of human beings to accompany him into the land of shadows.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The trail led through the brushwood, in the midst of which the dead buffalo was lying, and thence into a belt of jungle which covered the bank of the river and extended upstream from a point a few hundreds of yards above Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh's village to Kuâla Chin Lâma, half a dozen miles away. The tiger had turned up-river after entering this patch of forest, and half a mile higher he had come out upon a slender foot-path through the woods.

When Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh had followed the trail thus far, he halted and looked at his people.

"What say you?" he whispered. "Do you know whither this track leads?"

His companions nodded, but said never a word. They were obviously excited and ill at ease.

"What say you?" continued the Pĕnghûlu. "Do we follow or not follow?"

"It is as you will, O Pĕnghûlu," replied the oldest man of the party, speaking for his fellows. "We follow whithersoever you go."

"It is well," said the Pĕnghûlu. "Come, let us go."

No more was said when this whispered colloquy was ended, and the trackers set down to the trail again silently and with redoubled caution.

The narrow path which the tiger had followed led on in the direction of the river-bank, and ere long the high wattled bamboo fence of a native compound became visible through the trees. Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh pointed at it, turning to his followers.

"See yonder," he said.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Again the little band moved forward, still tracing the slot of the tiger and the flecks of blood upon the grass. These led them to the gate of the compound, and through it, to the *'âman*, or open space before the house. Here the spoor vanished at a spot where the rank spear-blades of the *lâlang* grass had been crushed to earth by the weight of some heavy body. To it the trail of the limping tiger led. Away from it there were no footprints, save those of the human beings who come and go through the untidy weeds and grasses which cloak the soil in a Malayan compound.

Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh and his followers exchanged troubled glances.

"Come, let us ascend into the house," said the former; and forthwith led the way up the stair-ladder of the dwelling where Haji Ali lived with his two sons, and whence a month or two before Patîmah had fled during the night time with a deadly fear in her eyes and an incredible story faltering upon her lips.

The Pĕnghûlu and his people found Abas, one of the Haji's sons, sitting cross-legged in the outer apartment, preparing a quid of betel nut with elaborate care. The visitors squatted on the mats and exchanged with him the customary salutations. Then Pĕnghûlu Mat Saleh said:

"I have come hither that I may see your father. Is he within the house?"

"He is," replied Abas laconically.

"Then, make known to him that I would have speech with him."

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"My father is sick," said Abas in a surly tone, and again his visitors exchanged glances.

"What is that patch of blood in the *lâlang* grass before the house?" asked the Pĕnghûlu conversationally, after a slight pause.

"We killed a goat yesternight," Abas answered.

"Have you the skin, O Abas?" enquired the Headman. "I am renewing the faces of my drums and would fain purchase it."

"The skin was mangy and therefore we cast it into the river," said Abas.

The conversation languished while the Pĕnghûlu's followers pushed the clumsy wooden betel-box along the mat covered floor from one to the other, and silently prepared their quids.

"What ails your father?" asked the Pĕnghûlu presently, returning to the charge.

"He is sick," a rough voice said suddenly, speaking from the curtained doorway which led into the inner apartment.

It was the elder of the two sons, Abdulrahman, who spoke. He held a sword in his hand, a kris was stuck in his girdle, and his face wore an ugly look. His words came harshly and gratingly with the foreign accent of the Korinchi people. He continued to speak, still standing near the doorway.

"My father is sick, O Pĕnghûlu," he said. "Moreover, the noise of your words disturbs him. He desires to slumber and be still. Descend out of the house. He cannot see you. Attend to these my words."

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Abdulrahman's manner and the words he spoke were at once so rough and so defiant that the Headman saw that he would have to choose between a scuffle, which would certainly mean bloodshed, and an ignominious retreat. He was a mild old man, and he drew a monthly stipend from the Government of Pêrak. He did not wish to place this in jeopardy, and he knew that the white men entertained prejudices against bloodshed and homicide, even if the person slain was a wizard or the son of a wizard. He therefore decided in favour of retreat.

As they were climbing down the stair-ladder, Mat Tahir, one of the Pĕnghûlu's men, plucked him by the sleeve and pointed to a spot beneath the house. Just below the place in the inner apartment where Haji Ali might be supposed to be lying stretched upon the mat of sickness, the ground was stained a dull red colour for a space of several inches in circumference. The floors of Malayan houses are made of laths of bamboo laid parallel one to another at regular intervals and lashed together with rattan. The interstices thus formed are convenient, as the slovenly Malays are thereby enabled to use the whole of the ground beneath the house as a slop-pail, waste-basket, and rubbish-heap. The red stain, situated where it was, had the appearance of blood—blood, moreover, from some one within the house whose wound had been recently washed and dressed. It might equally, of course, have been the rinsings of a spittoon reddened by the expectorated juice of the betel nut, but its stains are rarely seen in such

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

large patches. Whatever the origin of the stain the Pĕnghûlu and his people were afforded no opportunity of examining it more closely, for Abdulrahman and Abas, truculent to the last, followed them out of the compound and barred the gate against them.

Then the Pĕnghûlu, taking a couple of his people with him, set off on foot for Tanjong Mâlim in the neighbouring district of Bĕrnam, where lived the white man under whose administrative charge the Slim valley had been placed. He went with many misgivings, for he had had some experience of the easy scepticism of white folk; and when he returned, more or less dissatisfied some days later, he learned that Haji Ali and his sons had disappeared. They had fled down river on a dark night, without a soul being made aware of their intended departure. They had not stayed to reap their crop, which even then was ripening in the fields; to dispose of their house and compound, upon which they had expended, not only labour, but "dollars of the whitest," as the Malay phrase has it; not even to collect their debts, which chanced to be rather numerous. This was the fact which struck the white district officer as by far the most improbable incident of any connected with the strange story of the were-tiger of Slim, and for the moment it seemed to him to admit of only one explanation. Haji Ali and his sons had been the victims of foul play. They had been quietly done to death by the simple villagers of Slim, and a cock-and-bull story had been trumped up to account for their disappearance.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The white man would probably still be holding fast to this theory, were it not that Haji Ali and his sons happened to turn up in quite another part of the Peninsula a few months later. They had nothing out of the way about them to mark them from their fellows, except that Haji Ali limped badly with his right leg.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE EXPERIENCES OF RÂJA HAJI HAMID

THESE things were told to me by Râja Haji Hamid as he and I lay smoking on our sleeping-mats during the cool still hours before the dawn. He was a member of the Royal Family of Sĕlângor, and he still enjoyed throughout the length and breadth of the Peninsula the immense reputation for valour, invulnerability, successful homicides, and other manly qualities and achievements which had made him famous ere ever the white men came. He had accompanied me to the east coast as chief of my followers—an excellent band of ruffians who (to use the phrase at that time current among them) were helping me to serve as "the bait at the tip of the fish-hook" at the court of the Sultan of an independent Malay state. He had been induced to accept this post partly out of friendship for me, but mainly because he was thus enabled to turn his back for a space upon the deplorably monotonous and insipid conditions to which British rule had reduced his own country, and because, in the lawless land wherein I was then acting as political agent, he saw a prospect of renewing some of the stirring experiences of his youth.

Râja Haji and I had passed the evening in the Sultan's *bâlai*, or hall of state, watching the Chinese

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

bankers raking in their gains, while the Malays of all classes gambled and cursed their luck with the noisy slapping of thighs and many references to Allah and to his Prophet—according to whose teaching gaming is an unclean thing. The sight of the play and of the fierce passions which it aroused had awakened many memories in Râja Haji, filling him with desires that made him restless; and though he had refrained from joining in the unholy sport, it was evident that the turban around his head—which his increasing years and his manifold iniquities had driven him to Mecca to seek—was that night irksome to him, since it forbade public indulgence in such forbidden pleasures.

Now as we lay talking, ere sleep came to us, he fell to talking of the old days in Sĕlângor before the coming of the white men.

"Ya, Allah, *Tûan*," he exclaimed. "I loved those ancient times exceedingly, when all men were shy of Si-Hamid, and none dared face his *kris*, the 'Chinese Axe.' I never felt the grip of poverty in those days, for my supplies were ever at the tip of my dagger, and very few were found reckless enough to withhold aught that I desired or coveted.

"Did I ever tell you, *Tûan*, the tale of how the gamblers of Klang yielded up the money of their banks to me without resistance or the spinning of a single dice-box? No? Ah, that was a pleasant tale and a deed which was famous throughout Sĕlângor, and gave me a very great name.

"It was in this wise. I was in sorry case, for the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

boats had ceased to ply on the river through fear of me, and my followers were so few that I could not rush a town or even loot a Chinese *kong-si* house. As for the village people, they were as poor as I, and save for their womenfolk (whom, when I desired them, they had the good sense to surrender to me with docility) I never harassed them.

"Now, upon a certain day, my wives and my people came to me asking for rice, or for money with which to purchase it; but I had naught to give them, only one little dollar remaining to me. It is an accursed thing when the little ones are in want of food, and my liver grew hot within me at the thought. None of the womenfolk dared say a word when they saw that mine eyes waxed red; but the little children wept aloud, and I heard them and was sad. Moreover, I, too, was hungry, for my belly was empty. Wherefore, looking upon my solitary dollar, I called to me one of my men, and bade him go to the Chinese store and buy for me a bottle of the white men's perfume.

"Now when my wife—the mother of my son—heard this order, she cried out in anger: 'Are you mad, Father of Che' Bûjang, that you throw away your last dollar on perfumes for your lights of love, while Che' Bûjang and his brethren cry for rice?'

"But I slapped her on the mouth and said, 'Be still!' for it is not well for a man to suffer a woman to question the doings of men.

"That evening, when the night had fallen, I put on my fighting-jacket, upon which were inscribed

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

many texts from the Holy Book, my short drawers, such as the Bûgis folk weave; and I bound my *kris*, the 'Chinese Axe' about my waist, and took in my hand my so famous sword, 'the Rising Sun.' Three or four of my young men followed at my heels, and I did not forget to take with me the bottle of the white man's perfume.

"I went straight to the great Klang gaming-house, which at that hour was filled with gamblers; and when I reached the door, I halted for the space of an eye flick, and spilled the scent over my right hand and arm as far as the elbow. · Then I rushed in among the gamblers, suddenly and without warning, stepping like a fencer in the war dance, and crying '*Amok! Amok!*' till the coins danced upon the gaming-tables. All the gamblers stayed their hands from the staking, and some seized the hilts of their daggers. Then I cried aloud three times, 'I am Si-Hamid, the Tiger Unbound!'—for by that name did men then call me. 'Get you to your dwellings, and that speedily, and leave your money where it is or I will slay you!'

"Many were terrified, a few laughed, some hesitated, some even scowled at me in naughty fashion, clutching their coins; but none did as I bade them.

"'Pigs and dogs,' I cried. 'Are your ears deaf that you obey me not, or are you sated with living and desire that your shrouds should be made ready? Do instantly my bidding, or I will kill you all, as a kite swoops upon little chickens. What powers do you possess and what are your stratagems that you

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fancy you can prevail against me? For it is I, Si-Hamid—I, who am invulnerable—I whom the very fire burns, but cannot devour!'

"With that, I thrust my right hand into the flame of a Chinese gaming-lamp, and being saturated with the white man's perfume, it blazed up bravely, even to my elbow, doing me no hurt, while I waved it flaming above my head.

"Verily the white men are very clever, who so cunningly devise the medicine of these perfumes.

"Now, when all the people in the gambling-house saw that my hand and arm were burned with fire, but were not consumed, a great fear fell upon them, and they fled shrieking, no man staying to gather up his silver. This presently I counted and put into sacks, and my youths bore it to my house, and my fame waxed very great in Klang. Men said that henceforth Si-Hamid should be named, not the Tiger Unbound, but the Fiery Rhinoceros.* It was long ere the nature of my stratagem became known; and even then no man of all the many who were within the gambling-house at Klang that night had the hardihood or the imprudence to ask me for

---

**Bădak âpi*, the Fiery Rhinoceros, a monster of ancient Malayan myth. It is supposed to have quitted the earth in the company of the dragon and the lion at the instance of the magician *Sang Kĕlĕmbai*. The latter, whose spoken word turned to stone all animate and inanimate things that he addressed, fled the earth through fear of mankind, of whose size and strength he had obtained a mistaken impression. This arose from the sight of a man's *sârong* hanging from the top of a tall bamboo, upon which it had been placed when the yielding stem was pulled down to within a man's reach, and by the discovery of a little, glassy-headed, toothless man asleep in a hammock, whom *Sang Kĕlĕmbai* mistook for a newly born infant. Before his departure, he inadvertently taught mankind how to make and use a casting-net.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the money which I had borrowed from him and from his fellows.

"Ya, Allah, *Tûan*, but those days were exceedingly good days. I cannot think upon them for it makes me sad. It is true what is said in the quatrain of the men of Kĕdah—

> "Pûlau Pînang hath a new town
> And Captain Light is its king.
> Think not of the days that are gone
> Or you will bow low your head and your tears will flow.

"Ya, Allah! Ya Tûhan-ku! Verily I cannot endure these memories."

He lay tossing about upon his mat, muttering and exclaiming; and for a space I let him be. The thought of the old, free, lawless days, when it suddenly recurs to a Malayan *râja* of the old school, whose claws have been cut by the British Government, is to him like a raging tooth. It goads him to a maddened restlessness, and obliterates, for the time being, all other sensations. Words, in such circumstances, are useless; and in this particular instance I was hardly in a position to offer sympathy or consolation, seeing that Râja Haji and I were at that time engaged in an attempt to do for another Malayan state, and for the *râjas* who had battened upon it, all that my friend regretted so bitterly that the white men had done for Sĕlângor and for him.

Gradually he became calmer, and presently began

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

to chuckle comfortably to himself. Soon he spoke again.

"I remember once, when I was for the moment rich with the spoils of war, I gambled all the evening in that same gaming-house at Klang, and lost four thousand dollars. It mattered not at all on which quarter of the mat I staked, nor whether I went *ko-o*, *li-am*, or *tang*.* I pursued the red half of the die, as one chases a dog, but never once did I catch it. At length, when my four thousand dollars were finished, I arose and departed, and my liver was hot in my chest. As I came out of the gaming-house, a Chinaman whom I knew, and who loved me, followed after me and whispered in my ear: '*Hai-yah, Ungku!* You have lost much to-night. It is not fitting. That wicked one was cheating you; for he hath a trick whereby he can make the red part of the die turn to whichever quarter of the mat he chooses.'

"'Is this true?' I asked. And he made answer, 'It is indeed true.'

"Then I loosened the 'Chinese Axe' in its scabbard, and turned back into the gaming-house. First I seized the Chinaman by his pigtail, though he

*Three of the methods of staking employed in the Chinese game which the Malays call *te-po*. The mat is divided into four sections, and a die, one half of which is white and the other half red, is hidden in a solid brass box, which is then set spinning in the centre of the mat. The gamblers bet as to the quarter of the mat toward which the red half of the die will be found to be facing when the top of the box is lifted. *Ko-o* is staking on a single section, and if successful three times the amount of the stake is paid. *Li-am* is staking on two adjoining sections of the mat, and if the red die faces toward either of them, the player receives double the amount of his stake. *Tang* is staking on two opposite sections of the mat, and again double the amount of the stake is paid if the red half of the die faces toward either of them.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

yelled and struggled, loudly proclaiming his innocence; and my followers gathered up all the money in his bank—nearly seven thousand dollars, so that it took six men to carry it. Thus I departed to my house, with the Chinaman and the money, none daring to bar my passage.

"When we had entered the house, I bade the Chinaman be seated, and I told him that I would kill him, even then, if he did not show me the trick whereby he had cheated me. This he presently did; and for a long time I sat watching him and practising, for I had a mind to learn the manner of his art, thinking that later I might profit by it. Then, just as the dawn was breaking, I led the Chinaman down to the river by the hand, for I was loath to make a mess within my house; and when I had cut his throat, and had sent his body floating downstream, I washed myself, performed my religious ablutions, prayed the morning prayer, and so betook myself to my sleeping-mat, for my eyes were heavy from long waking."

"*Kasîh-an Chîna!* I am sorry for the Chinaman," I said.

"Why are you sorry for him?" asked Râja Haji. "He had cheated me, wherefore it was not fitting that he should live. Moreover, he was a Chinaman and an infidel, and the lives of such folk were not reckoned by us as being of any worth. In Kinta, before Tûan Birch came to Pêrak, they had a game called *main china*—the Chinaman game—each man betting upon the number of coins which a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

passing Chinaman carried in his pouch, and upon whether that number were odd or even. Thereafter, when the bets had been made, they would kill the Chinaman and count the coins."

"They might have done that without killing the Chinaman," I said.

"That is true," rejoined Râja Haji. "But it was a more certain way, and moreover it increased their pleasure. But, *Tûan*, the night is very far advanced and we are weary. Let us sleep."

Verily life in an independent Malay state thirty years ago, like adversity, made one acquainted with some strange bedfellows.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

DROIT DU SEIGNEUR

ONE morning, not so very many years ago, old Mat Drus, bare to the waist, sat cross-legged in the doorway of his house, in the little sleepy village of Kĕdôndong on the banks of the Pahang River. A single wide blade of *lâlang* grass was bound filet-wise about his forehead to save appearances, for all men know that it is unmannerly to wear no headdress, and Mat Drus had mislaid his kerchief. His grizzled hair stood up stiffly above the bright green of the grass-blade; his cheeks were furrowed with wrinkles; and his eyes were old and dull and patient—the eyes of the driven peasant, the cattle of mankind. His lips, red with the stain of areca nut, bulged over a damp quid of Java tobacco, shredded fine and rolled into a ball the size of a large marble. His jaws worked mechanically, chewing the betel nut, as a cow chews the cud, and his hands were busy with a little brass tube in which he was crushing up a fresh quid, for his teeth were old and ragged and had long been powerless to masticate the nut without artificial aid. The fowls clucked and scratched about the litter of trash with which the space before the house was strewn; and a monkey of the kind the Malays call *brôk*, and train to pluck cocoanuts, sat

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

on a wooden box fixed on the top of an upright pole, searching diligently for fleas and occasionally emitting a plaintive, mournful whimper. In the dim interior of the house the forms of two or three women could be indistinctly seen, and their voices sounded amid the recurring clack of crockery. Now and again a laugh—the laugh of a very young girl—rippled out, its merry cadences striking a note of joyousness and youth.

Presently a youngster, brilliantly dressed in silks of many colours, swaggered into the compound. He carried a *kris* in his girdle, and a short sword, with a sheath of polished wood, in his hand.

"O Che' Mat Drus," he cried, as soon as he caught sight of the old man in the doorway.

"What thing is it?" inquired the latter, pausing in the preparation of his betel quid, and raising weary eyes to gaze on the newcomer.

"The Grandfather (Chief) sends greetings and bids you come on the morrow's morn to the rice-field —you and all your folk, male and female, young and old—to aid in plucking the tares from amid the standing crop."

"It is well," mumbled Che' Mat Drus, resuming his pounding stolidly.

"But listen. The Grandfather sends word that no one of your household is to remain behind. Do you understand? The womenfolk also must come, even down to the girl Mînah, whom your son Dâman hath recently taken to wife."

"If there be no sickness, calamity, or impediment

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

we will surely come," Mat Drus made answer, employing the cautious formula of his people.

"And forget not the girl Mînah," added the youth.

But here a third voice broke into the conversation —a voice shrill and harsh and angry, which ran up the scale to a painful pitch, and broke queerly on the higher notes.

"Have you the heart, Kria? Have you the heart to bring this message to my man. We are both of age, you and I. We know and understand. May the Grandfather die by a spear cast from afar! May he die a violent death, stabbed, bowstrung and impaled crosswise! May he die vomiting blood, and you, too, Kria, who are but the hunting-dog of the Chief!"

"Peace! Peace!" cried Mat Drus in an agitated voice, turning upon his wife a face that betokened an agony of fear. "Hold your peace, woman without shame. And Kria, do you tell the Grandfather that we will surely come, aye, and the girl Mînah also, according to his bidding; and heed not the words of this so foolish woman of mine."

"I care not to bandy words with a hag," said Kria. "But the Grandfather will be wroth when he learns of the ill things that your woman has spoken."

"They are without meaning—they are of no account—the words of a woman who is growing childish," protested Mat Drus. "Pay no heed to them, and I pray you, speak not to the Grandfather concerning them."

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"She hath a wicked mouth, this woman of yours, and it is not fitting that such words should be spoken. I am loath to repeat them to the Grandfather, for were I to do so, a great evil would certainly overtake you. Show me that spear of yours—the ancient spear with a silver hasp at the base of the blade. I have a mind to borrow it. Ah, it is a good spear, and I will take it as an earnest of the love you bear me."

"Take it," said Mat Drus meekly; and Kria having possessed himself of this weapon, which he had long coveted, swaggered off to pass the word to other villagers that the Chief required their services for the weeding of his rice crop.

The sun stood high in the heavens, its rays beating down pitilessly upon the broad expanse of rice-field. A tall fence of bamboo protected the crop, shutting it off on the one side from the rhododendron scrub and the grazing-grounds beyond which rose the palm and fruit groves and the thatched roofs of the village, and on the other three from the forest, which formed a dark bank of foliage rising abruptly from the edge of the land which had been won from it by the labour of successive generations of men. The cubit-high spears of the *pâdi* carpeted the earth with vivid colour, absorbing the sun's rays and refracting them, and the transparent heat haze danced thin and restless over the flatness of the cultivated fields. The weeders, with their *sârongs* wound turban-wise about their heads to protect them from

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the sun, squatted at their work—men, women, and little children—the vertical rays dwarfing their shadows into malformed almost circular patches around their feet. They moved forward in an irregular line, digging out the tares by the roots with their clumsy *pârangs*.

Near the centre of the largest field a temporary hut had been erected, walled and thatched with palm fronds. Within it was garnished with a ceiling-cloth of white cotton, from which on all sides depended wall-hangings of the same material and of many colours. The only furniture were the sleeping-mat and pillows of the Chief, and numerous brass trays, covered by square pieces of patchwork, and filled with food and sweetmeats specially prepared for the occasion. These reposed upon a coarse mat fashioned from the plaited fronds of dried *mĕng-kûang* palms. In the interior of the Malay Peninsula in those days the luxury accessible to even the richest and most powerful natives was of a somewhat primitive order; but to the eyes of the simple villagers the interior of this hut represented as advanced a standard of comfort and civilization as did the *château* of a noble in pre-revolutionary France to the peasants who dwelt on his estate.

About noon the Chief emerged from his hut and began a tour of inspection among the weeders, throwing a word to one or another of the men, and staring boldly at the women, with the air of a farmer apprizing his stock. Half a dozen well-armed and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

gaudily clad youths followed at the heels of their master.

Old Mat Drus and his son Dâman, with three or four women, were squatting near the edge of the jungle, weeding diligently, and as the Chief drew near, Mînah, the girl who had recently married Dâman crept a little closer to her husband.

The Chief halted and stood for a while gazing at the group of toilers. He was a big, burly fellow, of a full habit of body, and well past middle age. He had a large, square, brutal face, garnished with a ragged fringe of beard that proclaimed his Sumatran descent, and his feet and hands were of unusual size. When he spoke his voice was harsh and coarse.

"What is the news, Mat Drus?" he asked, employing the common formula of greeting.

"The news is good, O Grandfather," replied Mat Drus, stopping in his work, and turning submissively toward the Chief. All the rest of the party, squatting humbly in the dust, moved so as to face their master, the womenfolk bowing low their heads to evade the hungry eyes of the Chief.

"Who is this child?" the great man inquired, indicating Mînah with his outthrust chin.

"She is the wife of your servant's son, O Grandfather," replied Mat Drus.

"Whose daughter is she?"

"She is your servant's daughter, O Grandfather," an old and ill-favoured woman made answer, from her place at Mat Drus's elbow.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Verily a *sâlak* fruit," cried the Chief. "An ugly tree, thorny and thin, are you, but you have borne a pretty, luscious fruit."

The weeders laughed obsequiously.

"How very witty are the words of our Grandfather!" ejaculated Mat Drus, in a voice carefully calculated to reach the ears of his master. The Chief did not even condescend to look at him.

"Dainty Fruit," he said, addressing Mînah, "you are parched by reason of your toil and the heat. Come to my hut yonder, and I will give you delicious sweetmeats to slake the thirst in that pretty throat of yours."

"Don't want to," mumbled the girl.

"Nay, but I bid you come," said the Chief.

"Go, child," urged her mother.

"Don't want to," the girl repeated, edging more close to Dâman, as though seeking his protection.

"What meaneth this?" roared the Chief, whose eyes began to wax red. "Do as I bid, you daughter of an evil mother."

"She is afraid," pleaded Mat Drus in a trembling voice. "Be not wroth, O Grandfather. She is very young, and her fears are heavy upon her."

"May she die a violent death!" bellowed the Chief. "Come, I say. Come!"

"Go, child, go," urged all the women in a chorus of frightened whispers; but the girl only nestled closer to her husband.

"Are your ears deaf?" cried the Chief. "Come

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

forthwith, or in a little you shall be dragged to my hut."

"Have patience, O Grandfather," said Dâman sulkily. "She is my wife to me. She doth not desire to go. Let her be."

"Arrogant one!" screamed the Chief. "You are indeed a brave man to dare to flout me. Already I hear the new-turned earth shouting for you to the coffin planks. You shall lend a hand to drag her to my hut."

At the word Dâman leaped to his feet. Until now, like the rest of his fellows, he had squatted humbly at the feet of the Chief—a serf in the presence of his lord; but now he stood erect, an equal facing an equal —a man defending his womenfolk from one who sought to put a shame upon them and upon him.

"Peace, Dâman! Have patience!" cried Mat Drus, his voice shaking with terror; but his son had no thought to spare for any save the Chief just then. His clear young eyes looked unflinchingly into the brutal, bloodshot orbs set in the sodden, self-indulgent face of his enemy, and the Chief's gaze faltered and quailed. Dâman's palm smote his wooden dagger-hilt with a resounding slap, and the Chief reeled hastily backward, almost losing his footing. The youngster, inspired by the passion of fury and indignation that possessed him, was lifted out of himself. The traditions of a lifetime were forgotten, together with the fear of rank and power that custom had instilled into him. The peasant had given place to the primordial man, fighting for his woman

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

against no matter what odds, and had the two been alone it would, in that hour, have gone ill with the Chief.

The latter's armed youths surged up around their tottering master, and the coward felt his courage returning to him when he realized that they were at hand.

No word was spoken for a little space, as the enemies eyed one another; but Mînah, crouching close to Dâman's mother, whimpered miserably, though a thrill of love and admiration ran through her as she marked the bearing of her man.

Suddenly Kria, who stood a little to the right of the Chief, raised his arm in the act to throw, and the intense sunlight flashed for a moment on the naked blade of a spear—a spear with a silver hasp which, until recently, had been the property of Dâman's father. Kria's eye sought that of the Chief, and the latter signalled to him to use his weapon. Immediately the long spear, with its shining blade, flew forward with incredible velocity, like a snake in the act of striking; but Dâman leaped aside, and the missile hissed harmlessly past him.

"Strike with the paralyzer," yelled the Chief; and at the word one of his youths ran forward and stabbed swiftly and repeatedly at Dâman with a long, uncanny-looking weapon. It was a very long forked spear, with two sharp blades, barbed and of unequal length; and in spite of Dâman's frantic efforts to avoid the thrusts of his assailant, the longer of the two points was presently driven deep into his

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

chest. He was now powerless, for the barbed tip could not be withdrawn, and the sharp point of the shorter blade prevented him from running up the spear, and getting to close quarters with his *kris*, as has frequently been done in the Peninsula by one mortally stricken.

The women screamed shrilly, and Mînah sought to run to her husband's aid, but those around her held her fast in spite of her tears and struggles. The weeders from all parts of the field had assembled, and stood watching the unequal fight, the men standing aloof, murmuring sullenly, but not daring to interfere, the women huddled together in terrified groups, wailing piteously—and above the tumult the coarse laugh of the Chief rang out.

"Verily a fish at the tip of a fish spear! Watch how he writhes and wriggles! Have a care not to kill him until we have had our sport with him!"

But Dâman, who had not uttered a sound, was still fighting gamely. He soon found that it was impossible for him to wrench the barbed spear from his breast, and seeing this, he threw his *kris* violently in the face of the man who had stabbed him. The snaky blade flew straight as a dart, and the tip ripped open the cheek and eyelid of Dâman's assailant. Blinded by the blood, the latter dropped the end of the spear, and Dâman now strove manfully, in spite of the agony it occasioned him, to wrench the blade free. This was an unexpected turn for affairs to take, and the Chief's laughter stopped abruptly.

"Kill him! Kill him!" he screamed to his men;

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and forthwith Kria, who had recovered his weapon, stabbed Dâman full in the throat with the broad spear-blade. The murdered man collapsed on the ground, giving vent to a thick, choking cough, and no sooner was he down than all the Chief's youths rushed in to whet their blades in his shuddering flesh.

Mînah, distraught with grief and horror, threw herself prostrate upon the ground, seeking to shut out the sight with her tightly clasped hands; and as she lay on the warm earth, the wailing of the women, the rough growlings of the men, and the soft whisperings of the steel blades, piercing the now lifeless body of her husband, told her that all was over.

The day waned, the darkness shut down over the land, and the moon rose above the broad, still river, pale and passionless, looking calmly down upon a world which, bathed in her rays, seemed unutterably peaceful and serene. But all through that night, and during many days and nights to come, the pitiful wailing of a girl broke the stillness of the silent hours in the neighbourhood of the Chief's compound. It was only Mînah mourning for her dead, and taking more time than her friends thought altogether necessary to become accustomed to her surroundings as one of the household of the Chief.

Her new lord was not unnaturally annoyed by her senseless clamour; and beating, he discovered, tended only to increase the nuisance. But crumpled rose leaves are to be met with in every bed of flowers, and the Chief had, at any rate, the satisfaction of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

knowing that for the future the season of weeding would be a merry time for him, and that all would be conducted with seemliness and with order, without any risk of his peace or his pleasure being further disturbed by rude and vulgar brawls.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

IN THE VALLEY OF THE TĔLOM

VERY far away, in the remote interior of Pahang, there is a river called the Tĕlom—an angry little stream, which fights and tears its way through the vast primeval forest, biting savagely at its banks, wrestling petulantly with the rocks and boulders that obstruct its path, squabbling fiercely over long, sloping beds of shingle, and shaking a glistening mane of broken water, as it rushes downward in its fury. Sometimes, during the prevalence of the northeast monsoon, when the rain has fallen heavily in the mountains, the Tĕlom will rise fourteen or fifteen feet in a couple of hours; and then, for a space, its waters change their temper from wild, impetuous rage to a sullen wrath which is even more formidable and dangerous. But it is when the river is shrunken by drought that it is most of all to be feared; for at such times sharp and jagged rocks, over which, at ordinary seasons, a bamboo raft is able to glide in safety, prick upward from the bed of the stream to within an inch or two of the surface, and rip up everything that chances to come in contact with them as cleanly as though it were cut with a razor. At the foot of the largest rapid in the Tĕlom one of these boulders forms, in dry weather, a very efficient trap for the unwary. The

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

channel narrows somewhat at this point, and is confined between high walls of rock, water-worn to a glassy smoothness, and the raging torrent pouring down the fall is obstructed by the jagged blocks of granite, with which the river-bed is studded. One of these leans slightly upstream, for the friction of ages has fashioned a deep cavity at the point where the full force of the river strikes it; and when the waters are low, it is impossible for a raft to avoid this obstacle.

The rafts, which are the only craft in use upon the upper reaches of Malayan rivers, are formed of about eighteen bamboos lashed side by side, and held in horizontal position by stout wooden stays, bound firmly above and across them by lacings of rattan. They are usually some twenty feet in length, the bow consisting of the larger ends of the bamboos, trimmed so as to present an even front to the stream, and the sterns of the tapering extremities cut short a couple of feet or so from their tips. Bamboos of rather larger size than the others are selected to form the two sides of the raft, and in the centre a low platform, some four feet square, is raised above the general level, and floored with split and flattened bamboos for the accommodation of a passenger or baggage. Each bamboo, of course, consists of a series of more or less watertight compartments—quite watertight at the outset, very imperfectly so later on, when the rafts have been subjected to the rough usage to which a journey down a rock- and rapid-beset river exposes them; but

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

even at their worst they possess great flotage, though their very lightness causes them to wallow knee-deep as they whirl headlong down a fall at a pace that is exhilarating, with the angry waters roaring around and over them. The more shrunken the stream, the more desperate the pace at which a bamboo raft spins down the rapids, for the height of the fall suffers no change, while in the dry season the volume of water is insufficient to break the drop and soften the descent.

Thus it befalls that, when the river is low, a raft sent charging down this big rapid of the Tělom, between the sheer walls of granite, comes to eternal grief when it strikes the leaning rock which obstructs the channel near its foot. A sound like a scream—the agonized pain cry of the bamboos—is heard above the tumult of the waters as the raft strikes the boulder; another second, and the bow is fast wedged beneath the projecting ledge of rock; again the bamboos give a despairing shriek, and the tail of the raft rises swiftly to a perpendicular position. For a moment it waggles irresolutely, and then, like the sail of a windmill, it whirls round in the air, the bow held firmly in position by the rock, serving as its axle, and smites the waters beyond with a resounding flap. Every one of the bamboos is smashed in an instant into starting, shrieking slivers, which have edges that can cut as sharply as the keenest knife. If there be men on board, they are cast high into the air, are broken pitilessly upon the rocks, are wounded horribly by the matchwood that was

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

once their raft, or are to be seen battling desperately with that raging torrent. If, however, he can reach the water without sustaining serious hurt, a stout swimmer has a good chance of life, for a strong current sets off, as well as toward, every midstream boulder, and, if use be made of this, a man may win in safety to the calmer waters down below the rapid.

Jĕram Mûsoh Kâram—the Rapid of the Drowned Enemy—this place is named in the vernacular; and native tradition tells of an invading expedition utterly destroyed in this terrible, rock-bound death-trap. But men who know the records of the river tell you that it spares friend no more than it once spared foe; and since Malays are ever wont to take their chance of danger rather than submit to the abandonment of a raft, and to the labour which constructing another in its place entails, the number of its kills waxes larger and larger as the years slip away.

The probability that its supply of victims will be fairly constant is strengthened by the fact that it is precisely at the season when the river is at its lowest that the valley of the Tĕlom fills with life. The black tin ore, found in the sands and shingles which form the bed of the stream, is only accessible during a drought, and the Malays come hither in little family parties to wash for it. All day long, men, women, and small children stand in the shallows, deftly manipulating their big flat wooden trays, sluicing the lighter sands over the edges, picking out and throwing away the pebbles, and storing the little pinches of almost pure tin, which in the end

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

remain, in the hollows of bamboos, which they carry slung from their waists. At night-time they camp in rude palm-leaf shelters, built on the banks of the stream; roast in the cleft of a split stick such fish as they have caught; boil their ration of rice; and when full-fed, discuss the results of the day's toil, ere they lie down to sleep, lulled by the night songs of the forest around them. The quantity of tin won by them is not large; but Malays are capable of a great deal of patient labour if it chances to take a form that they happen, for the moment, to find congenial, and these tin-washing expeditions serve to break the monotony of their days.

During the dry season, moreover, the jungles are one degree less damp and sodden than at other times, and the searchers for *gĕtah* rattan, and other jungle produce, seize the opportunity to penetrate into the gloomy depths of the forest where these things are to be found. Nothing is more dreary than a sojourn in such places when the rains come in with the northeast monsoon, for then the sun is unable to force a ray through the sodden canopy of leaves and branches overhead to dry what the downpours have soaked, the drip from above never ceases, even when for a little the rain abates, and the leeches go upon the warpath in their millions during all the hours of daylight. By a merciful disposition of Providence, these rapacious and insidious blood suckers go to bed at dusk like humans. Were it otherwise, a night passed among them in a Malayan forest would mean certain death.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Meanwhile, the magnificent *dûri-an* groves, which grow on the banks of the upper reaches of the Tĕlom, are rich with a profusion of fruit, and the semi-wild tribes of *Sâkai* come from far and near to camp beneath the shade of the giant trees, and to gorge rapturously. They erect small shacks just beyond the range of the falling fruit, for a blow from a *dûri-an*, which is about the size of a Rugby football, and covered all over with stout, pyramidal thorns, is a by no means infrequent cause of death in the Malay Peninsula. By day and night they maintain their watch, and when, during the hours of darkness, the dulled thud of the fruit falling into the underwood is heard, a wild stampede ensues from the shelters of the jungle dwellers, in order that it may be immediately secured. This is necessary, for every denizen of the forest, including the big carnivora, delight in the *dûri-an*, and are attracted to it by its strange and wonderful smell; and a man must be quick in the gathering if he would avoid a fight for possession with some of the most formidable of his natural enemies.

But it is not only by human beings that the valley of the Tĕlom is overrun during the dry season of the year; for it is then that the great salt lick of Mîsong is crowded with game. The Mîsong is a small stream that falls into the Tĕlom on its left bank, some miles above the rapids. About a couple of thousand yards up the Mîsong, from its point of junction with the Tĕlom, there is a spot where its right bank, though covered with virgin forest, is

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

much trodden by the passage of game. The underwood, usually as dense as a thick-set hedge, is here so worn down that it is thin and sparse. The trees are smooth in places, and the lower branches have been trimmed evenly, just as those of the chestnuts in Bushy Park are trimmed by the fallow-deer; and here and there the trunks are marked by great belts of mud, eight feet from the ground, showing where wild elephants have stood, rocking to and fro, gently rubbing their backs against the rough bark. Great clefts are worn in the river bank on both sides of the stream, such as the kine make near Malayan villages at the points where they are accustomed daily to go down to water; but on the Mîsong these have been trodden down by the passage of wild animals.

A bold sweep of the stream forms at this point a rounded headland, flat and level, and covering, it may be, some two acres of ground. Here and there patches of short, closely cropped grass colour the ground a brilliant green, but, for the most part, the earth underfoot has the appearance of a deeply ploughed field. This is the salt lick of Mîsong.

The soil is here impregnated with saline deposits, and the beasts of the forest come hither in their multitudes to lick the salt, which to them—as to the aboriginal tribes of the Peninsula also—is "sweeter" than anything in the world. Sâkai or Sĕmang will squat around a wild-banana leaf, on to which a bag of rock salt has been emptied, and devour it gluttonously, sucking their fingers, like a pack of greedy

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

children round a box of sugar plums. It is Nature in them howling for the corrective which alone can keep scurvy at arm's length from the perpetual vegetarian; and the beasts of the forest, driven by a similar craving, risk all dangers to obey a like command. When the waters of the Mîsong are swollen with rain, the salt cannot be got at, and the lick is deserted, but in dry weather all the surrounding jungle is alive with game, and at night-time it is transformed into a sort of Noah's Ark. In the soft and yielding earth may be seen the slot of deer of a dozen varieties; the hoofprints of the wild buffalo, the strongest of all the beasts; the long sharp scratches made by the toes of the rhinoceros; the pitted trail and the deep rootings of the wild swine; the pad track of the tiger; the tiny footprints of the *kanchil*, the perfectly formed little antelope, which is not quite as heavy as a rabbit; and the great round sockets punched in the clay by the ponderous feet of elephants. Here come, too, the black panther and the tapir, the packs of wild dogs, which always hunt in company, and the jungle cats of all kinds, from the brute which resembles a tiger in all save its bulk, to the slender spotted creature, built as lightly as a greyhound. Sitting in the fork of a tree, high above the heads of the game, so that your wind cannot disturb them, you may watch all the animal life of the jungle come and go within a few yards of you, and if you have the patience to keep your rifle quiet, you may see a thousand wonderful things on a clear moonlit night.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

It was to the salt lick of Mîsong that my friend Pandak Âris came one day, with two Sâkai companions, from his house below the rapids. When I knew him, he was an old man of seventy or thereabout, wizened and dry, with deep furrows of wrinkle on face and body. His left arm was shrivelled and powerless, and he bore many ugly scars besides. His closely cropped hair was white as hoarfrost, and from his chin there depended a long goat's beard of the same hue, which waggled to and fro with the motion of his lips. Two solitary yellow fangs were set in his gums, and his mouth was a cavern stained to a dark red colour with betel-nut juice. His words came indistinctly through his quid and the wad of coarse tobacco which he held wedged between his upper lip and his toothless gums; but he had many things to tell concerning the jungles in which he had lived so long, and of the Sâkai folk with whom he had associated, and, whenever I chanced to tie up my boat for the night at his bathing-raft, we were wont to sit talking till the dawn was reddening in the east, for age had made of him a very bad sleeper.

In his youth he had come across the Peninsula from Rĕmbau, near its western seaboard, to the interior of Pahang, on the other side of the main range of mountains, which run from north to south. He had had no special object in his journey, but had drifted aimlessly, as young men will, to the fate that awaited him, he knew not where. She proved to be a Jĕlai girl whose people lived near the limits of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the Sâkai country, and, after he had married her, they took up their abode a couple of days' journey up the Tĕlom River, where they might be completely alone, for no other Malays lived permanently in this valley. She had borne him three sons and two daughters, and he had planted cocoanuts and fruit trees, which now cast a grateful shade about his dwelling, and cultivated a patch of rice annually in a new clearing on the side of one of the neighbouring hills. Thus he had lived, quite contentedly, without once leaving the valley, for nearly fifty years before I first met him. He had remained, during all that long, long time, wrapped in a seclusion and in an untroubled peace and quiet almost unimaginable to a modern European; rarely seeing a strange face from year's end to year's end, concerned only with the microscopic incidents in which he was himself concerned, and entirely undisturbed by the hum and throb of the great world without. Think of it, ye white men! He had only one life on earth, and this is how he spent it—like the frog beneath the half cocoanut shell, as the Malay proverb has it, which dreams not that there are other worlds than his. Wars had raged within sixty miles of his home, but his peace had not been broken; immense changes had been wrought in political, social, and economic conditions from one end of the Peninsula to the other, but they had affected him not at all. The eternal forest, in which and by which he lived, had remained immutable; and the one great event of his life, which had scored its mark deeply upon both

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

his mind and his body, was that which had befallen him at the salt lick of Mîsong, a score of years and more before I chanced upon him.

He told me the tale brokenly, as a child might do, as he and I sat talking in the dim light of the *dâmar* torch, guttering on its clumsy wooden stand, set in the centre of the mat-strewn floor; and ever and anon he pointed to his stiff left arm, and to certain ugly scars upon his body, calling upon them to bear witness that he did not lie.

It was in the afternoon that Pandak Âris and his two Sâkai followers reached the salt lick of Mîsong. They had been roaming through the forest all day long, blazing *getah* trees, for it was Pandak Âris's intention to prepare a large consignment of the precious gum, so that it might be in readiness when the washers for tin came up into the valley during the next dry season. The Malay and his Sâkai all knew the salt lick well, and as it was an open space near running water, and they were hungry after their tramp, they decided to halt here and cook rice. They built a fire near the base of a giant tree, which grew a hundred yards or so inland from the left bank of the stream, at a point where the furrowed earth of the lick begins to give place to heavy jungle. The dry sticks blazed up bravely, the flame showing pale and almost invisible in the strong sunlight of the afternoon, while thin vapours danced frenziedly above it. The small black metal rice pot was propped upon three stones in the centre of the crackling fuel, and while one of the Sâkai sat stirring

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the rice, with a spoon improvised from a piece of wood, and the other plucked leeches from his bleeding legs, and cut them thoughtfully into pieces with his *pârang*, Pandak Âris began to prepare a quid of betel nut from the ingredients, which he carried in a set of little brass boxes, wrapped in a cotton handkerchief. The gentle murmur of bird and insect, which precedes the wild clamour of the sunset hour, was beginning to purr through the forest, and the Mîsong sang drowsily as it pattered over its pebbles. Pandak Âris's eyes began to blink sleepily, and the Sâkai who had dismembered his last leech, stretched himself in ungainly wise, and then, rolling over on his face, was asleep before his nose touched the grass. This is the manner of the Sâkai, and of some of the other lower animals.

Suddenly a wild tumult of noise shattered the stillness. The Sâkai, who was minding the rice, screamed a shrill cry of warning to his companions, but it was drowned by the sound of a ferocious trumpeting, not unlike the sound of a steam siren, the explosive crashing of boughs and branches, the rending of underwood, and a heavy, rapid tramping that seemed to shake the ground. The cooking Sâkai had swung himself into a tree, and was now swarming up it, like a monkey, never pausing to look below until the topmost fork was reached. His sleeping fellow had awakened, at the first alarm, with a leap that carried him some yards from the spot where he had been lying—for the Sâkai, who can fall asleep like an animal, can wake into com-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

plete alertness as abruptly as any other forest creature. A second later, he, too, was sitting in the highest fork of a friendly tree; and from their perches both he and his companion were scolding and chattering like a couple of terrified apes. And all this had happened before Pandak Âris, who had only been dozing, had fully realized that danger was at hand. Then he also bounded to his feet, and as he did so, two long white tusks, and a massive trunk held menacingly aloft, two fierce little red eyes, and an enormous bulk of dingy crinkled hide came into view within a yard of him.

Pandak Âris dodged behind the trunk of the big tree with amazing rapidity, thus saving himself from the onslaught of the squealing elephant, and a moment later he, too, had swung himself into safety among the branches overhead; for a jungle-bred Malay is quick enough on occasion, though he cannot rival the extraordinary activity of the Sâkai, which is that of a startled stag.

The elephant charged the fire savagely, scattering the burning brands far and wide, trampling upon the rice pot, till it was flattened to the likeness of a piece of tin, kneading the brass betel boxes deep into the earth, keeping up all the while a torrent of ferocious squealings. The whole scene only lasted a moment or two, and then the brute whirled clumsily about, and still trumpeting its war-cry, disappeared into the forest as suddenly as it had emerged from it.

Pandak Âris and the two Sâkai sat in the trees,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and listened to the crashing of the elephant through the underwood growing fainter and fainter in the distance, until at last it died away.

"How can one name such ferocity as this?" murmured Pandak Âris, with the aggrieved, half wondering patience of the Oriental, in whose long-enduring soul calamity never awakens more than a certain mild disgust. He looked down very sadly upon the flattened metal which had once been his rice pot, and upon the shapeless lumps of brass deeply embedded in the soil, which had so lately contained the ingredients for his quids.

The two Sâkai, gibbering in the upper branches, shook the boughs on which they were seated, with the agony of the terror which still held them.

"The Old Father was filled with wrath," whispered the elder of the two. He was anxious to speak of the brute that had assailed them with the greatest respect, and above all things to avoid proper names. Both he and his fellow were convinced that the rogue was an incarnation of their former friend and tribesman Pa′ Pâtin—the Spike Fish—who had come by his death on the salt lick two years earlier; but they were much too prudent to express this opinion openly, or at such a time. In life, Pa′ Pâtin had been a mild enough individual, but he seemed to have developed a temper during his sojourn in the land of shades, and the two Sâkai were not going to outrage his feelings by making any direct allusion to him.

Presently, Pandak Âris climbed down from his

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

tree, and began somewhat ruefully to gather together his damaged property. He cried to the two Sâkai to come down and aid him, but they sat shuddering in their lofty perches and declined to move. Pandak Âris quickly lost his temper.

"Come down!" he yelled at them. "Descend out of the branches, ye children of sin! May you die violent deaths! Come down! Are your ears deaf that you obey me not?"

But the terrified Sâkai would not budge, and maintained an obstinate silence.

Pandak Âris, capering in his impotent rage, miscalled them with all that amplitude of vocabulary which, upon occasion, the Malays know how to use. He threatened them with all manner of grievous punishments; he tried to bribe the trembling wretches with promises of food and tobacco; he flung stones and sticks at them, which they evaded without the least difficulty; at last he even condescended to entreat them to come down. But all was in vain. The Sâkai are still, to some extent, arboreal in their habits, and when once fear has driven them to seek safety in the trees, some time must elapse before sufficient confidence is restored to them to embolden them again to face the dangers of life upon the ground. Pandak Âris would willingly have wrung their necks, could he but have got within reach of them; but he knew the hopelessness of attempting to chase these creatures through the branches, for Sâkai can move among the treetops with the instinctive dexterity of monkeys. At length, there-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fore, very much out of temper, he abandoned the idea of persuading his companions to rejoin him that night.

Meanwhile, much time had been wasted, and already the waters of the Mîsong were running red beneath the ruddy glow overhead that marked the setting of the sun. The tocsin of the insect world was ringing through the forest, and the birds' chorus was slowly dying into silence. High above the topmost branches of the trees, the moon, not yet at the full, was showing pale and faint, though each moment the power of its gentle light was gaining strength. Pandak Âris glanced at these things, and drew from them a number of conclusions. It was too late for him to push on to the mouth of the Mîsong, near which his camp had been pitched that morning; for no Malay willingly threads the jungle unaccompanied, and least of all after darkness has fallen. It was too late, also, to erect a camp on the salt lick, for after the shock which his nerves had sustained from the attack of the rogue elephant, he had no fancy for penetrating into the forest to cut the materials for a hut, unless at least one of the Sâkai would go with him. Therefore, he decided to camp on the bare earth at the foot of the monster tree near which he stood. It would be fairly light, he told himself, until some three hours before the dawn, and though his rice pot had been smashed, and he would have to go supperless to bed, he would light a big fire and sleep beside its protecting blaze. But here an unexpected difficulty presented itself.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The flint and steel, with which the fire was to be kindled, was nowhere to be found. With the rest of Pandak Âris's gear, it had been tossed into the undergrowth by the rogue elephant, and the fading light refused to reveal where it had fallen. Pandak Âris searched with increasing anxiety and a feverish diligence for half an hour, but without result, and at the end of that time the darkness forced him to abandon all hope of finding it. If he could have lighted upon a seasoned piece of rattan, a really dry log, and a tough stick, he could have ignited a fire by friction; but rattan grows green in the jungle, and no suitable log or piece of stick were at the moment available.

Pandak Âris lay down upon the warm earth between the buttress roots of the big tree, and swore softly, but with fluency, under his breath. He cursed the Sâkai, the mothers that bore them, and all their male and female relatives to the fifth and sixth generation, and said many biting things of fate and destiny. Then he rolled over on his side, and fell asleep. The roots of the tree, between which he lay, had their junction with the trunk at a height of some two or three feet above the surface of the ground. Thence they sloped downward, at a sharp angle, and meandered away through the grass and the underwood, in all manner of knotty curves and undulations. Pandak Âris, occupying the space between two of these roots, was protected by a low wall of very tough wood on either side of him, extending from his head to his hips, just beyond

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the reach of his fingertips as he lay, but gradually dwindling away to nothing.

The placid light of the moon flooded the jungle with its soft radiance, lending a ghostly and mysterious air to this little clearing in the forest, and peopling it with fantastic shadows. It shone upon the face of the sleeping Malay, and upon the two Sâkai hunched up, with their heads between their knees, snoring uneasily in the treetops. The ants ran hither and thither over Pandak Âris's body, and the jungle hummed with the myriad night noises of nocturnal birds and insects, but the rhythm of this gentle murmur did not disturb the sleepers.

Suddenly the two Sâkai awoke with a start. They said never a word, but they listened intently. Very far away, across the Mîsong, a dry branch had snapped, with a faint but crisp sound. The ear of an European would hardly have detected the noise, even if its owner had been listening for it, but it had sufficed to arouse the sleeping Sâkai into an alert wakefulness. It was repeated again and again. Now several twigs and branches seemed to snap simultaneously; now there came a swishing sound, as of green leaves ripped from their boughs by a giant's hand; and then for a space silence would ensue. These sounds grew gradually louder and more distinct, and for nearly an hour the Sâkai sat listening to them while Pandak Âris still slept. At the end of that time a soft squelching noise was suddenly heard, followed presently by a *pop*, like the drawing of a big cork; and this was repeated many times, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

was succeeded by the splashing of water sluiced over hot, rough hides. Even a white man would at once have interpreted the meaning of this; but again the Sâkai would have outdistanced him, for their ears had told them, not only that a herd of elephants, which had been browsing through the forest, had come down to water in the Mîsong, but also the number of the beasts, and that one of them was a calf of tender age.

The wind was blowing from the jungle across the river to the trees where the men were camped, so the elephants took their bath with much leisure, undisturbed by their proximity, splashing and wallowing mightily in the shallows and in such pools as they could find. Then they floundered singly ashore, and later began working slowly round, under cover of the jungle, so as to get below the wind before venturing out upon the open space of the salt lick. The Sâkai, high up in the trees, could watch the surging of the underwood, as the great beasts rolled through it, but the footfall of the elephants made no noise, and except when one or another of the animals cracked a bough or stripped it of its leaves, the progress of the herd was wonderfully unmarked by sound. The wind of the Sâkai passed over their heads, though from time to time they held their moistened trunk tips aloft, searching the air with them, but they presently scented Pandak Âris. Instantly a perfect tumult of trumpetings and squealings broke the stillness of the night, and was followed by a wild stampede. Pandak Âris, awake at

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

last, listened to the crashing and tearing noise caused by the herd flinging itself through the underwood, and fancied that they were charging down upon him full tilt. It is often well-nigh impossible in the jungle to tell the direction in which big game are moving when they are on the run, but this time the elephants had been seized with panic and were in desperate flight.

Over and over again, while the light of the moon still held, game of all kinds made its way to a point below the wind, whence to approach the salt lick, and each time the tainted wind told them that men were in possession. The savage blowing and snorting of the wild kine, the grunting protests of a herd of swine, the abrupt, startled bark of a stag, and many other jungle sounds all were heard in turn, and each was succeeded by the snapping of dry twigs or the crashing of rent underwood, which told of a hasty retreat.

At first Pandak Âris sought safety in the branches of the tree, but very soon the agony of discomfort caused by his uneasy seat and by the red ants which swarmed over him, biting like dogs, drove him once more to brave the perils of the earth.

At about 2:30 A. M. the moon sank to rest, and a black darkness, such as is only to be found at night-time in a Malayan forest, shut down upon the land. Though Pandak Âris squatted or lay at the edge of the open, he could not distinguish the branches against the sky, nor see his own hand, when he waggled it before his eyes; and the impenetrable

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

gloom that enveloped him wrought his already overstrained nerves to a pitch of agonized intensity.

And now a fresh horror was lent to his situation, for the larger game no longer troubled themselves to approach the salt lick from below the wind. From time to time Pandak Âris could hear some unknown beast floundering through the waters of the Mîsong, or treading softly upon the kneaded earth within a few feet of him. He was devoured by sand-flies, which he knew came to him from the beasts that now were crowding the salt lick, and they fastened on his bare skin, and nestled in his hair, driving him almost frantic by the fierce itching which they occasioned.

Now and again some brute would pass so near to him that Pandak Âris could hear the crisp sound of its grazing, the noise it made in licking the salt, or the rhythm of its heavy breath. Occasionally one or other of them would wind him, as the sudden striking of hoofs against the ground, or an angry snorting or blowing, would make plain. But all this time Pandak Âris could *see* nothing.

Many times he clambered into the tree, but his weary bones could find no rest there, and the ferocity of the red ants quickly drove him to earth again.

Shortly before the dawn Pandak Âris was startled out of an uneasy, fitful doze by the sound of some huge animal passing very close to him. He could hear the sound of its movements more distinctly than he had yet heard those of any of the other beasts which had peopled his waking nightmare; and as he still lay listening, there came suddenly a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

mighty blowing, then a ferocious snort, and some monster—he knew not what—charged him viciously.

Pandak Âris was lying flat upon the ground, with the sloping buttress roots of the tree on each side of him, and the beast passed over him, doing him no hurt, save that a portion of the fleshy part of his thigh was pinched by a hoof that cut cleanly, for Pandak Âris could feel the warm blood trickling down his leg. He was not conscious of any pain, however, and continued to lie flat upon the earth, too terrified to move, and almost choked by the wild leaping of his heart.

But his invisible assailant had not yet done with him. The reek of a hot, pungent breath upon his face, which well-nigh deprived him of his reason, told him that some animal was standing over him. Instinctively, he felt for his *pârang*—the long, keen-edged knife from which the jungle-bred Malay is never, for an instant, separated—drew it gently from its clumsy wooden scabbard at his girdle, and grasped the hilt firmly in his right hand.

Presently, to an accompaniment of much snorting and blowing, some hard object was insinuated beneath his body. Pandak Âris moved quickly, to avoid this new horror, and clung convulsively to the ground. Again and again, first on one side and then on the other, this hard, prodding substance sought to force itself below him. It bruised him terribly, driving the wind from his lungs, sending dull pangs through his whole body at each fresh prod, and leav-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ing him faint and gasping. It seemed to him that it was pounding him into a jelly.

How long this ordeal lasted Pandak Âris never knew. For an eternity, it seemed to him, every energy of his mind and body was concentrated in the effort to prevent his enemy from securing a hold on him, and he was dimly aware that he was partially protected, and that his assailant was greatly hampered by the buttress roots by which his body was flanked. It was a desperate struggle, and Pandak Âris felt as though it would never end, and the situation was unchanged when day began slowly to break.

Dawn comes rapidly in Malaya up to a certain point, though the sun takes time to arise from under its bedclothes of white mist. One moment all is dark as the bottomless pit; another, and a new sense is given to the watcher—the sense of form. A minute or two more, and the ability to distinguish colour comes to one with a shock of surprise—a dim green manifests itself in the grass, the yellow of a pebble, the brown of a faded leaf, the grayness of a tree trunk, each is revealed as a new and unexpected quality in a familiar object. So it was with Pandak Âris. All in a moment he began to see; and what he saw did not help to reassure him. He looked up at a vast and overwhelming bulk standing over him—a thing of heavy, heaving shoulders and ferocious, lowered head, still seen only in outline—and knew his assailant for a *sĕlâdang*, the wild buffalo of eastern Asia, which is the largest of all the beasts, save only

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the elephant, and is reputed to outmatch even him in strength. Then, as the light increased, Pandak Âris could see the black hairy hide, the gray belly, the long fringe of shaggy hair at the monster's throat, the smoking nostrils, wide open and of a dim red, and the cruel little eyes glaring savagely at him.

Almost before he knew what he had done, Pandak Âris had grasped his *pârang* in both hands, and with the strength of desperation had drawn its long, keen edge across the brute's throat. A torrent of blood gushed into the man's face, blinding him, and the *sĕlâdang*, snorting loudly, stamped with its off fore-foot. The heavy hoof alighted upon Pandak Âris's left arm, crushing it to a jelly, but the wounded limb telegraphed no signal of pain to the brain, which was working too absorbedly on its own account to be able to take heed of aught else.

Furious with pain and rage, the *sĕlâdang* tried again and again to gore the man with its horns, but the buttress roots baffled its efforts, and all the while the *pârang* worked by Pandak Âris's still uninjured hand sawed relentlessly at the brute's throat. Very soon the bull began to feel the deadly sickness which comes before death, and it fell heavily to its knees. It floundered to its feet again, bruising Pandak Âris once more as it did so. Then it reeled away, sinking to its knees again and again, while the blood pumped from the widening gap in its throat. Presently it sank to the ground, and after repeated attempts to rise, and tearing up the earth in its death-agony, it lay still forever.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Yonder lies much meat," grunted one of the Sâkai to his fellow. That was their only comment upon the struggle, the end of which they had witnessed.

Now that danger was past and the daylight come again, they climbed down out of the treetops. They bent over the insensible body of Pandak Âris, and when they found that he was still alive, they bandaged his wounds, not unskilfully, with strips torn from his *sârong*, and stanched the bleeding with the pith which they ripped out of the heart of a *trap* tree. Then they built a makeshift raft, and placed the wounded man upon it, together with as much *sĕlâdang* beef as it would carry. Wading downstream, one at the bow and one at the stern of the raft, they reached the camp at the mouth of the Mîsong, which they had quitted the preceding morning, and there they lighted a fire and indulged in a surfeit of the good red meat.

Pandak Âris was as tough as are most jungle-bred Malays, and he was blessed with a mighty constitution; wherefore, when he regained consciousness, he also feasted upon the body of his enemy.

"I cut his throat, *Tûan*," he said to me in after days. "I cut his throat, and I mind me that while doing so, I murmured the word *Bishmillah*—in the name of Allah. Therefore it was lawful for me to eat of the meat, for the beast had been slaughtered according to the rites of the Muhammadans."

For my part, I was less surprised at the ease with which he had salved his conscience than at his

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ability to touch meat at all in his then shattered condition. However, the Sâkai got him back to his house, rafting him carefully downstream, and Mînah, his wife, who was a knowledgeable soul, tended him devotedly, till nought save scars and a useless left arm remained to tell of his encounter with the *sĕlâdang*.

This was the one notable incident that had served to break the dead monotony of Pandak Âris's many days of life; but perhaps he was right in thinking that that single night on the salt lick of Mîsong had held enough excitement and adventure to last any reasonable man for a lifetime.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE INNER APARTMENT

IF YOU go up the Pahang River for a hundred and eighty miles, you come to a spot where the stream divides itself into two main branches, and where the name "Pahang" dies an ignominious death in a small ditch which debouches at their point of junction. The river on your left is the Jĕlai, and that on your right is the Tĕmbĕling. If you go up the latter, you presently come to big flights of rapids, a few *gambir* plantations, and a great many of the very best ruffians in the Malay Peninsula, most of whom, a quarter of a century ago, were rather particular friends of my own. If, on the other hand, you follow the Jĕlai up its course, past Kuâla Lĭpis, where the river of that name falls into it on its right bank, and on and on and on, you come at last to the wild Sâkai country where, in my time, the Malayan language was still unknown, and where the horizon of the aboriginal tribes was formed by the impenetrable jungle shutting down on the far side of a slender stream, and was further narrowed by the limitations of intellects that were unable to conceive an arithmetical idea higher than the numeral three. Before you run your nose into these uncleanly places, however, you pass through a district spattered with Malay habitations; and if you turn off up the Tĕlang

Digitized by Microsoft ®

River, you find a little open country and some prosperous looking villages.

One day in July, 1893, a feast in honour of a wedding was being celebrated in a village situated in this valley. The scene was typical. The head and skin of a water buffalo—a black one, of course, for Malays will not eat the meat of one of the mottled, pink brutes, which are the alternative breed—and the fly-infested pools of blood which marked the spot where it had been slaughtered and where its carcase had been dismembered, were prominent features in the foreground, lying displayed in a highly unappetizing manner in a little open space at the side of one of the houses. In one part of the village two men were posturing in one of the more or less aimless sword dances which are so dear to all Malays, in which the performers move with incredible slowness, ward off the imaginary blows struck at them by hypothetical adversaries, and approach one another only at infrequent intervals and then with the most meagre results. A ring of spectators squatted on the grass around them, subjecting their movements to the keenest criticism, and taking an apparently inexhaustible interest in their unexciting display. Drums and gongs, meanwhile, beat a rhythmical time, that makes the heaviest heels itch to move more quickly; and now and again the crowd of onlookers whooped and yelled in shrill, far-sounding chorus. This choric shout—the *sôrak*, as the Malays call it—is raised by them when engaged either in sport or in battle; and partly from association, partly by reason

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

of the shrill lilt of it, I, for one, can never hear it without a thrill. The Malays are very sensitive to its infection of sympathetic excitement, and the sound of it speedily awakes in them a sort of frenzy of enthusiasm.

All the men present were dressed in many-coloured silks and tartans, and were armed with daggers, as befits warriors; but if you chanced to possess an eye for such details, you would have noticed that garments and weapons alike were worn in a fashion calculated to excite the ridicule of a down-country Malay. The distinction between the town and country mouse is as marked in the Malay Peninsula as elsewhere, and it is rarely that the man from the *ûlu*—the upper reaches—can master all the intricacies of language, habit, and custom which lend their *cachet* of superiority to the men of the more polite districts.

In a *bâlai*—a large building raised on piles, and protected by a high-pitched thatch roof, but furnished with low half walls only, an erection specially constructed for the purposes of the feast—a number of priests and pilgrims and persons of pious reputation were seated, gravely intoning the Kurân, but pausing to chew betel quids and to gossip scandalously at frequent intervals. Prominent among them were many white-capped *lĕbai*—that class of fictitious religious mendicants whose members are usually among the most well-to-do men of the village, but who accept as their right, and without shame, the charitable doles of the faithful in exchange for

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the prayers which they are ready on all occasions to recite. The wag of the district was also present among them, for he is an inevitable feature of most Malayan gatherings, and is generally one of the local holy men. It is not always easy to understand how he acquired his reputation for humour, but once gained it has stood steady as a rock. His mere presence is held to be provocative of laughter, and as often as he opens his mouth the obsequious guffaw goes up, no matter what the words that issue from his lips. Most of his hearers, on the present occasion, had listened to his threadbare old jests any time these twenty years past, but the applause which greeted them, as each in turn was trotted out, was none the less hearty or genuine on that account. Among Malays novelty and surprise are not held to be essential elements of humour. They will ask for the same story, or laboriously angle for the same witticism, time after time; prefer that it should be told in the same way, and expressed as nearly as possible in the same words at each repetition; and they will invariably laugh with equal zest and in precisely the same place, in spite of the hoary antiquity of the thing, after the manner of a child. Similarly, it is this tolerance of, nay, delight in, reiteration that impels a Malayan *râja*, when civilized, to decorate his sitting-room walls with half a dozen replicas of the same unattractive photograph.

Meanwhile the womenfolk had come from far and near to help in the preparation of the feast, and the men of the family having previously done the heavy

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

work of carrying the water, hewing the firewood, jointing the meat, and grinding the curry stuff, the female population was busily engaged in the back premises of the house cooking as only Malay women can cook, keeping up all the time a constant shrill babbling, varied by an occasional scream of direction from some experienced hag. The younger and prettier girls had carried their work to the doorways, pretending that more light was necessary than could be found in the dark interior of the house, and seated there with a mighty affectation of modesty, they were engaging at long range in a spirited interchange of "eyeplay"—as the Malays call it—with the youngsters of the village. Much havoc, no doubt, was thus wrought in susceptible male hearts, but most of the sufferers knew that maidens and matrons alike would be prepared, as occasion offered, to heal with a limitless generosity the wounds they so wantonly inflicted. That is one of the things that make life so blithe a business for the average young Malay. He is always in love with some woman or another, and knows that its consummation is merely a question of opportunity in the provision of which he shows equal energy and ingenuity.

The bride, of course, having been dressed in smart new silks of delicious tints, and loaded with gold ornaments, borrowed for the occasion from their possessors from many miles around, was left in solitude, seated on the *gêta*—or raised sleeping platform—in the dimly lighted inner apartment, there to await the ordeal known to Malay cruelty as

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

sanding. The ceremony that bears this name is one at which the bride and bridegroom are brought together for the first time. They are officially supposed never to have seen one another before, though few self-respecting Malays allow their *fiancées* to be finally selected for them until they have had more than one good look at them. To effect this, a Malay, accompanied usually by one or two trusty friends, creeps one evening under the raised floor of the lady's house, and peeps at her through the bamboo laths or through the chinks of the wattled walls. At the *sanding*, however, stealth is no longer necessary. The bride and bridegroom are led forth by their respective relatives, and are placed side by side upon the dais prepared for the purpose, where they remain seated for hours, while the assembled male guests eat a hearty meal, and thereafter chant interminable verses from the Kurân. During the whole of this time they must sit motionless, no matter how painfully their cramped legs may ache and throb, and their eyes must be downcast and fixed upon their hands which, scarlet with henna, lie motionless one on each knee. Malays who have endured the *sanding* assure me that the experience is trying in the extreme, and that the publicity of it is highly embarrassing, the more so since it is a point of honour for the man to try to catch an occasional glimpse of his bride out of the corner of his eyes, without turning his head a hair's breadth, and without being detected by the onlookers in the appalling solecism of moving so much as an eyelash.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The bridegroom is conducted to the house of his *fiancée* there to sit in state, by a band of his male relations and friends, some of whom sing shrill verses from the Kurân, while others rush madly ahead, charging, retreating, capering, dancing, yelling, and hooting, brandishing naked weapons, and engaging in a highly realistic sham-fight with the bride's relatives and their friends, who rush out of her compound to meet them, fling themselves into the heart of the excited mob, and do not suffer themselves to be routed until they have made a fine show of resistance.

Traditional customs, such as this, are among the most illuminating of archæological relics. They are perpetuated to-day for old sake's sake, laughingly, as a concession to the conventions, by people who never stay to question their origin, or to spare a thought to the forgotten social conditions or religious observances to the nature of which they testify. Yet each one of them is a fragmentary survival that whispers, to those who care to listen, of strange and ancient things. Thus the right claimed in England to kiss any girl who at Christmas is caught beneath the mistletoe, is the innocent shadow thrown across the present by the wild, indiscriminate orgies which were wont to be held under the oak trees in Druidical Britain, in celebration of the winter solstice. The practice of "blooding" a boy who, for the first time, is in at the death of a fox, points to the fact that of old, in merry England, the anointing of the young and untried warriors with the blood of the slain was a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

part of the established military ritual. Similarly, the Malayan custom which compels a youth, who has killed his first man, to lick the blood from his *kris* blade, or it may be even to swallow a tiny piece of flesh cut from the neighbourhood of his victim's heart, indicates that cannibalism was once an approved feature of war as waged by the Malays. In the same way, the sham fight which, among these people, marks the arrival of a bridegroom, bears witness to a time when marriage by capture was at once a stern reality, and the only honourable way in which a bride might be won. The antagonism of the male members of a family to the man who desires to possess himself of their daughter or sister is a strong, natural instinct, and it is easy to understand that, long after forcible abduction had ceased to be a reality, self-respect demanded that some show of resistance should be offered before the detested intruder was suffered to lead his wife away. In some of the wilder and more remote parts of the Malay Peninsula the aboriginal Sâkai still place a girl on an ant-hill, and ring her about by a mob of her male relations, who do not allow her suitor to approach her until his head has been broken in several places. Who can doubt that the adoption of a similar practice in England would find much favour with many schoolboy brothers, if it could be made a customary feature of their sisters' marriage ceremonies?

The bride, as has been said, had been left in the inner apartment, there to await her call to the dais; and the preparations were in full swing—the men

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and women enjoying themselves each after their own fashion, the former idling while the latter worked —when suddenly a dull thud, as of some falling body, was heard within the house. The women rushed in to enquire its cause, and found the little bride lying on the floor with a ghastly gash in her throat, a small clasp-knife on the mat by her side, and all her pretty garments drenched in her own blood. They lifted her up, and strove to stanch the bleeding; and as they fought to stay the life that was ebbing from her, the drone of the priests and the beat of the drums came to their ears from the men who were making merry without. Then suddenly the news of what had occurred reached the assembled guests, and the music died away and was replaced by a babble of excited voices.

The father of the girl hurried in, thrusting his way through the curious crowds which already blocked the narrow doorways, and holding his daughter in his arms, he entreated her to tell him who had done this thing.

"It is mine own handiwork," she said.

"But wherefore, child of mine," cried her mother, "but wherefore do you desire to kill yourself?"

"I gazed upon my likeness in the mirror," the girl sobbed out, speaking painfully and with difficulty, "and looking, I beheld that I was very hideous, so that it was not fitting that I should any more live. Therefore I did it."

And until she died, about an hour later, this was the only explanation that she would give.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The matter was related to me by the great up-country chief, the Dâto' Maharâja Pĕrba of Jĕlai, who said that he had never heard of any parallel case. I warned him solemnly not to let the thing become a precedent; for there are many ill-favoured women in his district, and if they had all followed the girl's example, the population would have suffered considerable depletion. Later, however, when I learned the real reasons which had led to the suicide, I was sorry that I had ever jested about it, for the girl's was a sad little story.

Some months earlier a Pĕkan Malay had come up the Jĕlai on a trading expedition, and had cast his eyes upon the girl. To her he was all that the people of the surrounding villages were not. He walked with a swagger, wore his weapons and his clothes with an air that none save a Malay who has been bred in the neighbourhood of a *râja's* court knows how to assume, and was full of brave tales, to which the elders of the village could only listen with wonder and respect. Just as Lancelot enthralled Elaine, so did this man—a figure no less wonderful and splendid to this poor little upcountry maid—come into her life, revolutionizing her ideas and her ideals, and filling her with hopes and with desires of which hitherto she had never dreamed. Against so practised and experienced a wooer what could her simple arts avail? Snatching at a moment's happiness and reckless of the future, she gave herself to him, hoping, thereby, it may be, to hold him in silken bonds through which he might not break; but what was

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

all her life to her was to him no more than a passing incident. One day she learned that he had returned downstream. The idea of following him probably never even occurred to her, for Malayan women have been robbed by circumstance of any great power of initiative; but, like others before her, she thought that the sun had fallen from heaven because her rush-light had gone out.

Her parents, who knew nothing of this intrigue, calmly set about making the arrangements for her marriage—a matter concerning which she, of course, would be the last person in the world to be consulted. She must have watched these preparations with speechless agony, knowing that the day fixed for her wedding must be that upon which her life would end; for she had resolved to die faithful to her false lover, though it was not until the very last that she summoned up sufficient courage to kill herself. That she ever brought herself to the pitch of committing suicide is very marvellous, for that act is not only opposed to all natural instincts, but is specially repugnant to the spirit of her race. The male Malay, driven to desperation, runs *âmok;* the Malay woman endures and submits. But this poor child of fourteen, who so early had learned the raptures and the tragedies of a great love, must have been possessed of extraordinary force of character. Secretly and in silence she resolved; fearlessly she carried her resolve into execution; and dying concealed the love affair which had wrought her undoing, and the fact of her approaching maternity. And perhaps there

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

lurked some elements of truth in the only explanation which she gave with her dying breath. She had looked into the mirror and it had condemned her, for though she had won love, her love had abandoned her.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE GHOUL

WE HAD been sitting late upon the veranda of my bungalow at Kuâla Lîpis, which, from the top of a low hill covered with coarse grass, overlooked the long, narrow reach formed by the combined waters of the Lîpis and the Jĕlai. The moon had risen some hours earlier, and the river ran white between the black masses of forest, which seemed to shut it in on all sides, giving to it the appearance of an isolated tarn. The roughly cleared compound, with the tennis ground which had never got beyond the stage of being dug over and weeded, and the rank growths beyond the bamboo fence, were flooded by the soft light, every tattered detail of their ugliness standing revealed as relentlessly as though it were noon. The night was very still, but the heavy, scented air was cool after the fierce heat of the day.

I had been holding forth to the handful of men who had been dining with me on the subject of Malay superstitions, while they manfully stifled their yawns. When a man has a working knowledge of anything which is not commonly known to his neighbours, he is apt to presuppose their interest in it when a chance to descant upon it occurs, and in those days it was only at long intervals that I had an opportunity of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

forgathering with other white men. Therefore, I had made the most of it, and looking back, I fear that I had occupied the rostrum during the greater part of that evening. I had told my audience of the *pĕnanggal*—the "Undone One"—that horrible wraith of a woman who has died in childbirth, who comes to torment and prey upon small children in the guise of a ghastly face and bust, with a comet's tail of blood-stained entrails flying in her wake; of the *mâti-ânak*, the weird little white animal which makes beast noises round the graves of children, and is supposed to have absorbed their souls; and of the *pôlong*, or familiar spirits, which men bind to their service by raising them up from the corpses of babies that have been stillborn, the tips of whose tongues they bite off and swallow after the infant has been brought to life by magic agencies. It was at this point that young Middleton began to pluck up his ears; and I, finding that one of my hearers was at last showing signs of being interested, launched out with renewed vigour, until my sorely tried companions, one by one, went off to bed, each to his own quarters.

Middleton was staying with me at the time, and he and I sat for a while in silence, after the others had gone, looking at the moonlight on the river. Middleton was the first to speak.

"That was a curious myth you were telling us about the *pôlong*," he said. "There is an incident connected with it which I have never spoken of before, and have always sworn that I would keep to

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

myself; but I have a good mind to tell you about it, because you are the only man I know who will not write me down a liar if I do."

"That's all right. Fire away," I said.

"Well," said Middleton. "It was like this. You remember Juggins, of course? He was a naturalist, you know, dead nuts upon becoming an F. R. S. and all that sort of thing, and he came to stay with me during the close season* last year. He was hunting for bugs and orchids and things, and spoke of himself as an anthropologist and a botanist and a zoölogist, and Heaven knows what besides; and he used to fill his bedroom with all sorts of creeping, crawling things, kept in very indifferent custody, and my veranda with all kinds of trash and rotting green trade that he brought in from the jungle. He stopped with me for about ten days, and when he heard that duty was taking me upriver into the Sâkai country, he asked me to let him come, too. I was rather bored, for the tribesmen are mighty shy of strangers and were only just getting used to me; but he was awfully keen, and a decent beggar enough, in spite of his dirty ways, so I couldn't very well say 'No.' When we had poled upstream for about a week, and had got well up into the Sâkai country, we had to leave our boats behind at the foot of the big rapids, and leg it for the rest of the time. It was very rough going, wading up and down streams when one wasn't clambering up a hillside or sliding down

* "Close season," *i. e.* from the beginning of November to the end of February, during which time the rivers on the eastern seaboard of the Malay Peninsula used to be closed to traffic on account of the North East Monsoon.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the opposite slope—you know the sort of thing—and the leeches were worse than I have ever seen them—thousands of them, swarming up your back, and fastening in clusters on to your neck, even when you had defeated those which made a frontal attack. I had not enough men with me to do more than hump the camp-kit and a few clothes, so we had to live on the country, which doesn't yield much up among the Sâkai except yams and tapioca roots and a little Indian corn, and soft stuff of that sort. It was all new to Juggins, and gave him fits; but he stuck to it like a man.

"Well, one evening when the night was shutting down pretty fast and rain was beginning to fall, Juggins and I struck a fairly large Sâkai camp in the middle of a clearing. As soon as we came out of the jungle, and began tightroping along the felled timber, the Sâkai sighted us and bolted for covert *en masse*. By the time we reached the huts it was pelting in earnest, and as my men were pretty well fagged out, I decided to spend the night in the camp, and not to make them put up temporary shelters for us. Sâkai huts are uncleanly places at best, and any port has to do in a storm.

"We went into the largest of the hovels, and there we found a woman lying by the side of her dead child. She had apparently felt too sick to bolt with the rest of her tribe. The kid was as stiff as Herod, and had not been born many hours, I should say. The mother seemed pretty bad, and I went to her, thinking I might be able to do something for her;

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

but she did not seem to see it, and bit and snarled at me like a wounded animal, clutching at the dead child the while, as though she feared I should take it from her. I therefore left her alone; and Juggins and I took up our quarters in a smaller hut nearby, which was fairly new and not so filthy dirty as most Sâkai lairs.

"Presently, when the beggars who had run away found out that I was the intruder, they began to come back again. You know their way. First a couple of men came and peeped at us, and vanished as soon as they saw they were observed. Then they came a trifle nearer, bobbed up suddenly, and peeped at us again. I called to them in Sĕ-noi*, which always reassures them, and when they at last summoned up courage to approach, gave them each a handful of tobacco. Then they went back into the jungle and fetched the others, and very soon the place was crawling with Sâkai of both sexes and all ages.

"We got a meal of sorts, and settled down for the night as best we could; but it wasn't a restful business. Juggins swore with eloquence at the uneven flooring, made of very roughly trimmed boughs, which is an infernally uncomfortable thing to lie down upon, and makes one's bones ache as though they were coming out at the joints, and the Sâkai are abominably restless bedfellows as you know. I

*Sé-noi—one of the two main branches into which the Sâkai are divided. The other is called *Tê-mi-au* by the *Sê-noi*. All the Sâkai dialects are variants of the languages spoken by these two principal tribes, which, though they have many words in common, differ from one another almost as much as, say, Italian from Spanish.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

suppose one ought to realize that they have as yet only partially emerged from the animal, and that, like the beasts, they are still naturally nocturnal. Anyway, they never sleep for long at a stretch, though from time to time they snuggle down and snore among the piles of warm wood ashes round the central fireplace, and whenever you wake, you will always see half a dozen of them squatting near the blazing logs, half hidden by the smoke, and jabbering like monkeys. It is a marvel to me what they find to yarn about: food, or rather the patent impossibility of ever getting enough to eat, and the stony-heartedness of Providence and of the neighbouring Malays must furnish the principal topics, I should fancy, with an occasional respectful mention of beasts of prey and forest demons. That night they were more than ordinarily restless. The dead baby was enough to make them uneasy, and besides, they had got wet while hiding in the jungle after our arrival, and that always sets the skin disease, with which all Sâkai are smothered, itching like mad. Whenever I woke I could hear their nails going on their dirty hides; but I had had a hard day and was used to my hosts' little ways, so I contrived to sleep fairly sound. Juggins told me next morning that he had had *une nuit blanche*, and he nearly caused another stampede among the Sâkai by trying to get a specimen of the fungus or bacillus, or whatever it is, that occasions the skin disease. I do not know whether he succeeded. For my own part, I think it is probably due to chronic anæmia—the poor

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

devils have never had more than a very occasional full meal for hundreds of generations. I have seen little brats, hardly able to stand, white with it, the skin peeling off in flakes, and I used to frighten Juggins out of his senses by telling him he had contracted it when his nose was flayed by the sun.

"Next morning I woke just in time to see the still-born baby put into a hole in the ground. They fitted its body into a piece of bark, and stuck it in the grave they had dug for it at the edge of the clearing. They buried a flint and steel and a woodknife and some food, and a few other things with it, though no living baby could have had any use for most of them, let alone a dead one. Then the old medicine man of the tribe recited the ritual over the grave. I took the trouble to translate it once. It goes something like this:

"'O Thou, who hast gone forth from among those who dwell upon the surface of the earth, and hast taken for thy dwelling-place the land which is beneath the earth, flint and steel have we given thee to kindle thy fire, raiment to clothe thy nakedness, food to fill thy belly, and a woodknife to clear thy path. Go, then, and make unto thyself friends among those who dwell beneath the earth, and come back no more to trouble or molest those who dwell upon the surface of the earth.'

"It was short and to the point; and then they trampled down the soil, while the mother, who had got upon her feet by now, whimpered about the place like a cat that had lost its kittens. A mangy,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

half-starved dog came and smelt hungrily about the grave, until it was sent howling away by kicks from every human animal that could reach it; and a poor little brat, who chanced to set up a piping song a few minutes later, was kicked and cuffed and knocked about by all who could conveniently get at him with foot, hand, or missile. Abstenance from song and dance for a period of nine days is the Sâkai way of mourning the dead, and any breach of this is held to give great offence to the spirit of the departed and to bring bad luck upon the tribe. It was considered necessary, therefore, to give the urchin who had done the wrong a fairly bad time of it in order to propitiate the implacable dead baby.

"Next the Sâkai set to work to pack all their household goods—not a very laborious business; and in about half an hour the last of the laden women, who was carrying so many cooking-pots, and babies and rattan bags and carved bamboo-boxes and things, that she looked like the outside of a gipsy's cart at home, had filed out of the clearing and disappeared in the forest. The Sâkai always shift camp, like that, when a death occurs, because they think the ghost of the dead haunts the place where the body died. When an epidemic breaks out among them they are so busy changing quarters, building new huts, and planting fresh catch crops that they have no time to procure proper food, and half those who are not used up by the disease die of semi-starvation. They are a queer lot.

"Well, Juggins and I were left alone, but my men

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

needed a rest, so I decided to trek no farther that day, and Juggins and I spent our time trying to get a shot at a *sêlâdang**, but though we came upon great ploughed-up runs. which the herds had made going down to water, we saw neither hoof nor horn, and returned at night to the deserted Sâkai camp, two of my Malays fairly staggering under the piles of rubbish which Juggins called his botanical specimens. The men we had left behind had contrived to catch some fish, and with that and yams we got a pretty decent meal, and I was lying on my mat reading by the aid of a *dâmar* torch, and thinking how lucky it was that the Sâkai had cleared out, when suddenly old Juggins sat up, with his eyes fairly snapping at me through his gig-lamps in his excitement.

"'I say,' he said. 'I must have that baby. It would make a unique and invaluable ethnological specimen.'

"'Rot,' I said. 'Go to sleep, old man. I want to read.'

"'No, but I'm serious,' said Juggins. 'You do not realize the unprecedented character of the opportunity. The Sâkai have gone away, so their susceptibilities would not be outraged. The potential gain to science is immense—simply immense. It would be criminal to neglect such a chance. I regard the thing in the light of a duty which I owe to human knowledge. I tell you straight, I mean to have that baby whether you like it or not, and that is flat.'

Sêlâdang The gaur or wild buffalo. It is the same as the Indian variety, but in the Malay Peninsula attains to a greater size than in any other part of Asia.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Juggins was forever talking about human knowledge, as though he and it were partners in a business firm.

"'It is not only the Sâkai one has to consider,' I said. 'My Malays are sensitive about body snatching, too. One has to think about the effect upon them.'

"'I can't help that,' said Juggins resolutely. 'I am going out to dig it up now.'

"He had already put his boots on, and was sorting out his botanical tools in search of a trowel. I saw that there was no holding him.

"'Juggins,' I said sharply. 'Sit down. You are a lunatic, of course, but I was another when I allowed you to come up here with me, knowing as I did that you are the particular species of crank you are. However, I've done you as well as circumstances permitted, and as a mere matter of gratitude and decency, I think you might do what I wish.'

"'I am sorry,' said Juggins stiffly. 'I am extremely sorry not to be able to oblige you. My duty as a man of science, however, compels me to avail myself of this god-sent opportunity of enlarging our ethnological knowledge of a little-known people.'

"'I thought you did not believe in God,' I said sourly; for Juggins added a militant agnosticism to his other attractive qualities.

"'I believe in my duty to human knowledge,' he replied sententiously. 'And if you will not help me to perform it, I must discharge it unaided.'

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"He had found his trowel, and again rose to his feet.

"'Don't be an ass, Juggins,' I said. 'Listen to me. I have forgotten more about the people and the country here than you will ever learn. If you go and dig up that dead baby, and my Malays see you, there will be the devil to pay. They do not hold with exhumed corpses, and have no liking for or sympathy with people who go fooling about with such things. They have not yet been educated up to the pitch of interest in the secrets of science which has made of you a potential criminal, and if they could understand our talk, they would be convinced that you needed the kid's body for some devilry or witchcraft business, and ten to one they would clear out and leave us in the lurch. Then who would carry your precious botanical specimens back to the boats for you, and just think how the loss of them would knock the bottom out of human knowledge for good and all.'

"'The skeleton of the child is more valuable still,' replied Juggins. 'It is well that you should understand that in this matter—which for me is a question of my duty—I am not to be moved from my purpose either by arguments or threats.'

"He was as obstinate as a mule, and I was pretty sick with him; but I saw that if I left him to himself he would do the thing so clumsily that my fellows would get wind of it, and if that happened I was afraid that they might desert us. The tracks in that Sâkai country are abominably confusing, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

quite apart from the fear of losing all our camp-kit, which we could not hump for ourselves, I was by no means certain that I could find my own way back to civilization unaided. Making a virtue of necessity, therefore, I decided that I would let Juggins have his beastly specimen, provided that he would consent to be guided entirely by me in all details connected with the exhumation.

"'You are a rotter of the first water,' I said frankly. 'And if I ever get you back to my station, I'll have nothing more to do with you as long as I live. All the same, I am to blame for having brought you up here, and I suppose I must see you through.'

"'You're a brick,' said Juggins, quite unmoved by my insults. 'Come on.'

"'Wait,' I replied repressively. 'This thing cannot be done until my people are all asleep. Lie down on your mat and keep quiet. When it is safe I'll give you the word.'

"Juggins groaned, and tried to persuade me to let him go at once; but I swore that nothing would induce me to move before midnight, and with that I rolled over on my side and lay reading and smoking, while Juggins fumed and fretted as he watched the slow hands of his watch creeping round the dial.

"I always take books with me into the jungle, and the more completely incongruous they are to my immediate surroundings the more refreshing I find them. That evening, I remember, I happened to be rereading Miss Florence Montgomery's "Misunderstood" with the tears running down my nose; and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

by the time my Malays were all asleep, this incidental wallowing in sentimentality had made me more sick with Juggins and his disgusting project than ever.

"I never felt so like a criminal as I did that night, as Juggins and I gingerly picked our way out of the hut across the prostrate forms of my sleeping Malays; nor had I realized before what a difficult job it is to walk without noise on an openwork flooring of uneven boughs. We got out of the place and down the crazy stair-ladder at last, without waking any of my fellows, and we then began to creep along the edge of the jungle that hedged the clearing about. Why did we think it necessary to creep? I don't know. Partly we did not want to be seen by the Malays, if any of them happened to wake; but besides that, the long wait and the uncanny sort of work we were after had set our nerves going a bit, I expect.

"The night was as still as most nights are in real, *pukka* jungle. That is to say, that it was as full of noises—little, quiet, half-heard beast and tree noises—as an egg is full of meat; and every occasional louder sound made me jump almost out of my skin. There was not a breath astir in the clearing, but miles up above our heads the clouds were racing across the moon, which looked as though it were scudding through them in the opposite direction at a tremendous rate, like a great white fire balloon. It was pitch dark along the edge of the clearing, for the jungle threw a heavy shadow; and Juggins kept knocking those great clumsy feet of his against the stumps, and swearing softly under his breath.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Just as we were getting near the child's grave the clouds obscuring the moon became a trifle thinner, and the slightly increased light showed me something that caused me to clutch Juggins by the arm.

"'Hold hard!' I whispered, squatting down instinctively in the shadow, and dragging him after me. 'What's that on the grave?'

"Juggins hauled out his six-shooter with a tug, and looking at his face, I saw that he was as pale as death and more than a little shaky. He was pressing up against me, too, as he squatted, a bit closer, I fancied, than he would have thought necessary at any other time, and it seemed to me that he was trembling. I whispered to him, telling him not to shoot; and we sat there for nearly a minute, I should think, peering through the uncertain light, and trying to make out what the creature might be which was crouching above the grave and making a strange scratching noise.

"Then the moon came out suddenly into a patch of open sky, and we could see clearly at last, and what it revealed did not make me, for one, feel any better. The thing we had been looking at was kneeling on the grave, facing us. It, or rather she, was an old, old Sâkai hag. She was stark naked, and in the brilliant light of the moon I could see her long, pendulous breasts swaying about like an ox's dewlap, and the creases and wrinkles with which her withered hide was criss-crossed, and the discoloured patches of foul skin disease. Her hair hung about

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

her face in great matted locks, falling forward as she bent above the grave, and her eyes glinted through the tangle like those of some unclean and shaggy animal. Her long fingers, which had nails like claws, were tearing at the dirt of the grave, and her body was drenched with sweat, so that it glistened in the moonlight.

"'It looks as though some one else wanted your precious baby for a specimen, Juggins,' I whispered; and a spirit of emulation set him floundering on to his feet, till I pulled him back. 'Keep still, man,' I added. 'Let us see what the old hag is up to. It isn't the brat's mother, is it?'

"'No,' panted Juggins. 'This is a much older woman. Great God! What a ghoul it is!'

"Then we were silent again. Where we squatted we were hidden from the hag by a few tufts of rank *lâlang* grass, and the shadow of the jungle also covered us. Even if we had been in the open, however, I question whether the old woman would have seen us, she was so eagerly intent upon her work. For full five minutes, as near as I can guess, we squatted there watching her scrape and tear and scratch at the earth of the grave, with a sort of frenzy of energy; and all the while her lips kept going like a shivering man's teeth, though no sound that I could hear came from them.

"At length she got down to the corpse, and I saw her lift the bark wrapper out of the grave, and draw the baby's body from it. Then she sat back upon her heels, threw up her head, just like a dog, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

bayed at the moon. She did this three times, and I do not know what there was about those long-drawn howls that jangled up one's nerves, but each time the sound became more insistent and intolerable, and as I listened, my hair fairly lifted. Then, very carefully, she laid the child's body down in a position that seemed to have some connection with the points of the compass, for she took a long time, and consulted the moon and the shadows repeatedly before she was satisfied with the orientation of the thing's head and feet.

"Then she got up, and began very slowly to dance round and round the grave. It was not a reassuring sight, out there in the awful loneliness of the night, miles away from every one and everything, to watch that abominable old beldam capering uncleanly in the moonlight, while those restless lips of hers called noiselessly upon all the devils in hell, with words that we could not hear. Juggins pressed up against me harder than ever, and his hand on my arm gripped tighter and tighter. He was shaking like a leaf, and I do not fancy that I was much steadier. It does not sound very terrible, as I tell it to you here in comparatively civilized surroundings; but at the time, the sight of that obscure figure dancing silently in the moonlight with its ungainly shadow scared me badly.

"She capered like that for some minutes, setting to the dead baby as though she were inviting it to join her, and the intent purposefulness of her made me feel sick. If anybody had told me that morning

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

that I was capable of being frightened out of my wits by an old woman, I should have laughed; but I saw nothing outlandish in the idea while that grotesque dancing lasted.

"Her movements, which had been very slow at first, became gradually faster and faster, till every atom of her was in violent motion, and her body and limbs were swaying this way and that, like the boughs of a tree in a tornado. Then, all of a sudden, she collapsed on the ground, with her back toward us, and seized the baby's body. She seemed to nurse it, as a mother might nurse her child; and as she swayed from side to side, I could see first the curve of the creature's head, resting on her thin left arm, and then its feet near the crook of her right elbow. And now she was crooning to it in a cracked falsetto chant that might have been a lullaby or perhaps some incantation.

"She rocked the child slowly at first, but very rapidly the pace quickened, until her body was swaying to and fro from the hips, and from side to side, at such a rate that, to me, she looked as though she were falling all ways at once. And simultaneously her shrill chanting became faster and faster, and every instant more nerve-sawing.

"Next she suddenly changed the motion. She gripped the thing she was nursing by its arms, and began to dance it up and down, still moving with incredible agility, and crooning more damnably than ever. I could see the small, puckered face of the thing above her head every time she danced it up,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and then, as she brought it down again, I lost sight of it for a second, until she danced it up once more. I kept my eyes fixed upon the thing's face every time it came into view, and I swear it was not an optical illusion—*it began to be alive*. Its eyes were open and moving, and its mouth was working, like that of a child which tries to laugh but is too young to do it properly. Its face ceased to be like that of a new-born baby at all. It was distorted by a horrible animation. It was the most unearthly sight.

"Juggins saw it, too, for I could hear him drawing his breath harder and shorter than a healthy man should.

"Then, all in a moment, the hag did something. I did not see clearly precisely what it was; but it looked to me as though she bent forward and kissed it; and at that very instant a cry went up like the wail of a lost soul. It may have been something in the jungle, but I know my Malayan forests pretty thoroughly, and I have never heard any cry like it before nor since. The next thing we knew was that the old hag had thrown the body back into the grave, and was dumping down the earth and jumping on it, while that strange cry grew fainter and fainter. It all happened so quickly that I had not had time to think or move before I was startled back into full consciousness by the sharp crack of Juggins's revolver fired close to my ear.

"'She's burying it alive!' he cried.

"It was a queer thing for a man to say, who had seen the child lying stark and dead more than thirty

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

hours earlier; but the same thought was in my mind, too, as we both started forward at a run. The hag had vanished into the jungle as silently as a shadow. Juggins had missed her, of course. He was always a rotten bad shot. However, we had no thought for her. We just flung ourselves upon the grave, and dug at the earth with our hands, until the baby lay in my arms. It was cold and stiff, and putrefaction had already begun its work. I forced open its mouth, and saw something that I had expected. The tip of its tongue was missing. It looked as though it had been bitten off by a set of shocking bad teeth, for the edge left behind was like a saw.

"'The thing's quite dead,' I said to Juggins.

"'But it cried—it cried!" whimpered Juggins. 'I can hear it now. To think that we let that horrible creature murder it.'

"He sat down with his head in his hands. He was utterly unmanned.

"Now that the fright was over, I was beginning to be quite brave again. It is a way I have.

"'Rot,' I said. 'The thing's been dead for hours, and anyway, here's your precious specimen if you want it.'

"I had put it down, and now pointed at it from a distance. Its proximity was not pleasant. Juggins, however, only shuddered.

"'Bury it, in Heaven's name,' he said, his voice broken by sobs. 'I would not have it for the world. Besides, it *was* alive. I saw and heard it.'

"Well, I put it back in its grave, and next day we

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

left the Sâkai country. Juggins had a whacking dose of fever, and anyway we had had about enough of the Sâkai and of all their engaging habits to last us for a bit.

"We swore one another to secrecy as Juggins, when he got his nerve back, said that the accuracy of our observations was not susceptible of scientific proof, which, I understand, was the rock his religion had gone to pieces on; and I did not fancy being told that I was drunk or that I was lying. You, however, know something of the uncanny things of the East, so to-night I have broken our vow. Now I'm going to turn in. Don't give me away."

Young Middleton died of fever and dysentery, somewhere upcountry, a year or two later. His name was not Middleton, of course; so I am not really "giving him away," as he called it, even now. As for his companion, though when I last heard of him he was still alive and a shining light in the scientific world, I have named him Juggins, and as the family is a large one, he will run no great risk of being identified.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

A MALAYAN PRISON

I HAVE said that the Malays, taken in bulk, have no bowels. The story I am about to tell illustrates the truth of this assertion rather forcibly. The particular incident related happened on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula in the year of grace 1895. The native gaol, of which mention is made, was visited by me a month or two before I wrote the account of it; and it and its numerous counterparts continued to exist in some of the independent Malay States on the east coast, until the British eventually took charge of their affairs in 1910. It is useful to bear facts such as these in mind lest, in our honest solicitude for the rights and liberties of mankind, we should subscribe too enthusiastically to the dictum of the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman that good government can never be a satisfactory substitute for self-government. From this opinion thousands of my friends in Malaya would passionately dissent, and as to whether the craven wretches who thus submit to alien rule can plead any justification for their heresy, let the readers of this story judge. For the rest, I must frankly admit that it is not a pretty tale, and I would counsel persons who prefer to ignore the existence of uncomfortable things to give it a wide berth.

Univ Calif Digitized by Microsoft ®

In one of the States on the east coast of the Peninsula there lived, some twenty years ago, a Râja who, though he was not the ruler of the country, was a man of exalted position and stood possessed of considerable power. This man owned much land, many cattle, several wives, a host of retainers, and a number of slave-debtors. Also his reputation for kindness of heart stood high among the people. This last fact is worth remembering, having regard to what I am about to relate. Native public opinion in no wise reprobated him for his share in the matter; which shows that when a Malay of standing bore the character of a brute or a bully he had earned it by the commission of atrocities for which simple people, like you and me, do not even know the technical names.

Upon a certain day a *kris* was stolen from this Râja, and suspicion fastened upon one of his slave-debtors, a man named Talib. As it happened, the fellow was innocent of the theft; but his protestations were not believed, and his master forthwith consigned him to the *pĕn-jâra*, or local gaol. The tedious formality of a trial played no part in Malayan judicial proceedings, and nothing in the nature of the sifting of evidence was regarded as necessary. The stolen dagger was the property of a prince. The suspect was a man of no account. That was enough; and Talib went to gaol accordingly, the Râja issuing an order—a sort of *lettre de cachet*—for his admission.

To European ears this does not sound very terrible. Miscarriages of justice are not unknown, even in

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

civilized lands; and in semi-barbarous countries such things are, of course, to be looked upon as being all in the day's march. Unfortunately, however, a *pĕn-jâra* in independent Malaya only resembles the prisons with which white men are acquainted in the fact that both are places designed for the accommodation of criminals. Some ugly things are to be read in the pages of "It Is Never too Late to Mend," but the prison described by Charles Read might rank for comfort with a modern work-house beside the gaol in which Talib was confined.

It was situated in one of the most crowded portions of the native town. It consisted of two rows of cages, placed back to back, each one measuring some six feet in length, two feet in width, and five feet in height. These cages were formed of heavy slabs of wood, set close together, with spaces of about two inches in every ten for the admission of light and air. The floors, which were also made of wooden bars, were raised about six inches from the ground; and the cages, which were twelve in number, were surrounded at a distance of about two feet by a solid wall made of very thick planks of hard wood, mortised firmly together. No sanitary appliances of any kind were provided; and though a prisoner, once placed in a cell, was not allowed to come out of it again for a moment until the necessary money-payment had been made, or until death brought him merciful release, the precincts were never cleaned out, nor were any steps taken to prevent the condition of the captives from being such as would disgrace that of a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

wild beast in a small travelling menagerie. The space before the floor and the ground, and the interval which separated the cells from the wooden walls set so close about them, was one seething, writhing mass of putrefaction. Here in the tropics, under a brazen sun, all unclean things turn to putrid, filthy life within the hour; and in a Malayan *pĕn-jâ·a*, wither no breath of wind could penetrate, the atmosphere was heavy with the fumes bred of the rottenness of years, and the reeking pungency of offal that was new.

This, then, was the place of confinement to which Talib was condemned; nor did his agonies end here, for the gnawing pangs of hunger were added to his other sufferings. He was handed over to the gentle care of the *pĕr-tanda*, or executioner—an official who, in the independent Malay States, united the kindly office of life-taker and official torturer with the hardly more humane post of gaoler. This man, like most of his fellows, had been chosen in the beginning on account of his great physical strength and an indifference to the sight of pain which was remarkable even among an insensible people; and the calling which he had pursued for years had endowed the natural brutality of his character with an abnormal ferocity. He was, moreover, an official of the ancient East—a class of worthies who require more supervision to restrain them from pilfering than do even the Chinese coolies in a gold mine, where the precious metal winks at you in the flickering candlelight. Needless to say, the higher state officials were not so

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

forgetful of their dignity, or so lost to a sense of propriety, as to pry into the doings of a mere executioner; so the *pĕr-tanda* enjoyed to the full the advantages of a free hand. During the months of the year when the mouth of the river was accessible to native craft he had the right to collect dues of rice and fish from all vessels and fishing-boats using the harbour; but during the "close season," when the northeast monsoon was raging, no allowance of any kind was made to him for the board of the prisoners in his charge. In these circumstances, since a *pĕr-tanda* is not a philanthropical institution, it was only natural that he should pervert to his own use, and sell to all comers, the collections which he made during the open season, so that his household might not be without a sufficiency of rice and raiment during the dreary six months that the hatches were down for the monsoon. Death from slow and lingering starvation was, therefore, a by no means uncommon incident in the *pĕn-jâra;* and one of Talib's earliest experiences was to witness the last agonies of a fellow-captive in an adjoining cell, who came from upcountry, knew no one in the capital, and so had died painfully of gradual inanition. Talib himself was a trifle more fortunate, for food was daily brought to him by a girl who had been his sweetheart before his trouble fell upon him; and though his hunger-pangs could not be wholly allayed by such slender doles as she contrived to save for him from her own ration of rice and fish, he, for the time, was not exposed to actual danger of death from want. But always he

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

was tortured by fear. He knew that the horror of his surroundings was growing upon the girl; that each visit demanded of her a new and a stronger effort, that other men were wooing her; and that sooner or later she would turn to them, and thrust from her mind the memory of the loathesome creature into which he knew himself to be rapidly degenerating. In that hour he would be robbed alike of his love and of his daily food.

The prisoner in the cage on Talib's left was little more than a skeleton when the latter first entered the gaol. He lay huddled up in a corner, with his hands pressed against his sunken stomach and the sharp angles of his bones peeping through his bed-sores—motionless, miserable, and utterly degraded, but stirred to a sort of frenzy, now and again, by the sight or smell of cooked food. Talib saved a small portion of his own insufficient meal for this man, for he was new to the prison, and had not yet acquired the brutal selfishness and indifference that characterized the other inmates; but the poor wretch was already too far gone for any such tardy aid to avail to save him. Though he snatched avidly at the stuff which Talib passed, in grudging handfuls, through the bars of his cell, it was with difficulty that he could swallow a grain of it. When, too, a little had at last been forced down his shrunken gullet his enfeebled stomach rejected it, and violent spasms and vomitings ensued, which seemed to rend his stricken frame much as a fierce gust of wind rips through the palm-leaf sail of a native fishing-smack.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

After a day or two he became wildly delirious, and Talib then witnessed a terrible sight. A raving maniac in a well-ordered asylum, where padded walls and careful tendance do much to save the afflicted body from the blind fury of the disordered brain, is an appalling thing to see; but in the vile cage in which this wretched creature was confined there was nothing to restrain the violence he was practising upon himself. With the strength of madness he dashed his head and body relentlessly against the unyielding walls of his cell. He fell back crushed and bleeding, foaming at the mouth with a bloody froth, and making beast noises in his throat. The *pĕr-tanda*, attracted by the noise, rested his back against the surrounding wall and rocked to and fro, convulsed with laughter, each brutal jest that he uttered being greeted with obsequious titters from the caged animals around him.

But the madman was oblivious of him and of all things. Once more, as the frenzy took him, shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat, he flung himself at the bars, and after another fearful paroxysm, fell back inert upon the floor. For hours he lay there exhausted, but wildly restless; too spent to struggle, and too demented and tortured to be still. He moaned, he groaned, he raved and cursed with vile and filthy words, bit and snapped like a dog in its madness, strove to gnaw the loathsome rags which had long ceased to cover his nakedness, and then again was still, save for the incessant rolling of his head, and the wilder motion of his eyes, which blazed with

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fever. The *pĕr-tanda*, wearied by so tame an exhibition, withdrew to his house; and a little before the dawn, when the chill breeze, which comes up at that hour out of the China Sea, was making itself felt even in the fetid atmosphere of the place, his reason, for a space, returned to him, and he spoke to Talib in a thin, faraway voice, his words punctuated by many gasps and sighs and pauses.

"Little brother," he whispered, "do you also watch? For not long now shall your elder brother endure these pains. The order is come. Have you any water? I thirst sore. No matter, it is the fate to which I was born. The hair of the heads of all men alike is black, but the lot of each of us is peculiar to himself. . . . Listen. I stole five dollars from a chief. . . . I did it because my wife was very fair, and she abused me, saying that I gave her neither ornaments nor raiment. . . . Brother, I was detected, and the chief consigned me to the *pĕn-jâra*. . . . I knew not then that it was my wife, and none other, who gave the knowledge of my theft to the chief, he in whose household I had been born and bred. . . . He desired her, and she loved him; and now he has taken her to wife, I being as one already dead, and the woman being legally divorced from me. They said that they would set me free if I would divorce her, and I let fall the *talak* in the presence of witnesses, thinking thereby to escape from this place. But . . . ah, brother, I thirst. Have you no water? . . . While the woman was yet bound to me, she sent me

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

food by one of the chief's slaves, and it was from him that I learned the plot that had undone me. . . . I thirst, I thirst. Have you no water, little brother? . . . After I had divorced her the rice did not come any more. . . . I want water. My mouth is hard and rough as the skin of a skate, and it is dry as the fish that has been smoked above the fire. Have you no water? . . . Ya Allah! Maimûnah, heart of my heart, fruit of my eyes! Water, I pray you. Water. Water. O mother! O mother! O mother of mine! Water, mother! . . . I die . . . I die . . . mother . . . "

His voice trailed away into inarticulate moanings, and in an hour he was dead.

Next day his body was carried out for burial, and for a time his cage remained untenanted.

On Talib's right a man was confined who was so haggard, meagre, filthy, diseased, and brutal in his habits that it was difficult to believe that he was altogether human, His hair fell in long, tangled, matted, vermin-infested shocks, almost to his waist. His eyes—two smouldering pits of flame—were sunken deep into his yellow parchment-like face. His cheek-bones were so prominent that the sharp edges seemed about to cut their way through the skin, and his brows jutted forward like the bosses on the forehead of a fighting ram. The dirt of ages festered in the innumerable wrinkles and creases of his body; and he hardly moved, save to scratch himself fiercely, much as a monkey tears at his flea-infested hide. A small ration of rice and fish was brought to him daily

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

by an old and withered hag—his wife of former years—who made a meagre living for him and for herself by hawking sweet-stuffs from door to door. She came to him twice daily, and he flung himself ravenously upon the food with guttural noises of satisfaction, devouring it in bestial fashion, while she cooed at him through the bars, with many endearing epithets, such as Malay women use to little children. Not even his revolting degradation had been able to kill her love, though its wretched object had long ago ceased to understand it or to recognize her, save as the giver of the food which satisfied the last appetite which misery had left to him. He had been ten years in these cages, and had passed through the entire range of feeling of which a Malay captive in a native gaol is capable—from acute misery to despair, from despair, by slow degrees, to stupid indifference and dementia, until at the long last he had attained to the condition which Malays call *kâleh*. This means a complete insensibility, a mental and physical anæsthesia so absolute that it reduces a sentient human being to the level of an inanimate object, while leaving to him many of the disgusting qualities of an ape.

Talib himself had as yet reached only the first stage of his suffering, and the insistent craving for one breath of fresh air grew and grew and gathered strength, until it became an overmastering longing that day and night cried out to be satisfied. His memories tortured him—memories of the chill morning hour at which he had been wont to step

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

forth from his house into the dusk of the dawning, and to make his way to the river which poured its cool flood seaward beneath the curtain of white mist; of the long slanting sunrays beginning to dry the dew, as he walked through the wet grass to the rice-fields behind the village; of the return home, as the heat became intense, with the pale and cloudless sky overhead, and the vivid green of the vegetation covering all the earth; of the long, lazy hours spent in the cool interior of the thatched house; of the waning of the day, as the buffaloes began to troop down to water; of the falling of the night, with its smell of wood-smoke and the cooking meal; of the deep sleep that used to come to the sound of the humming chorus from the insect world without. For these things meant for him liberty—the freshness and cleanliness of God's good earth—all the common happenings which had made life beautiful, but which till now he had never thought about or prized.

At last he could no longer restrain his passionate desire to escape, if only for a few hours, from the horrors of the *pĕn-jâra*, and, reckless of consequences, he told the *pêr-tanda* that if he could be taken to a place a day's journey up the river, he could set his hand upon the missing *kris* which, he said, he had hidden there. He was perfectly aware that the dagger was not, and never had been, buried at that spot, for he knew as little concerning its whereabouts as the *pêr tanda* himself. He could foresee that his failure would be followed by worse punishment. But he heeded not. He would breathe the fresh, un-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

tainted air once more, would see once again the sky arching above him, would hear the murmur of running water, the sighing of the wind through the fruit trees and its stir among the fronds—would be quit for a space of the horrors and the putrefaction of his surroundings, and would see, smell, hear, and enjoy all the sights, scents, sounds, and familiar things for which he hungered with so sick a longing.

Accordingly, the chief having been communicated with, he was one day taken upriver to the place he had named; but the reek of the cage clung to him, and the fresh air was to him made foul by it. The search was fruitless, of course; he was beaten by the boatmen, who had had their trouble for nothing; and, sore and bleeding, he was placed once more in his cage, with the added pain of heavy chains to complete his sufferings. An iron collar was riveted about his neck, and attached by ponderous links to chains passed about his waist and to rings around his ankles. The fetters galled him, preventing him from lying at ease in any attitude, and they speedily doubled the number of his bed-sores. The noisy, bloated flies buzzed around him now in ever-increasing numbers, feasting horribly upon his rottenness, as he sat all day sunken in stupid, wide-eyed despair.

A Chinese lunatic had been placed in the vacant cage on his left—a poor mindless wretch who cried out to all who visited the prison that he had become a Muhammadan, vainly hoping thereby to meet with some small measure of pity from the worshippers of Allah, the merciful and compassionate God. The

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

bestial habits of this man, whose mental disease was intensified by his misery and by the disgusting character of his environment, imported a new horror into Talib's life; but he himself was fast sinking into the stolid, animal existence of his right-hand neighbour. I saw him, precisely as I have described him, and learned his story, in April, 1895, and since the state in which he was awaiting his lingering death was at that time independent, I was, of course, powerless to effect his deliverance. Of his end I know nothing, but his future held no prospect of release, and the best that one could hope for him was an early death, or failing that, a speedy arrival at the happy condition which is locally called *kâleh*. To add to the horror of it all, there were two women and one small child confined in the cages at the time of my visit, but upon their sufferings I have refrained from dwelling.

Readers of this true tale will perhaps realize how it comes to pass that some of us men of the outskirts—who have *seen* things, not merely *heard of them*—are apt to become rather strong "imperialists," and to find it at times difficult to endure with patience those ardent defenders of the Rights of Man, who bleet their comfortable aphorisms in the British House of Commons, and cry shame upon our "hungry acquisitiveness."

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

HE OF THE HAIRY FACE

IF YOU put your finger on the map of the Malay Peninsula, an inch or two from its exact centre, you will find a river in Pahang territory which has its rise in the watershed that divides that state from its northern neighbours Kĕlantan and Trĕnggânu. It is called the Tĕmbĕling, and after its junction with the Jĕlai, at a point some two hundred miles from the sea, the combined rivers are named the Pahang. The Tĕmbĕling is chiefly remarkable for the number and magnitude of its rapids, for the richness of its gutta-bearing trees, and as being the scene of some of the most notable exploits of the legendary magician Sang Kĕlĕmbai, whose last days on earth are supposed to have been spent in this valley. The inhabitants of the district were, in my time, a ruffianly lot of jungle-dwelling Malays, preyed upon by a ruling family of *Wans*—a semi-royal set of nobles, who did their best to live up to the traditions of their class. Chiefs and people alike were rather specially interesting because—though of this they had no inkling—they represented the descendants of one of the earliest waves of Malay invaders of the Peninsula—folk who came, not from Sumatra, as did the ancestors of the bulk of the natives of British Malaya, but from the islands of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the Archipelago further south. In many localities the offspring of the earlier invaders have resisted conversion to Muhammadanism, and are regarded by the Malays of to-day as part of the aboriginal pagan population of the Peninsula; but the people of the Tĕmbĕling valley have embraced the faith of Islam, and their origin is not suspected by themselves or their neighbours. It is clearly to be traced, however, in certain peculiar customs that have been preserved among them, and by the use of a few local words, not generally understanded of the people of the Peninsula, but common enough in northern Borneo and other parts of the Archipelago.

The Tĕmbĕling Valley is bisected by a set of rapids, which render navigation excessively difficult for a distance of some five miles, and above which large boats cannot be taken. Below this obstruction, the natives are chiefly noted for the quaint pottery which they produce from the clay that abounds there, and the rude shapes and the ruder tracery of their vessels have probably suffered no change since the days when the men who dealt with the middle men who traffieked with Solomon's emissaries, sought gold and peafowl and monkeys in the fastnesses of the Malay Peninsula—as everybody knows. Above the rapids the natives, from time immemorial, have planted enough *gambir* to supply the wants of the entire betel-chewing population of Pahang; and as the sale of this commodity brought in a steady income, they were for the most part too indolent to plant their own rice. Rice being the staple of all

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Malays, without which they cannot live, the grain used to be sold to them by downcountry Malays at an exorbitant price, and the profits on the *gambir* crop was thus skilfully diverted into the pouches of wiser men.

A short distance upstream from the junction of the Těmběling and the Jělai, and midway between that point and the big rapids, there is a straggling village called Ranggul, the houses of which, built of wattled bamboos and thatched with palm leaves, stand on piles upon the river bank, amid groves of cocoanut and areca-nut palms, fruit trees and clumps of smooth-leaved banana plants. The houses are not set very close together, but a man calling can make himself heard with ease from one to another; and thus the cocoanut palms thrive, for they, the Malays aver, grow not with pleasure beyond the range of the human voice.

The people of Ranggul are no more indolent than other upcountry Malays. They plant a little rice in the swamp behind the village, when the season comes round. They work a little jungle-produce—rubber, rattans, *dâmar*-pitch, and the like—when the pinch of poverty drives them to it. The river is, of course, their principal highway, and they never walk if a boat will take them to their destination. For the rest, they take life very easily. If you chance to visit Ranggul during any of the hot hours of the day, you will find most of its male inhabitants lying about in their dark, cool houses, or seated in their doorways. They occupy themselves

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

with such gentle tasks as whittling a stick or hacking aimlessly at the already deeply scored threshold-block with their heavy wood-knives. Sitting thus, they croak snatches of song, with some old-world refrain to it, breaking off, from time to time, to throw a remark over their shoulders to the women-folk, who share the dim interiors of the huts with the cats, the babies, and the cooking-pots, or to the little virgin daughter, carefully secreted on the shelf overhead amid a miscellaneous collection of dusty rubbish, the disused lumber of years. Here the maiden is securely hidden from the sight of the passing neighbour, who stops to gossip with the master of the house, and sits for a space, propped upon the stair-ladder, lazily masticating a quid of betel nut. Nature has been very lavish to the Malay, and has provided him with a soil that produces a maximum of food in return for a minimum of grudging labour; but, rightly viewed, he has suffered at her hands an eternal defeat. In the tropics, no less than in the arctic regions, Nature has proved too strong a competitor for mankind. In the latter she has forced men to hibernate, paralyzing their energies for more than half the year; in the former, she has rushed in to obliterate the works of human beings with so appalling a rapidity, if for a moment their efforts to withstand her have been relaxed, that here, too, they have abandoned the unequal contest. In the far north and in the tropics alike, it is men drawn from temperate climates, where they have learned to bend Nature in her weaker phases to their will, who have

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

come to renew the struggle with weapons which they have wrested from the enemy in the course of the age-long conflict. But in neither instance can the newcomers look for active assistance from the people of the lands they have invaded. The cool, moist fruit groves of Malaya woo men to the lazy enjoyment of their ease during the parching hours of midday, and the native, who long ago has retired from the fight with Nature, and now is quite content to subsist upon her bounty, has caught the spirit of his surroundings, and is very much what environment and circumstances have combined to make him. Those of us who cry shame upon the peoples of the tropics for their inertia would do well to ponder these things, and should realize that energy is to the natives of the heat-belt at once a disturbing and a disgusting quality. It is disturbing because it runs counter to the order of Nature which these people have accepted. It is disgusting because it is opposed to every tenet of their philosophy.

Some five and fifty years ago, when Che′ Wan Ahmad—who subsequently was better known as Sultân Âhmad Maätham Shah K. C. M. G.—was collecting his forces in Dûngun, preparatory to making his last and successful descent into the Tĕmbĕling Valley, whence to overrun and conquer Pahang, the night was closing in at Ranggul. A large house stood at that time in a somewhat isolated position, within a thickly planted compound, at one extremity of the village. In this house seven men and two

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

women were at work on the evening meal. The men sat in the centre of the floor on a white mat made of the plaited leaves of the *mêngkûang* palm, with a plate piled with rice before each of them, and a brass tray, supporting numerous small china bowls of curry, placed where all could reach it. They sat cross-legged, with bowed backs, resting their weight upon their left arms, the hands of which lay flat on the floor, with the wrists so turned that the fingers pointed inward. They messed the rice with their right hands, mixing the curry well into it, and expressing the air between grain and grain, ere they carried each large ball of it swiftly to their mouths, and propelled it into them with their thumbs along the surfaces of their hollowed and closely joined fingers. If rice is your staple, it is almost a necessity that you should eat it in this fashion, for when a spoon is used it is aerated, windy stuff of which it is impossible to consume a sufficient quantity. As for the cleanliness of the thing, a Malay once remarked to me that he could be sure that his fingers had not been inside the mouths of other folk, but had no such feeling of certainty with regard to the spoons of Europeans.

The women sat demurely in a half-kneeling position, with their feet tucked away under them, ministering to the wants of the men. They uttered no word, save an occasional exclamation when they drove away a lean cat that crept too near to the food, and the men also held their peace. Malays regard meals as a serious business which is best transacted in

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

silence. From without there came the hum of insects, the chirping of crickets in the fruit trees, and the deep, monotonous note of the bullfrogs in the rice-swamps.

When the men had finished their meal, the women carried the dishes to a corner near the fireplace, and there set to on such of the viands as their lords had not consumed. If you had looked carefully, however, you would have seen that the cooking-pots, over which the women presided, still held a secret store reserved for their own use, and that the quality of the food in this *cache* was by no means inferior to that of the portion which had been allotted to the men. In a land where women wait upon themselves, labour for others, and have none to attend to their wants or to forestall their wishes, they generally develop a sound working notion of how to look after themselves; and since they have never known a state of society, such as our own, in which women occupy a special and privileged position, it does not occur to them that they are the victims of male oppression.

Each of the men had meanwhile folded a lime-smeared leaf of the *sîrih*-vine into a neat, oblong packet, within which was enclosed parings of the betel nut and a fragment or two of prepared *gambir*, taking the ingredients of their quids from the little brass boxes in the clumsy wooden box that lay before them on the mat. Next they had rolled a pinch of Javanese tobacco—potent stuff which grips you by the throat as though you were a personal enemy—in a dried shoot of the *nîpah*-palm, had lighted these

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

improvised cigarettes at the *dâmar*-torch which provided the only light, and at last had broken the silence which so long had held them.

The talk flitted lightly over many subjects, all of a concrete character; for talk among natives plays for the most part around facts, rarely around ideas, and the peace of soul induced by repletion is not stimulating to the mind. Che' Sĕman, the owner of the house, and his two sons, Âwang and Ngah, discussed the prospects of the crops then growing in the fields behind the village. Their cousin, Abdullah, who chanced to be passing the night in his relatives' house, told of a fall which his wife's step-mother's brother had come by when climbing a cocoanut tree. Mat, his *bîras* (for they had married two sisters, which established a definite relationship between them according to Malay ideas), added a few more or less repulsive details to Abdullah's description of the corpse after the accident. These were well received, and attracted the attention of the two remaining men, Pôtek and Kassim, who had been discussing the price of rice and the varying chances of *gêtah*-hunting; whereupon the talk became general. Pôtek and Kassim had recently come across the mountains from Dûngun, in Trĕnggânu, where the claimant to the sultanate of Pahang was at that time collecting the force, which later invaded and conquered the country. They told all that they had seen and heard, multiplying their figures with the daring recklessness common to a people who rarely regard arithmetic as one of the exact sciences; but even this

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

absorbing topic could not hold the attention of their audience for long. Before Pôtek and Kassim had well finished the enumeration of the parts of heavy artillery, the hundreds of elephants and the thousands of the followers, with which they credited the adventurous but slender bands of ragamuffins who followed the fortunes of Che' Wan Âhmad, the master of the house broke into their talk with words on a subject which just then had a more immediate interest than any other for the people of the Tĕmbĕling Valley. Thus the conversation slipped back into the rut in which the talk of the countryside had run, with only casual interruptions, for many weeks.

"He of the Hairy Face* is with us once more," Che' Sĕman suddenly announced; and when his words had caused a dead silence to fall upon his hearers, and had even stilled the chatter of the women and children near the fireplace, he continued:

"At the hour when the cicada becomes noisy,† I met Imâm Sîdik of Gĕmûroh, and bade him stay to eat rice, but he would not, saying that He of the Hairy Face had made his kill at Lâbu yesternight, and that it was expedient for all men to be within

---

**Si-Pŭdong*—He of the Hairy Face—is one of the names used by jungle-bred Malays to describe a tiger. They will not use the beast's ordinary name, lest the sound of it should reach his ears, and cause him to come to the speaker.

†*When the cicada becomes noisy*—sunset. The Malays use many such phrases to indicate the time of day, *e. g.*: *When the fowls jump off their perches*, about 5:30 A.M.; *Before the flies are on the wing*, about 6 A.M.; *When the heat breaks forth*, about 7 A.M.; *When the sun is halfway up*, about 9 A.M.; *When the plough is idle*, from 9:30 to about 11 A.M.; *When the shadows are circular*, noon; *When the day changes, viz.*, from morning to afternoon, about 1 P.M.; *When the buffaloes go down to water*, an hour before sunset, *i. e.*, about 5 P.M.; *When the fowls begin to doze*, the beginning of night; *When the children are fast asleep*, about 9 P.M.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

their houses before the darkness fell. And so saying, he paddled his boat down stream, using the "dove" stroke.* Imâm Sîdik is a wise man, and his talk is true. He of the Hairy Face spares neither priest nor prince. The girl he killed at Lâbu was a daughter of the *Wans*—Wan Ëśah was her name."

"That makes three-and-twenty whom He of the Hairy Face had slain in one year of maize,"† said Âwang, in a low, fear-stricken voice. "He toucheth neither goats nor kine, and men say he sucketh more blood than he eateth flesh."

"It is that that proves him to be the Thing he is," said Ngah.

"Your words are true," said Che' Sĕman solemnly. "He of the Hairy Face was in the beginning a man like other men—a *Sĕmang*, a negrit of the woods. Because of his cruelty and his iniquities and the malignity of his magic, his own people drove him forth from among them, and now he lives solitary in the jungles, and by night transforms himself into the shape of Him of the Hairy Face, and feasts upon the flesh of human beings. This is a fact well known and attested."

"It is said that it is only the men of Korinchi who possess this art," interposed Abdullah, in the tone of one who seeks to be reassured.

"They also practise magic of a like kind," rejoined

*The "dove" stroke is a very rapid stroke made with the paddle lifted high in the air, and driven into the water and drawn back with great force. It is always used for the finish of a canoe-race. The origin of the term is unknown.

†A year of maize—three months; a year of rice—six months; a year, without any qualification, is the Muhammadan year of twelve months of thirty days each

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Sĕman. "But it is certain that He of the Hairy Face was in the beginning a *Sĕmang*—a negrit of the woods; and when he goeth abroad in human guise, he is like all other *Sĕmang* to look upon. I and many others have come upon him, now and again, when we have been in the forests seeking for jungle-produce. He is old and wrinkled and very dirty, covered with skin disease, as with a white garment; and he roameth alone naked and muttering to himself. When he spies men he makes haste to hide himself; and all folk know that it is He who harries us by night in our villages. If we venture forth from our houses during the hours of darkness, to the bathing-raft at the river's edge, to tend our sick, or to visit a friend, Si-Pûdong is ever to be found watching, and thus the tale of his kill waxeth longer and longer."

"But at least men are safe from him while they sit within their houses," said Mat.

"God alone knoweth," answered Che' Sĕman piously. "Who can say where safety abides when He of the Hairy Face is seeking to glut his appetites? He cometh like a shadow, slays like a prince, and then like a shadow he is gone. And ever the tale of his kills waxeth longer and yet more long. May God send Him very far away from us! *Ya Allah!* It is He, even now! Listen!"

At the word a dead silence, broken only by the hard breathing of the men and women, fell upon all within the house. Then very faintly, and far away upstream, but not so faintly but that all could hear it, as they listened with straining ears and suspended

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

heart-beats, the long-drawn, howling, snarling moan of a hungry tiger rose and fell above the murmur of the insect-world without. The Malays call the roar of the tiger *äum*, and as they pronounce it, the word is vividly onomatopoetic, as those of us who have heard it in lonely jungle places during the silent night watches can bear witness. All who have listened to the tiger in his forest freedom know that he has many voices. He can give a barking cry, which is not unlike that of a deer; he can grunt like a startled boar, and squeak like the monkeys cowering and chattering at his approach in the branches overhead; he can shake the earth with a vibrating, resonant purr, like the sound of distant thunder in the foothills; he can mew and snarl like an angry wildcat; and he can roar almost like a lion. But it is when he lifts his voice in the long-drawn moan that the men and beasts of the jungle chiefly fear him. This cry means that he is hungry, but also that he is so sure of his kill that he cares not if all the world knows that his belly is empty. There is in its note something strangely horrible, for it is as though the cold-blooded, dispassionate cruelty, peculiar to the feline race, has in it become suddenly articulate. These sleek, glossy-skinned, soft-footed, lithe, almost serpentine creatures torture with a grace of movement and gentleness in strength which have in them something infinitely more terror-inspiring than the blundering charge and savage goring of the gaur, or the clumsy tramplings and kneadings with which the elephant destroys its victims.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Again the long-drawn moan broke upon the stillness. The water-buffaloes in the byre heard it, and were panic-stricken. Mad with fear they charged the walls of their pen, bearing all before them, and a moment later could be heard plunging wildly through the brushwood and splashing through the soft mud of the *pâdi*-fields, the noise of their stampede growing fainter and fainter with distance. The lean curs, suddenly awakened, whimpered miserably and scampered off in every direction, while the sleepy fowls, beneath the flooring of the house, set up a drowsy and discordant screeching. The folk within were too terror-stricken to speak; for extremity of fear, which lends voices to the animal world, renders voluble human beings dumb. And all this while the cry of the tiger broke out again and again, ever louder and louder, as He of the Hairy Face drew nearer and yet more near.

At last it sounded within the very compound in which the house stood, and its sudden proximity caused Mat to start so violently that he overturned with his elbow the pitch-torch at his side, and extinguished the flickering light. The women, their teeth chattering like castanets, crowded up against the men, seeking comfort in physical contact with them. The men gripped their spears, and squatted trembling in the half-light cast by the dying embers of the fire, and by the flecks cast upon floor and wall by the moonbeams struggling through the interstices of the wattling and the thatch of the roof.

"Fear not, Mînah," Che' Sĕman whispered, in a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

hoarse, strained voice, to his little daughter, who nestled quaking against his breast. "In a space He will be gone. Even He of the Hairy Face will do us no hurt while we sit within the house."

Che' Sĕman spoke with his judgment supported by the experience of many generations of Malays; but he knew not the nature of the strange animal with which he was now confronted. Once more the moan-like howl set the still air vibrating, but this time its note had changed, and gradually it quickened to the ferocious, snarling roar, which is the charge-song of the tiger, as the beast rushed at the house and flung itself against the bamboo wall with a heavy, jarring thud. A shriek from all the seven distraught wretches within went up on the instant; and then came a scratching, tearing sound, followed by a soft *flop*, as the tiger, failing to effect a landing on the low roof, fell back to earth. The men leaped to their feet, clutching their weapons convulsively, bewildered by fear and by the darkness; and led by Che' Sĕman, they raised above the wailing of the women, a quavering, half-hearted *sôrak*—the Malayan war-cry, which is designed as much to put courage into those who utter it, as to dismay the enemy whom it defies.

Mat, the man who had upset the torch, alone failed to add his voice to the lamentable outcry of his fellows. Seeking to hide himself from the raging brute without, he crept, unobserved by the others, up into the shelflike loft, in which Mînah had been wont to sit, when strangers were about, during the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

short days of her virginity. This place consisted of a platform of stout laths suspended from the roof in one corner of the house, and amidst the dusty lumber that filled it, Mat now cowered, sweating with terror.

A minute or two of silence and of sickening suspense followed the tiger's first unsuccessful charge. But presently the howl broke forth anew, quickened rapidly to the charge-roar, and again the house shook beneath the impact as the weight of the great animal was hurled at it. This time the leap of Him of the Hairy Face had been judged more surely; and a crash overhead, a shower of leaflets of thatch, and an ominous creaking of the beams apprised the cowering folk within the house that their enemy had secured a foothold on the roof.

The fragmentary, throaty *sôrak*, which Che' Sĕman had urged his companions to raise, died away into a sobbing silence, disturbed only by the sound of breaths drawn thickly and by the hysterical weeping of the women. Then all were smitten with dumbness, as gazing upward in awful fascination, they saw the thatch torn violently apart by the great claws of the tiger. There were no firearms in the house, but instinctively the men clutched their spears, and held them in readiness to resist the descent of their assailant; and thus for a moment all remained spellbound, with their eyes fastened upon the horror above them. A flood of moonlight, infinitely quiet and peaceful, poured in upon them through the yawning gap in the thatch, and against it the immense, square head of Him of the Hairy Face was darkly outlined, the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

black bars on the brute's hide, the flaming eyes, and the long cruel teeth being plainly visible, framed in the hole which its claws had made.

The timbers of the roof bent and cracked anew under the unwonted weight, and then, with the agility of a cat, He of the Hairy Face leaped lightly down, and was in among them before they knew. The striped hide was slightly wounded by the upthrust spears, but the shock of the beast's leap bore all who had resisted it to the floor. The tiger never stayed to use its jaws. It sat up, much in the attitude of a kitten playing with a ball of worsted dangled before its eyes, and striking out rapidly and with unerring aim, speedily disposed of all its victims. Che′ Sĕman and his two sons, Âwang and Ngah, were the first to fall. Then Îang, Che′ Sĕman's wife, was flung reeling backward against the wall with her skull crushed out of all resemblance to any human member by a single, playful buffet from one of those mighty pads. Kassim, Pôtek, and Abdullah fell before the tiger in quick succession; and Mînah, the little girl who had nestled against her father for protection, lay now beneath his body, sorely wounded, almost demented by terror, but still alive and conscious. Mat, cowering on the shelf overhead, and gazing fascinated at the carnage going on below him, was the only inmate of the house who remained uninjured.

He of the Hairy Face killed quickly and silently while there were yet some alive to resist him. Then, purring gently, he passed from one crumpled form

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

to the other, sucking at the blood of each of his victims, after the manner of a mongoose. At last he reached the body of Che' Sĕman; and Mînah, seeing him draw near, made a feeble effort to evade him. He pounced upon her like a flash, and then, under the eyes of the horrified Mat, an appalling scene was enacted. The tiger played with and tortured the girl, precisely as we have all seen a cat treat a maimed mouse. Again and again Mînah crawled laboriously away, only to be drawn back by her tormentor when he seemed at last to have exhausted his interest in her. At times she lay still in a paralysis of inertia, only to be goaded into agonized motion once more by a touch of the tiger's claws. Yet, so cunningly did he manipulate his victim, that—as Mat afterward described it—"a time sufficient to enable a pot of rice to be cooked" elapsed ere the girl was finally put out of her misery.

Even then, He of the Hairy Face did not quit the scene of slaughter. Mat, lying prone upon the shelf, watched him through the long hours of that night of terror, playing with the mangled corpses of each of his victims in turn. He leaped from one to the other, apparently trying to cheat himself into the belief that they still lived, inflicting upon them a series of fresh wounds with teeth and claws. The moonlight, pouring through the torn thatch, revealed him frolicking among the dead with all the airy, light-hearted agility and grace of a kitten playing with its own shadow on a sunny lawn; and it was not until the dawn was beginning to break that he tore down

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the door, leaped easily to the ground, and betook himself to the jungle.

When the sun was up, an armed party of neighbours came to the house to see if aught could be done to aid its occupants. They found the place a shambles, the bodies hardly to be recognized, the floor-laths dripping blood, and Mat lying face-downward on the shelf, with his reason tottering in the balance. The corpses, though they had been horribly mutilated, had not been eaten, the tiger having contented himself with drinking the blood of his victims, and playing his ghastly game with them till daybreak interrupted him.

This is, I believe, the only well-authenticated instance of a tiger attacking men within their closed house in the heart of a Malayan village; and the circumstances are so remarkable in every way, that it is perhaps only natural that the natives of Pahang should attribute the fearlessness of mankind, and the lust of blood displayed by Him of the Hairy Face, to the fact that he was no ordinary wild beast, but a member of the human family who, by means of magic agencies, had assumed a tiger's shape, the better to prey upon his kind.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE FLIGHT OF CHÊP, THE BIRD

IN A large Sâkai camp on the banks of the upper reaches of the Jĕlai River, at a point some miles above the last of the scattered Malay villages, the annual harvest home was being held one autumn night in the year of grace 1893. The occasion of the feast was the same as that which all tillers of the soil are wont to celebrate with bucolic rejoicings, when the year's crop has been got in; and the name which I have applied to it awakens the perennial nostalgia of the exile by conjuring up the picture of many a long summer day in the quiet country at Home. Again, in imagination, he watches the loaded farm-wains labouring over the grass or lumbering down the leafy lanes; again the scent of the hay is in his nostrils, and the soft English gloaming—so delicious by contrast with the short-lived twilight of the tropics—is lingering over the land. The reapers astride upon the load exchange their barbarous badinage with those who follow afoot; the pleasant glow of health, that follows upon a long day of hard work in the open air, warms the blood; and in the eyes of all is the light of expectation, born of the thought of the good red meat, and the lashings of ale and cider, awaiting them at the farmhouse two miles across the meadows.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

But in the distant Sâkai country the harvest home has little in common with such scenes as these. The rice-crop planted in the clearing in the forest, hard by the spot in which the camp is pitched, has been reaped laboriously in the native fashion, each ear being severed from its stalk separately and by hand. Then, after many days, the grain has at last been stored in the big circular boxes, formed of the bark of a giant tree, and securely thatched with palm leaves; and the Sâkai women, who throughout have performed the lion's share of the work, are set to husk some portions of it for the evening meal. This they do with clumsy wooden pestels, held as they stand around a troughlike mortar fashioned from the same material, the *ding-dong-ding* of the pounders carrying far and wide through the forest. At the joyful sound, all wanderers from the camp—whose inhabitants have for months been subsisting upon roots and berries—turn their faces homeward with the eagerness bred of empty stomachs and the prospect of a long-expected surfeit. The rice is boiled in cooking-pots, manufactured in Europe and sold to them by the Malays, if the tribe be so fortunate as to possess such luxuries; otherwise a length of bamboo is used, for that marvellous vegetable growth is made to serve every conceivable purpose by the natives of the far interior of the Peninsula.

The fat, new rice is sweet to eat, for when freshly reaped, its natural, oleaginous properties have not yet evaporated. It differs as widely from the parched and arid stuff you know in Europe as does the butter

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

in a cool Devonshire dairy from the liquid, yellow train oil we pour out of tins and dignify by that name in the sweltering tropics. The Sâkai devour it ravenously and in incredible quantities, for not only does it afford them their first full meal for months, but they are eating against time, since they know that in a day or two the Malays will come upstream to "barter" with them, and that then the bulk of the priceless stuff will be taken from them, almost by force, in exchange for a few axe heads, flints and steels, and the blades of native wood-knives. Therefore, they pack themselves while the opportunity is still with them, and so long as their distended stomachs will bear the strain of a few additional mouthfuls.

Thus, while the darkness is shutting down over the forest, is the harvest supper devoured in a Sâkai camp, with gluttony and beast noises of satisfaction and repletion; but when the meal has been finished, the sleep of the full-fed may not fall upon the people. The Sâkai, who quail before the appalling strength of Nature, at whose hands they have suffered an eternal defeat, lie in perpetual terror of the superhuman beings by whom they believe Nature to be animated. Before rest can be sought, the spirits of the forest and of the streams, and the demons of the grain must be thanked for their gifts, and propitiated for such evil as has been done to them. The inviolate jungle has been felled to make the clearing, its virgin growths being ravaged with axe head and fire brand. The rice has been reaped and brought

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

into store. Clearly the spirits stand in need of comfort and reparation for the injury which has been wrought, and for the loss which they have sustained. An apologetic mood is felt by the tribe to be appropriate upon their part, and Sâkai custom—well-nigh as ancient as the hills in which these people live—provides for such emergencies.

The house of the headman or of the local wizard—and the Sâkai, as the Malays will tell you, are deeply versed in magic arts—is filled to the roof with the sodden green growths of the jungle. The Sâkai, having trespassed upon the domain of the spirits, now invite the demons of the woods and of the grain to share with them the dwellings of men. Then, when night has fallen, the whole tribe of Sâkai—men, women, and little children—casting aside their bark loin-clouts, creep into the house, stark naked and entirely unarmed. Grovelling together in the darkness, amid the leaves and branches with which the place is crammed, they raise their voices in a weird chant, which peals skyward till the dawn has come again.

No man can say how ancient are these annual orgies, nor trace with certainty the beginnings in which they originated. Perhaps they date back to a period when huts, and garments even of bark, were newly acquired things, and when the Sâkai suffered both ungladly, after the manner of all wild jungle creatures. It may be that, in those days, they cast aside their bark loin-cloths to revel once more in pristine nakedness, amid the green boughs of the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

jungle, on occasions of rejoicing, and at such times thrust behind them all memory of the more or less decorous mating of man with the maid of his choice, and of the bars of close consanguinity which experience was teaching them to rear up between members of the opposite sexes. Be that how it may, the same ceremony is performed, to the immense scandal of the Malays, in every camp scattered throughout the broad Sâkai country, and the same ancient chant is sung during the long, still night which follows the garnering of the rice crop. The Malays call this custom *bĕr-jĕrmun*—which more or less literally means "to pig it"—because they trace a not altogether fanciful resemblance between the huts stuffed with jungle, in which these orgies are held, and the *jĕrmun*, or nestlike shelters which wild boars construct for their protection and comfort.

But though the Malays, very properly, despise the Sâkai, and reprobate all their heathenish ways and works, upon the occasion of which I write, Sĕntul—a man of the former race—was not only present, but was debasing himself to the extent of taking an active part in the demon worship and the unclean ceremonies of the infidels.

He was a Malay of the Malays—a Muhammadan who, in his saner moments, hated all who prayed to devils (other than those enshrined in the traditions of his own people) or who bowed down to stocks and stones. But for the time being, he was mad. He had come upstream, a few weeks earlier, to trade with the forest-dwellers, and when his companions had

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

returned to the Malay villages, he had remained behind. Since then he had shared the life of the inmates of the Sâkai camp, forgetful of his superiority of religion and of race,, and to-night was herding naked, amid the green stuff, with the chanting jungle people. And all this had befallen him because the flashing glance from a pair of pretty eyes,, set in the face of a slender Sâkai girl, had blinded him and deprived him of reason.

The wife of his own race, and the child whom he had left with her in the hut downriver, troubled him not at all. All considerations of honour and duty and of the public opinion, which in the matter of a *liaison* with an infidel woman can, among Malays, be uncommonly rigid, were forgotten. He only knew that life no longer seemed to hold for him anything of good unless Chêp, the Bird, as her people named her, could be his. In the abstract, he despised the Sâkai even more vehemently than of old; but for this girl's sake he smothered his feelings, dwelt among her kinsfolk as one of themselves, losing thereby the last atom of his self-respect, and consciously risking his soul's salvation. Yet all this sacrifice of his ideals had hitherto been unavailing, for Chêp was the wife of a Sâkai named Ku-îsh—the Porcupine—who had not only declined to sell her at even the extravagant price which the Malay had offered for her, but guarded her jealously, and gave Sĕntul no opportunity of prosecuting his intimacy.

On her side, she had quickly divined Sĕntul's passion for her; and as he was younger and richer than

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Ku-îsh, better favoured in his person, and moreover a Malay—a man of the dominant race—she was both pleased and flattered by his admiration. Such exotic notions as a distinction between right and wrong boiled themselves down in her intelligence into a desire to be well fed and clothed, and a reluctance to risk a severe whipping at the hands of the muscular Ku-îsh. She knew that Sĕntul, who also attracted her physically, could provide her with hitherto unattainable luxuries. She hoped he would be able to protect her from the wrath and violence of her husband, since there are few Sâkai who dare to defy a Malay; and having thus thought the matter out, so far as such a process was possible to her, she now merely awaited a fitting opportunity to elope with her lover.

Their chance came on the night of the harvest home. In the darkness Sĕntul crept close to Chêp, and when the chant was at its loudest, he whispered in her ear that his dugout canoe lay ready yonder, moored to the river bank, and that he loved her. Together they stole out of the hut, unobserved by the Sâkai folk, who sang and grovelled in the darkness. The boat was speedily found, and the lovers, stepping into it, pushed noiselessly out into the stream.

The river at this point hustles its shallow waters, with much fuss and uproar, down a long, sloping bed of shingle, and the noise swallowed up the sound of the paddles. Chêp, seated in the stern, held the steering oar, and Sĕntul, squatting in the bows, propelled the boat downstream with rapid and vigorous

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

strokes. Thus they journeyed on in silence through a shadowy world. The wonderful virgin forest—immense banks of vegetation rising sheer from the river's brink on either hand—made of the stream a narrow defile between lowering walls of darkness. The boughs and tree-tops overhead, converging closely, reduced the sky to a slender, star-bespangled ribbon. A steel-like glint played here and there upon the surface of the running water, and its insistent roar, sinking now and again to a mere murmur, was blent with mysterious whisperings. Once in a long while an argus pheasant would yell its ringing challenge from its drumming-ground on a neighbouring hill-cap or the abrupt bark of a spotted deer, or the cry of some wild beast would momentarily break in upon the stillness. Sĕntul and Chêp were travelling on a half-freshet, and this, in the far upper country, where the streams tear over their beds of rocks or pebbles through the gorges formed by their high banks, and where each drains a big catchment area, means that their boat was tilted downriver at a headlong pace. The dawn was breaking when the fugitives reached their destination—the Malay village in which Sĕntul had his home; and by then a good fifty miles separated them from the Sâkai camp, and they felt themselves to be safe from pursuit.

To understand this, you must realize what the Sâkai of the interior is. Men of the aboriginal race who have lived for years surrounded by Malay habitations are as different from him as are the fallow deer in an English park from the sambhur of the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

jungles. Sâkai who have spent all their lives among Malays, who have learned to wear clothes, to count up to ten, or it may be even twenty, are hardly to be distinguished from their neighbours, the other primitive upcountry natives. They are not afraid to wander through the Malay villages; they do not rush into the jungle or hide behind trees at the approach of strangers; a water-buffalo does not inspire them with as much terror as a tiger; and they do not hesitate to make, comparatively speaking, long journeys from their homes if occasion requires. In all this they are immeasurably more sophisticated than their kinsmen, the semi-wild Sâkai of the centre of the Peninsula. These folk trade with the Malays, it is true; but the traffic has to be carried on by visitors who penetrate for the purpose into the Sâkai country. Most of them have learned to speak Malay, though many are familiar only with their own jerky, monosyllabic jargon, and when their three numerals have been used, fall back, for further arithmetical expression, upon the word *kerp*", which means "many." For clothes they wear the narrow loin-clout, fashioned of the prepared bark of certain trees—a form of garment which only very partially covers their nudities; they go, not without reason, in great terror of the Malays, and are as shy as the beasts of the forest; and never willingly do they quit that portion of the country which is still exclusively inhabited by the aboriginal tribes. It was to semi-savage Sâkai such as these that Chêp and her people belonged.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

There are tribes of other and wilder jungle-dwellers living in the fastnesses of the forests of the broad Sâkai country—men who fly at the approach of even the tamer tribesmen. Their camps may occasionally be seen, on a clear day, far up the hillsides on the jungle-covered uplands of the remote interior; their tracks are sometimes met with, mixed with those of the bison and rhinoceros, the deer and the wild swine; but the people themselves are but rarely encountered, and when glimpsed for an instant, vanish like shadows. The tamer Sâkai trade with them in the silent fashion of the aborigines, depositing the articles of barter at certain spots in the forest, whence they are removed by the wild men and replaced by various kinds of jungle produce. Of these, the most valued are the long, straight reeds, found only in the more remote parts of the forest, which are used by the wild men and by the tamer tribes folk alike to form the inner casings of their blowpipes. All these aborigines are straight-haired peoples, the colour of whose skins is, if anything, somewhat lighter than is usual among their Malayan neighbours; but the jungles of the Peninsula harbour also a race of negrits —little sturdy black men with jutting, prognathous features, and short curly hair that clings closely to their scalps. They resemble an African negro seen through the wrong end of a field-glass; they live in improvised shelters, and are nomadic hunters; and though some of the tamer among them curb their restlessness sufficiently to plant an occasional catch-crop, their civilization is somewhat lower than that

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

of the Sâkai, and they prefer to wander about in small family groups rather than to dwell together in village communities.

Chêp, of course, was deeply embued with the traditions of her people, and her fancy for Sĕntul, her appreciation of the material comfort with which he would be able to surround her, and her confidence in his ability to protect her, had alone succeeded in nerving her to leave her tribe and to turn back upon the forest country with which she was familiar. A great fear fell upon her when, the last of her known landmarks having been left far behind, she found herself floating downstream through cluster after cluster of Malay villages. The instinct of her race, which bids the Sâkai plunge headlong into the forest at the approach of a stranger, was strong upon her, and her heart beat violently, like that of some wild bird held in the human hand. All her life the Malays, who preyed upon her people, had been spoken of with fear and suspicion by the simple Sâkai grouped at night-time around the fires in their squalid camps. Now she found herself alone in the very heart—for such to her it seemed—of the Malayan country. She gazed with awe and admiration at the primitive houses around her, which were poor enough specimens of their kind, but which revolutionized her notions as to the possibilities of architectural achievement. The groves of palms and fruit trees were another marvel, for her experience of agriculture had hitherto been confined to a temporary clearing in the forest. She felt, as the Malays put it, like a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

deer astray in a royal city. Sĕntul, moreover, was changed in her sight. While he had lived among her people as one of themselves, he had seemed to her to be merely a superior sort of Sâkai. Now she realized, seeing him in his proper environment, that he was, in truth, a Malay—a man of the dominant, foreign race which, from time immemorial, had enslaved her people; and at that thought her spirit sank. Pursuit, which she had feared during the earlier hours of the night, became now for her a hope. It meant, in spite of the very workmanlike whipping which would accompany recapture, a possibility of deliverance—escape from this strangers' land, and a return to the peaceful forest she had so foolishly quitted. But in her eyes the prospect was infinitely remote. She knew how hearty was the fear with which her people regarded the Malays; how averse they were from being lured out of the jungles with which they were familiar; and Sĕntul, who had acquired a fairly intimate knowledge of the ways and character of the Sâkai, fully shared her conviction that he and the girl he had abducted were now out of the reach of the tribesmen.

Accordingly Chêp and her lover halted at the latter's village, and took up their abode in his house. Of that homecoming I possess no details. Sĕntul's Malay wife, who was the mother of his children, must have regarded the new importation from up river with peculiar disfavour. A co-wife is always a disagreeable accretion, but when she chances to belong to the despised Sâkai race, the natural dis-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

content which her arrival in the household occasions is inevitably transformed into a blazing indignation. Malay women, however, can sometimes patch up a *modus vivendi* with the obviously intolerable as well as any of their sex, when circumstances are too strong for them; and Sĕntul's lawful wife did not carry her opposition farther than to stipulate that Chêp and she should be accommodated in separate huts.

The Sâkai girl was delighted with her new home. In her eyes it was a veritable palace compared with the miserable shacks which contented her own people; and the number and variety of the cooking-pots, the large stock of household stores, the incredibly luxurious flock sleeping mat, and above all the pretty Malayan garments of silk and cotton of which she had suddenly become the bewildered possessor filled her woman's soul with pleasure. Also, Sĕntul was kind to her, and she ate good boiled rice twice daily, which was to her an undreamed-of content. Sooner or later the irresistible longing for the jungle, which is bred in the very marrow of the forest-dwellers, would awaken in her, and drive her back to her own people; but of this she knew nothing as yet, and for the time she was happy.

In the Sâkai camp it was not until the day had dawned that the devil-worshippers, looking at one another's tired and pallid faces through heavy, sleepless eyes, as they crawled forth from the sodden, draggled tangle of vegetation in the house, noted that two of their number were missing. The quick sight

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

of the jungle-people at once spied the trail left by the passage of the man and woman, and following it, they crowded down to the place where the dugout had been moored. Here they squatted on the ground and began to smoke.

"*Rĕj-ă-rŏj!*" they exclaimed, in the barbarous jargon of the jungle-folk. "Lost!" and then relapsed into silence.

"May she be devoured by a tiger!" snarled Ku-îsh, the Porcupine, who was making guttural noises deep down in his throat; and at the word all his hearers shuddered, and drew closer one to another. The curse is the most terrible that the jungle-people know; and if you shared your home with the great cats, as they do, you also would regard it with fear and respect. To speak of a tiger openly, in such a fashion, is moreover extraordinarily unlucky, as the monster, hearing itself mentioned, may look upon it as an invitation to put in an immediate appearance.

Ku-îsh said little more, for the Sâkai, when prey to emotion, make but a slight use of the meagre vocabulary at their command. He presently rose, however, and went back to the camp and unslung an exceedingly ancient matchlock, which was suspended from a beam in the roof of the headman's hut. It was the only gun which the tribe possessed, and was their most precious possession; but no one interfered with the Porcupine or tried to stay him when, musket on shoulder, he slipped into the forest, heading downstream.

Two days later, in the cool of the afternoon, Sĕntul

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

left Chêp, the Bird, in her new house, busying herself with the preparation of the evening meal, and accompanied by his small son—the child of his outraged wife—went forth to catch fish in one of the swamps at the back of the village. These marshy places, which are to be found in the neighbourhood of so many Malay habitations, are ready-made rice-fields; but as the cultivation of a *pâda* swamp demands more exacting labour than most Malays are willing to expend upon it, they are often left to lie fallow, while crops are grown in clearings on the hills round about. In dry weather the cracked, parched earth, upon which no vegetation sprouts, alone marks the places which, in the rainy season, are pools of stagnant water; but so surely as these ponds reappear, the little muddy fishes, which the Malays call *rûan* and *sĕpat*, are to be found in them. What is the manner of their subterranean existence during the months of drought, or how they then contrive to support life, no man clearly knows, but a heavy shower suffices to bring them once more to the surface, and they never appear to be any the worse for their temporary interment.

Sĕntul carried two long *jôran*, or Malayan fishing-rods, over his shoulder, and his small naked son pattered along at his heels bearing in his hands a tin containing bait. The child crooned to himself, after the manner of native children, but his father paced ahead of him in silence. He was in a contented and comfortable mood, for the satisfaction of his desire for Chêp had soothed him body and soul.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Arrived at the swamp, which was now a broad pool of water with here and there a tuft or two of rank rushes showing above the surface, Sêntul and his son each took a rod and began patiently angling for the little fishes. The sun crept lower and lower, quickening its pace as it neared the western horizon, till its slanting rays flooded the surface of the pool with the crimson hue of blood. The sky overhead was dyed a thousand gorgeous tints, and the soft light of the sunset hour in Malaya mellowed all the land. Sĕntul had watched many a hundred times the miracle of beauty which, in these latitudes, is daily wrought by the rising and the setting sun, and he looked now upon the colour-drenched landscape about him with the complete indifference to the glories of nature which is one of the least attractive qualities of the Malays. If the orgy of splendour above and the reddened pool at his feet suggested anything to him, it was only that the day was waning, and that it was time to be wending his way homeward.

He set to work to gather up his fishing-tackle while his son, squatting on the ground at his side, passed a rattan cord through the fishes' gills to their mouths, so that the take might be carried with greater ease. While they were thus engaged a slight rustle in the high grass behind them caused both father and son to start and look round. Not a breath of wind was blowing; but none the less, a few feet away from them, the spear-shaped grass tufts were agitated slightly, as though the stalks were being rushed against by the passage of some wild animal.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Hasten, little one," said Sĕntul uneasily. "Perchance it is the striped one."

But as he spoke the words the grass was parted by human hands, and Sĕntul found himself gazing into the wild and bloodshot eyes of Ku-îsh, the Porcupine, along the length of an ancient gun-barrel. He had time to note the rust upon the dulled metal, the fantastic shape of the clumsy sight, and the blue tattoo-marks on the nose and forehead of his enemy. All these things he saw mechanically, in an instant of time; but ere he could move hand or foot the world around him seemed to be shattered into a thousand fragments to the sound of a deafening explosion, and he lay dead upon the grass, with his skull blown to atoms.

At the sight Sĕntul's son fled screaming along the edge of the pool; but Ku-îsh's blood was up, and he started in pursuit. The little boy, finding flight useless, flung himself down in the long grass, and cowering there, raised his arms above his head, shrieking for mercy in his childish treble. Ku-îsh, for answer, plunged his spear again and again into the writhing body at his feet; and at the second blow the distortions of terror faded from his victim's face and was replaced by that expression of perfect peace that is only to be seen in its completeness in the countenance of a sleeping child.

Ku-îsh gathered up the fish and took all the tobacco that he could find upon Sĕntul's body; for a Sâkai never quite loses sight of those perennial cravings of appetite which he is doomed never alto-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

gether to satisfy. Then, when the darkness had shut down over the land, he crept softly to Chêp's house, and bade her come forth and join him. She came at once, and without a word; for your Sâkai woman holds herself to be the chattel of whatever man chances at the moment to have possessed himself of her, forcibly or otherwise. She wept furtively when Ku-îsh told her, in a few passionless sentences, of how he had killed Sĕntul and his child; and she bewailed herself at the top of her voice when, at the first convenient halting-place, she received the handsome trouncing which Sĕntul dealt out to her, with no grudging hand, as her share in the general chastisement. But when the welting was over she followed him meekly enough, with the tears still wet upon her cheeks, and made no effort to escape. Thus Ku-îsh, the Porcupine, and Chêp, the Bird, made their way back through the strange forests, until they had once more regained the familiar Sâkai country, and were safe among their own people.

Pursuit in such a place is hopeless; for a Sâkai comes and goes like a shadow, and can efface himself utterly if he desire so to do. Thus, though Sĕntul's relatives clamoured for vengeance, little could be done. I was at that time in charge of the district where these things occurred, and it was only with the greatest difficulty, and after pledging myself to guarantee their personal immunity, that I was able to induce the various Sâkai headmen to meet me near the confines of their country. My request that Ku-îsh should be handed over to me for trial was

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

received by the assembled elders as a suggestion that was manifestly ridiculous. Ku-îsh, they observed sententiously, was in the jungle, the portals of which were closed to all save the Sâkai. Unaided by them, neither white man nor Malay could ever hope to set hands upon him. They would take no part in the hunt. I could not bring any material pressure to bear, as I had undertaken that no harm should befall them at the meeting, and when we had once separated they could vanish quite as effectively as Ku-îsh had done. They were fully aware of all this, and were irritatingly placid and happy. It looked like an absolute *impasse*.

At length a very aged man, the principal Sâkai elder present, a wrinkled and unimaginably dirty old savage, scarred by encounters with wild beasts, and gray with skin diseases and wood-ashes, lifted up his voice and spoke, shaking his straggling mop of grizzled hair in time to the cadence of his words.

"There is a custom, *Tûan*," he said. "There is a custom when such things befall. The Porcupine hath killed the *Gob*,* and our tribe must repay sevenfold. Seven lives for the life of a Gob. It is the custom."

He spoke in Malay, which gave him an unusual command of numerals, and he had attained to a degree of civilization and experience which enabled him to perform the brain-cracking feat of counting up to ten.

The proposal sounded generous, but a little inquiry presently revealed the old chief's real inten-

Gob—Stranger, *i. e.*, any person who is not a Sâkai.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

tions. His suggestion was that the blood-money to be exacted from his tribe should take the form of seven human beings, who were to be duly delivered to the relatives of the dead man as slaves. These seven unfortunates were not to be members of his own or Ku-îsh's tribe, but were to be captured by them from among the really wild people of the hills, who had had no share in the ill-doing, which it was my object to punish. The Porcupine and his brethren, he explained, would run some risk, and would be put to a considerable amount of trouble and exertion before the seven wild Sâkai could be caught, and this was to be the measure of their punishment. The blameless savages of the mountains I was, moreover, assured, were not deserving of any pity, as they had obviously been created in order to provide the wherewithal to meet such emergencies, and to supply their more civilized neighbours with a valuable commodity for barter. The old chief went on to tell me that his tribe would be mercifully free from all fear of reprisals as owing to some incomprehensible but providential superstition, the wild Sâkai never pursued a raiding party beyond a spot where the latter had left a spear sticking upright in the ground. This, he said, was well known to the marauders, who took care to avail themselves of the protection thus afforded to them as soon as ever their captives had been secured. The assembled Sâkai were unable to account for the paralysis with which the sight of this abandoned spear invariably smote the wild folk, but the extraordinary conven-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ience of the thing evidently appealed strongly to their utilitarian minds.

Blood-money in past times, I was assured by Malays and Sâkai alike, had always been paid in this manner when it was due from the semi-wild tribes of the interior. It was the custom; and Sĕntul's relatives were urgent in their prayers to me to accept the proposal. Instead, I exacted a heavy fine of *gĕtah** and other jungle produce from the tribe to which Ku-îsh, the Porcupine, belonged. This was regarded as a monstrous injustice by the Sâkai, and as an inadequate indemnity by the Malays; and I thus gave complete dissatisfaction to all parties concerned, as is not infrequently the fate of the adjudicating white man. However, as the Oriental proverb has it, "an order is an order till one is strong enough to disobey it"; so the fine was paid by the Sâkai and accepted by the Malays with grumblings of which I only heard the echoes.

The really remarkable features of the incidents related are that Ku-îsh ever plucked up the courage to quit the jungles with which he was familiar and to penetrate alone into the Malayan country, and that he, the son of a down-trodden race, dared for once to pay a portion of the heavy debt of vengeance for long years of grinding cruelty and wicked wrong which the Sâkai owe to the Malays.

Gĕtah—Gutta-percha.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

A DAUGHTER OF THE MUHAMMADANS

THE sunset hour had come as I passed up the narrow track that skirted the river bank, with a mob of villagers at my heels. Old men were there who had seen many strange things in the wild days before the coming of the white men; dull peasants, who seemed too stolid and stupid to have ever seen anything at all; and swaggering youngsters, grown learned in the mysteries of reading and writing, fresh from our schools and prepared at a moment's notice to teach the wisest of the village elders the only proper manner in which an egg may be sucked. The rabble which every Malay village spews up nowadays, when one chances to visit it, is usually composed of these elements—the old men whose wisdom is their own and of its kind deep and wide; the middle-aged tillers of the soil, whose lives are set in so straitened a rut that they cannot peep over the edges, and whose wisdom is that of the field and the forest; and the men of the younger generation, most of whose knowledge is borrowed, extraordinarily imperfect of its kind, and fortified by the self-confidence of ignorance. The men of the first two classes are gradually dying out, those of the last are replacing them; and the result sometimes tempts one to ask the heretical question whether European

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

systems of education are really as practically educative as the unsystematic transmission of accumulated knowledge and tradition which they have superseded.

The path along which I was walking was to all intents and purposes the main street of the village. On my right, a dozen feet away, the ground fell suddenly and perpendicularly to the brown waters of the Jĕlai, which at this point had cut for themselves a deep channel through the clay soil. Here and there the bank had been worn into a *chenderong*—a deep cleft formed by the buffaloes trampling their way down to water; and at regular intervals bathing rafts were moored, and rude steps had been cut to render them more easily accessible. On my left the thatched roofs of the Malayan houses showed in an irregular line running parallel to the river, amid groves of fruit trees and coco and areca nut palms. On the other side of the Jĕlai the jungle rose in a magnificent bank of vegetation eighty feet in height, sheer from the river's brink.

The glaring Malayan sun, sinking to its rest, blazed full in my eyes, dazzling me, and thus I saw but dimly the figure that crossed my path, heading for the running water on my right. Silhouetted blackly against the furnace mouth in the west it appeared to be the form of a woman bowed nearly double beneath the weight of a burden slung in a cloth across her back—a burden far too heavy for her strength. This, however, is a sight that is only too common in Asiatic lands; for here, if man must idle and loaf, woman must work as well as weep, until

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

at last the time comes for the long, long rest under the lovegrass and the spear-blades of the *lalang* in some shady corner of the peaceful village burial-ground. Accordingly, I took no special notice of the laden woman moving so painfully athwart the sun-glare ahead of me, until my arm was grasped violently by the headman, who was walking just behind me.

"Have a care, *Tûan!*" he cried in some agitation. "Have a care. It is Mînah and her man. It is the sickness that is not good—the evil sickness. Go not near to her, *Tûan*, lest some ill thing befall."

The perverse instinct of the white man invariably prompts him to set at instant defiance any warning that a native may be moved to give him. This propensity has added considerably to the figures which represent the European death-rate throughout Asia, and, incidentally, it has led to many of the acts of reckless daring which have won for Englishmen their Eastern Empire. It has also set the native the hard task of deciding whether the greater subject for wonder is the courage or the stupidity of the men who rule him. I had lived long enough among natives to know that there is generally a sound reason to justify any warning they may give; but nature, as usual, was stronger than acquired experience or common sense, so I released my arm from the headman's grip, and walked up to the figure in front of me.

It was, as I had seen, that of a woman bowed beneath the weight of a heavy burden,—a woman still young, not ill-looking, light coloured for a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Malay, and possessed of a pair of dark eyes the expression of which was peculiarly soft and tender. I only noticed this later, and perhaps a knowledge of her story helped then to quicken my perceptions; but at the moment my attention was completely absorbed by the strange bundle which she bore.

It was a shapeless thing, wrapped in an old cloth, soiled and tattered and horribly stained, which was slung over the woman's left shoulder, across her breast, and under her right armpit. Out of the bundle, just above the base of the woman's own neck, there protruded a head that lolled backward as she moved—a head, gray-white in colour, hairless, sightless, featureless, formless—an object of horror and repulsion. Near her shoulders two stumps, armed with ugly bosses at their tips, emerged from the bundle, motiveless limbs that swayed and gesticulated loosely. Near her own hips two members, similarly deformed, hung down almost to the ground, dangling limply as the woman walked—limbs that showed a sickly grayish colour in the evening light, and ended in five white patches where the toes should have been. It was a leper far gone in the disease whom the woman was carrying riverward.

She did not pause when I spoke to her, rather she seemed to quicken her pace; and presently she and her burden, the shapeless head and limbs of the latter bobbing impotently as the jolts shook them, disappeared down the river bank in the direction of the running water.

I stood still where she had left me, shocked by what

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

I had seen; for lepers, or indeed deformed people of any kind, are remarkably rare among the healthy Malayan villagers, and the sight had been as unexpected as disgusting. Of the men behind me, some laughed, one or two uttered a few words of cheap jeer and taunt, and every one of them turned aside to spit solemnly in token that some unclean thing had been at hand. The headman, newly appointed and oppressed by a sense of his responsibilities, whispered an apology in my ear.

"Pardon us, *Tûan*," he said. "It is an ill-omened sight, and verily I crave forgiveness. It is not fitting that this woman should thus pass and repass athwart the track upon which you are pleased to walk, and that she should bear so unworthy a burden. She is one who hath been inadequately instructed by her parents, one who knoweth nought of language or religion. I pray you pardon her and the village. She is a bad woman to bring this shame upon our folk."

"Who is she?" I inquired.

"She is Mînah, a woman of this village, one devoid of shame. And behold this day she has smudged soot upon the faces of all of us by thus wantonly passing across your path, bearing her man, the leper; and I presently will upbraid her, yea, very certainly, I will reprove her with many pungent words."

"Is she also unclean?" I asked.

"No, *Tûan*, the evil sickness hath not fallen upon her—yet. But her man is sore stricken, and though we, who are of her blood, plead with her unceasingly,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

bidding her quit this man, as by the Law of Muhammad she hath the right to do, she will by no means hearken to our words, for she, *Tûan*, is a woman of a hard and evil heart, very obstinate and headstrong."

He spoke quite simply the thought that was in his mind. From his point of view there was nothing of heroism, nothing of the glory of womanly tenderness and devotion in the sight of this girl's self-sacrifice. To him and to his fellows Mînah's conduct was merely a piece of inexplicable female folly, the unspeakable perversity of a woman deaf to the persuasions and advice of those who wished her well. As for white men, they were even more incomprehensible than women; so he turned upon me eyes that held more of pity than surprise when I presently spoke of her in praise.

"Of a truth," I said, "this woman is nobler than any of her sex of whom I have heard tell in all this land of Pahang. Your village, O *Peng-hulu*, hath much right to be proud of this leper's wife. I charge you say no word of reproach to her concerning her crossing of my path; and give her this, it is but a trifling sum, and tell her that it is given in token of the honour in which I hold her."

This wholly unexpected way of looking upon a matter which had long been a topic of discussion in the village was clearly bewildering to the Malays about me; but money is a useful and honourable commodity, and the possession of anything calculated to bring in cash does not fail to inspire some measure

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

of respect. My gift, therefore, had the effect of stemming forthwith the undercurrent of jeers and laughter at Mînah and her husband which had been audible among the *Peng-hulu's* followers ever since the strange pair had come into view. The incident, moreover, would tend to improve her position in the village and to cause more consideration to be shown to her by her neighbours.

"Tell her also," I said, as I stepped on board my boat to begin the journey downstream. "Tell her also that if there be aught in which she needs my aid, now or hereafter, she hath but to come to me or to send me word, and I will help her in her affliction according to the measure of my ability."

"*Tûan!*" cried the villagers in a chorus of assent, as my boat pushed out from the bank, and my men seized their paddles for the homeward row; and thus ended my first encounter with Mînah, the daughter of the Muhammadans, whom the threats of the village elders, the advice of her friends, the tears and entreaties of her relatives, the contempt of most of her neighbours, and the invitations of those who would have wed with her, were alike powerless to lure from the side of the shapeless wreck who was her husband.

Later I made it my business to inquire from those who knew concerning this woman and her circumstances, and all that I learned served only to quicken my sympathy and admiration.

Like all Malay women, Mînah had been married, when she was still quite a child, to a man whom she

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

had hardly ever seen, and with whom, prior to her wedding, she would not for her life have been guilty of the indecency of speaking a syllable. On the day appointed for the ceremony she had been decked out in all the finery and gold ornaments that her people had been able to borrow from their neighbours for many miles around, and had been led forth to take her seat upon a dais, side by side with the stranger into whose keeping she was about to be given. For hours she had squatted there in an agony of cramped limbs that she dared not relieve by the slightest movement, and in a torture of embarrassment, while the village folk—who composed the whole of her world—ate their fill of the rich food provided for them, and thereafter chanted endless verses from the Kûran in sadly mispronounced Arabic. This appalling publicity had almost deprived the dazed little girl of her faculties, for hitherto she had been kept in complete seclusion, and latterly had spent most of her time on the *para*, or shelf-like upper apartment of her father's house. She had been too abjectly terrified even to cry, far less to raise her eyes from her fingertips which, scarlet with henna, rested immovably upon her knees.

Then, the wedding ceremonies having at last concluded, she had been utterly miserable for many days. She was not yet in her "teens," and to her a man was much what the ogre of the fairy-tales is to the imagination of other little girls of about the same age in our nurseries at home—a creature of immense strength and cruelty, filled with strange devouring

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

appetities, against whom her puny efforts to resist could avail nothing. All women who are wives by contract, rather than by inclination, experience something of this paralysis of fear when first they find themselves at the mercy of a man; but for the girls of a Muhammadan population this instinctive terror of the husband has a tenfold force. During all the days of her life a daughter of the Muhammadans has seen the power and authority of man undisputed and unchecked by the female members of his household. She has seen, perhaps, her own mother put away, after many years of faithfulness and love, because her charms have faded and her husband has grown weary of her; she has seen the married women about her cowed by a word, or even a look, from the man who holds in his hands an absolute right to dispose of his wife's destiny; she has watched the men eating their meals apart—alone if no other member of the masculine sex chanced to be present—because women are not deemed worthy to partake of food in the company of their superiors; and as a result of all these things, the daughter of the Muhammadans has learned to believe from her heart that man is indeed fashioned in a mould more honourable than that in which the folk of her own sex are cast. She subscribes generally to the Malay theory that "it is not fitting" that women should question the doings of men, and she has no share in the *quasi* maternal, very tolerant, yet half-contemptuous attitude which women in Europe are apt to assume toward the men whom they love but are accustomed to regard in the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

light of more or less helpless and irresponsible children. Instead, the Muhammadan woman looks up to a man as to a being who is nobler than herself, endowed with mental and physical powers superior to her own, who is often capricious, harsh, and violent, who may be cajoled and placated, but who fills her simple, trustful soul with fear and awe.

Little Mînah, therefore, had been frightened out of her wits at the bare notion of being handed over to a husband for his service and pleasure, and her gratitude to her man had been extravagant and passionate in its intensity when she found that he was consistently kind and tender to her. For Mamat, the man to whom this child had been so early mated, was a typical villager of the interior, good-natured and easygoing through sheer indolence, courteous of manner, soft of speech, and caressing by instinct, as are so many folk of the kindly Malayan stock. He, too, perhaps, had felt something akin to pity for the wild-eyed little girl who addressed him in quavering monosyllables, and he found a new pleasure in soothing and petting her. So, little by little, his almost paternal feeling for her turned in due season to a man's strong love, and awoke in her a woman's passionate devotion. Thus, for a space, Mamat and Mînah were happy, though no children were born to them, and Mînah fretted secretly, when the house was still at night-time, for she knew that the village women spoke truly when they whispered together that no wife could hope to hold the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fickle heart of a man unless there were baby fingers to aid and strengthen her own desperate grasp.

Two or three seasons came and went. Annually the rich yellow crop was reaped laboriously, ear by ear, and the good grain was garnered. Later the ploughs were set going anew across the dry meadows, and in the rice swamps the buffaloes were made to trample and knead the soft earth into a quagmire. Then sowing had been taken in hand, and while the progress of the crop was closely marked and endlessly discussed, the villagers had kept all free from weeds, working in rotation upon one another's land in chattering groups until the time for reaping once more came round. Mamat and Mînah had taken their share of the toil, and had watched nature giving birth to her myriad offspring with unfailing regularity, but still no small feet pattered over the lath flooring of their hut, and no child's voice made music in their compound. Mamat seemed to have become less lighthearted than of old, and he frequently returned from the fields complaining of fever, and lay down to rest tired and depressed. Mînah tended him carefully, but she watched him with misery in her heart, for she told herself that the day was drawing near that would see a co-wife, who should bear sons to her husband, come to rob her of his love. Therefore, at times, when Mamat was absent, she would weep furtively as she sat alone among the cooking-pots in the empty hut, and many were the vows of rich offerings to be devoted to the shrines of the local

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

saints that she made if only they would insure to her the joy of motherhood.

Just before dusk one afternoon Mamat came back to the hut, and as was his wont—for he was very considerate to Mînah, and ever anxious to aid her in her work—he fell to boiling the rice at the little mud fireplace at the back of the central living-room where Mînah was preparing the evening meal. While he was so engaged he contrived by a clumsy movement to over-set the pot, and the boiling water streamed over the fingers of his right hand. Mînah gave a shrill cry in sympathy for the pain which she knew he must be enduring; but Mamat looked up at her with wondering eyes.

"What ails you, little one?" he asked, without a trace of suffering in his voice.

"The water is boiling," cried Mînah. "*Ya Allah!* How evil is my destiny that so great a hurt should befall you because you, unlike other men, stoop to aid me in my work! O Weh, Weh, my liver is sad because of your pain. Let me bind your fingers. See, here is oil and much rag."

"What is the matter?" Mamat asked again, staring at her uncomprehendingly. "Indeed I have suffered no hurt. The water was cold. Look at my fing . . ."

His voice faltered and his words ceased as he sat gazing stupidly, in mingled astonishment and fear, at his scalded hand. The little hut was reeking with the odour emitted by that peeling skin and flesh.

"What is the meaning of this, Mînah," he asked

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

presently, in an awed whisper. "The water was certainly boiling for my fingers are all a-frizzle, yet I felt no pain, and even now . . . What is it, Mînah?"

His wife inspected the ugly hand which he extended toward her, and was as bewildered as Mamat.

"Perchance you have acquired some magic art that drives pain far from you," she suggested.

Among the villagers of the Malay Peninsula magic is accounted so much a commonplace of everyday experience that neither Mamat nor Mînah saw anything extravagant in her explanation. Mamat, indeed, felt rather flattered by the idea, but he none the less denied having had any dealings with the spirits, and for some weeks he thought little more about the discovery of his strange insensibility to pain. The sores on his hands, however, did not heal, and at length matters began to look serious, since he could no longer do his usual share of work in the fields. By Mînah's advice the aid of a local medicine-man of some repute was had recourse to, and for days the little house was noisy with the sound of old-world incantations, and redolent of the heavy odours given off by the spices that burned in the wizard's brazier. Mamat, too, went abroad with his hands stained all manner of unnatural hues, and was hedged about by numerous taboos, which deprived his life of a good deal of its comfort and his meals of most things that made his rice palatable.

For some weeks, as is the manner of his kind in Asia and out of it, the medicine-man struggled with

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the disease he half recognized but lacked the courage to name; and when at length disguise was no longer possible, it was to Mînah that he told the truth, told it with the crude and brutal bluntness which natives keep for the breaking of ill tidings. He lay in wait for her by the little bathing raft on the river's brink, where Mînah was wont to fill the gourds with water for her house, and he began his tale at once without preface or preparation.

"Sister, it is the evil sickness," he said. "Without doubt it is the sickness that is not good. For me, I can do nought to aid this man of thine, for the devil of this sickness is a very strong devil. Therefore, give me the money that is due to me, and suffer me to depart, for I also greatly fear to contract the evil. And, Sister, it were well for you speedily to seek a divorce from Mamat, as in such cases is permitted by law, lest you, too, become afflicted, for this disease is one that can by no means be medicined, even if Petera Guru himself were to take a hand in the charming away of the evil humours."

No one in Malaya ever names leprosy. It is spoken of as rarely as possible, and then by all manner of euphonisms, lest hearing its name pronounced it should seek out the speaker and abide with him forever. But when the words "the evil sickness" sounded in her ears, Mînah understood their full meaning. The shock was violent, the grief and horror intense; yet her first conscious feeling was a throb of relief, almost of joy. Her man was a leper! No other woman would ever now be found to wed

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

with him; no co-wife would come into her life to separate her from him; barren woman though she was, the man she loved would be hers for all his days, and no one would arise to dispute with her her right—her sole right—to tend and comfort and cherish him.

The medicine-man turned away and walked slowly up the path along the river bank, counting the coppers in his hand, and Mînah stood where he had left her, gazing after him, a prey to tumultuous and conflicting emotions. Then a realization of the tragedy of it overwhelmed her, a yearning, passionate pity for the man she loved, and in an agony of self-reproach she threw herself face downward on the ground. Lying there among the warm damp grasses, clutching them in her hands, and burying her face in them to suppress her sobs, she prayed passionately and inarticulately, prayed to the leprosy itself, as though it were a sentient being, entreating it, if indeed it must have a victim, to take her and spare her husband. Her rudimentary conceptions of religion did not bid her turn to God in the hour of her despair; and though, moved by the instinct which impels all human beings in the hour of their sorest need to turn for aid to invisible Powers, she poured out plaint and supplication, her thoughts were never for a moment directed Heavenward. She was a daughter of the Muhammadans, unskilled in letters, ignorant utterly of the teachings of her faith, and, like all her people, she was a Malay first and a follower of the Prophet accidentally, and, as it were, by an afterthought. Therefore her cry was

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

raised to the demon of the leprosy, to the spirits of wind and air and pestilence, and to all manner of unclean beings who should find no place in the mythology of a true believer. The old-world superstitions of the Malays—the natural religion of the people, tempered a little by the bastard Hinduism disseminated in its day by the great Brahman empire of Kambodia, ere ever the Muhammadan missionaries came to tamper with their simple paganism—always comes uppermost in the native mind in seasons of trouble or stress. In precisely the same way, it is the natural man, the savage, that ordinarily rises to the surface, through no matter what superimposed strata of conventionalism, in moments of strong emotion. But these things had no power to help or comfort Mînah, and any strength that came to her during that hour that she passed, lying prone and in agony, tearing at the lush grass and stifling her lamentations, was drawn from her own brave and generous heart, that fountain of willing self-immolation and unutterable tenderness, the heart of a woman who loves.

The evening sun was sinking amid the riot of splendour which attends sunset in Malaya when at last Mînah gathered herself together, rearranged her disordered hair and crumpled garments with deft feminine fingers, and turned her face homeward. Later still, when the evening meal had been dispatched and the lights extinguished, Mînah, tenderly caressing the head of her husband, which lay pillowed upon her breast, whispered in his ears the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

words which revealed to him the full measure of his calamity. No more appalling message can come to any man than that which makes known to him that he has been stricken by leprosy, that foulest, most repulsive, and least merciful of incurable diseases; and Mamat, as he listened to his wife's faltering speech, cowered and trembled in the semi-darkness, and now and again, as he rocked his body to and fro—for instinctively he had withdrawn himself from Mînah's embrace—gave vent to low sobs, very pitiful to hear.

Leprosy has an awful power to blight a man utterly, to rob him alike of the health and the cleanliness of his body, and of the love and kindness which have made life sweet to him; for when the terror falls upon any one, even those who held him in closest affection in the days when he was whole, too often turn from him in loathing and fear.

As slowly and with pain Mamat began to understand clearly, and understanding, to realize the full meaning of the words that fell from his wife's lips, he drew farther and farther away from her, in spite of her restraining hands, and sat huddled up in a corner of the hut, shaken by the hard, deep-drawn tears that come to a grown man in the hour of misery, bringing no relief, but merely adding one additional pang to the intensity of his suffering. Vaguely he told himself that, since Mînah must be filled with horror at his lightest touch, since she would now surely leave him, as she had a right to do, he owed it to himself, and to what tattered remnant of self-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

respect was left to him, that the first signal for separation should be made by him. It would ease the situation for both of them, he felt, if from the beginning he showed her plainly that he expected nothing but desertion, that she was free to go, to leave him, that he was fully prepared for the words that should tell him of her intention, though for the moment they remained unspoken. Therefore, though Mînah held out her arms toward him, he repulsed her gently, and retreating farther into the shadows, cried warningly: "Have a care! Have a care lest you also become infected by the evil."

Again Mînah crept toward him, with arms outstretched for an embrace, and again he evaded her A little moonbeam struggling through the interstices of the wattled walls fell full upon her face, and revealed to him her eyes wide with sympathy, dewy with tears, and yearning after him with a great love. The sight was so unexpected that it smote him with the violence of a blow, sending a strange thrill through all his ruined body, and gripping his heart so that he fought for breath like one distressed by running.

"Have a care!" he cried again; but Mînah disregarded his warning.

"What care I?" she replied. "What care I? Do you think that my love is so slight a thing that it will abide with you only in the days of your prosperity? Am I like unto a woman of the town, a wanton who loves only when all is well and when the silver dollars are many and bright? Am I so fashioned that I

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

have no care for anyone save for myself? O Mamat, my man to me, fruit of my heart! After these years that we have lived together in love, do you in truth know me so little? Is it fitting that I, your wife, should quit you now because the evil spirits have caused this trouble to fall upon you? *Weh*, I love you, I love you, I love you, and life would be of no use to me without you. Come to me, *Weh*, come to me!" And again she extended her arms toward him.

For long Mamat resisted, fighting against the temptation to accept her sacrifice sturdily; but at length the longing for human sympathy, and for comfort in his great affliction—a desire which, in time of trouble, a grown man feels as instinctively as does the little child that, having come by some hurt, runs to its mother to be petted into forgetfulness of his pain—proved too strong for him; and he sank down, sobbing unrestrainedly, with his head in Mînah's lap, and with her kind hands fondling and caressing him.

And thus it came about that Mînah made the great sacrifice, which, in a manner, was to her no sacrifice, and her husband brought himself to accept it as the one precious thing that capricious fate had accorded to him.

Two or three years slid by after this, and as Mînah watched her husband, she marked the subtle changes of the evil to which he was a prey working their cruel will upon him. He had been far gone in the disease even before the medicine-man had mustered courage

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

to name it, but for many months after the discovery little change was noticeable. Then, as is its wont, the leprosy took a forward stride; then halted for a space, only to advance once more, but now with more lagging feet. Thus, though the physical alterations wrought by the ravages of the disease were increasingly terrible to Mînah, who marked each change take place gradually, step by step and from day to day, beneath her eyes, underlying the deformed and featureless face, the blind eye-sockets, the aimless, swaying limbs with their maimed and discoloured extremities, she saw as clearly as ever the face, the glance, the gestures that had been distinctive of her husband. And she loved this formless, mutilated thing with all the old passionate devotion, and with a new tenderness that awoke all her maternal instincts; for to this childless woman Mamat was now both husband and the baby that had never been born to her.

He was utterly dependent upon her now. Twice daily she carried him upon her back down to the river's edge, and bathed him with infinite care. To her there seemed nothing remarkable in the act. She had done it for the first time one day long before, when his feet were peculiarly sore and uncomfortable, had done it laughingly, half in jest, and he had laughed, too, joining in her merriment. But now he had become so helpless that there was no other way of conveying him riverward, and she daily bore him on her back unthinkingly, as a matter of course. The weight of her burden diminished as time went on.

In the same way she had gradually fallen into the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

habit of dressing and feeding him, having performed these services for him now and again before there was any absolute necessity therefor; but latterly his limbs had become so useless that lacking her aid he would have gone naked and have died of starvation. She never lamented now that Allah or the Spirits—Mînah was always in doubt as to which of the two had the larger share in the ordering of her world—had not seen fit to send her a child in answer to her prayer. Mamat occupied every cranny of her heart, and in his helplessness made to her an appeal stronger far than that which he had made to her in the years of his unspoiled manhood. Most Asiatic women of the better sort find the *rôle* of mother more naturally congenial than that of wife, and all that was best in Mînah's nature rose up to fortify her in her trial. She was quite blind to the nobility of her own devotion, for thoughts of self played but a small part in the consciousness of this daughter of the Muhammadans, and though her simple vocabulary contained no word to express the idea of "duty," she found in the performance of the task which she had set herself a deep content that transformed the squalor of her life into a thing of wonder and beauty. And she had to work for both her husband and herself, that there might be rice in the cooking-pot and clothing for their bodies, so her labours in house or in the fields was never ended. The kindly village folk, who pitied her, though they could not repress an occasional jeer at her eccentric devotion to a leper, lightened her tasks for her in half a hundred ways, and Mînah found her

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

rice plot tilled and the crop weeded, and the precious grain stored safely, without clearly knowing how the work had been done at such comparatively slight cost to herself. And thus Mînah and her man spent many years of the joint life that even the Demon of the Leprosy had been powerless to rob of all its sweetness.

It was some time after the white men had placed Pahang under their protection, with the amiable object of quieting that troubled and lawless land, that a new terror came to Mînah. Men whispered together in the villages that the strange pale-faced folk who now ruled the country had many ordinances unknown to the old Rajas. The eccentricities and excesses of the latter were hair-erecting things, but to them the people were inured by the accumulated experience of generations, whereas the ways of the white men were inconsequent and inscrutable. The laws which they promulgated were unhallowed by Custom—the greatest of all Malayan fetishes—and were not endeared to the native population by age or tradition; and one of them, it was said, provided for the segregation of lepers. In other words, it was the habit of white folk to sentence lepers to imprisonment for life, precisely as though it were a crime for a man to fall a victim to a disease! Mînah listened to this talk, and was stricken dumb with misery and bewilderment, as the village elders, mumbling their discontent concerning a dozen lying rumours, spoke also of this measure as one likely to be put in force in Pahang.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The wanton cruelty of the notion was what chiefly struck her. The old native rulers had been oppressive, with hearts like flint and hands of crushing weight, but they had always been actuated by a personal motive, a motive which their people could recognize and understand, the sort of motive whereby the peasants felt that they themselves would have been impelled if their relative positions had been reversed. But why should the white folk covet her man? Why should they scheme to rob her of him, seeing that he was all she had, and they could have no need of him? Why, too, should they punish him with imprisonment for a calamity for which he was in no wise to blame? What abnormal and criminal instinct did the strangers hope to gratify by such an aimless piece of barbarity? In imagination she heard his fretful call, his mumbled speech, which none save she could interpret or understand; and the thought of the pitifulness of his condition, of his utter helplessness, if deprived of her love and companionship, aroused in her all the blind combativeness that lurks in all maternal creatures. In his defence she would cast aside all fear and fight for him, as a tigress fights for her cubs.

Mînah managed with difficulty to bribe an old crone to tend Mamat for a day or two. Then she set off for Kuala Lîpis, the town at which, she had heard men say, the white men had their headquarters. Until she started upon this journey downcountry she had never quitted her own village, and to her the twenty miles of river, that separated her home from

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the town, was a road of wonder through an undiscovered country. Kuala Lîpis itself—the ordered streets; the brick buildings, in which the Chinese traders had their shops; the lamp-posts; the native policemen standing at the corners of the roads, shameless folk who wore trousers, but no protecting *sarong;* the huge block of Government offices, for to her this far from imposing pile appealed as a stupendous piece of architecture; the made roads, smooth and metalled; the wonder and the strangeness of it all—dazed and frightened her. What could the white men, who already possessed so many marvellous things, want with her man, the leper, that they should desire to take him from her? And what had she of power or of stratagem to oppose to their might? Her heart sank within her.

She asked for me, since I had bade her come to me if she were in trouble, and presently she made her way along the unfamiliar roads to the big Residency on the river's bank, round which the forest clustered so closely in the beauty which no hand was suffered to deface. She was brought into my study, and seated herself upon the mat-covered floor, awed by the strangeness of her surroundings, and gazing up at me plaintively out of those great eyes of hers, which were wet with tears. Hers was the simple faith of one who has lived all her days in the same place, whither few strangers penetrate, and where every man knows his neighbour and all his neighbours' affairs. It never occurred to her that her words might need explanation or preface of any kind,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

in order that they might be rendered intelligible, and so, fixing her gaze upon my face, she sobbed out her prayer again and again,

"O suffer me to keep my man and my children. O suffer me to keep my man and my children. O suffer them not to be taken away from me. *Allah*, *Tûan*, suffer me to keep my man and my children."

I knew, of course, that she spoke of her "man and her children" merely from a sense of decorum, since it is coarse and indecent, in the opinion of an up-country woman, to speak of "her husband" without euphonism, even though she be childless; but, for the moment, I supposed that she was the wife of some man accused of a crime, who had come to me seeking the aid that I had not the power to give.

"What has your man done?" I inquired

"Done, *Tûan?*" she cried. "What could he do, seeing that he is as one already dead? Unless men lifted him he could not move. But suffer him not to be taken from me. He is all that I have, and in truth I cannot live without him. Hang me on high, *Tûan*, sell me in a far land, burn me till I am consumed, duck me till I be drowned, but suffer not my man and my children to be taken from me. I shall die, *Tûan*, if you allow this thing to befall us."

Then suddenly the mist obscuring my memory rolled away, and I saw the face of this woman, as I had seen it once before, straining under a terrible burden on the banks of the Jĕlai River, with the sunset glow and the dark masses of foliage making a background against which it stood revealed. Then

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

at last I understood, and her passionate distress moved me intensely.

As a matter of fact, the question of the necessity for segregating lepers in the Malay States under British protection had shortly before been under discussion, but so far as Pahang was concerned, I had succeeded in persuading the Federal Government that the country was not yet ripe for any such action. Administration, all the world over, is from first to last a matter of compromise, compromise between what is right and what is expedient, what is for the material welfare of the population and what is advisable and politic in existing circumstances; and in dealing with a new, raw country, whose people prior to our coming had been living, to all intents and purposes, in the twelfth century, great caution had to be exercised by those of us who were engaged in the delicate task of transferring them bodily into a nineteenth-century atmosphere. Leper asylums in the tropics are, at best, deplorable institutions. One may admit their necessity, but the perennial discontent and unhappiness of their inmates are proverbial, and even the devoted service rendered to the unfortunates by so many European women belonging to religious orders, fails greatly to ameliorate their lot. When lepers are consigned to the charge of ordinary paid attendants, the results are even more depressing. It was with a feeling of keen relief, therefore, that I was now able to reassure Mînah.

"Have no fear, sister," I said, making use of the kindly Malayan vocative which makes all the world

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

akin. "Your man shall not be taken from you. Who is it that seeks to separate you from him?"

"Men say it is an order," she replied.

To the Oriental an "order" is a kind of impersonal monster, invincible and impartial, a creature that respects no man, and is cruel to all alike.

"Have no fear," I said. "It is true that I have bidden the headmen of the villages report to me concerning the number of those afflicted with the evil sickness, but this is only done that we may be able to aid those who suffer from it. Moreover, in this land of Pahang, the number is small, and the infection does not spread. Therefore, sister, have no fear, and believe me, come what may, the Government will not separate you from your man. Return now in peace to your home, and put all trouble from you. Moreover, if aught comes to sorrow you, remember that I, or another, am here to listen to your plaint."

As I finished speaking, the woman before me was transformed. Her eyes filled with tears, her brown skin faded suddenly to a grayish tint with the intensity of her relief; and before I could stay her, she had thrown herself upon the matting at my feet, encircling them with her warm clasp. I leaped up, humbled exceedingly that such a woman should so abase herself before me, and angered by an Englishman's instinctive hatred of a scene; and as I stooped to disengage her hands, I heard her murmur, almost in a whisper.

"Your servant hath little skill in speech, but in

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

truth, *Tûan*, you have made me happy—happy, as though the moon had fallen into my lap—happy as is the barren wife to whom it is given to bear a son!"

And, as I looked into her face, it seemed to me to shine with the beauty of her soul.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE LONE-HAND RAID OF KÛLOP SÛMBING

HE WAS an ill fellow to look at—so men who knew him tell me—large of limb and very powerfully built. To his broad and ugly face a peculiarly sinister expression was imparted by a harelip, which left most of the upper gums exposed. It was to this latter embellishment that he owed alike his vicious temper and the name by which he was known. That his disposition should not have been of the sweetest was natural enough, for women did not love to look upon the gash in his lip; and whereas, in the land of his birth, all first-born male children are called Kûlop, his nickname of *Sûmbing*—which means "the chipped one"—distinguished him unpleasantly from his fellows, and reminded him of his calamity whenever he heard it.

He was a native of Pêrak, and he made his way alone, through the untrodden Sâkai country, into Pahang. That is practically all that is known concerning his origin. The name of the district in which Kûlop Sûmbing had his home represented nothing to the natives of the Jĕlai Valley, into which he strayed on the other side of the Peninsula, and now no man knows from what part of Pêrak this adventurer came. The manner of his coming, however, excited the admiration and impressed itself

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

upon the imagination of the people of Pahang—who love pluck almost as heartily as they abominate toil —so the tale of his doings is still told, though these things happened nearly forty years ago.

Kûlop Sûmbing probably held a sufficiently cynical opinion on the subject of the character of his countrywomen, who are among the most venal of their sex. He knew that no woman could love him for his personal attractions, and that those who would be willing to put up with him and with his disfigurement would be themselves undesirable. On the other hand, experience convinced him that many would be ready to lavish their favours upon him if his money-bags were well lined. Therefore he determined to grow rich with as little delay as possible, and in order to compass this end he looked about for some one whom he could conveniently plunder. For this purpose Pêrak was played out. The law of the white men could not be bribed by a successful robber, and of recent years the chances of evading it had been much restricted. In these circumstances, he turned his eyes across the border to Pahang, which was still ruled by its own Sultan and his chiefs, and which bore a notable reputation as a land in which ill things might be done with impunity, to the great profit and contentment of him who did them.

He had a love of adventure, was absolutely fearless, and was, moreover, a good man with his weapons. To put these possessions to their proper uses more elbow-room was necessary than Pêrak afforded, for there a man was forever haunted by the threatening

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

shadow of the central gaol; and as he did not share the Malay's instinctive dread of travelling alone in the jungle, he decided to make a lone-hand raid into the Sâkai country, which lies between Pêrak and Pahang. Here he would be safe from the grip of the white man's hand, hidden from the sight of the Government's "eyes," as the Malays so inappropriately name our somnolent policemen; and here, he felt sure, much wealth would come to the ready hand that knew full well how to seize it. To Kûlop Sûmbing, reasoning thus, the matter presented itself in the light of a purely business proposition. Such abstractions as ideas of right and wrong or questions of ethics or morality did not enter into the calculation; for the average unregenerate Malay is honest and law-abiding just as long as it suits his convenience to be so, and not more than sixty seconds longer. Virtue for virtue's sake makes not the faintest appeal to him, but a love of right-doing may occasionally be galvanized into a sort of paralytic life within him if the consequences of crime are kept very clearly and very constantly before his eyes. He will then discard sin because sinning has become inconvenient. So Kûlop Sûmbing kicked the dust of law-restrained Pêrak from his bare brown soles, and set out for the Sâkai country in the remote interior of Pahang, into which even the limping, lop-sided justice of a native administration made no pretence to penetrate.

He carried with him all the rice that he could bear upon his shoulders, two dollars in silver, a little salt and tobacco, a handsome *kris*, and a long spear with

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

a broad and shining blade. His supplies of food were to last him until the first Sâkai camps should be reached, and after that, he told himself, all that he might need would "rest at the tip of his dagger." He did not propose seriously to begin his operations until the mountain range, which fences the Pêrak boundary, had been crossed, so he was content to leave the Sâkai villages on the western slope unpillaged. He impressed some of the naked and scared aborigines to serve as bearers, and levied such supplies as he required; and the Sâkai, who were glad to get rid of him so cheaply, handed him on from village to village with the greatest alacrity. The base of the jungle-covered mountains of the interior was reached at the end of a fortnight, and Kûlop and his Sâkai began to drag themselves up the steep ascent by means of roots, trailing creepers, and slender saplings.

Upon a certain day they attained the summit of a nameless mountain, and threw themselves down, panting for breath, upon the bare, circular drumming-ground of an argus pheasant. On the crest of nearly every hill and hogsback in the interior of the Peninsula these drumming-grounds are found, patches of naked earth trodden to the hardness of a threshing-floor, and carpeted with a thin litter of dry twigs. Sometimes, if you keep very still, you may hear the cocks strutting and dancing, and mightily thumping the ground, but no man, it is said, has ever actually seen the birds going through their vainglorious performance. At night-time their challenging yell-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

incredibly loud, discordant, yet clear—rings out across the valleys, waking a thousand echoes, and the cry is taken up and thrown backward and forward from hill-cap to hill-cap. Judging by the frequency and the ubiquity of their yells, the argus pheasants must be very numerous in the jungles of the interior, but so deftly do they hide themselves that they are rarely seen, and the magnificence of their plumage, which rivals that of the peacock, is only familiar to us because the birds are often trapped by the Malays.

At the spot where Kûlop and his Sâkai lay the trees grew sparsely. The last two hundred feet of the ascent had been a severe climb, and the ridge, which formed the summit, stood clear of the tree-tops which had their roots halfway up the slope. As he lay panting Kûlop Sûmbing gazed down for the first time upon the eastern side of the Peninsula, the theatre in which ere long he proposed to play a very daring part. At his feet were tree-tops of every shade of green, from the tender, brilliant colour which we associate with young corn to the deep and sombre hue which is almost black. The forest fell away beneath him in a broad slope, the contour of each individual tree, and the gray, white, or black lines which marked their trunks or branches growing less and less distinct, until the jungle covering the plain became a blurred wash of colour that had more of blue than green in it. Here and there, very far away, the sunlight smote something that answered with a dazzling flash, like the mirror of a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

heliograph, and this, Kûlop knew, was the broad reaches of a river. The forest hid all traces of human habitation or cultivation, and no sign of life or movement was visible save only a solitary kite circling and veering on outstretched, motionless wings, and the slight, uneasy swaying of some of the taller trees as a faint breeze sighed gently over the jungle. Here, on the summit of the mountains, the air was damp and chilly, and a cold wind was blowing, while the sun seemed to have lost half its usual power; but in the plain below the earth lay sweltering beneath the perpendicular rays, and the heat-haze danced and shimmered above the forest like the hot air above a furnace.

During the next few days Kûlop Sûmbing and his Pêrak Sâkai made their way down the eastern slope of the mountains, and through the silent forests, which are given over to game and to the really wild jungle-folk, who fly at the approach of human beings, and discover their proximity as instinctively as do the beasts which share with them their home.

Kûlop and his people passed several abandoned camps belonging to these wild Sâkai—mere rough hurdles of boughs and leaves, canted on end to form lean-to huts; but of their owners they saw no trace, for even when these people trade with the tamer Sâkai they adopt the immemorial custom of silent barter and never suffer themselves to be seen by the men with whom they do business. Their principal stock in trade are the long, straight reeds of which the inner casing of the blowpipe is made, and these they

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

deposit in certain well-known places in the jungle, whence they are removed by the tamer tribesmen, who replace them by salt, knife-blades, flints and steels and other similar articles. Now and again a successful slave-raid has resulted in the capture of a few of these savages, but their extraordinary elusiveness, added to the fact that they live the life of the primitive nomadic hunter, roaming the forest in small family groups, renders them difficult to locate, and impossible to round up in any large numbers.

Kûlop Sûmbing, of course, took very little interest in them, for to his utilitarian mind people who possessed no property could make no claim upon the attention of a serious man. Therefore, he pushed on through the wild Sâkai country, following game paths and wading down the beds of shallow streams until the upper waters of the Bĕtok, the principal tributary of the Jĕlai River, were struck. Here bamboos were felled, a long, narrow raft was constructed, and Kûlop Sûmbing, dismissing his Pêrak Sâkai, began the descent of the unknown river. He knew only that the stream upon which he was navigating would lead, if followed far enough, into the country inhabited by Malays; that somewhere between it and himself lay a tract peopled by semi-civilized Sâkai; that he proposed to despoil the latter, and would have some difficulty in preventing the Pahang Malays from pillaging him in their turn; but he fared onward undismayed, alone save for his weapons, and was filled with a sublime confidence in his ability to plunder the undiscovered land that lay before him.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

When you come to think of it, there was something bordering upon the heroic in the action of this unscrupulous man with the marred face, who glided gently down the river on this wild, lone-hand raid. Even the local geography was unknown to him. For aught he knew, the stream might be beset by impassable rapids and by dangers that would task his skill and courage to the utmost; and even if he triumphed over natural obstacles, the enmity which his actions would arouse would breed up foemen for him wherever he went. He was going forth deliberately to war against heavy odds, yet he poled his raft down the river with deft punts, and gazed calmly ahead of him with a complete absence of fear.

It was noon upon the second day of his lonely journey down the Bĕtok that Kûlop sighted a large Sâkai camp, evidently the property of semi-tame tribesfolk, set in a clearing on the right bank of the river. The sight of a Malay coming from such an unusual quarter filled the jungle-people with superstitious fear, and in a few minutes every man, woman, and child had fled into the forest.

Kûlop went through the ten or fifteen squalid huts which stood in the clearing, and an occasional grunt of satisfaction signified that he approved of the stores of valuable gum lying stowed away in the sheds. He calculated that there could not be less than seven *pîkul*, a quantity that would fetch a good six hundred Mexican dollars, even when the poor price ruling in the most distant Malayan villages of the interior was taken into consideration. This, of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

course, was long before such a product as plantation rubber had come into existence in the East, and wild gutta was much sought after by Europeans in the towns of the straits settlements. Now, six hundred dollars represented a small fortune to a man of Kûlop Sûmbing's standing, and the sight of so goodly a store of gum filled him with delight. But here he found himself faced by a problem of some difficulty. How was the precious stuff to be carried downstream into the Malayan districts of Pahang? His raft would hold about one *pîkul*, and he felt reasonably certain that the Sâkai, who were fairly used to being plundered by their Malayan neighbours, would not interfere with him very seriously if he chose to remove that quantity and to leave the rest. But the thought of the remaining six *pîkul* was too much for him. He could not find it in his heart to abandon it; and of a sudden he was seized by a dull anger against the Sâkai who, he almost persuaded himself, were in some sort defrauding him of his just dues.

Seating himself on the threshold-beam in the doorway of one of the huts, he lighted a *rôkok*—a cigarette of coarse Javanese tobacco encased in a dried shoot of the *nîpah* palm, and set himself to think out the situation and to await the return of the tribesmen; and ever, as he dwelt upon the injury which these miscreants were like to inflict upon him if they refused to help him to remove the gutta, his heart waxed hotter and hotter against them.

Presently two scared brown faces, scarred with blue tattoo-marks on cheek and forehead, and sur-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

mounted by frowzy mops of sun-bleached hair, rose stealthily above the level of the flooring a dozen yards away, and peeped at him with shy, distrustful eyes.

Kûlop turned in their direction, and the bobbing heads disappeared with astonishing alacrity.

"Come hither," Kûlop commanded.

The heads reappeared once more, and in a few brief words Kûlop bade their owners have no fear, but go back into the forest and fetch the rest of the tribesfolk.

After some further interchange of words and considerable delay and hesitation, the two Sâkai sidled off into the jungle, and presently a crowd of squalid aborigines issued from the shelter of the trees and underwood. They stood huddled together in an uneasy group, gazing curiously at Kûlop, while with light feet they trod the ground gingerly, with every muscle braced for a swift dart into cover at the first alarm of danger.

"Who among you is the headman?" asked Kûlop.

"Your servant is the headman," replied an ancient Sâkai.

He stood forward a little as he spoke, trembling slightly as he glanced up furtively at the Malay, who sat cross-legged in the doorway of the hut. His straggling mop of hair was almost white, and his skin was dry and creased and wrinkled. He was naked, as were all his people, save for a dirty loin-clout of bark cloth, which use had reduced to a mere whisp. His thin flanks and buttocks were gray with

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the warm wood ashes in which he had been lying when Kûlop's coming interrupted his midday snooze.

"Bid these, your children, build me eight rafts of bamboo, strong and firm, and moor them at the foot of the rapid yonder," ordered Kûlop. "And hearken, be not slow, for I love not indolence."

"It can be done," said the Sâkai headman submissively.

"That is well," returned Kûlop. "And I counsel you to see to it with speed, for I am a man very prone to wrath."

Casting furtive glances at the Malay, the Sâkai set to work, and by nightfall the new rafts were completed. For his part, Kûlop of the Harelip, who had declared that he loved not indolence, lay upon his back on the floor of the chief's hut, while the jungle-people toiled for him, and roared a love song in a harsh, discordant voice to the hypothetical lady whose heart was presently to be subdued by the wealth which was now almost within his grasp.

Kûlop slept that night in the Sâkai hut among the restless jungle-folk. Up here in the foothills the air was chilly, and the fire, which the Sâkai never willingly let die, smoked and smouldered in the middle of the floor. Half a dozen long logs, all pointing to a common centre, like the spokes of a broken wheel, met at the point where the fire burned red in the darkness, and between these boughs, in the warm gray ashes, men, women, and children sprawled in every attitude into which their naked brown limbs could twist themselves. Ever and anon some of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

them would arise and tend the fire, and then would group themselves squatting around the blaze, and jabber in the jerky, monosyllabic jargon of the aborigines. The pungent smoke enshrouded them, and their eyes waxed red and watery, but they heeded it not, for the warmth of fire is one of the Sâkai's few luxuries, and the discomforts connected with it are to them the traditional crumpled rose leaf.

And Kûlop of the Harelip slept the sleep of the just.

The dawn broke grayly, for a mist hung low over the forest, white as driven snow, and cold and clammy as the forehead of a corpse. The naked Sâkai peeped shiveringly from the doorways of their huts, and then went shuddering back to the grateful warmth of their fires, and the frowsy atmosphere within.

Kûlop alone made his way down to the river bank, and there performed his morning ablutions with scrupulous care, for whatever laws of God or man a Malay may disregard, he never is unmindful of the virtue of personal cleanliness which, in an Oriental, is ordinarily of more immediate importance to his neighbours than all the godliness in the world.

His ablutions completed, Kûlop climbed the steep bank, and standing outside the headman's hut, summoned the Sâkai from their lairs in strident tones, bidding them hearken to his words. They stood or squatted before him in the white mist, through which the sun, just peeping above the jungle, was beginning to send long slanting rays of dazzling white light.

They were cold and miserable—this little crowd of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

naked savages—and they shivered and scratched their bodies restlessly. The trilling of the thrushes, and the morning chorus raised by the other birds, came to their ears, mingled with the whooping of troops of anthropoid apes, but this joyous music held no inspiration for the Sâkai The extraordinary dampness of the air during the first hours after daybreak, in these remote jungle places of the Peninsula, chills men to the marrow and is appallingly depressing. Moreover, the Sâkai are very sensitive to cold, and it is when dawn has roused them and the fierce heat of the day has not yet broken through the mists to cheer them, that their thin courage and vitality are at the lowest ebb.

"Listen to me, you Sâkai," cried Kûlop in a loud and wrathful voice; and at the word those of his hearers who were standing erect made haste to assume a humble squatting posture, and the shiverings occasioned by the cold were increased by tremblings born of fear.

If there be one thing that the jungle-folk dislike more than another, it is to be called "Sâkai" to their faces, and they are never so addressed by a Malay unless he wishes to bully them. The word, which has long ago lost its original meaning, signifies a slave, or some say, a dog; but by the aborigines it is regarded as the most offensive epithet in the Malayan vocabulary. In their own tongue they speak of themselves as *sĕn-oi*—which means a "man"—as opposed to *gob*, which signifies "foreigner"; for even the Sâkai has some vestiges of pride, if you know

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

where to look for it, and from his point of view the people of his own race are the only human beings who are entitled to be classed as "men," without any qualifying term. When speaking Malay, they allude to themselves as *Ôrang Bûkît*—men of the hills; *Ôrang Ûtan*—men of the jungle; or *Ôrang Dâlam*—the folk who live *within*, *viz.*, within the forest. They love to be spoken of as *raayat*—peasants, or as *raayat râja*—the king's people; and the Malays, who delight in nicely graded distinctions of vocative in addressing men of various ranks and classes, habitually use these terms when conversing with the Sâkai, in order that the hearts of the jungle-folk may be warmed within them. When, therefore, the objectionable term "Sâkai" is applied to them, the forest-dwellers know that mischief and trouble are threatening them, and as they are as timid as any other wild animals of the woods, they are forthwith stricken with terror.

"Listen, you accursed Sâkai," Kûlop of the Hare-lip cried again, waving his spear above his head. "Mark well my words, for already I seem to hear the warm earth calling to the coffin planks in which your carcasses shall presently lie if you fail to do my bidding. Go speedily and gather up all the gutta that is stored in your dwellings, and bring it hither to me lest some worse thing befall you."

The Sâkai, eying him fearfully, decided that they had to deal with a determined person whose irritable temper would quickly translate itself from words into deeds. Slowly, therefore, they rose up and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

walked, each man to his hut, with lagging steps. In a few minutes the great balls of rubber, with a hole punched in each through which a rattan line was passed, lay heaped upon the ground at Kûlop's feet. During the absence of the men, the women and children had almost imperceptibly dribbled away, and most of them were now hidden from sight behind the huts or the felled trees of the clearing. But the men when they returned brought with them something as well as the rubber, for each of the Sâkai now held in his hand a long and slender spear fashioned from a bamboo. The weapon sounds harmless enough, but these wooden blades are strong, and their points and edges are as sharp as steel. Kûlop Sûmbing was shocked and outraged by this insolent suggestion of resistance, and arrived at the conclusion that prompt action must supplement rough words.

"Cast away your spears, you swine of the forest!" he yelled.

Almost all the Sâkai did as Kûlop bade them, for the Malay stood for them as the embodiment of the dominant race, and years of oppression and wrong have made the jungle folk very docile in the presence of the more civilized brown man. The old Chief, however, clutched his weapon in his trembling hands, and his terrified eyes ran round the group of his kinsman, vainly inciting them to follow his example. The next moment his gaze was recalled to Kûlop of the Harelip by a sharp pain in his right shoulder, as the spear of the Malay transfixed it. His own

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

spear fell from his powerless arm, and the little crowd of Sâkai broke and fled. But a series of cries and threats from Kûlop, as he ran around them, herding them as a collie herds sheep, brought them presently to a standstill.

No thought of further resistance remained in their minds, and the gutta was quickly loaded on to the rafts, and the plundered Sâkai impressed as crews for them. The rafts were fastened to one another, by Kûlop's orders, by a stout piece of rattan, to prevent straying or desertion, and the conqueror sat at ease on a low platform in the centre of the rearmost raft, keeping a watchful eye on all, and maintaining his mastery over the shuddering jungle-folk by frequent threats and admonitions.

The wounded Chief, left behind in his hut, sent two youths through the forest to bid their fellow tribesmen make ready the poison for their blowpipe darts, for he knew that no one would now dare to attack Kûlop of the Harelip at close quarters. But the poison which the Sâkai distil from the resin of the *îpoh* tree requires some time for its preparation, and if it is to be used with effect upon a human being or any large animal, a specially strong solution is necessary. Above all, if it is to do its work properly, it must be newly brewed. Thus it was that Kûlop Sûmbing had time to load his rafts with gutta taken from two other Sâkai camps, and to pass very nearly out of the jungle people's country before the men whom he had robbed were in a position to assume the offensive.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The Bĕtok River falls into the Upper Jĕlai, a stream which is also given over entirely to the Sâkai, and it is not until the latter river meets the Tĕlom and the Sĕrau, and with their combined waters form the lower Jĕlai, that the banks begin to be studded with scattered Malayan habitations.

Kûlop of the Harelip, of course, knew nothing of the geography of the country through which he was travelling, but running water, if followed down sufficiently far, presupposed the discovery, sooner or later, of villages peopled by folk of his own race. Therefore, he pressed forward eagerly, bullying and goading his Sâkai into something resembling energy. He had now more than a thousand dollars' worth of rubber on his rafts, and he was growing anxious for its safety. To the danger in which he himself went, he was perfectly callous and indifferent.

It was at Kuâla Mĕrăbau—a spot where a tiny stream falls into the upper Jĕlai on its right bank—that a small party of Sâkai lay in hiding, peering through the vegetation at the gliding waters down which Kûlop and his plunder must presently come. Each man carried at his side a quiver, fashioned from a single length of bamboo, ornamented with the dots, crosses, zigzags, and triangles which the Sâkai delight to brand upon their vessels. Each quiver was filled with darts about the thickness of a steel knitting needle, and some fifteen inches in length, with an elliptical piece of light wood at one end to steady it in its flight, and at the other a very sharp tip, coated with the black venom of the *îpoh* sap.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

In their hands each man of the ambushing party held a reed blowpipe, ten or twelve feet long, and rudely but curiously carved.

Presently the foremost Sâkai stood erect, his elbows spread-eagled and level with his ears, his feet heel to heel, his body leaning slightly forward from the hips. His hands were locked together at the mouthpiece of his blowpipe, the long reed being held firmly by the thumbs and forefingers, which were coiled above it, while the weight rested upon the lower interlaced fingers of both hands. His mouth, nestling closely against the wooden mouthpiece, was puckered and his cheeks drawn in, like those of a man who seeks to spit out a shred of tobacco which the loose end of a cigarette has left between his lips. His keen, wild eyes glared unflinchingly along the length of his blowpipe, little hard wrinkles forming at their corners.

"*Pit!*" said the blowpipe.

The wad of dry pith, which had been used to exclude the air around the head of the dart, fell into the water a dozen yards away, and the dart itself flew forward with incredible speed, straight to the mark at which it was aimed.

A slight shock on his right side, just above the hip apprised Kûlop that something had struck him, and looking down he saw the dart still quivering in his waist. But, as luck would have it, Kûlop carried under his coat a gaudy bag, ornamented with beads, and stuffed with the ingredients of the betel quid, and in this the dart had embedded itself. The merest

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fraction of a second was all that Kûlop needed to see this, and to take in the whole situation. With him action and preception kept even step. Before the dart had ceased to shudder, before the Sâkai on the bank had had time to send another in its wake, before the men poling his raft had fully grasped what was happening, Kûlop had seized the nearest of them by his frowzy halo of elflocks, and had drawn him screaming across his knees. The terrified creature writhed and bellowed, flinging his body about wildly, and his friends upon the bank feared to blow their darts lest they should inadvertently wound their kinsman while trying to kill the Malay.

"Have a care, you swine of the forest!" roared Kûlop, cuffing the yelling Sâkai unsparingly in order to keep his limbs in constant motion. "Have a care, you sons of fallen women! If you spew forth one more of your darts, this man, your little brother, dies forthwith by my *kris*."

The Sâkai on the bank had no reason to doubt the sincerity of Kûlop's intentions, and as these poor creatures love their relatives, both near and distant, far more than is usual in more civilized communities where those connected by ties of blood do not necessarily live together in constant close association, they dared not blow another dart. Moreover, one poisoned arrow had apparently gone home, and a single drop of the powerful solution of the *îpoh* which they were using sufficed, as they well knew, to cause death accompanied by excrucioting agony. The attacking party therefore drew off, and Kûlop of the Harelip

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

proceeded upon his way rejoicing; but he kept his Sâkai across his knee, none the less, and occasionally administered to him a sounding cuff for the stimulation of his fellows.

Thus Kûlop won his way in safety out of the Sâkai country, and that night he stretched himself to sleep upon a mat spread on the veranda of a Malayan house, in the full enjoyment of excellent health, the knowledge that he was at last a rich man, and a delightful consciousness of having performed great and worthy deeds.

For a month or two he lived in the valley of the Jĕlai, at Bûkit Bĕtong, the village which was the headquarters of the Dâto' Maharâja Pĕrba, the great upcountry chief, who at that time ruled most of the interior of Pahang. He sold his rubber to this potentate, and as he let it go for something less than the market price, the sorrows of the Sâkai were the cause of considerable amusement to the local authorities from whom they sought redress.

But Kûlop of the Harelip had left his heart behind him in Pĕrak, for the natives of that State, men say, can never long be happy when beyond the limits of their own country, and must always sooner or later make their way back to drink again of the waters of their silver river. Perhaps, too, Kûlop had some particular lady in his mind when he set out upon his quest for wealth, for all the world over, if you trace matters to their source, the best work and the most blackguardly deeds of men are usually to be ascribed to the women who sit at the back of their hearts.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and supply the driving-power which impels them to good or to evil.

One day Kûlop of the Harelip presented himself before the Dâto′ Maharâja Pĕrba, as the latter lay smoking his opium pipe upon the soft mats in his house, and informed him that, as he had come to seek permission to leave Pahang, he had brought a present—"a thing trifling and unworthy of his notice"—which he begged the chief to honour him by accepting.

"When do you go down river?" inquired the Dâto′ for the Jĕlai Valley is in the far interior of Pahang, and if a man would leave the country by any of the ordinary routes, he must begin his journey by travelling downstream at least as far as Kuâla Lĭpis.

"Your servant goes *up*stream," replied Kûlop Sûmbing.

The Dâto′ gave vent to an expression of incredulous surprise.

"Your servant returns the way he came," said Kûlop.

The Dâto′ burst out into a torrent of excited expostulation. It was death, certain death, he said, for Kûlop to attempt once more to traverse the Sâkai country. The other routes were open, and no man would dream of staying him if he sought to return to his own country by land or sea. The course he meditated was folly, was madness, was an impossibility. But to all these words Kûlop of the Harelip turned a deaf ear. He knew Malayan chieftains and all their ways and works pretty intimately, and he

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

had already paid too heavy a toll to the Dâto' to have any desire to see his honest earnings further diminished by other similar exactions. If he took his way homeward through country inhabited by Malays, he knew that at every turn he would have to satisfy the demands of the barons and chiefs and headmen whose territory he would cross on his journey, and the progressive dwindling of his hoard which this would entail was a certainty that he would not face. On the other hand, he held the Sâkai in utter contempt, and as at this stage of the proceedings he was incapable of feeling fear, the Dâto's estimate of the risks he was running did not move him. A sinister grin distorted his face as he listened to the chief's words, for he regarded them as a cunning attempt to induce him to penetrate more deeply into Pahang in order that he might thereafter be plundered with greater ease. Accordingly, he declined to accept the advice offered to him, and a couple of days later he set out upon his return journey through the forests.

He knew that it would be useless to attempt to persuade any one to accompany him, so he went, as he had come, alone. The dollars into which he had converted his loot were hard and heavy upon his back, and he was further loaded with a supply of rice, dried fish, and salt; but his weapons were as bright as ever, and to him they still seemed the only comrades which a reasonable man need hold to be essential. He travelled on foot, for single-handed he could not pole a raft against the current, and he fol-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

lowed such paths as he could find, guiding himself mainly by the direction from which the rivers flowed. His plan was to ascend the valley through which the Bêtok ran, until the mountains were reached, and after crossing them to strike some stream on the Pĕrak side of the range, down which it would be possible to navigate a bamboo raft.

He soon found himself back in the Sâkai country, and passed several of the jungle-folk's camps, which were all abandoned at his approach; but though he halted at one or two of them in order to replenish his scanty stock of provisions, he considered it more prudent to pass the night in the jungle.

It was on the evening of the third day that Kûlop became aware of an unpleasant sensation. The moon was at the full, and he could see for many yards around him in the forest, but though no living thing was visible, he became painfully conscious of the fact that he was being watched. Occasionally he thought that he caught the glint of eyes peeping at him from the underwood, and every now and again a dry twig snapped crisply, first on one side of him, then on the other, in front of him, behind him. He started to his feet and sounded the *sôrak*—the war-cry—that pealed in widening echoes through the forest. A rustle in half a dozen different directions at once showed him that the watchers had been numerous, and that they were now taking refuge in flight.

Kûlop of the Hanelip sat down again beside his fire, and a new and strange sensation began to lay

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

cold fingers about his heart. It was accompanied by an uneasy feeling in the small of his back, as though a spearthrust in that particular part of his person was momentarily to be expected, and a clammy dampness broke out upon his forehead, while the skin behind his ears felt unwontedly cold. Danger that he could see and face had never had any power to awe him, but his isolation and the invisibility of his enemies combined to produce in him some curious phenomena. Perhaps even Kûlop of the Harelip needed no man to tell him that he was experiencing fear.

He built up his fire, and sat near the blaze, trying to still the involuntary chattering of his teeth. If he could get at grips with his foes, fear, he knew, would leave him; but this eerie, uncanny sensation of being watched and hounded by crafty enemies whom he could not see was sawing his nerves to rags. From time to time he glanced uneasily over his shoulder, and at last wedged his body in between the barrier roots of a big tree, so that he might be secure from assault from behind. As he sat thus, leaning slightly backward, he chanced to glance up, and in a treetop, some fifty yards away, he saw the crouching form of a Sâkai outlined blackly against the moonlit sky, amidst a network of boughs and branches.

In an instant he was on his feet, and again the *sôrak* rang out, as he flung himself at the underwood, striving to tear his way through it to the foot of the tree in which his enemy had been perched. But the jungle was thick and the shadows were heavy; he

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

quickly lost his bearings, and was presently glad to stumble back to his fire again, torn with brambles and sweating profusely.

All through that night Kûlop of the Harelip strove to drive away sleep from his heavy eyes. He had been tramping all day, and his whole being was clamouring for rest. The hours were incredibly long, and he feared that the dawn would never come. During every minute he was engaged in an active and conscious battle with physical exhaustion. At one moment he would tell himself that he was wide awake, and a second later a rustle in the underwood startled him into a knowledge that he had slept. His waking nightmare merged itself inextricably into the nightmare of dreams. Over and over again, in an access of sudden panic, he leaped to his feet, and yelled the war-cry, though his dazed brain hardly knew whether he was defying the Sâkai besetting him or the spectres which thronged his sleep-drugged fancy; but each time the patter of feet and the snapping of twigs told him that those who watched him were stampeding. While he remained awake and on guard the Sâkai feared him too much to attack him. His previous escape from the dart which they had seen pierce his side had originated in their minds the idea that he was invulnerable, and proof against the *îpoh* poison, so they no longer tried to kill him with their blowpipes. That they dared not fall upon him unless he slept very soon became evident to Kûlop himself. Sleep was the ally of the Sâkai and his most dangerous enemy; but fear

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

gripped him anew as he speculated as to what would happen when he at last was forced to yield to the weight of weariness that even now was oppressing him so sorely.

Presently a change began to come over the forest in which he sat. A whisper of sound from the trees around told him that the birds were beginning to stir. Objects, which hitherto had been black and shapeless masses cast into prominence by the clear moonlight, gradually assumed more definite shape. Later the colour of the trunks and leaves and creepers—still sombre and dull, but none the less colour—became perceptible, and Kûlop of the Harelip rejoiced exceedingly because the dawn had come and the horrors of the night were passing away.

Quickly he boiled his rice and devoured a meal; then, gathering up his belongings, he resumed his journey. All that day, though physical weariness pressed heavily upon him, he trudged onward stubbornly; but the news had spread among the Sâkai that their enemy was once more among them, and the number of the jungle-folk who dogged his footsteps steadily increased. Kûlop could hear their shrill whoops as they called to one another through the forest, giving warning of his approach, or signalling the path that he was taking. Once or twice he fancied that he caught a glimpse of a lithe brown body, of a pair of glinting eyes, or of a straggling mop of hair; and forthwith he would charge, shouting furiously. But the figure—if indeed it had any existence save in his overwrought imagination—

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

always vanished as suddenly and as noiselessly as a shadow, long before he could come within striking distance. This experience, Kûlop found, was far more trying to the nerves than any stand-up fight could have been. Violent action and the excitement of a bloody hand-to-hand encounter would have supplied him with an anodyne; but the invisibility of his enemy, and the intangible character of their pursuit of him added the terrors of a fever dream to the very imminent danger in which he now knew himself to be.

The night which followed that day was a period of acute agony to the weary man, who dared not sleep; and about midnight he again resumed his march, hoping thereby to elude his pursuers.

For an hour he believed himself to have succeeded in this. Then the shrill yells began once more to sound from the forest all around him, and at the first cry Kûlop's heart sank. Still he stumbled on, too tired out to charge at his phantom enemy, too hoarse at last even to raise his voice in the *sôrak*, but doggedly determined not to give in. He was beginning, however, visibly to fail, and as he showed visible signs of distress, the number and the boldness of his pursuers increased proportionately. Soon their yells were resounding on every side, and Kûlop, staggering forward, seemed like some lost soul, wending his way to the Bottomless Pit, with an escort of mocking devils chanting their triumphant chorus around him.

Yet another unspeakable day followed, and when

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

once more the night shut down, Kûlop of the Hare-lip sank exhausted upon the ground. His battle was over. He could bear up no longer against the weight of his weariness and the insistent craving for sleep. Almost as his head touched the warm litter of dead leaves, with which the earth in all Malayan jungles is strewn, his heavy eyelids closed and his breast rose and fell to the rhythm of his regular breathing. He was halfway up the mountains now, and almost within reach of safety, but Kûlop of the Harelip—Kûlop, the resolute, the fearless, the strong, and the enduring—had reached the end of his tether. He had been beaten, not by the Sâkai, but by Nature, whom no man may long defy; and to her assaults he surrendered his will and slept.

Presently the underwood was parted by human hands in half a dozen different places, and the Sâkai crept stealthily out of the jungle into the little patch of open in which their enemy lay at rest. He moved uneasily in his sleep—not on account of any noise made by them, for they came as silently as a cloud shadow cast across a landscape; and at once the Sâkai halted with lifted feet, ready to plunge back into cover should their victim awake. But Kûlop, utterly exhausted, was sleeping heavily, wrapped in the slumber from which he was never again to be aroused.

The noiseless jungle-folk, armed with heavy clubs and bamboo spears, stole to within a foot or two of the unconscious Malay. Then nearly a score of them raised their weapons, poised them aloft, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

brought them down simultaneously on the head and body of their enemy. Kûlop's limbs stretched themselves slowly and stiffly, his jaw fell, and blood flowed from him in twenty places. No cry escaped him, but the trembling Sâkai looked down upon his dead face, and knew that at last he had paid his debt to them in full.

They carried off none of his gear, for they feared to be haunted by his ghost, and Kûlop at the last had nothing edible with him, such as the jungle-folk find it hard to leave untouched. Money had no meaning for the Sâkai, so the silver dollars, which ran in a shining stream from a rent made in his linen waist pouch by a chance spear thrust, lay glinting in the moonlight by the side of that still, gray face rendered ghastly in death by the pallid lip split upward to the nostrils. Thus the Sâkai took their leave of Kûlop Sûmbing, as he lay stretched beside the riches which he had won at so heavy a cost.

If you want some ready money and a good *kris* and spear, both of which have done execution in their day, they are all to be had for the gathering at a spot in the forest not very far from the boundary between Pahang and Pêrak. You must find the place for yourself, however, for the Sâkai to a man will certainly deny all knowledge of it. Therefore it is probable that Kûlop of the Harelip will rise up on the Judgment Day with his ill-gotten property intact.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE FLIGHT OF THE JUNGLE-FOLK

KRÊTING, the old Sâkai slave-woman, first told me this story, as I sat by her side at Sayong, on the banks of the Pêrak River, watching her deft management of her long fishing-rod, and listening to her guttural grunts of satisfaction when she contrived to land anything that weighed more than a couple of ounces. The Malays called her Krêting—which means woolly-head—in derision, because her hair was not so sleek and smooth as that of their own womenfolk, and it was the only name to which she had answered for well-nigh half a century. When I knew her she was repulsively ugly, bent with years and many burdens, lean of body and limb, with a loose skin that hung in pouches of dirty wrinkles, and a shock of grizzled hair which, as the village children were wont to cry after her, resembled the nest of a squirrel. Even then, after many years of captivity, she spoke Malay with a strong Sâkai accent, splitting each word up into the individual syllables of which it was composed; and though the story of her life's tragedy moved her deeply, her telling of it was far from being fluent or eloquent. By dint of making her repeat it to me over and over again, by asking countless questions, and by fitting what she said and what she hinted on to my own

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ©

knowledge of her fellow-tribesmen and their environment, I contrived to piece her narrative together into something like a connected whole. For the rest, the Sâkai people of the upper Plus, into whose country duty often took me in those days, gave me their version of the facts, not once but many times, as is the manner of natives. Therefore, I think it is probable that in what follows I have not strayed far from the truth.

The Sâkai camp was pitched far up among the little straying spurs of hill which wander off from the main range of the Malay Peninsula, on its western slope, and straggle out into the valleys. In front of the camp a nameless stream tumbled its hustling waters down a gorge to the plain below. Across this slender rivulet, and on every side as far as the straitened eye could carry, there rose forest, nothing but forest, crowding groups of giant trees, underwood twenty feet in height, and a tangled network of vines and creepers, the whole as impenetrable as a quickset hedge.

It had been raining heavily earlier in the day, and now that evening was closing in, each branch and leaf and twig dripped slow drops of moisture persistently with a melancholy sound as of nature furtively weeping. The fires of the camp, smouldering sullenly above the damp fuel, crackled and hissed their discontent, sending wreaths of thick, blue smoke curling upward into the still, moisture-laden air in such dense volumes that the flames were hardly visible even in the gloom of the gathering night. In

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the heavens, seen overhead through the interlacing branches, the sunlight still lingered, but the sky looked wan and woebegone.

There were a score and a half of squallid creatures occupying the little camp, men and women and children of various ages, all members of the down-trodden aboriginal tribes of the Peninsula, beings melancholy and miserable, thoroughly in keeping with the sodden, dreary gloom around them, and with their comfortless resting-place. All the children and some of the younger women were stark naked, and the other occupants of the camp wore no garment save a narrow strip of bark cloth twisted in a dirty wisp about their loins. Up here in the foothills it was intensely cold, as temperature is reckoned in the tropics, for the rain had chilled the forest land to a dank rawness. The Sâkai huts consisted of rude, lean-to shelters of palm leaves, supported by wooden props, and under them the jungle-folk had huddled together while the pitiless sky emptied its waters upon them. No real protection from the weather had thereby been afforded to them, however, and everything in the camp was drenched and clammy.

The Sâkai squatted upon their heels, pressing closely against one another, with their toes in the warm ashes, as they edged in nearer and nearer to the smoky fires. Every now and again the teeth of one or another of them would start chattering noisily, and several of the children whimpered and whined unceasingly. The women were silent for the most

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

part, but the men kept up a constant flow of disjointed talk in queer, jerky monosyllables. Most of the Sâkai were covered from head to foot with a leprous-looking skin disease, bred by damp jungles and poor diet; and since the wet had caused this to itch excruciatingly, they from time to time tore at their hides with relentless fingernails, like apes. The men smoked a green, shredded tobacco, soft and fragrant, rolled into rude cigarettes with fresh leaves for their outer casing. A few wild yams and other jungle roots were baking themselves black in the embers of the fires, and one or two fish, stuck in the cleft of a split stick, were roasting in the centre of the clouds of smoke.

Of a sudden the stealthy tones of the men ceased abruptly, and the women fell a-quieting the complaining children with hurried maternal skill. All the folk in the camp were straining their ears to listen. Any one whose senses were less acute than those of the wild Sâkai would have heard no sound of any kind save only the tinkling babble of the little stream and the melancholy drip of the wet branches in the forest; but after a moment's silence one of the elder men spoke.

"It is a man," he grunted, and a look of relief flitted over the sad, timorous faces of his companions.

Even the Sâkai, whose place is very near the lowest rung in the scale of humanity, has his own notions of self-esteem, and he only dignifies those of his own race by the title of "men." All other human beings are *Gobs*—strangers.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Presently a shrill cry, half scream, half hoot, such as you might imagine to be the war-whoop of a Red Indian, sounded from the forest a quarter of a mile downstream. Even an European could have heard this, so clear and penetrating was the sound; and he would have added that it was the cry of an argus pheasant. A Malay, well though he knows his jungles, would have given to the sound a similar interpretation; but the Sâkai knew better. Their acute perceptions could detect without difficulty the indefinable difference between the real cry of the bird and this ingenious imitation, precisely similar though they would have seemed to less sharpened senses; and a moment later an argus pheasant sent back an answering challenge from the heart of the fire over which the old man who had spoken sat crouching. The whoop was immediately replied to from a hilltop a few hundred yards upstream, and the old fellow made a clicking noise in his throat, like the sound of a demoralized clockspring. It was his way of expressing amusement, for a wild bird had answered his yell. It had failed to detect the deception which the Sâkai could recognize so easily.

In about a quarter of an hour two young Sâkai, with long blowpipes over their shoulders, rattan knapsacks on their backs, and bamboo spears in their hands, passed into the camp in single file. They emerged from the forest like shadows cast upon a wall, flitting swiftly on noiseless feet, and squatted down by the central fire without a word. Each rolled a cigarette, lighted it from a flaming firebrand,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and fell to smoking it in silence. At the end of a minute or so the old man who had answered their signal jerked out a question at them in the disjointed jargon of the jungle-people. The elder of the two newcomers grunted a response, with his eyes still fixed upon the smoky fire.

"The Gobs are at Lĕgap—three and three and three—many Gobs," he said.

The Sâkai's knowledge of notation does not lend itself to arithmetical expression.

"May they be devoured by a tiger!" snarled the old man; and at the word all his kinsmen shuddered and glanced uneasily over their shoulders. He had uttered the worst curse known to the jungle-folk, who fears his housemate the tiger with all his soul, and very rarely takes his name in vain.

"They are hunting," the youngster continued; "hunting *men*, and To′ Pangku Mûda and To′ Stîa are with them."

He split up these Malayan titles into monosyllables, suiting the sounds to the disjointed articulation of his people.

The listening Sâkai grunted in chorus, in token of their dissatisfaction at the presence of these men among their enemies.

To′ Pangku Mûda was the Malay chief of the village of Lâsak, the last of the civilized settlements on the banks of the Plus River. His title in Malay means literally "the Junior Lap," and it was conferred upon the headman of Lâsak because he was supposed to be in charge of the Sâkai tribes, and the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

childlike jungle-people were euphemistically said to repose upon his knees, as an infant lies in the lap of its mother. Malays have a fondness for picturesque notions of this kind, though their attitude toward the Sâkai has never been of a kind to justify this particular simile. Although To′ Pangku was a Muhammadan, he had, like most of the Malays of the Plus Valley, a strong strain of Sâkai in his blood, and his inherited and acquired woodcraft rendered him formidable in the jungles when he led the annual slave-raiding party in person. Moreover, he was greatly feared by Malays and Sâkai alike for the knowledge of magic and the occult powers which were attributed to him.

To′ Stîa, on the other hand, was a Sâkai born and bred, but he was the headman of one of the tamer tribes who, in order to save themselves and their womenkind and children from suffering worse things than usual, were accustomed to throw in their lot with the Malays, and to aid them in their periodical slaving expeditions. His title, given to him by the Malays, means "the Faithful Grandfather," but his fidelity was to his masters and to his own tribal interests, not to the race to which he belonged.

The presence of these two men with the party now upon the hunting-path boded ill for the cowering creatures in the camp, for the Sâkai's only chance of escape on such occasions lay in his sensitive hearing and in his superior knowledge of forest lore. But To′ Pangku Mûda and To′ Stîa, the Sâkai knew full

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

well, could fight the jungle-people with their own weapons.

The old headman, Ka′, the Fish, who had taken the lead in the conversation since the arrival of the scouts, presently spoke again, still keeping his tired old eyes fixed upon the smouldering embers.

"By what sign did you learn that To′ Pangku and To′ Stîa were with the Gobs?" he inquired.

It was evident from his tones that he was seeking comfort for himself and his fellows in the hope that the young scouts might perhaps have been mistaken. Laish, the Ant, the youth who until now had sat by the fire in silence, answered him promptly.

"We saw the track of the foot of To′ Stîa on the little sandbank below Lĕgap, and knew it by the twisted toe," he said. "Also, as we turned to leave the place, wading upstream, seeking you others, the Familiar of To′ Pangku called from out the jungle thrice. He was, as it might be, yonder," and he indicated the direction by pointing with his outstretched chin, as is the manner of his people.

The poor cowering wretches around the fires shuddered in unison, like a group of treetops when a puff of wind sets the branches swaying.

"The Grandfather of many Stripes," snarled Ka′ in an awed whisper under his breath.

He spoke of him with deep respect, as of a chief of high repute, for every man and woman present knew of the Familiar Spirit which in the form of a tiger followed its master, To′ Pangku, whithersoever he went, and even the little children had learned to

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

whimper miserably when their elders spoke of the Grandfather of many Stripes.

An old crone, shivering in her unlovely nakedness, beat her long, pendulous breasts with palsied hands, and whimpered plaintively, "E kĕ-non yeh! E kĕ-non yeh!"—O my child! O my child!—which in almost every vernacular of the East is the woman's cry of lamentation; and a young girl who squatted near her pressed softly against her, seeking to bring her comfort. The hard tears of old age oozed with difficulty from the eyes of the hag as she rocked her body restlessly to and fro; but the girl did not weep, only her gaze sought the face of Laish, the Ant. She was a pretty girl, in spite of the dirt and squalor that disfigured her. Her figure was slim and lithe, and though her face was too thin, it had the freshness and beauty of youth, and was crowned by an abundance of glossy hair with a natural wave in it. Her dark eyes were lustrous and almost too large, but instead of the gayety which should have belonged to her age, they wore the hunted, harassed expression which was to be marked in all the inhabitants of this unhappy camp.

Laish seemed to swallow something hard in his throat before he turned to Ka′ and said, "What shall we do, O Grandfather?"

"Wait till dawn," the old chief grunted in reply. "Then shift camp upstream, always upstream."

The Sâkai pressed in more closely than ever around the fires, and the two scouts emptied the contents of their rattan knapsacks onto a couple of large banana

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

leaves. Roots of many kinds were there, some sour jungle fruits and berries, and a miscellaneous collection of nastinesses, including the altogether too human corpse of a small monkey with its pink flesh showing in places beneath its wet fur. This was quickly skinned and gutted and set to roast in the cleft of a split stick, while Ka′ divided the rest of the trash among those present with extreme nicety and care. Food is so important to the wild Sâkai, who never within human memory have had sufficient to eat, that the right of every member of the tribe to have a proportionate share of his fellows' gleanings is recognized by all. No man dreams of devouring his own find until it has been cast into the common stock; and in time of stress and scarcity, if a single cob of maize has to be shared by a dozen Sâkai, the starving creatures will eat the grain row by row, passing it from one to the other so that each may have his portion.

As the night wore on the Sâkai settled themselves to sleep in the warm, gray ashes of the fires, waking at intervals to tend the blaze, to talk disjointedly, and then to stretch themselves to rest once more. The younger men took it in turn to watch in the treetops on the downriver side of the camp; but no attempt to disturb them was made by the raiders, and at dawn they broke camp and resumed their weary flight.

The Malay Peninsula is one of the most lavishly watered lands in all the earth. In the interior it is not easy to go in any direction for a distance of half

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

a mile without encountering running water, and up among the foothills of the main range, when navigable rivers have been left behind, travelling through the forest resolves itself into a trudge up the valleys of successive streams, varied by occasional scrambles over ridges of hill or spurs of mountain which divide one river system from another. Often the bed of the river itself is the only available path, but as wading is a very fatiguing business, if unduly prolonged, the banks are resorted to wherever a game-track or the thinning out of the underwood renders progress along them practicable.

The Sâkai fugitives, however, did not dare to set foot upon the land when once they had quitted their camp, for their solitary chance of throwing pursuers off their track lay in leaving no trace behind them of the direction which they had followed. Accordingly they began by walking up the bed of the little brawling torrent, swollen and muddy from the rains of the previous afternoon, and when presently its point of junction with a tributary stream was reached, they waded up the latter because of the two it seemed to be the less likely to be selected. It was miserable work, for the water was icy cold, and the rivulet's course was strewn with ragged rocks and hampered by fallen timber; but the Sâkai seemed to melt through all obstructions, so swift and noiseless was their going. They crept through incredibly narrow places; they scrambled over piles of rotten timber without disturbing a twig or apparently leaving a trace; and they kept strictly to the bed of the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

stream, scrupulously avoiding even the brushwood on the banks and the overhanging branches, lest a broken leaf should betray them to their pursuers.

The men carried their weapons and most of their few and poor possessions; and the women toiled along, their backs bowed beneath the burden of their rattan knapsacks, in which babies and carved receptacles made of lengths of bamboo jostled rude cooking-pots of the same material and scraps of evil-looking food. Children of more than two years fended for themselves, following deftly in the footsteps of their elders, many of them even helping to carry the property of the tribe. The oldest woman in the camp, Sem-pak—the Dûri-an fruit—who, the night before had cried out in terror when To' Pangku Mûda's Familiar was mentioned by the scouts, tottered along with shaking knees and palsied limbs, her lips mumbling, her head in constant motion, her eyes restless and wild. She alone carried no burden for it was all that she could do to keep up with her fellows unhampered by a load; but Te-U—Running Water—her granddaughter, bore upon her strong young shoulders a pack heavy enough for them both, and on the march her hand was ever ready to assist the feeble steps of the older woman.

Te-U, had times been better, was to have been married to Laish, the Ant, a few days earlier; but the camp had been broken up hurriedly before the simple wedding ceremonies could be completed, for the news of the impending raid had driven all thought of anything less urgent than the saving of life and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

liberty from the minds of the harassed jungle-folk. In their own primitive way these two wild creatures loved one another with something more than mere animal passion. Laish was more fearful on the girl's account than even on his own, and she looked to him for protection and felt certain that he would fight in her defence. For the moment, however, the girl's heart was really more occupied with her old grandmother than with her lover; and it never occurred to Laish to relieve her of any part of her burden, nor did she expect such service from him.

The long procession wound its way in single file up the bed of the tributary stream until the midday sun showed clearly over their heads through the network of vegetation. The Sâkai all walked in precisely the same manner, each foot being placed exactly in front of its fellow, and each individual treading as nearly as possible in the footsteps of the man in front of him. Experience must, in some remote and forgotten past, have taught the forest-dwellers that this is the best and quickest way of threading a path through dense jungle, and in the course of time experience has become crystalized into an instinct, so that to-day, even when walking along a broad highway, the Sâkai still adopt this peculiar gait. You may mark a similar trick of successively placing the feet one exactly in front of the other in many wild animals whose lives have been passed in heavy forest.

At last old Ka', who was leading, halted, and his followers stood still in their tracks while he grunted out his orders. A steep hill, some five hundred feet

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

high, rose abruptly on their right. It was covered with jungle through which the eye could not penetrate in any place for more than a few yards; but all the Sâkai knew that its crest was a long spur or hogsback, which if followed for a matter of half a mile would enable them to pass down into the valley of a stream that belonged to a wholly different river system. By making their way up its bed they in time would win to the mountains separating Pêrak from Pahang; and when the raiders, if they succeeded in picking up the carefully veiled trail, found that the fugitives had gone so far, it was possible that they might be discouraged from further pursuit, and might turn their attentions to some more accessible band of wandering Sâkai. The first thing, however, was to conceal all traces of the route which Ka''s party had taken, and he therefore bade his people disperse, breaking up into little knots of two or three, so that no definite, well-defined trail might be left as a guide to the pursuers. Later the tribe would reassemble at a spot appointed by him. The Sâkai were well versed in all such tricks, and very few words and no explanations were needed to convey to them an understanding of their leader's plan. In the space of a few seconds the little band of aborigines had broken up and vanished into the forest as swiftly and as silently as a bank of mist is dispersed by a gust of morning wind.

Laish attached himself to Te-U and old Sem-pak, and the three, passing upstream, drew themselves with infinite caution on to its bank without bruising

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

a twig, and presently began to scale the steep side of the hill. The earth was black, sodden, and slippery; the jungle was dense, and set with the cruel thorn thickets which cover the slopes of the interior; the gradient was like that of a thatched roof; and the climb made even Laish and Te-U pant with labouring breath, while old Sem-pak's lungs pumped painfully, emitting a noise like the roaring of a broken-winded horse. Up and up they scrambled, leaving hardly any trace of their ascent, and with that extraordinary absence of avoidable sound to which only the beasts of the forest, and their fellows, the wild Sâkai, can attain. They never halted to take breath, but attacked the hill passionately, as though it were an enemy whom they were bent upon vanquishing; and at last the summit showed clearly through the tree trunks and underwood ahead of them.

Then Laish, who was leading, stopped dead in his tracks, gazing in front of him with the rigidity of a pointer at work; and the next moment, uttering an indescribable cry, half yell, half scream, he was tumbling down the slope, bearing the two women with him, rolling, falling, scrambling, heedless of the rending thorns and of the rude blows of branches, until they once more found themselves in the bed of the stream from which they had started to make the ascent. Old Sem-pak fell prone upon the ground, her chest heaving as though it imprisoned some wild thing that was seeking to effect its escape. Her eyes and those of her companions were wild with terror.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

At that moment the long-drawn, moaning howl of a tiger broke the deep stillness of the forest, the sound apparently coming from some spot almost vertically above their heads; and the three Sâkai listened, shuddering, while their teeth chattered. Laish had caught a glimpse of the great striped body gliding with stealthy speed through the sparse jungle near the summit of the hill, and this had sufficed to send him floundering down the slope in precipitate flight.

The three Sâkai were silent, straining their ears to listen above the noise of Sem-pak's agonized sobs for breath. A moment later the howl broke out once more, a little farther to the left this time, and it was quickly followed by a scream such as only a human being could utter. Then again there was silence—silence desolate and miserable—during which the tapping of a woodpecker could be distinctly heard. Then in an instant the whole jungle seemed to have been invaded by all the devils in hell. Every member of the little band of fugitives was sounding the danger yell—a shrill, far-carrying cry in which the despair of the miserable jungle-folk becomes vocal, calling to the unresponsive heavens and to unpitying man and beast the tale of their helplessness and of their wrongs. Te-U and Laish joined in the cry, but above the tumult could be heard the bestial growlings of the unseen tiger worrying its prey.

Presently the Sâkai, still screaming as though in noise they sought comfort and protection from the dangers besetting them, forced their way, singly or in groups, out of the underwood, and gathered in a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

shuddering group in the bed of the stream. One of their number—Ple, the Fruit—and the two small children whom she had been carrying in the knapsack slung upon her back, were missing, and the man who had been her husband, staring at nothing with eyes that protruded horribly, was making strange clicking noises in his throat, which is the way in which the male Sâkai gives expression to deep emotion. Gradually, however, the band was stilled into silence, and huddled together listening as though spellbound to the growlings of the tiger. Then Ka′ spoke.

"It is the accursed one," he said. "It is he that followeth ever at the heels of To′ Pangku. I beheld his navel, yellow and round and swollen. It is situated at the back of his neck. Because I saw it, he dared not touch me, and passing by me, took Ple and the little ones, her children. Come, my brothers, let us cry aloud informing him that we have seen his navel, and he, being overcome with shame, will seek speedily to hide himself."

Taking their time from Ka′, all the men raised a shout in chorus, imparting the strange, anatomical information in question to the growling monster on the ridge. They made so goodly a noise that for a moment the snarling of the beast was drowned by it; but when they paused to listen, it was heard as distinctly as before.

"It is the accursed beast of magic, without doubt," said Ka′ despondently. "Otherwise, a great shame would have overcome him, and he would surely have fled."

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The unabashed tiger continued to snarl and growl over its victims, high above the Sâkai's heads on the brow of the hogsback.

"Come, let us cry to him once more," said Ka' to his fellows; and again they raised a shrill shout that carried far and wide through the forest, repeating that they had beheld the beast's navel, and that they knew it to be situated at the back of its neck. Malays and Sâkai alike believe the tiger to be very sensitive upon this subject, and that he will fly before the face of any man who possesses the necessary knowledge of his anatomy. The native theory inclines to the opinion that the tiger's navel is located in his neck, and you may examine the dead body of one of these animals minutely without finding anything to disprove, or indeed to prove, this notion.

A third time the Sâkai raised their shout, and when they relapsed into silence the tiger had ceased his growlings; but another sound, faint and far, came from the direction of the lower reaches of the stream up which the tribe had been toiling all the morning. It was like the roar of a rapid, but was broader, coarser, gruffer, and when they heard it the Sâkai were conscious of a painful tightening of their heart-strings, for it recalled them suddenly to recollection of the danger from human pursuers which for the moment had well-nigh passed out of their consciousness. It was the *sôrâk*—the war-cry of the Malays. The raiders were hot upon their trail, and were pressing up the banks of the little stream in pursuit. The yells which the fugitives had been uttering

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

would serve to guide them, and they would thus be saved the slow tracking and uncertainty which delays the hunter and gives the quarry his best chance of escape. In their flight from the Familiar of To′ Pangku—for such they firmly believed the tiger to be—the Sâkai had trampled the thorn-thickets and the underwood recklessly, and even an European would have found little difficulty in reading the tale which their hasty footmarks told so plainly.

Ka′, bidding his people follow him, turned his back upon the ascent—for none dared again face the fury of the Familiar—and plunged into the jungle, worming a way through the packed tree trunks and the dense scrub with wonderful deftness and speed. Ka′, bent almost double, went at a kind of jog-trot, steady, swift, but careful and unhurried; and his people, young and old, streamed along at his heels adopting the same nimble gait. They were covering the ground now at a far faster rate than any Malay could hope to maintain through virgin forest; but they were leaving behind them a trail that a child could follow without difficulty, and in their passage they were partially clearing a path for the use of their enemies.

All day they kept on steadily, only halting now and again for a brief breathing space when old Sem-pak, overweighted by her load of seventy years, could no longer keep up with her fellows. The adults were from time to time carrying some of the smaller children who had begun the day on foot. At first the sound of the *sôrak* had been heard once or twice,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

still indistinct and very distant, but after the first half hour it had ceased to be audible, and nothing was to be heard save the tinkle of running water, the occasional note of a bird, or the faint stir of animal life in the forest around. The fugitives had thrown away most of their loads when the tiger stampeded them, and they now were travelling burdened by little save their babies and their weapons. When life itself is in jeopardy, property ceases to possess a value. For the time being it ceases to exist.

The same expression—tense, fearful, strained—was to be marked on the faces of all the Sâkai, and their eyes were wild, savage, hunted, and filled to the brim with a great fear. Even their movements were eloquent of apprehension, and the light touch of their feet upon the ground betokened that their muscles were braced for instant flight at the first sign of danger.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon the heavens opened and emptied themselves on to the forest in sheets of tropical rain. At the end of a few minutes every branch and leaf overhead had become a separate conduit and was spouting water like a gargoyle; but still the Sâkai continued their march, pressing forward with the energy bred of despair into jungle-depths which even to them were untrodden lands. They had no objective in sight now; their one idea was to get away—it mattered not whither—away from the Malays, from captivity and death.

As the dusk began to gather the rain ceased, and Ka′ cried to his fellows that they must halt for the night. The moon was well past the full, and the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

darkness in the forest would be too absolute for even the Sâkai to force a way through the thickets during the earlier hours of the night. Also the fugitives were almost worn out by their prolonged exertions. Not daring to kindle a fire, lest its light should serve as a guide to their pursuers, they squatted in a draggled woebegone group, seeking warmth and comfort by close physical contact with one another. They were chilled by the rain and miserably cold; they had eaten nothing since the dawn, and they had but a few blackened yams and roots between them with which to assuage their hunger; their straggly mops of hair were drenched, and the skin diseases with which they were covered caused their bodies to itch distractingly. But all material discomforts were forgotten in the agony of terror which wrung their hearts.

Shortly after midnight they all awoke, suddenly and simultaneously. They had been sleeping in sitting attitudes, with their knees drawn up to their chins, and their heads nodding above them. They spoke no word, but they listened breathlessly. The yowling moan of a tiger was sounding about half a mile away to the south. The brute drew nearer and nearer, moaning and howling from time to time, and prolonging each complaining note with a wanton delight in its own unmusical song. It was the call of a full-fed tiger which cared not how rudely he disturbed the forest silence and warned the jungle of his presence. The Sâkai, beset at once by material and superstitious fears, cowered miserably and drew nearer still to one another. Thus for more than half an

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

hour they sat in utter silence, quaking, while the tiger approached slowly and deliberately, till presently it seemed to be calling from the jungle within a few yards of the shivering wretches. Now it appeared to make a complete circle of the camp, yowling savagely, and then fell to prowling about and about the little group of terror-stricken creatures, as though it were herding them. And all the time they could see nothing through the intense darkness, and the complete loss of the sense of sight served to quicken and torture even their rudimentary imaginations. For an hour this lasted, and then the tiger seemed to draw off, whereupon the jungle-folk, who had been too occupied by their terror of the beast to spare a thought to any other danger, became aware that human beings were in their vicinity. How they knew this it would be impossible to explain: the instinct of the wild tribes is as unerring as that of many animals, and they *felt*, rather than heard or perceived through any of their ordinary senses, the proximity of their pursuers.

Noiselessly then the Sâkai, men and women alike, fell to drawing clear of the underwood the long lines of green rattan which grow in such profusion in all the jungles of the interior of the Peninsula. These they twisted into great coils the size of large cart-wheels, and the young men of the tribe, some seven or eight in number, with Laish among them, began swarming into the nearest trees. They had gathered and prepared the rattan in darkness almost absolute, guided only by their sense of touch, and the men now

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

climbed unseeing into the impenetrable blackness of the night. Their instinct had told the forest people not only that their enemies were at hand, but also that the camp had been surrounded by them. They felt pretty certain that the Malays and the tamer Sâkai who were with them would not attack until just before the dawn; therefore it was their object to effect their escape, if they could do so, before daylight returned to the earth.

The wild Sâkai, who have never lost the arboureal habits of primitive man, can walk up the bare trunk of a tree with as much ease as you ascend the doorsteps of your house, and when once fairly among the branches they are thoroughly at home. The young men, accordingly, had no difficulty in climbing into the treetops, whence, swinging themselves lightly from bough to bough, they began to bridge the more difficult places with lines of rattan, making them fast at each end. In this manner before three-quarters of an hour had elapsed they had constructed a path of slack-ropes some eighty yards in length, and had passed over the heads of the Malays who lay encamped all around. They then made their way back to their fellows and gave the word for the start.

Old Ka′ leading, the long string of jungle-folk climbed slowly into the treetops, all treading lightly without making a sound, the anxious mothers striving to still the babies which they bore strung about their necks. Deftly they picked their way through the pitchy darkness, feeling for their foothold upon bending bough and branch, and treading with ex-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

traordinary precision upon the slender lines of rattan, and for some thirty or forty yards all went well with them. Then one of the babies whimpered, and at the sound the jungle in front and below them broke into a tumult of familiar yells, which told them that those of the slave-raiders who belonged to their own race had discovered their attempt to escape, and were doing their best to head the fugitives off and to warn the sleepy Malays.

Presently old Ka′ saw the mop heads of half a dozen tame Sâkai spring into prominence against the dim sky. His enemies had swarmed up into a treetop not twenty feet away from him, and were in possession of the other end of the rattan line along which he was tightroping. A voice, which he recognized as that of To′ Stîa of the twisted toe, cried hurriedly in the Sâkai dialect "*Ok i-odz*"—give me a knife!—and some one unseen in the darkness, grunted "Kod"—Take it.

At this Ka′, screaming a warning to his fellows, turned sharply about in midair, and headed back for the tree from which he had set out. Involuntarily he looked down into the abyss of impenetrable darkness beneath his feet, into the fathomless obscurity on either hand, but even his eyes, gifted with the marvellous sight of the jungle-folk, could see nothing. A man and two women, the latter bearing little children against their bosoms, had turned to fly when Ka′ uttered his warning cry; but they were feeling their way along the rattan line unaided by any sense save that of touch, and even in their panic their

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

movements were slow and cautious. All this happened in the space of a few seconds, and then the rattan jerked sickeningly under the blow of a heavy woodknife. Another blow, and the brawny creeper groaned like a sentient thing in pain; a third, and it parted with an awful suddenness, and Ka′ and the two women were precipitated from a height of nearly eighty feet into the invisible forest below. The man immediately in front of them had just sufficient time to save himself by clutching the branches of the tree to which the near end of the rattan was made fast.

Old Ka′ gave vent to an appalling yell, into which was compressed all the passionate despair of his long lifetime and of his downtrodden and unhappy race. Each of the women, as she felt her foothold give way beneath her, screamed shrilly—sudden, abrupt cries which ceased with a jerk, as of the breath caught sharply. For the space of a second there was silence, and then the crashing sound of heavy bodies falling headlong through leaves and branches, and three thudding concussions—distinct, but almost simultaneous—were succeeded by a few low groans far below in the darkness. The tame Sâkai yelled their triumph, passing the news of their success on to the Malays, who answered with the *sôrak*, and thereafter there was much laughter. Ka′'s people, sick with the horror of what they had heard and trembling with fear, made their way back to the spot where they had sat encamped all night, and huddling up against one another in quaking misery, waited in dumb despair for the dawn and for death.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

As soon as the slow daylight began to make itself felt in the obscurity of the forest, investing the watchers, as it seemed, with a new and wonderful gift of sight, the raiders began to close in around their quarry. One or two of the younger Malays, who carried muskets, fired a few shots into the thick of their victims, with the object of frightening the last atom of fight out of them, and old Sem-pak rolled over on her back, with her knees drawn up against her breast, jerking spasmodically. With a cry of pain and despair, Te-U threw herself prone across the old woman's body, calling to her frantically by name, and vainly seeking to pet and coax her back into life by tender words and caresses. Then the raiders rushed the camp, and for a moment or two all was noise and confusion. The Sâkai broke like a herd of stampeded deer, leaving several of their number dead or wounded on the ground. A good many of the more active males made good their escape, but Laish was killed with his spear in his hand as he fought to defend Te-U, who saw him fling away his life in a vain effort to rescue her, and felt the cup of her misery to be filled to overflowing.

In all, the raiders captured Te-U and four other young women, half a dozen children, and two young men. There were also several older women who were not regarded as worth taking. It was, as such things were reckoned, a highly successful expedition, and the hunting-party returned to Lâsak in great spirits, for the labour and risks of slave chasing was not much to their taste, and with so goodly a crowd of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

captives in hand they would not find it necessary to undertake another raid for a couple of years or so.

To′ Pangku Mûda's oath of fealty to the Sultan of Pêrak bound him in those days—and indeed until the British Government took in hand the administration of the country in the middle seventies of the nineteenth century—to bring a large raft downriver once a year, loaded with jungle produce. One of the items composing this annual tribute was a Sâkai man and woman, or failing them, two elephant tusks of approved weight. The latter were not always easy to procure, so it was usually found more convenient to sacrifice instead the lifelong happiness of a couple of human beings.

Te-U and a youth named Gaur, the Pig, were selected for the first year's offering, and accordingly they presently found themselves lying on the great raft, bound hand and foot, floating slowly into a land of the existence of which they had not dreamed, in company with stores of gutta, rattan, and other jungle produce, and the supplies of rice and other foodstuffs which had won for the Plus Valley the title of "the Rice-pot of the King."

The remainder of their days were passed in captivity among the people of an alien race, who despised them heartily and held them as little better than the beasts of the field; but perhaps the fullest measure of their sufferings was their inability to satisfy the longing for the jungle and for the free life of the forest which is like a ceaseless ache in the heart of the jungle-folk.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Such was the story that Krêting, the old Sâkai slave woman, told me that afternoon long ago, as she sat angling for little fish on the banks of the Pêrak River. Her kinsfolk of the Sâkai country were still able, in some instances, to recall the incidents connected with her capture, and they spoke to me of her as Te-U—Running Water—a name which set the sad-faced old hag weeping very pitifully when, after the lapse of so many years, she heard it spoken by my lips together with some broken fragments of her mother-tongue.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ONE WHO HAD EATEN MY RICE

THE punkah swings freely for a space, then gradually shortens its stride; hovers for a moment, oscillating gently, in answer to the feeble jerking of the cord; almost stops and then is galvanized into a series of violent, spasmodic leaps and bounds, each one less vigorous than the last, until once more the flapping canvas fringe is almost still. It is by signs such as these that you may know that Ûmat, the punkah-puller, is sleeping the sleep of the just.

If you look behind the high screen which guards the doorway, you will see him; and without moving, if the afternoon is very warm and still, you may occasionally hear his soft, regular breathing, and the gentle murmur with which his nose is wont to mark the rhythm of his slumber. An old cotton handkerchief is bound about his head in such a manner that the top of his scalp is exposed, the short bristles of hair upon it standing erect in a circular enclosure, like the trainers in a garden of young *sîrih* vines. On his back he wears an old, old coat of discoloured khaki, once the property of a dead policeman. The Government buttons have been taken away from him by a relentless inspector of police, and Ûmat has supplied their place with thorns, cunningly contrived

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

pieces of stick, and one or two wooden studs. The shoulder-straps flap loosely, and their use and intention are problems that present a constant puzzle to Ûmat. A cotton *sârong*—not always of the cleanest—is round his waist, and falling to his knees, supplies the place of all other nether garments. For Ûmat is at once comfort-loving and economical, and Pahang by this time had become a free land in which a man might go clad pretty well as he liked, without some ill thing befalling him therefor. Less than ten years earlier, a man who went abroad without his trousers ran a good chance of never returning home again, for Pahang Malays were apt to regard any one so clad as a person who was no lover of battle Among Malays—who are the most physically modest people in the world—it is well known that no man can fight with a whole heart and with undivided attention, when at any moment a mishap may expose his nakedness; and those who by the inappropriateness of their costume gave proof of their unpreparedness, simply invited the warlike persecutions of the gilded youth of the place, who were always ready to display prowess by mangling one from whom little resistance was to be expected. But in Kĕlantan, where Ûmat was born and bred, few men possess trousers, and no one who loves his comfort ever wears such things if he can help it.

Below *sârong*, goodly lengths of bare and hairy leg are visible, ending in broad splay feet, with soles that seem shod with horn; for Ûmat could dance barefoot upon a thorn thicket with as much comfort as upon a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

velvet carpet. He half sits, half lies, huddled up in a wicker-work armchair, his head canted stiffly over his right shoulder, his eyes tight shut, and his mouth wide open. Two rows of blackened tusks are exposed to view, and a fair expanse of gums and tongue stained a dull scarlet with areca nut. His feet are on the seat of the chair—one doubled snugly under him, the other supporting the knee upon which his chin may find a resting-place as occasion requires. The pull cord of the punkah is made fast about his right wrist, and his left hand holds it limply, his arms moving forward and backward mechanically in his sleep. It often looks as though the punkah were pulling Ûmat, not Ûmat the punkah, so completely a part of the thing does he appear, and so invisible is the effort which he puts into his work.

At his feet, humming contentedly to himself, sits a very small boy, dressed chastely in a large cap and a soiled pocket-handkerchief; and thus Ûmat dreams away many hours of his life. If his sleeping memory takes him back to the days when he followed me upon the warpath, to one of the dirty nights when we went fishing together, or to hours spent in floundering through the rice-swamps or trudging over the grazing grounds and through the rhododendron scrub when snipe were plentiful and the bag a big one, the punkah leaps to and fro vigorously, taking an active part in the scenes of which he dreams. But when Ûmat's mind turns home again to the extraordinarily ill-kept hut in the corner of my compound, which he shares with his soft-eyed, gentle wife, Sĕlĕma, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

their children, and dwells upon hearty meals and quiet nights, then in sympathy the punkah moves slowly, sentimentally, and stops.

"*Târek!* Pull!" cries a voice from the inner room, and Ûmat, awakening with a start, bursts into voluble reproaches, addressed to himself in the guttural speech of the Kĕlantan people. Then he very calmly relapses into slumber.

If you sail up the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, past the long sandy beaches, backed by a fringe of *casuarina* trees, which are the shores of Pahang and Trĕnggânu, you at last reach the spot where the bulk of the waters of the Kĕlantan River used once upon a time to empty themselves into the China Sea. The principal mouth is now a mile or two farther up the coast, but the groves of palm trees show that the people have been less fickle than the river, and that the villages have continued to thrive in spite of the fact that the highways of traffic have deserted them. It is here that Ûmat was born and bred, one of a family of fisher folk, successive generations of whom have dwelt at Kuâla Kĕlantan ever since the beginning of things.

If you look at Ûmat's round, splay-featured face and observe it carefully, you may read therein much that bears upon the history of his people. The prevailing expression is one of profound, calm patience, not the look of conscious waiting and of the pain of hope long deferred, which is the restless European substitute therefor, but the contented endurance of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

one whose lot is unchanging, whose desires are few, and who is satisfied to be as he is. It is a negative expression, without sadness, without pain, and yet sufficiently far removed from dullness or stupidity. It speaks of the long years during which Ûmat's forebears have laboured stolidly, have been as driven cattle before prince or chief, and yet have accepted their lot as they found it, without resistance or complaint, finding therein a fair measure of happiness, since the knowledge of better things has been mercifully withheld from them. A divine discontent may be the beginning of all improvement, but beyond all gainsaying it sounds the knell to placid happiness and content.

This is what one reads in Ûmat's face when it is in repose, but it is subject to the changes wrought by many emotions. Suddenly his features break up into a thousand creases, the brown skin puckering in numberless divergent lines, like the surface of a muddy puddle into which a stone has been cast. A noise like the crowing of a cock combined with the roaring of a bull accompanies this phenomenon, and you may then know that Ûmat's sense of humour has been tickled. It does not take much to amuse him, for, like most Malays, he is very light-hearted; and all Ûmat's world laughs with and at him. Almost every Kĕlantan fishing-boat that puts to sea carries its *âlan-âlan*, or jester, with it, for toil is lightened if men be merry, and in days gone by Ûmat was one of the most popular and successful men of this class on the coast. A quaint phrase, a happy repartee,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

not always expressed in the most decorous language, the rude mimicry of some personal eccentricity, a play upon words, or a story with almost too much point in it—such are Ûmat's stock in trade, and the dexterous use of them has caused him to be well beloved by his fellows.

But, on occasion, he can be serious enough. As my raft whirls down a rapid, a clumsy punt sends it reeling to what looks like certain destruction. Ûmat's ugly old nut of a face sets hard. His teeth are clenched, his lips compressed tightly. His bare feet grapple the slippery bamboos with clinging grip, and his twenty-foot punting pole describes a circle above his head. Its point alights with marvellous rapidity and unerring aim upon the only projecting ridge of rock within immediate reach, and all Ûmat's weight is put into the thrust, while his imprisoned breath breaks loose in an excited howl. The raft cants violently, wallowing knee deep, but the danger of instant demolition is averted, and we tear through the fifty yards of roaring, rock-beset water, which divides us from the foot of the rapid, without further mishap. Then Ûmat's face relaxes, his queer laugh resounds, and he chaffs the man whose clumsiness has nearly been our undoing with unmerciful disregard for his feelings or for the more approved proprieties.

His promptness to grasp the nature of the emergency, and the quick, decisive action with which he meets it and averts catastrophe, have little to do with Ûmat himself. He owes them to his forebears the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fisher-folk who, for many unrecorded centuries, have been accustomed to risk their lives on the dangerous river bars and the treacherous waters of the China Sea. If ready presence of mind in the face of peril, and a quick appreciation of the surest means of escape had not become for them an inherited instinct, the breed would long ere now have become extinct.

Ûmat, however, has at his command pluck of quite another stamp—the courage which is no mere flash in the pan, born of excitement and an instinct of self-preservation, but is long enduring when beset by a danger before which a man must sit down and wait. It is no light thing to stare death in the eyes for days and weeks on end, to expect it in some cruel, violent form, and yet to possess one's soul in patience, and to keep a heart in one's body that does not sink and quail. Yet Ûmat has successfully withstood this test, and though the limitations of his imagination doubtless made the situation easier for him than it would be for a white man, cursed with the restless brain of his kind, he fully grasped the risks to which he was exposing himself. All his light-heartedness vanished, for unlike my friend Râja Haji Hamid, whose eyes never danced so happily as when danger was afoot, Ûmat came of a class to whom a gamble with death is a hated thing. For once the look of calm patience had deserted him, for he was enduring consciously, and by a hundred tokens it was evident that his nerves were strung like a bow. In a word, he detested the whole position; but though noth-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ing bound him to it except a sentimental conception of loyalty, he never attempted to bridge from it.

But Ûmat's face is capable of yet another change. When his brown eyes blaze, when his features are distorted with excitement, and a torrent of hardly articulate words burst headlong from his lips, you may know that Ûmat is angry. A tumult of wrathful sound at the back of the bungalow, where the servants congregate in the covered way which joins the kitchen to the main building, begins the uproar, and if you fail to interfere, some Chinese heads will infallibly be broken in several places. On inquiry it will prove that the cook has accused Ûmat of adulterating the milk, or that the water coolie, whose business it also is to make the kerosene lamps smell and smoke, has charged him with purloining the kerosene. No words can describe Ûmat's fury and indignation, if he be indeed guiltless, which is very rarely the case. If, on the other hand, the counts brought against him be true, he is a bad liar and his manner speedily betrays him, while his wrath fails to convince. Presently he will produce the bottle of lamp oil from the folds of his *sârong*, and laughing sheepishly, will claim that praise should be his portion, since it is only half full. He will hang his head, assuming an attitude of exaggerated humility, while he listens to my biting comments upon his grossly immoral conduct, ejaculating from time to time the question: "Where should the lice feed, if not upon the head?" and five minutes later the com-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

pound will be ringing with the songs he loves to bellow. It is not possible to abash Ûmat.

I first met him in 1890 when, after a year spent in Europe, I returned to Pahang for a second tour of service at the ripe age of twenty-four, and took charge of the districts which form the interior of that country. I was very lonely. I had served for a long time as political agent at the Sultan's court before the British Government assumed a more active part in the administration of the state, but at that time I had had with me some thirty Malays who had come from the other side of the Peninsula to share my fortunes and to keep me company. These were now scattered to the winds, and I had none but strangers around me. There were a few mining-camps spattered about the district, but of the Europeans who lived in them I saw little, except when I visited them. The Pahang Malays eyed us with suspicion, and stood aloof, for their chiefs did not encourage a friendly attitude toward a set of intruders in whose presence they saw a menace to their power and privileges, while the peasantry had still to learn that we were able to deliver them from the oppression to which custom had almost reconciled them. For a space, therefore, I was in a position of quite extraordinary isolation, and I found the experience sufficiently dreary.

Pahang had had an ill name on the east coast of the Peninsula any time during the past three hundred years, and until the white men "protected" the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

country in 1889, few strangers cared to set foot in a land where life and property were held on so insecure a tenure. Soon, however, the whisper spread through the villages of Kĕlantan and Trĕnggânu that work found a high price in Pahang under the Europeans, and a stream of large-limbed Malays, very different in appearance from the slender, cleanly built natives of the country, began to trickle over the borders. On this stream Ûmat was borne to me, and so long as my connection with Malaya remained unsevered he remained with me "inseparable as the nail and the quick," to use his own expression.

Ûmat, in the beginning, was just one of my boatmen, the folk in whose company I explored all the rivers in the interior of Pahang. No map of the country existed in those days, and I had a notion—the soundness of which was subsequently demonstrated—that the time would come when a thorough knowledge of the local geography would be of great importance and military value, and that at such a season native guides would be unprocurable. I spent about eight months, therefore, in punting up and paddling down the streams, which in those days formed the principal highways in the interior, and in trudging through the jungle from watershed to watershed. Most of the Malay villages, of course, were situated on the banks of these rivers, but there were a certain number of inland settlements, and a network of narrow footpaths linked each set of habitations to its fellows. A thorough examination of these necessitated a great deal of travelling and camping, and as

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the local Malays were not greatly interested in my doings, I got together a pack of men, mostly natives of Kĕlantan, to work my boat on the river, and to carry my baggage when I tramped.

I think Ûmat divined that I was lonely, and he may even have dimly realized that I was an object of pity, for he used to creep into my hut in the evening, and seating himself upon the floor, would tell me tales of his own country and people until the night was far advanced. His dialect was strange to me at that time, and the manner in which he eluded some of his vowels and most of his consonants was at first a trifle bewildering. It took a little time to master the phonetic law which caused *ănam* (six) to shrink into *ne'*, and *kĕrbau* (buffalo) into *kûba'*, and his vocabulary was rich in local words; but I let him talk, and in the end learned not only to understand, but actually to talk this new and barbarous brand of Malay to which he was the first to introduce me.

Thus Ûmat and I became friends, and life was a thought less dreary because he was at hand. He taught me a number of things which I did not know before, and his folklore and his dialect furnished an interesting study that served to enliven hours of solitude that at times were almost overwhelming.

Then came a period when trouble darkened the land, and the disturbances which I had foretold, but in the imminence of which I had failed to persuade any one to believe, broke out in earnest. The war-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

path was to me a wholly new experience, but I had no alternative but to go upon it, and Ûmat elected to trudge along at my heels while most of his fellows made tracks for Kĕlantan, bearing with them the tidings that Pahang was once more living up to its ancient reputation. The dreary business dragged on for months and threatened to be endless, but Ûmat stuck to me through bad and good fortune alike with dogged perseverance. The official theory, to which I was never able personally to subscribe, was that certain bands of evilly disposed people were rebelling against the Sultan, whose country we had "protected" for very sufficient reasons, but very much against his will. But in Pahang, until the white men came, for thirty long years no dog had barked save with its ruler's leave, and to me, who had lived in the country in its pristine condition under native rule, it was patent that disturbances of the magnitude we were facing could never have broken out if they had lacked royal approval and inspiration.

In the spring of 1892, however, I found myself back at Kuâla Lîpis, my old headquarters in the far interior, surrounded by a very restless and excited population, and with written instructions "to treat all the chiefs as friendly, until by some overt sign they prove themselves to be hostile." These precious words, to which, as most public servants will recognize, there clings the genuine Secretariat odour, are enshrined in my memory, but at the moment the humour of them was wasted upon me. A thrust between the ribs with a *kris* was the sort of "overt

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

sign" which our neighbours were likely to give us. For this we sat down and waited.

I had two white men with me—a doctor and an inspector of police, both full of pluck and of the greatest assistance to me; about twenty Sikhs—overgrown Casabiancas every one of them, who would have stood upon the burning deck till they were reduced to cinders any day if the order to quit it had failed to reach them; and half a dozen panic-stricken Malays, recruited in the Colony to serve as constables, and about as much good as the proverbial sick headache. We had at our disposal a big, unwieldy stockade, built to surround certain government buildings, badly situated, and much too large for efficient defence. The force at my command was quite inadequate to hold it in any circumstances, but our only chance of making a stiff fight of it lay in guarding against a surprise.

The chiefs from all the surrounding districts, accompanied by great gatherings of their armed followers, swarmed into the little town, and presently began to build stockades in all the positions which commanded our defences. This was done, they said, in order to prevent the rebels from occupying these points of vantage, but the statement was unconvincing. Numbers of them visited me daily, trying to obtain money and supplies, posing as our allies with a contempt for my understanding which they barely troubled themselves to conceal, and showing me by a hundred subtle indications that they believed themselves to hold me in the hollow of their hand. My

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

principal preoccupation was to keep them and their armed parties out of my stockade, and to this end I lived in my own bungalow, which was distant from it a matter of a couple of hundred yards. My Chinese servants had come to me, a day or two after the arrival of the chiefs, and had mentioned that they understood that there was to be a battle that afternoon. After lunch, therefore, their spokesman remarked, they proposed, with my leave, to run away and hide themselves in the jungle. That would have meant that each one of them would have had his throat cut; but as they were frightened out of their wits, though not out of their good manners, and I feared that they would try the experiment, I put them into a boat which happened to be going down-river, and so shipped them into safety. Thus I was left alone in my bungalow, save only for Ûmat, and he and I kept watch, turn and turn about, for a matter of several weeks. He cooked my rice for me, and squatted on the mat beside me while I slept, and whenever a chief and his truculent crew overflowed into the bungalow, Ûmat sat by fondling his weapons.

At last there came a day when the greatest of all the chiefs had arrived, and presently a message reached me from him saying that he was too ill to come up the hill to see me, and inviting me to visit him in the town. The position was not pleasant. A refusal was out of the question, for having regard to the characters of the men with whom we were dealing, any sign of timidity would, I knew, precipi-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

tate a conflict. An ostentatious display of fearlessness is, on such occasions, the only safe card to play with a Malay, and I knew that though the war party among the younger chiefs was daily gaining strength, the biggest man of the lot was hesitating, and, as I thought, capable of being talked round.

Accordingly, I sent word that I would come; issued written instructions to the white men in the stockade on no account to quit the defences in order to attempt a rescue if things went ill with me, since that would mean the destruction of all; armed myself carefully, and prepared to set out. A minor chief with a few followers came, according to custom, to escort me to the town, and just as I was starting, Ûmat, armed with *kris* and spear, and with a set look of resolve upon his face, fell in behind me. I stopped and took him aside.

"It is not necessary for you to come," I said. "If all goes well, there will be no need of you. If aught goes amiss, what profits it that two should suffer instead of one?"

Ûmat grunted, but he did not turn back.

"Return," I ordered. "I have no need of you."

But Ûmat showed no sign of obeying me.

"*Tûan*," he said, "for how long a time have I eaten your rice when you were in prosperity and at ease? Is it then fitting that I should quit you in a day of trouble? *Tûan*, where you go, there I go also. Where you lead I follow."

I said no more, but went upon my way with Ûmat at my heels. His devotion not only touched but

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fortified me. He was taking voluntarily risks which I was running because circumstances left me no alternative. Moreover, he, I knew, believed himself to be going to certain death, whereas I was backing my own conception of the psychology of the men with whom I was dealing, and saw in the action I was taking the one chance afforded to me of saving myself and those under my charge from a violent and unpleasant end.

The interview with the chiefs was a long one, and throughout it the knowledge that Ûmat's great, fleshy body was wedged in securely between my enemies and the small of my back gave me an added confidence which was worth many points in my favour. The decision, whether it was to be peace or war, lay with the Dâto′ Maharâja Pĕrba Jĕlai—the great territorial baron whom I had come to see—who was, under the Sultan, the practical ruler of the whole of the interior of Pahang. This man, before British influence had been extended to the country, had been the object of the Sultan's jealousy and had seen encroachments upon his authority by more than one royal favourite attempted and encouraged. Several of these upstart chiefs were among the leaders of the present revolt, and the son of one of them was now heading the local war party at Kuâla Lîpis and was being warmly seconded by the Dâto′s own promising heir. That these youngsters had the Sultan's influence at their back was also obvious; but my chances of success lay in my ability to discredit them and to convince the Dâto′ that he was

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

being made a cat's-paw of by his old enemies and their astute master.

Hardly had the interview opened before Mat Kîlau, the youthful leader of the war party, cut abruptly into the conversation. Assuming an air of incredulous astonishment, I ignored him and turned to the Dâto'.

"I came hither," I said, "to see you, to discuss matters with those possessed of knowledge and understanding, not to bandy words with babes. Is it fitting, then, and is it approved by ancient custom, that one who has but recently been weaned, one whose age is that of a season of maize, should disturb with his babble the grave conferences of his elders?"

I was laying myself open to an obvious retort, but I question whether this occurred to my audience, and the appeal to custom, which is the great Malayan fetish, was a sure card. Mat Kîlau was promptly suppressed, and with him the war party was silenced at the outset.

This point gained, I next addressed myself to a statement of the case as it presented itself, I averred, to the eye of common sense.

Behold a war had broken out, and certain evilly disposed persons were fighting the British Government. Either this was being done by the Sultan's orders, or it was not. If it were, doubtless the Sultan had issued his mandate under his seal, thus assuming responsibility for all that might befall. If the Dâto' would produce such a document, I should have no further word to say. No written order, I was told,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

had been received; and this I was prepared to believe, for the Sultan was far too astute a person to commit himself in such a fashion.

"Then," said I, "suffer me, as an old friend, to give you this much counsel. Turn a deaf ear to any alleged verbal command, for if you act against the British now, and have no formal mandate from the Sultan for your action, you, and you alone, will be held responsible. At this moment I and the men with me are few and weak; we are a tempting morsel for the youthful, the warlike, and the unwise—like the bait that killed the shark. You can kill me now." (The Dâto' politely hastened to disavow any such desire.) "You can kill me now, you can kill the men in my stockade to-morrow or in a day or two; but that will be only the beginning. If we fall, in a little space more white men than you have ever seen or heard of will come pouring over the hills. They will burn your villages, fell your cocoanut groves, kill your cattle, and they will never rest until they have hanged you by the neck until you are dead, for the war will be your war, and in the absence of a mandate from the Sultan nothing will clear you of guilt. Even were the Sultan openly at your back, you would, at the best, be banished to some distant island, as is the white man's way. It would indeed be sad," I concluded, "if such calamities should befall because the advice of hot-headed youngsters had been suffered to prevail over the wise deliberations of their elders."

This was the gist of my argument, but Malay fashion, we talked about and about it for hours. In

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the end, however, words prevailed, and Ûmat and I won through. The Dâto′ dispersed his followers, while Mat Kîlau and the bulk of the war party retired to a village some twenty miles distant, where they placed themselves astride my lines of communication. From this place, a couple of months later, I had the satisfaction of dislodging them with a portion of the force sent across the mountains to the relief of my stockade. For the moment, however, all immediate danger of an attack on Kuâla Lîpis was averted, and that night Ûmat made darkness hideous by the discordant snatches of song with which he celebrated our diplomatic victory, betokening the reaction occasioned by the unstringing of his tense nerves.

Later I became resident of Pahang, and Ûmat came with me to the capital, and lived there for some years in a house in my compound, with Sĕlĕma, the Pahang girl, who made him so gentle and faithful a wife. It was soon after his marriage that his trouble fell upon Ûmat, and swept much of the sunshine from his life. He contracted a form of ophthalmia, and for a time was totally blind. Native medicine-men doctored him, and drew sheafs of needles and bunches of thorns from his eyes, which they declared were the cause of his affliction. These and other miscellaneous odds and ends, similarly extracted, used to be brought to me for inspection at breakfast-time, floating most unappetizingly in a cup half full of oily water; and Ûmat went abroad with eye sockets stained crimson, or yellow, or black,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

according to the fancy of the native physician. The aid of an English doctor was called in, but Ûmat was too thoroughly a Malay to place much trust in the simple and untheatrical prescriptions provided for him, and though his blindness was relieved, and he became able to walk without the aid of a staff, his eyesight could never be wholly restored to him.

But Ûmat was of a sanguine temperament, and even when his blindness had continued for years, and each new remedy had proved to be merely one more disappointment, he clung unshakenly to the belief that in time the light would return to him. Meanwhile, his life held much enjoyment. All through the day his laugh used to ring out, and at night-time the compound would resound to the songs he loved to improvise which had for their theme the marvellous doings of "Ûmat, the blind man, whose eyes cannot see." His patience had come to the rescue, and the sorrow of his blindness, accompanied as it was with a sufficient wage and no great measure of physical exertion, was a chastened grief which he bore with little complaining. He had aged somewhat, for the loss of sight made his face look graver, heavier, duller than of old, but his heart remained as young as ever.

And good things have not held quite aloof from him. One day, as I sat writing, Ûmat erupted into the room, and presently the whole house resounded with the news that he expected shortly to become a father. The expression of his face was a queer medley of delight, excitement, and pride, blent with

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

some anxiety for Sĕlĕma; and when he spoke of the child, whose advent he prophesied so noisily, he became almost sentimental.

He rushed off to the most famous midwife in the place, and presented her with the retaining fee prescribed by Malay custom—a small brass dish filled with leaves of the *sîrih* vine, and six pence of our money. The recipient of these treasures is thereafter held pledged to attend the patient whenever she may be called upon to do so, and after the child is born she can claim further payments for the services rendered. These are not extravagantly high, according to European notions, two depreciated Mexican dollars being the charge for a first confinement, a dollar or a dollar and a half on the next occasion, and twenty-five or at the most fifty cents being deemed an adequate payment for each subsequent event.

When Ûmat had "placed the *sîrih* leaves," he had done all that was immediately possible for Sĕlĕma, and he sat down to endure the anxieties of the next few months with the patience of which he had so much at his command. The *pantang bĕr-anak*, or birth-taboos, hem a Malayan husband in almost as rigidly as they fence his wife, and Ûmat went in constant dread of unwittingly transgressing any of the laws upon the nice observance of which the welfare of Sĕlĕma and the future of their child depended. He ceased to shave his head, foregoing the cool comfort of a naked scalp. He dared not even cut his hair, and a thick, black shock presently stood five

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

inches high upon his head, and tumbled raggedly about his neck and ears. Sĕlĕma was about to become the mother of his first-born, and for Ûmat to cut his hair in such circumstances would have been to invite disaster. He would not kill the fowls for the cook now, nor would he even drive a stray dog from the compound with violence, lest he should chance to do it a hurt; for he must shed no blood and do no injury to any living thing during his wife's pregnancy. One day he was sent on an errand up-river, and did not return for two nights. On inquiry it appeared that he camped in a friend's house and learned next day that his host's wife was also expecting shortly to give birth to a child. Therefore he had had to spend at least two nights in the house. Why? Because, if he had failed to do so, he might have brought death to Sĕlĕma. Why should this be the result? Allah alone knoweth, but such is the teaching of the men of old, the very wise ones who lived aforetime.

But Ûmat's chief privation was that he was forbidden to sit in the doorway of his house. This, to a Malay, was serious, for the seat in the doorway, at the head of the stair-ladder which leads to the ground, is to him much what the chimney corner is to an English peasant. It is here that he sits and looks out patiently at life, as the European stares into the heart of a fire; it is here that his neighbours come to gossip with him, and it is in the doorway of his own or his friends' houses that the rumours that fill his narrow world are borne to him. To obstruct a door-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

way at such a time, however, would have been fatal to Sĕlĕma's prospects, and almost certain death to her and to her child; so though the restriction robbed his life of much of its comfort, Ûmat submitted to it with meekness.

His wife, meanwhile, had to be no less circumspect. She bridled her woman's tongue rigorously, and no word of disparagement of man or beast was allowed to pass her lips. Had she miscalled or depreciated any living thing the consequences, as was well known, would have been that her child would have reproduced the defects upon which she had commented. This, it will be noted, represent Jacób's wands driven hilt-deep into the ground. She was often dropping with fatigue, and faint and ill before her hour came, but she dared not lie down upon her mat during the hours of daylight lest she should fall asleep, in which case evil spirits would almost certainly have entered into her unborn child. Therefore, she struggled on till dusk, and Ûmat did his clumsy best to comfort her and to lighten her sufferings by constant tenderness and care.

One night, when the moon was nearly at the full, the town suddenly broke out into a tumult of discordant sound. The large brass gongs, in which the Chinese devils delight, clanged and clashed and brayed; the Malay drums throbbed and thudded; and a tremendous clamour was raised by thousands of human voices lifted in shrill and strenuous outcry. The jungle on the distant bank across the river echoed and reëchoed the noise, till the air seemed to be

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

quivering with its vibrations. The moon, which is beloved by all dwellers in the tropics, and is especially dear to Oriental lovers, was suddenly seen to be in dire peril, for before the eyes of all men the jaws of that infamous monster, the *Gĕrhâna*, could be seen to have fastened themselves upon her, and were swallowing her inch by inch. Even the Chinese, who are astronomers and had learned how to foretell eclipses while our forebears were still very rudimentary folk, firmly believe in this legendary causation of the phenomenon, and all men are enjoined to aid the moon on such occasions by raising a tumult that will frighten her assailant away. So now all the people shouted, while the gongs clanged and the drums were beaten, until the terrified dragon withdrew, and the moon was seen sailing unharmed across the sky, looking down in love and gratitude upon her children, to whose aid she owed her deliverance.

But during the period that her fate had hung in the balance Sĕlĕma had been thrust into the empty fireplace and had sat there, under the shadow of the tray-like shelf depending from the low rafters, trembling with fear of the unknown. The little basket work stand, upon which the hot rice pot is wont to rest, was put on her head as a cap, and in her girdle the long wooden rice spoon was stuck daggerwise. Thus equipped she remained motionless and silent during the whole period of the eclipse. Neither she nor Ûmat had a notion why it was necessary to do these things, but they never dreamed of questioning the custom that prescribed them. The men of

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

olden days have decreed that women with child should behave in this manner when the moon is in trouble, and the consequences of neglect are far too serious to be risked; so Sělěma and Ûmat acted accordingly to their simple faith.

Later came a day when Sělěma nearly lost her life by reason of the barbarities which Malayan science holds to be necessary if a woman is to live through her confinement without mishap. Great bands of linen were passed around her body, and the ends were pulled at, tug-of-war fashion, by rival knots of aged crones. She was roasted over a charcoal brazier till her skin was blistered and she was well-nigh suffocated. She was made the victim of other indescribable horrors, and tortured in divers ways. Ûmat's brown face was gray with fear and anxiety, and drawn and aged with pain. He paced restlessly between his hut and my study, retailing to me realistic details of the enormities being perpetrated by the midwife and her assistants, and he poured the tale of his suspense into my ears, and wet the floor mats with his great beady tears. Hours passed, and at last a feeble cry came from Ûmat's house, a thin wailing which brought with it such relief that I, too, found the apple lumping in my throat. Ûmat, beside himself with delight and almost delirious with joy at Sělěma's trial being over, rushed to me with the news that a man-child had been born to him, and that his wife was doing well. He was like a mad thing, laughing through his tears and sobbing in his laughter, the most triumphant parent that I have ever seen,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Thereafter, nightly, for many weeks, the cries of Âwang—as the boy was named—broke the peace of my compound during the midnight hour. Malayan custom was still busy with him, and the poor little wretch was being bathed ruthlessly in *cold* water, after being dragged out of his sleep for the purpose, and then was dried by being held face downward over a charcoal brazier. The pungent smoke choked his breath and pained his eyes, but he contrived to survive this and other drastic experiences, though he bawled his protests and disapproval with a pair of sturdy lungs. Only a percentage of Malayan children live through the attentions of their mothers, but Âwang was among the survivals, and as soon as he was old enough to be allowed out of the house, he became Ûmat's constant friend and companion. Long before he could speak he and his father appeared to have established a complete understanding, and later you could hear them holding long conversations together, on the matting outside my study door, for hours at a time.

As Âwang grew big enough to use his legs, he used to patter nimbly round Ûmat with an air which had in it something of protection. He was generally mother-naked, save that now and again a cap was set rakishly upon one side of his little bullet head, and when I spoke to him he used to wriggle in a most ingratiating fashion, and thrust his small hand halfway down his throat in his embarrassment. Ûmat delighted in him, and his eyes followed him constantly, and though they were very dim, I used to

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fancy that he saw Âwang more clearly than anything else on earth.

In the fullness of time I was transferred from Malaya to another part of the Empire, distant from it a matter of some nine thousand miles, and shortly afterward Ûmat elected to return to his own country, taking his Pahang wife and his several children with him. He had saved a little money—some of it come by none too honestly, I shrewdly suspect—and in Kĕlantan he entered into possession of certain ancestral lands. I still hear tidings of him occasionally, and I learn that he has blossomed out into a sort of minor headman, his authority being mainly based upon his intimate knowledge of the curious ways of white men. It is hardly likely that he and I will ever meet again, but I shall always recall with tenderness and gratitude the man who, having eaten my rice when I was in prosperity and at ease, held that it was "not fitting" to quit me in time of trouble.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

AT A MALAYAN COURT

WHERE and when these things happened does not signify at all. The east coast of the Malay Peninsula is a long one; several native states occupy its seaboard; and until quite recently the manners of the *râjas* who ruled over them had not suffered any material change for centuries. Thus, both in the matter of time and of space, a wide range of choice is afforded to the imagination. The facts, anyway, are true, and they were related, in the watches of the night, to a white man (whose name does not matter) by two people with whose identity you also have no concern. One of the latter was a man, whom I will call Âwang Îtam, and the other was a woman whose name was Bêdah, or something like it. The place which they chose for the telling of their story was an empty sailing-boat, which lay beached upon a sand bank in the centre of a Malayan river; and as soon as the white man had scrambled up the side, the dug-out which had brought him sheered off and left him.

He had come to this place by appointment, but he knew nothing beyond that single fact, for the assignation had been made in the furtive native fashion which is as unlike the invitation card of Europe as are most things in the East if compared

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

with white men's methods. Twice that day his attention had been very pointedly called to this deserted sailing-boat, once by an old crone who was selling sweet stuff from door to door, and once by a young chief who had stopped to speak to him while passing up the street of the native town. By both a reference had been made to the moonrise and to a "precious thing," visible only to one who dared to go in search of it unattended; and though these hints had been dropped, as it were, by accident, they sufficed to show the white man that something was to be learned, seen, or experienced by one who chose to visit the sailing-boat at the hour of the moon's rising.

The Malays who were with him feared a trap, and implored him not to go alone; but the white man felt certain that if any of his people accompanied him, his trouble would be in vain. Moreover, he had an appetite for adventure and could in no case afford to let his friends or his enemies think that he was afraid. The man who, dwelling alone among Malays in an unsettled country, shows the slightest trace of fear, is apt thereby to sign his own death warrant, while one who is believed by them to be "spoiling for a fight" is usually the last to be attacked; for no people are more susceptible to bluff, and given a truculent demeanour and a sufficiency of bravado, a coward may pass for a brave man in many a Malayan state.

The decks of the boat were wet with dew and drizzle, and she smelt abominably of the ancient fish cargoes which she had carried before she was

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

beached. A light rain was falling, and the white man crept along the side until he reached the stern, which was covered by a roofing of rotten palm-leaf mats. Then he squatted down, rolled a cigarette, and awaited developments.

Presently the soft *splash*, *whisp—splash*, *whisp* of a single paddle came to his ear, and a moment later he heard the sound of a canoe bumping gently against the side of the sailing-boat. Next a girl's figure appeared, standing erect on the vessel's low bulwarks. She called softly, inquiring whether any one was on board, and the white man answered her with equal caution. She then turned and whispered to some unseen person in a boat moored alongside, and after some seconds she came toward the white man.

"There is one yonder who would speak with thee, *Tûan*," she said, "but he cannot climb over the ship's side. He is like one who is dead, unless others lift him, how can he move? Will the *Tûan*, therefore, aid him to ascend into the ship?"

The white man loosened his revolver in its holster, covertly, that the girl might not see, and stepped cautiously to the spot where the boat appeared to be moored, for now he, too, began to fear a trap. What he saw over the side reassured him. The dug-out was of the smallest, and it had only one occupant, a man who, even in the dim moonlight, showed the sharp angles of his bones. The white man let himself down into the canoe, and aided by the girl, he lifted her companion on board. He was in the last stages of emaciation, shrunken and drawn beyond

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

belief, and the skin was stretched across his hollow cheeks like the goat hide on a drum face.

Painfully and very slowly he crept aft, going on all fours like some crippled animal, until he had reached the shelter in the stern. The girl and the white man followed, and they all three squatted down on the creaking bamboo decking. The man sat all of a heap, moaning at short intervals, as Malays moan when the fever holds them. The girl sat unconcernedly preparing a quid of betel nut, and the white man inhaled his cigarette and waited for them to speak. He was trying to get the hang of the business, and to guess what had caused two people, whom he did not know, to seek an interview with him with so much secrecy and precaution in this weird place and at such an untimely hour.

The girl, the moonlight showed him, was pretty. She had a small, perfectly shaped head, a wide, smooth forehead, abundant hair, bright, laughing eyes, with eyebrows arched and well defined—"like the artificial spur of a game-cock," as the Malay simile has it—and the dainty hands and feet which are so common among well-born Malayan women. The man, on the contrary, was a revolting object. His shrunken and misshappen body, his features distorted by perpetual twitchings, his taut and pallid skin, and his air of abject degradation were violently repellent. Looking at him, the white man was moved by the feeling which is pity driven to desperation—the instinctive impulse to hustle the creature out of sight, or to put it out of its misery once for all—so

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

abominable was the humiliation of its broken manhood.

Presently the girl glanced up at the white man.

"The *Tûan* knows Âwang Îtam?" she inquired.

Yes, the white man knew him well by sight, and had spoken with him on many occasions. He had not, however, seen him for many months.

"This is he," said the girl, indicating the crippled wretch who sat rocking and moaning by her side; and her words administered as sharp a shock to the white man as though she had smitten him across the face.

Âwang Îtam, when he had last seen him, had been one of the smartest and best favoured of the "King's Youths," a fine, clean-limbed, upstanding youngster, dressed wonderfully in an extravagantly peaked kerchief and brilliant garments of many-coloured silks, and armed to the teeth with Malayan weapons of beautiful workmanship. Among the crowd of lads who strutted like peacocks, and looked upon life as a splendid game in which love affairs were the cards and danger the counters, he had been preëminent for his swagger, his daring, and his successes. What had befallen him to work in him so appalling a transformation in the space of a few months? It was for the purpose of revealing this secret to the white man, in the hope that thereby a tardy retribution might overtake his oppressors, that he and Bêdah had sought this stolen interview.

In every independent Malay state the *bûdak râja*, or "King's Youths," are an established insti-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

tution. They are a band of vainglorious young fighting men, recruited from the sons of nobles, chiefs, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and men belonging to the more well-to-do families. It is their business to watch over the person of the Sultan, to follow at his heels when he goes abroad, to paddle his boat, to join with him in the chase, to kill all who may chance to offend him, and incidentally to do a mort of evil in his name. Their principal aim in life is to win the fickle favour of their master, and having once gained it, freely to abuse the power thus secured. As the Malay proverb has it, "they carry their lord's work upon their heads, and their own under their arms"; and woe betide those, who are not themselves under the immediate protection of the king, with whom chance brings them in contact. At times they act as a sort of irregular police force, levying *chantage* from people detected in the commission of an offence; and when crime is scarce, it is their amiable practice to exact blackmail from wholly innocent individuals by threatening to accuse them of some ill deed unless their good will be purchased at their own price. There is, of course, no abomination which their master can require of them that they are not willing, nay, eager, to commit in his service; and no Malayan *râja*, in the old days, ever needed to ask twice in their hearing: "Will no man rid me of this turbulent priest?"

During the long, long hours which the Sultan spends among his women, the *bûdak râja* have to be in attendance in the courtyards of the palace or at the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

gate of the royal enclosure. This affords them the abundant leisure which Malays so dearly love, and they while away the time by loafing and gossiping, by playing games of chance, by betting on the spinning of tops, on the number of seeds in a mangosteen, or on the power of resistance possessed by rival nuts of the kind called *bûah kras;* they sing a little, sleep a good deal, conceal their own, and speculate luridly upon their neighbours' private intimacies, and for the rest, are quite idle, dissolute, and happy. It is unnecessary to add that they are greatly feared by the peasants and immensely admired by the generality of the female population, for they are as reckless, as unscrupulous, as immoral, and withal as gayly dressed and as well born a gang of young truculents as ever preyed upon a defenceless people, or made open love to their wives and daughters.

More or less insecurely imprisoned within the palace precincts there abides also yet another set of *bûdak râja*—"a monstrous regiment of women"—some of whom are the concubines, permanent or occasional, of the king, while the remainder are the companions, attendants, and serving-girls of the more directly favoured ladies. All of them, however, without distinction, are vowed to the royal service, and are supposed to lead a celibate existence. Now, according to the vernacular proverb, the desires of Malay women are as disproportionate as those of the sandfly, the minute insect which is said to have a standing wager that he will swallow a man whole; and, as yet another Malayan proverb has it, "the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

cat and the roast, the tinder and the spark, and a boy and a girl are ill to keep asunder." Given, then, as the main components of a Malay court, a band of lusty young roisterers, separated from a hundred or more of equally idle young women by nothing more substantial than a few bamboo fences, and such like frail obstructions, and the resulting happenings can be more decorously left to the imagination than indicated in even the broadest outline. The question of marriage rarely arises, for it is only very infrequently that a *rája* can bring himself to dispose in this fashion of any of the female inmates of his numerous households. Therefore, all love affairs have to be conducted with the utmost stealth and secrecy; the atmosphere of the court is pungent with perennial immorality and intrigue; and the sordidness of it all is only redeemed by the fact that errant man and maid alike go from day to day in imminent danger of torture and death. These are the penalties of discovery.

Nevertheless, the majority of the intrigues carried on by the palace women with the men of the court become sooner or later more or less notorious. The inordinate vanity of the women largely contributes to this, for they pride themselves upon the number and upon the recklessness of their lovers. When torn by jealousy or spite, or by a desire to be avenged upon a faithless wooer, a girl is often enough moved to betray the secret she shares with him, regardless of the consequences to herself. Moreover, it is a point of honour with the palace women to exact

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

love tokens from their admirers, and thereafter to display them to their envious companions; and even the men are frequently guilty of similar indiscretions. Usually the Sultan himself is the last person to learn what is going forward, for though there are many people at a Malayan court who are eager to curry favour with him by telling tales of their neighbours, the man who does so must himself be without sin or damaging secret of his own, and such innocents are passing rare.

Âwang Îtam had served the Sultan for several years as one of the *bûdak râja*, but his immediate chief was Saiyid Usman, a youngster who was also one of the King's Youths, and was usually spoken of as Tûan Bângau. Âwang had been born and bred in the household of which Tûan Bângau's father was the head; and, though in accordance with the immutable Malayan custom, he always addressed him as "Your Highness," and used the term "your servant" in lieu of the personal pronoun, when alluding to himself, the relations subsisting between him and his chief more nearly resembled those of two brothers than any which we regard as customary between master and man. They had been born within a week or two of one another; had crawled about the floor of the women's apartments in company until they were old enough to run wild in the open air; they had learned to play *pôrok* and *tûju lûbang*, and all the games known to Malay childhood, still in company; they had splashed about in the river together, cooling their little brown bodies in the running water; they

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

had often eaten from the same plate, and slept side by side upon the same mat spread in the veranda. Later, they had been circumcised upon the same day, and having thus entered upon man's estate, they had together begun to participate in the life of dissipation which every boy, bred in the neighbourhood of a Malayan court, regards as his birthright.

Both had been duly entered as members of the Sultan's bodyguard, and they had quickly proved themselves to be not the least reckless or truculent of that redoubtable crew. They were an uncommonly good-looking pair of boys, and many were the girls in the palace, and in the town that lay around it, who cast inviting glances in their direction. Tûan Bângau availed himself to the full of his opportunities, but Âwang had no taste for casual love-affairs, for he had conceived an overwhelming passion for a girl who chanced to be a *jâmah-jâmah-an*, or occasional concubine, of the Sultan, and who, being somewhat puffed up by the majesty of her position, was leading for the moment a life of almost aggressive propriety. She was none the less fully aware of the state of Âwang's feelings, and was not averse from affording him an occasional glimpse of the charms which had reduced him to so abject a condition. On his part, he was forever trying to have sight of her, and Tûan Bângau did his best to help him, but it was a tantalizing and unsatisfying business at the best. It was an evil day for both, however, when as they swaggered past the palace fence, intent upon stealing a peep at the girl, they

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

were seen by Tŭngku Ûteh, the Sultan's only daughter by a royal mother, to whose household the *jâmah-jâmah-an* belonged. There was a saying current at the court, that Tŭngku Ûteh resembled a *pôlong*—a familiar spirit—not physically, for she was fairly well favoured, but in her capacity to devour and ruin. Her father guarded her jealously, for she had been recently married to the ruler of a neighbouring state, and his honour was involved; but public report said that her ingenuity was more than a match for his vigilence, and from time to time some prominent person in the community would precipitately fly the country, and presently the whisper would spread that he had been added to the tale of the princess's victims. Such a disappearance had very recently taken place, wherefore, for the moment, her affections were disengaged, and so it chanced that she looked with the eyes of desire at the young and handsome Saiyid.

In the East, love affairs develop quickly; and that very day Âwang Îtam again saw Îang Mûnah—the girl whom he had loved so long and so hopelessly—and by the flash of an eyelid was apprized that she had that to tell him which it concerned him to hear. When two people are set upon securing a secret interview, many difficulties may be overcome; and that evening Âwang whispered to Tûan Bângau that "the moon was about to fall into his lap."

The Saiyid laughed.

"I dreamed not long since," he said, "that I was bitten by a very venomous snake," and Âwang laughed too, for he knew that his friend was ripe for

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

any adventure, and upon that his own chances of happiness now depended.

To dream of a snake bite, among any of the people of the Far East, is held to signify that ere long the dreamer will receive lavish favours from some lady of exalted rank or surpassing beauty. The more venomous the snake, the brighter, it is believed, will be the qualities with which the dreamer's future mistress is endowed. Tûan Bângau had probably not failed to note the love glances bestowed upon him by the princess, and these, coupled with his dream, supplied him with a key to the situation.

His position in the matter was rather curious. He did not desire Tŭngku Ûteh for herself; she was his monarch's daughter, and the wife of a royal husband; and his duty and his interest alike forbade him to accept her advances. He knew that if his intrigue were to be discovered, he would be a ruined, if not a dead man; and he was, moreover, at this time very genuinely in love with another girl, whom he had recently married. In spite of all these considerations, however, the princess's overtures were, in his eyes, a challenge to his manhood which his code of honour made it impossible for him to refuse. The extreme danger of the business was, in a fashion, its supreme attraction. To evade it, upon no matter what pretext, was to play the poltroon; and on this point no self-respecting Malay, brought up in the poisonous moral atmosphere of an independent state, could admit of any other opinion.

And in this affair there were intrigues within in-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

trigues. Îang Mûnah, who was acting as go-between for her mistress with the Saiyid, was to have her love passages with Âwang Îtam in comfort and security, without incurring any penalties therefor, and was moreover to have the princess's support in her candidature to become a permanent, and not a merely casual concubine of that young lady's father. Âwang Îtam would accompany his friend on his nocturnal visits to the palace, and while Tûan Bângau wooed the princess, her handmaiden would give herself to him, and thus the desire of his heart would at length be fulfilled. Eagerly he wooed his friend on Tŭngku Ûteh's behalf, and of the twain it was he who was the impassioned lover when together the two young men stole into the palace at the noon of the night.

They effected their entrance by a way known to few, the secret of which had been conveyed to them from the princess, through Îang Mûnah; and they left by the same means before the breaking of the dawn, passing by a circuitous route to their quarters in the guardhouse, while all the town still slumbered.

For more than a month they paid their secret visits unobserved by any save those whom they sought, and by an old crone, who unbarred the door for them to enter; but one night, toward the end of that time, they narrowly escaped detection. The Sultan, like many Malay *râjas*, kept curious hours. The distinction between night and day had for him light or darkness, exactly when the fancy took him;

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and occasionally, when having gone to rest at noon, he awoke at midnight, he would go for a solitary prowl round the palace precincts, pouncing upon ill-doers like a roaming beast of prey. It thus chanced that he lighted upon Tûan Bângau and Âwang Îtam, just as they were quitting the princess's compound; but they fled so swiftly through the darkness that he failed to discover their identity, and was equally unable to determine that of the women whom they had risked their lives to visit. It was a hair-erecting experience for all concerned, however, and for a space the meetings ceased.

But Tûngku Ûteh was finding in the intrigue a delightful relief to the general dullness of palace life, and she was not prepared to let it have so tame an ending. Tûan Bângau, on the other hand, would very willingly have broken off the connection, but Âwang Îtam was in this matter the princess's most ardent advocate, and a series of taunting messages from her speedily reduced the Saiyid to acquiescence. Greater precautions were now necessary, however, and the meetings no longer took place in the palace. Instead, the lovers passed the night in a shed, within the fence of the royal enclosure, which was ordinarily used for storing firewood.

Things had gone on in this way for some time, when Tûngku Ûteh began to weary of the lack of excitement attending the intrigue. Her secret had been kept so well that there was not a breath of scandal to titillate her vanity. She regarded Tûan Bângau as a lover to be proud of, and she itched to show her

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

entourage, the court world in general, and Tûan Bângau's wife in particular, that he had fallen a victim to her charms. To possess him in secret afforded her now only a pale satisfaction, and it never even occurred to her to consider his interests rather than her own whims. She knew, of course, that discovery would spell disaster, more or less complete, for him, and incidentally would deprive her of her lover; but for one of her adventuresome spirit, that was a loss which, in a Malay court, could be replaced without much difficulty, and since the intrigue must have an end, sooner or later, it was just as well, from her point of view, that it should conclude with a resounding explosion.

One morning, when the faint yellow of the dawn was beginning to show through the grayness low down in the east, and the thin smokelike clouds were hurrying across the sky from the direction of the sea, like great night birds winging their homeward way, Tûan Bângau awoke from sleep to find Tûngku Ûteh sitting beside him on their sleeping-mat, with his *kris* and girdle in her hands. She had taken them from his pillow while he slept, and no persuasions on his part could induce her to restore them to him. While he yet sought to coax her to return his property she leaped to her feet, and with a saucy laugh disappeared in the palace. Pursuit was, of course, impossible; and Tûan Bângau and Âwang Îtam made their way homeward with anxious hearts, knowing that now, indeed, their hour had come.

Once inside her own apartments, Tŭngku Ûteh

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

placed the *kris* ostentatiously upon the tall erection of ornamental pillows that adorned the head of her sleeping-mat, and then composed herself calmly to enjoy the tranquil slumber which in the west is erroneously supposed to be the peculiar privilege of the just. The dagger was famous throughout the country, and the identity of its owner was not, of course, for a moment in doubt. Tŭngku Ûteh could not have proclaimed the intrigue more resoundingly if she had shouted its every detail from the *bilâl's* minaret of the central mosque.

The Sultan's anger knew no bounds when he learned what had occurred, and physical violence was, of course, the only means of its expression, and of covering the shame which had been put upon him, that presented itself to his primitive and unoriginal mind. He found himself, however, in a position of considerable difficulty. He was anxious to avoid prejudicing his daughter's future with her kingly husband, who had already evinced a marked disinclination to transport her from her father's to his own palace. As regards her, therefore, his hands were fettered; and her acute enjoyment of the situation, and the shameless levity with which she received his reproofs, combined to make his impotence well-nigh unendurably humiliating. Tûan Bângau, moreover, was a member of a very powerful clan. He was also a Saiyid, and the Sultan feared that the religious fanaticism of his people would be aroused if he openly punished with death a descendant of the Prophet. Besides, it was not easy to proceed against

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

him without involving Tŭngku Ûteh in the scandal. For the moment, therefore, he turned his thoughts to the other culprits. Âwang Îtam was overpowered that evening, on his way to the guardhouse, by a bevy of the King's Youths, was dragged into the palace, and thereafter all trace of him was lost for some months. The girl Îang Mûnah, all her bright dreams of permanent concubinehood scattered to the winds, was suspended by her thumbs from a roof beam, and was soused with water whenever she had the impudence to faint. The Sultan would not suffer any graver injury to be done to her, in spite of the gentle entreaties of his wife, Tŭngku Ûteh's mother, as that farseeing potentate judged it to be possible that his casual fancy for her might, at some later period, revive.

To Tûan Bângau, however, not a word was said; and never by sign or gesture was he allowed to guess that his crime against his master's honour was known to the Sultan.

Nearly a year later, when the whole incident had become a piece of ancient court history, the Sultan chanced to go ahunting, and took his way up a small stream, the banks of which happened to be totally uninhabited. Tûan Bângau was of the party, and the other *bûdak râja* who were on duty that day were all men who had been selected on account of their discretion and their unwavering loyalty to the Sultan. The hunt was accommodated in boats, of which there were two, the Sultan travelling in one, and his son, Tŭngku Saleh in the other. Besides the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

prince, there sat in the latter boat Tûan Bângau and about a dozen of the King's Youths. Arrived at a certain place, Tŭngku Saleh ordered his men to make the boat fast in midstream while he ate some sweetmeats which his women had prepared and packed for his use. The Sultan's boat meanwhile went on upriver, and presently disappeared round a jungle-covered point.

When the prince had eaten his fill, he bade Tûan Bângau and one or two other Saiyids who were among his followers, fall to on the remainder; and it was while Tûan Bângau was washing his mouth over the side of the boat after eating, that Tŭngku Saleh gave the signal which heralded his death. A man who was behind him, leaped suddenly to his feet and stabbed him with a spear, and a second thrust, delivered almost simultaneously by another of the party, knocked him into the river. Tûan Bângau dived and came presently to the surface in the shallow water near the bank of the stream. Here he rose to his feet, drew his *kris*, and called to the men in the boat to come and fight him, one at a time, if they dared. The only answer was a spear which struck him in the neck, and a bullet fired from the prince's express rifle by one of his men, which penetrated to his heart. He collapsed where he stood, and a moment later all that remained of Tûan Bângau was a huddled form lying motionless in the shallow water, with the eddies playing in and out of the brilliant silk garments, which had made him so brave a sight in life.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Those who had killed him buried him in the jungle near the place where he had fallen, the secret of the exact spot being shared by three individuals only. The report that he had strayed from the hunting party and had been lost was diligently spread, and to lend colour to it search was made for him for some days in a part of the forest situated at a discreet distance from his grave. The account of his disappearance was very generally disbelieved, but it was found to be impossible of disproof. But Bêdah, his wife, who had loved him, had not rested here. Deliberately she had set herself to work to worm the truth out of one of his murderers doing in the process every conceivable violence to her own feelings and inclinations; and she now told all to the white man, hoping that, through him, vengeance might perhaps overtake the Sultan who had planned, and his servants who had carried out the assassination. She was quite indifferent to the fact that she thereby risked the life which Tûan Bângau's death had temporarily rendered desolate.

All things considered, however, the relatives of the young Saiyid had not much of which to complain. He had got into mischief with the Sultan's daughter, and could not expect to escape the penalty of such ill doing. Though he was murdered in cold blood in circumstances which made it impossible for him to offer any resistance, he met his end, at any rate, by a quick death and a clean one. Worse things may befall, as Âwang Îtam had experienced. After that youngster vanished behind the palace gates,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

he became the victim of nameless tortures. As he told the tale of the things that he had suffered on the night of his arrest—of the appalling mutilations which had been inflicted upon him, and of the diabolical ingenuity which had been used, amid laughter and brutal jests, to wreck his manhood, and to reduce him to the pitiful ruin he had since become—the white man sat writhing in sympathetic agony, and was assailed by a feeling of horror so violent that it turned him sick and faint.

"Ya Allah!" he cried. "It were better far to die than to endure such excruciating pains, and thereafter to live the life which is no life."

The cripple looked up at him with interest. He had evidently been more accustomed to mockery than to pity.

"That is true," he said. "It is true." Then, a light that was almost insane in its intensity awaking suddenly in his dulled eyes, he added, with something like triumph in his tone, "But for a space Îang Mûnah was *mine*, my woman to me, and willingly would I endure anew the worst that men can do if for a little I could be what of old I was, and the desire in my heart could once more be satisfied."

The spark of energy and spirit died out of him as quickly as it had been kindled. He seemed to collapse upon himself, and said in a hoarse whisper:

"But now she has again become a *jâmah-jâmah-an*—a casual concubine of the Sultan—and in that knowledge lurks the keenest of all my agonies."

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

THE ÂMOK OF DÂTO′ KÂYA BÎJI DĚRJA

THE average stay-at-home European knows little about the Malay and cares less. Any fragmentary ideas that he may have concerning him are obtained, for the most part, from light literature of the kind which caters for the latent barbarism of the young, with the amiable object of awakening in them a spirit of adventure which the circumstances of later life will render it impossible for the vast majority in any degree to satisfy. Books of this class, which are apt to be more sensational that accurate, ordinarily depict the Malay either as a peculiarly "treacherous" person, much as wild beasts that stand up for themselves are denounced as "vicious" by big game shooters; or else as a wild-eyed, long-haired, blood-smeared, howling, naked savage, armed with what Tennyson calls "the cursed Malayan crease," who spends all his spare time running "amuck."

As a matter of fact, *âmok*-running was not an event of very frequent occurrence, even in the lawless and unregenerate days of which I chiefly write; but mistaken notions concerning it, and more especially with regard to the reasons that impel Malays to indulge in it, are not confined to those Europeans who know nothing of the natives of the Peninsula.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

White men, in the East and out of it, have attempted to treat *âmok*-running from a purely pathological standpoint—to attempt to ascribe it to a morbid condition of the brain cells peculiar to the Malays—and to ignore the psychological causation which is usually responsible for these homicidal frenzies. Some *âmok*, no doubt, are the result of insanity *pur et simple;* but outbreaks of this kind are common to madmen of all races and are largely a question of opportunity. Given a lunatic who has arms always within reach, and physical injury to his neighbours at once becomes a highly likely occurrence; and as in an independent Malay state all men invariably went armed, the scope of the homicidal maniac was thereby sensibly enlarged. Such *âmok*-running, however, was in no sense typical, nor did it present any of the characteristic features which differentiate a Malayan *âmok* from similar acts committed by men of other nationalities.

By far the greater number of Malayan *âmok* are the result, not of a diseased brain, but of a condition of mind which is described in the vernacular by the term *sâkit hâti*—sickness of liver—that organ, and not the heart, being regarded as the centre of sensibility. The states of feeling which are denoted by this phrase are numerous, complex, and differ widely in degree, but they all imply some measure of grievance, anger, excitement, and mental irritation. In acute cases they attain to something very like despair. A Malay loses something that he values; he has a bad night in the gambling houses; his

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

father dies, or his mistress proves unfaithful. Any one of these things causes him "sickness of liver." In the year 1888 I spent two nights awake by the side of Râja Haji Hamid, who was on the verge of such a nervous outbreak; and it was only by bringing to bear every atom of such moral influence as I had over him, that I was able to restrain him from running *âmok* in the streets of Pĕkan, the capital of Pahang, because his father had died a natural death on the other side of the Peninsula, and because the then Sultan of Sĕlângor had behaved with characteristic parsimony in the matter of his funeral. He had no quarrel with the people of Pahang, but his liver was sick, and the weariness of life which this condition of mind engendered impelled him to kill all and sundry, until he himself should, in his turn, be killed

I might multiply instances all pointing to the same conclusion—namely, that most *âmok* are caused by a mental condition which may be the result of serious or of comparatively trivial troubles that makes a Malay, for the time being, unwilling to live. In similar circumstances, a white man sometimes commits suicide, which is much more convenient for his neighbours; but I know of no authenticated case of a male Malay resorting to self-murder, and the horror with which such an act is regarded by the people of this race supplies the real reason why *âmok*-running is practised in its stead. Often enough something quite trivial furnishes the original provocation, and in the heat of the moment a blow is struck by a man against one who is dear to him.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Forthwith the self-hatred that results makes him desire death and drives him to seek in it the only way which readily occurs to a Malay—by running *âmok*. The *âmok*-runner, moreover, almost always kills his wife, if the opportunity occurs. Being anxious to die himself, he sees no good reason why any woman in whom he is interested should be suffered to survive him, and thereafter, in a little space, to become the property of some other man. He also frequently destroys his more valued possessions for a similar reason. In all this there is a considerable amount of method; and though the euphemism of "temporary insanity," commonly employed by coroner's juries when returning verdicts in cases of suicide, may be applied to the *âmok*-runner with precisely the same degree of inaccuracy, it is absurd to treat the latter as though he were the irresponsible victim of disease.

The following story, for the truth of which I can vouch in every particular, is only worth telling because it affords a typical example of a Malayan *âmok* conducted upon a really handsome scale.

There is a proverbial saying current among the Malays which is by way of hitting off the principal characteristics of the natives of some of the leading states in the Peninsula and Sumatra. "Wheedlers are the sons of Malacca," it declares. "Buck-sticks the men of Mĕnangkâbau; cheats the men of Rambau; liars the men of Trĕnggânu; cowards the men of Singapore; sneak-thieves the men of Kĕlantan; and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

arrogant are the men of Pahang." By far the most salient qualities of the people of Trĕnggânu, however, are their profound love of peace, their devotion to their religion and to study, and their skill both as artisans and as traders. On the lawless East Coast thirty years ago men who did not love fighting for fighting's sake were regarded by their neighbours as an anomaly, as something almost monstrous; and the mild temperament of the natives of Trĕnggânu, coupled with their extraordinary business aptitude, brought them in those days contempt and wealth in more or less equal measure. Their religious fervour is in part due to the existence among them of an hereditary line of saints—the Saiyids of Pâloh—who have succeeded one another from father to son for several generations, and have attained to an extraordinary reputation for piety by an ostentatious display of virtue, by public preachings, and by the occasional performance of minor miracles. For the rest, the people of Trĕnggânu excel as craftsmen, and they are accustomed to flood the native markets with all manner of spurious imitations of goods of high repute. The dyes which they use are never fast. The gold-threaded turban cloths, which their pilgrims carry to Mecca and dispose of there as articles of genuine Arab manufacture, wear out with surprising rapidity; and the unabashed eloquence with which a Trĕnggânu trader will discourse concerning the antiquity of some object which he has fashioned with his own hands, and the calm with which he regards detection, have won for his people

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

the reputation for lying which rightly belongs to them. Here, however, alone among the Malayan states, a great name was to be won, not by prowess as a warrior, but by renown as a saint, a sage, or a successful man of business. Every man bore arms, as a matter of course, for that was the Malayan custom; but very few ever found occasion to use them, and one and all had a natural horror of battle in any shape or form. It is necessary to realize this, for it is probable that in no other state in the Peninsula could the *âmok* which the Dâto′ Kâya Bîji Dĕrja ran in the streets of Kuâla Trĕnggânu have met with such inefficient opposition.

When Băginda Umar, who conquered the country early one morning after landing at the head of some fifty warriors, ruled in Trĕnggânu, there was a chief named Dâto′ Bĕntâra Haji, who was one of the king's adopted sons, and early in the reign of the present Sultan the title of Dâto′ Kâya Bîji Dĕrja was conferred upon this man's eldest son. The public mind was much exercised at this, for the title was not one which it was usual to bestow upon a commoner, and Jûsup, the youth now selected to bear it, was unproven and was possessed of little personality. He was of no particular birth, his father having been merely a king's favourite; he had little reputation as a scholar, such as the Trĕnggânu people revere; and he was not even skilled in the warriors' lore which of old was so dear to the ruder natives of Pahang.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

The new Dâto′ Kâya was miserably conscious of his own unfitness for his exalted office, though there was attached to it no duty save that of looking the part, and he accordingly set to work to acquire the *ĕlêmu hûlubâlang*, or occult sciences, which it behooves a fighting man to possess. In peaceful Trĕnggânu there were few warriors capable of instructing him in the arts he desired to learn, though for a time he apprenticed himself to Tŭngku Long Pĕndêkar, who was a skillful fencer. He took, therefore, to haunting graveyards by night, hoping that the ghosts of the fighting men of ancient times would appear to him and impart to him the lore which had perished with them. But the Dâto′ had a wife who was of a jealous disposition, and she persisted in misunderstanding the purity of the motives which caused her husband to absent himself so frequently at nighttime. Violent disputes followed, and at last, for the sake of peace, the Dâto′ abandoned his nocturnal prowlings among the graves and settled down to lead the obscure domestic existence for which nature had intended him.

One day his father, Dâto′ Bĕntâra Haji, fell sick and was removed to the house of one Che′ Ali, who was a medicine-man of some repute. To′ Kâya was a dutiful son, and he paid many visits to his father during his illness, tending him assiduously, and in consequence returned to his own home at a late hour on more than one occasion. This was an old cause of offence, and angry recriminations between him and his wife ensued. Their disagreement was

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

made more bitter by To′ Kâya discovering a stringy thread of egg in one of the sweetmeats prepared for him by his wife, and mistaking it for a human hair. To European ears this does not sound very important, but To′ Kâya, in common with most Malays, believed that the presence of hair in his food betokened that his wife was either trying to poison him or else to put upon him some spell. He accused her roundly of both crimes, and a row royal followed.

Next evening To′ Kâya was again in attendance upon his father until a late hour, and when he at length returned home, his wife greeted him through the closed door with loud reproaches for his supposed infidelity to her. He cried to her to unbar the door, and when she at last did so, railing virulently the while, he shouted angrily that he would have to stab her in order to teach her better manners if she did not make haste to mend them.

At this she was seized by a perfect transport of rage, and making a gesture which is the grossest insult that a Malay woman can put upon a man, she yelled at him, "Hai! Stab, then! Stab—if you are able!"

It was now To′ Kâya's turn completely to lose his head and his temper. He drew his *kris* clear of its scabbard, and she took the point in her breast, their baby, who was on her arm, being also slightly wounded.

Dropping the child, with unerring maternal instinct, she rushed past her husband, leaped to the ground, and took refuge in the house of a neighbour named Che′ Long.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

To′ Kâya pursued her, and cried to those within the house to unbar the door which his wife had shut in his face. Che′ Long's daughter, a girl named Ësah ran to comply with his bidding; but before she could do so, To′ Kâya, who had crept under the raised floor of the house, stabbed at her savagely through the interstices of the bamboo flooring, wounding her in the hip.

The girl's father, hearing the noise, flung the door open and ran out of the house. To′ Kâya greeted him with a spear thrust in the stomach, which proved his death blow. To′ Kâya's wife, profiting by this interlude, leaped from the house and rushed back to her own home; but her husband followed her, overtook her on the veranda, and stabbed her again in the breast, this time killing her on the spot.

He then entered his house, which was still tenanted by his mother-in-law, the baby, and his son, a boy of about twelve years of age, and set fire to the bed curtains with a box of lucifer matches. Now the people of Trĕnggânu greatly dread a fire, for their houses, which are built of very inflammable material, jostle one another on every available foot of ground, and here on the seashore a steady wind blows both by day and by night. When, therefore, a Trĕnggânu man deliberately sets fire to his house, he has reached the last stage of desperation and is preparing to make an end of himself and all things.

At the sight of the flames To Kâya's little son made a rush at the curtains, pulled them down, and stamped the fire out. To′ Kâya's mother-in-law,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

meanwhile, rushed out of the door, seized the baby who still lay squalling where it had fallen on the veranda, and set off at a run. The sight of his mother-in-law in full flight spurred To′ Kâya to instant pursuit, and he speedily overtook her and stabbed her through the shoulder. She, however, succeeded in eluding him, and made good her escape, carrying the baby with her. To′ Kâya then returned to his house, whence his son had also fled, and set it afire once more, and this time it blazed up bravely.

As he stood looking at the flames a Kĕlantan man named Abdul Rahman came up and asked him how the conflagration had originated.

"I do not know," said To′ Kâya.

"Then let us try to save some of the property," said Abdul Rahman; for as is the case with many Kĕlantan men, he chanced to be a thief by trade and knew that a fire gave him a good opportunity for the successful practice of his profession.

"Good," said To′ Kâya. "Do you mount into the house and lift down the boxes while I wait here below to receive them."

Nothing loth, Abdul Rahman climbed into the house and presently reappeared with a large box in his arms. As he leaned over the veranda in the act of handing it down to To′ Kâya, the latter stabbed him shrewdly in the vitals and box and man came to the ground with a crash. Abdul Rahman picked himself up and ran as far as the open space before the big stone mosque where he collapsed and died.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

To′ Kâya did not pursue him, but continued to stand gazing at the leaping flames.

The next person to arrive on the scene was a Trĕnggânu man named Pa′ Pek, who with his wife, Ma′ Pek, had tended To′ Kâya when he was little.

"Wo′," he said, for he addressed To′ Kâya as though the latter were his son, "Wo′, what caused this fire?"

"I do not know," said To′ Kâya.

"Where are the children?" inquired Pa′ Pek.

"They are still within the house," replied To′ Kâya.

"Then suffer me to save them," said Pa′ Pek.

"Do so, Pa′ Pek," said To′ Kâya; and as the old man began to climb into the house he stabbed him in the ribs.

Pa′ Pek fell, gathered himself together, and ran away in the direction of the mosque till he tripped over the body of Abdul Rahman tumbled in a heap, and eventually died where he lay.

Presently Ma′ Pek came to look for her husband and finding To′ Kâya standing near the burning house, asked him about the fire and inquired after the safety of his children.

"They are still in the house," said To′ Kâya, "but I cannot be at the pains of getting them out."

"Then suffer me to fetch them," said the old woman.

"Do so, by all means," said To′ Kâya; and as she began to scramble up the stair-ladder, he stabbed her just as he had stabbed her husband and she running

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

away fell over the two other bodies near the mosque and there gave up the ghost.

Next a Trĕnggânu lad named Jûsup came up, armed with a spear, and To′ Kâya at once attacked him, but he took shelter behind a tree. To′ Kâya thereupon emptied his revolver at him missing him with all six chambers; and then, throwing away his pistol, he stabbed at him with his spear. Jûsup dodged the blow which in the darkness struck the tree. Immediately To′ Kâya, believing the tree to be Jûsup's body, was seized with panic.

"You are invulnerable!" he cried in horror and promptly turned and fled. Jûsup, meanwhile, made off in the opposite direction as fast as his legs would carry him.

Finding that he was not pursued, To′ Kâya presently retraced his footsteps and made his way to the house of Tŭngku Long Pĕndêkar, under whom he had formerly studied fencing and other arts of war. At the alarm of fire all the men in the house had set to work to remove their effects to a place of safety, and when To′ Kâya arrived, Tŭngku Long himself was standing without, watching their operations while the others—Tŭngku Îtam, Tŭngku Pa, Tŭngku Chik, and Che′ Mat Tûkang—were busying themselves within doors. With the exception of Che′ Mat Tûkang, who was a commoner, all the others were men of royal stock. Tŭngku Long was armed with a rattan-work shield and an ancient and very pliable native sword. As he stood gazing upward quite unaware that any trouble other than that

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

occasioned by the fire was at hand, To′ Kâya suddenly flung himself upon him out of the darkness and stabbed him in the ribs. Thereafter, for a space, they fought, Tŭngku Long lashing his assailant again and again with his sword, but inflicting upon him nothing more serious than a number of bruises. At length To′ Kâya was wounded in the left hand and at the same moment he struck Tŭngku Long's shield with such force that its owner fell. To′ Kâya at once trampled upon him and stabbing downward, as one spears a fish, pinned him through the neck. At this Tŭngku Îtam, who had been watching the struggle without taking any part in it, much as though it were a mere cock fight, showed the greatest presence of mind by taking to his heels.

Tŭngku Long being disposed of, To′ Kâya turned and passed out of the compound, whereupon Che′ Mat Tûkang ran out of the house, climbed the fence, and threw a spear at him, striking him in the back. This done, Che′ Mat also most prudently ran away.

To′ Kâya, passing up the path, met a woman named Ma′ Chik—an aged, bent, and feeble crone—and her he stabbed in the breast, killing her on the spot. Thence he went to the compound of a pilgrim named Haji Mih, who also was busy getting his property out of his house, fearing that the fire might spread.

"What has caused this fire?" Haji Mih inquired of To′ Kâya.

"God alone knows," replied To′ Kâya, and so saying, he stabbed Haji Mih through the shoulder.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Help! Help!" roared the pilgrim, and his son-in-law, Saleh, and four other men ran out of the house, threw themselves upon To′ Kâya, and engaged him so hotly that in stepping backward he tripped and fell. As he lay on his back, however, he stabbed upward, striking Saleh in the elbow and deep into his chest; whereupon all his assailants incontinently fled.

To′ Kâya then picked himself up. He had not been hurt in the struggle, for Saleh and his people had not stayed to unbind their spears which were fastened into bundles, and save for the slight wounds which he had received in his left hand and in his back, he was so far little the worse for his adventures.

He now withdrew to the Makam Lĕbai Salâm—the grave of an ancient saint of high repute—and here he bathed in a well hard by, dressed himself, and ate half a tin of Messrs. Huntly & Palmer's "gem" biscuits, which he had brought with him from his house.

His toilet and his meal completed, he returned to the house of Haji Mih and shouted in a loud voice:

"Where are those men, my enemies, who engaged me in fight a little while agone?"

It was now 3 A. M., but the men were awake and heard him.

"Come quickly," he cried. "Come quickly and let us finish this little business with no unnecessary delay."

At this challenge no less than ten men who had gathered in Haji Mih's house came out and began to throw spears at To′ Kâya; but though they struck

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

him more than once they did not succeed in wounding him. He retreated before their onslaught, keeping his face turned toward them and so chanced to trip over a root near a clump of bamboos, lost his footing, and fell. His assailants fancied that they had killed him and at once fear seized them, for he was a chief, and they had no warrant from the Sultan. They, therefore, fled and To′ Kâya gathered himself together and went back to Lĕbai Salâm's grave where he finished eating the tin of "gem" biscuits.

At dawn he came once more to Haji Mih's house, and halted there to bandage his wounds with some cotton rags which had been bound about a roll of mats and pillows that Haji Mih had removed from his house at the alarm of fire. Again he shouted to the men in the house to come forth and fight with him anew, but no one replied, so he laughed aloud and went down the path till he came to the compound which belonged to Tŭngku Pa. The latter and a man named 'Sĕmail were seated upon the veranda, and when the alarm was raised that To′ Kâya was approaching, Tŭngku Pa's wife, acting on a fine instinct of self-preservation, slammed to the door and bolted it on the inside while her husband danced without, clamouring to be let in.

Tŭngku Pa was, of course, a man of royal blood, but To′ Kâya addressed him as though he were an equal.

"O Pa," he cried. "I have waited for you the long night through, though you did not come. I

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

have greatly desired to fight with a man of rank. At last we have met and now I shall have my wish."

'Sĕmail at once made a bolt of it, but To′ Kâya was too quick for him, and as he leaped down the stair-ladder, the spear took him through the body and he died.

Tŭngku Pa, still standing on the veranda, stabbed downward at To′ Kâya with a spear and struck him in the groin, the blade becoming bent in the muscles so that it could not be withdrawn. This was Tŭngku Pa's opportunity; but instead of seizing it and rushing in upon his enemy to finish him with his *kris*, he let go the handle of his spear, and ran to a large water jar on the veranda, behind which he sought shelter. To′ Kâya tugged at the spear and at length succeeded in wrenching it free. Seeing this, Tŭngku Pa broke cover from behind the water jar and took to his heels. To′ Kâya was too lame to attempt to overtake him, but he shouted after him in derision:

"*He*, Pa! Did the men of old bid you to fly from your enemies?"

Tŭngku Pa halted at a safe distance and turned round.

"I am only armed with a *kris* and have no spear as you have," he said.

"This house is yours," returned To′ Kâya. "If you want weapons, enter it and fetch as many as you can carry while I await your return."

But Tŭngku Pa had had enough, and turning, continued his flight pursued by the laughter and the jeers of To′ Kâya.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Is this, then, the manner in which the men of the rising generation do battle with their enemies?" he shouted.

Finding that arguments and taunts were alike powerless to persuade Tŭngku Pa to put up a fight, To′ Kâya went on down the path past the spot where Ma′ Chik's body still lay until he came to the pool of blood which marked the place where Tŭngku Long Pĕndêkar had come by his death. Standing there, he called to Tŭngku Îtam, who was within the house.

"O Tŭngku!" he cried. "Be pleased to come forth if you desire to avenge the death of your cousin, Tŭngku Long. Now is the appropriate time, for your servant hath still some little life left in him. Later you will not be able to wreak vengeance upon your servant for he will be dead. Condescend, therefore, to come forth and do battle with your servant."

But Tŭngku Îtam remained in hiding and maintained a prudent silence, and To′ Kâya, finding that his challenge was ignored, cried once more:

"If you will not take vengeance for the death of your cousin, the fault is none of your servant's," and so saying he passed upon his way.

The dawn was breaking wanly and the cool land breeze was making a little stir in the fronds of the palm trees as To′ Kâya passed up the lane and through the deserted compounds the owners of which had fled in fear. Presently he came out on to the open space before the mosque, and here some four hundred men fully armed with spears and daggers

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

had assembled. It was light enough for To′ Kâya to be able to mark the terror in their eyes. He grinned at them evilly, smacking his lips. Men who are bent upon keeping alive, if possible, are always at an enormous disadvantage in the presence of one who is resolutely seeking death.

"This is indeed good," shouted To′ Kâya. "Now at last shall I have my fill of stabbing and fighting," and thereupon he made a shambling, limping charge at the crowd, which wavered, broke, and fled in every direction, the majority of the fugitives pouring helter-skelter into Tŭnku Ngah's compound and closing the gate in the high bamboo fence behind them.

One of the hindermost was a man named Gĕnih, and to him To′ Kâya shouted:

"O Gĕnih! It profits the *râja* little that he gives you and such as you food both morning and evening. You are indeed *bitter* cowards. If you all fear me so greatly, go and seek some guns so that you may be able to kill me from afar off."

Gĕnih, who had failed to get into Tŭngku Ngah's compound, took To′ Kâya's advice and running to the Sultan's *bâlai* or hall of state, he cried to Tŭngku Mûsa, who was at once the uncle and principal adviser of the king, "Your servant, To′ Kâya, bids us bring guns wherewith to slay him."

Now, at this moment, all was not well in the *bâlai* of the Sultan. When first the news of the *âmok* had been noised abroad all the *râjas* and chiefs had assembled at the palace, and it had been unanimously decided that no action could be taken until the day

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

broke. At dawn, however, it was found that all the chiefs, with the exception of Tŭngku Panglîma, Dâto′ Kâya Dûyong, Pănglîma Dâlam, Imâm Prang Losong, and Pahlâwan had sneaked away under cover of the darkness. Tŭngku Mûsa was there to act as the mouthpiece of the Sultan, but he was quite as unhappy as any of his colleagues.

At last the Sultan said:

"Well, the day has dawned. Why does no man go forth to kill the Dâto′ Kâya Bîji Dĕrja?"

Tŭngku Mûsa turned upon Tŭngku Pănglîma.

"Go you and slay him," he said.

"Why do you not go yourself or send Pahlâwan?" replied Tŭngku Pănglîma.

Pahlâwan protested.

"Your servant is not the only chief in Trĕnggânu," he said. "Many eat the king's mutton in the king's *bâlai*. Why, then, should your servant alone be called upon to do this thing?"

Tŭngku Mûsa said to Îmâm Prang Lôsong, who was by way of being the professional leader of the Sultân's warriors:

"Go you, then, and slay the Dâto′ Kâya."

"I cannot go," said the Îmâm Prang, "for I am not suitably attired. I am not clad in trousers, and lacking that garment, in the activity of combat my clothes may become deranged and a great shame be thereby put upon your servant."

"I will lend you some trousers," said Tŭngku Mûsa, who was a man of resource.

"But even then I cannot go," said the warrior,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"for my mother is sick and I must needs return to tend her."

Then the Sultan stood upon his feet and stamped.

"What manner of warrior is this?" he cried indignantly, pointing at Tŭngku Pănglîma. "He is a warrior fashioned from offal!"

Thus publicly admonished, Tŭngku Pănglîma detailed about a hundred of his followers to go and kill To′ Kâya; but after they had gone some fifty yards in the direction of the mosque they returned to him on some trivial pretext and though he bade them go many times, they repeated this performance again and again.

Suddenly old Tŭngku Dâlam came hurrying into the palace yard, very much out of breath, for he was of a full habit of body, binding on his *kris* as he ran.

"What is this that men are saying concerning To′ Kâya Bîji Dĕrja running *âmok* in the palace? Where is he?" he cried.

"At the mosque," twenty voices replied.

"Ya Allah!" exclaimed Tŭngku Dâlam in a tone of relief, mopping the sweat from his forehead. "Men said he was in the palace. Well, what steps are you taking to slay him?"

The assembled chiefs maintained a shamed silence and old Tŭngku Dâlam cursing them roundly, selected forty men with guns, and leading them himself, passed out at the back of the royal enclosure to the house of Tŭngku Chik Pâya, which is situated close to the mosque.

On the low wall which surrounds the latter build-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ing To′ Kâya was seated, and when he saw Tŭngku Dâlam approaching he cried out joyously:

"Welcome! Welcome! Your servant has desired the long night through to fight with one who is of noble birth. Come, therefore, and let us see which of us twain is the more skillful with his weapons."

At this Mat, one of Tŭngku Dâlam's men, leaped forward and said, "Suffer your servant to engage him in fight. It is not fitting, Tŭngku, that you should take part in such a business."

But Tŭngku Dâlam restrained him.

"Have patience," he said. "He is a dead man. Why should we, who are alive, risk death or hurt at his hands?"

Then he ordered a volley to be fired, but when the smoke cleared away, To′ Kâya was seen to be still sitting unharmed upon the low wall surrounding the mosque.

A second volley was fired with a like result, and then To′ Kâya cast away the spear he was holding in his hand, crying, "Perchance this spear is a charm against bullets. Try once more and I pray you end this business, for it has already taken over long in the settling."

A third volley was then fired, and one bullet struck To′ Kâya but did not break the skin. He clapped his hand upon the place and leaped to his feet crying, "Hai, but that hurts me! I will repay you for that!" and as he rushed forward, the crowd surged back before him. With difficulty Tŭngku Dâlam suc-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ceeded in rallying his people and inducing them to fire a fourth volley. This time, however, one bullet took effect, passing in under one armpit and out under the other. To′ Kâya staggered back to the wall and sank upon it, rocking his body to and fro. A fifth and final volley rang out and a bullet passing through his head, To′ Kâya fell prone upon his face.

The cowardly crowd pressed forward, but fell back again in confusion for the whisper spread among them that To′ Kâya was feigning death in order to get at close quarters with his assailants. At length, however, a lad named Sâmat, who was related to the deceased Ma′ Chik, summoned up enough courage to run in and transfix the body with his spear, but To′ Kâya was already dead.

He had killed his wife, Che′ long, the Kĕlantan man Abdul Rahman, Pa′ Pek, Ma′ Pek, Tŭngku Long Pĕndêkar, Ma′ Chik, Haji Mih, and 'Sĕmail; and he had wounded his baby child, his mother-in-law, Che′ Long's daughter Esah, and Saleh—in all nine killed and four wounded. This is a respectable butcher's bill for any single individual, and he had done all this because having had words with his wife and having stabbed her in the heat of the moment he had felt that it would be an unclean thing for him to continue to live on the surface of a comparatively clean planet. In similar circumstances a white man might possibly have committed suicide, which would have occasioned considerably less trouble; but that is one of the many respects in which a white man differs from a Malay.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

A MALAYAN ACTOR-MANAGER

AT KÔTA BHARU, the capital of Kĕlantan, some thirty years ago, the Powers of Wickedness in the High Places were at considerable pains to preserve a kind of cock-eyed, limping, knock-kneed, shambling morality which kept more or less even step with their conception of the eternal fitness of things. To this end, Yam Tûan Mûlut Mêrah, the "Red Mouthed King," so called on account of his insatiable thirst for blood, did his best to discourage theft; and in pursuance of this laudable desire killed during his reign sufficient men and women to have repeopled a new country half the size of his own kingdom. Old Nek 'Soh, the Dâto' Sri Padûka, who stood by and witnessed most of the killing, used openly to lament in my time that all the thieves and robbers were not made over to him instead of being wasted in the shambles. It was his opinion that, with so considerable a following, he might have set up a new dynasty in the Peninsula and still have had enough men and women at his disposal to make it possible for him to sell a batch of them now and then if ready money were needed. Nek 'Soh was a wise old man, and he was probably sure of his facts; but though his influence with his master, the Red Mouthed King, was great in most

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

things, he was never able to induce him to forego his killings or to try the experiment. So the king continued to slay robbers, thieves, and pilferers, never pausing to discriminate very closely between those who were convicted and those who were merely accused, and occasionally extending the punishment to their relations and friends. Nek 'Soh silently bewailed the wholesale waste of good material on utilitarian rather than upon humanitarian grounds, and the bulk of the population thieved and robbed and pilfered as persistently and gayly as ever, for that was the custom of the country.

It must be confessed that the Red Mouthed King's attempts to effect a reform in the habits of his people were attended by no very encouraging result, and this perhaps is why he confined his attention to an effort designed to eradicate a single vice and in other directions was content to let the morality of Kĕlantan take care of itself. After many years, however, old Mûlut Mêrah died, and his son and later his grandson, ruled in his stead. Nek 'Soh, now a very old man, continued to have a hand in the government of the country, but he no longer occupied the position of king's principal adviser. This post was held by a person upon whom had been conferred the title of Maha Mĕntri, which means "Great Minister"; and as he was young and energetic, and was, to all intents and purposes, the real ruler of the land, he presently launched out into a scheme of reform which was destined, as he forecast it, to work a revolution in the manners and customs of the good people of Kĕlantan.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Undeterred by the knowledge that mutilation, violent death, and an ingenious system of tortures, had proved quite powerless to cure the Kĕlantan folks' innate propensity to misappropriate one another's property, Maha Mĕntri conceived the bold idea of converting the entire population, on a sudden, into fervent and fanatical Muhammadans. Now, judged as an exponent of Islam, your average Malayan peasant is wofully slack and casual, but the people of Kĕlantan are the dullest and least fervent Malays in the Peninsula. No more unpromising material for a religious revival could be found in any part of Asia, and any attempt to make such folk scrupulous observers of the Prophet's law, by the local equivalent of an Act of Parliament, was foredoomed to failure from the outset. Nothing daunted, however, Maha Mĕntri insisted upon all men attending at the mosque on Fridays, for the recital of congregational prayer, and inculcated the breaking of the heads of recalcitrant church-goers; he observed, and personally superintended the observance of fasts; he did his best to prevent the use of silk garments by any save women, and this, be it remembered, in a country which is famous for its silk fabrics; he set his face against cock-fighting, bull-matches, ram-butting, human prize-fights, hunting, and the keeping of dogs, all the sports of the well-to-do, in fact; and while he pried into the home of every family in the capital, with the laudable object of ascertaining whether its inmates prayed regularly at each of the five hours of appointed prayer, he dealt an even more

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

severe blow to the happiness of the bulk of the population by forbidding the performance of the *ma'iong*.

The *ma'iong* are heroic plays which are acted throughout the length and breadth of the Peninsula by troupes of strolling players, and they are specially dear to the natives of Kĕlantan. They are bastard off-shoots of the magnificent spectacular plays which, to this day, are performed in the palace of the king of Kambodia at Pnom Phen. These in their turn had their origin in the traditional and ceremonial dances enacted at Angkor, when that city of gigantic ruins was still the capital of a great Hindu empire, which extended over most of Burma, Siam, and Indo-China, and was established and ruled for several centuries by Brahmans who migrated from across the Ganges. Since the enslaved population rose in revolt against the twice-born tyrants, utterly destroying them and reducing their city to ruins, the plays have undergone many changes, and in our time the clown, who plays the part of low comedian, is called *Bram* in Kambodia. In the Malayan *ma'iong* he reappears as *Pran;* and this butt of the other actors, and object of the derision of the spectators, derives his title of infamy from the proudest caste on earth, who long ago at Angkor exacted the worship of the people, and by their oppression of them earned a hatred of which this grotesque piece of spite is the last surviving manifestation.

The Malay renderings of these plays are of the most primitive character. They are performed inside a small square paddock, enclosed by a low bam-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

boo railing, but otherwise open on all four sides, so as to afford the spectators an unobstructed view of all that goes forward within the enclosure. A palm-leaf roof protects the players from the sun by day and from the heavy dews by night; and whenever a *panggong* is erected upon a new site, the *pâwang*, or medicine-man, who is also the actor-manager of the troupe, performs certain magic rites with cheap incense and other unsavoury offering to the spirits. This he does in order to enlist the assistant of the demons of the earth and air, and of all local deities, whom he entreats to watch over his people and to guard them from harm. The incantations of which he makes use are very ancient, and it is possible to trace in some of them a strong Hindu influence, but for the rest, the whole business is pure devil worship.

First he calls upon Black Âwang, King of the Earth and Air, he who is wont to wander through the veins of the ground and to take his rest at the portals of the world. Âwang, of course, is one of the commonest of Malayan proper names, and here it is obviously used as an euphemism substituted for a word which it is not lawful for men to utter. Next the *pâwang* calls upon the Holy Ones, the local demons of the place, and finally upon his grandsire, Pĕtĕra Gûru, the Teacher who is from the Beginning, who is incarnate from his birth, who dwells as a hermit in the recesses of the moon, and practises his magic arts in the womb of the sun; the Teacher whose coat is wrought of green beads, whose blood is white, who hath but a single bone, the hairs of whose body stand

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

erect, the pores of whose skin are adamant, whose neck is black, whose tongue is fluent, whose spittle is brine. All these he prays to guard his people, and he then cries to them to fling wide the gates of lust and passion together with the gates of desire and credulity, and the portals of longing—"the longing which endureth from dawn unto dawn, which causeth food to cease to satisfy, which maketh sleep uneasy, which remembering maketh memory eternal, which causeth hearing to hear and sight to see."

Such shameless trafficking with spirits, which should find no place in the demonology of any good Muhammadan, was quite properly regarded as an abomination by the straitlaced Maha Mĕntri; and not content with prohibiting the performances of the *ma'iong*, he contrived to make life so singularly unattractive to the actors and actresses that many of them quitted Kĕlantan and trooped across the jungle-clad mountains which divide that state from Pahang.

Now, no matter what other faults are to be attributed to the people of Pahang, they cannot justly be accused of bigotry or religious fanaticism, so the players were welcomed with open arms, and from end to end of the land the throbbing beat of the *ma'iong* drums, the clanging of the gongs, the scrapings of the ungainly Malay fiddles, the demented shrieks and wailings of the *sĕrûnai*, which sounds like bagpipes in distress, the nasal chantings of the *prima donna*, and the roars of laughter which greet each one of the clown's threadbare jests, made merry

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

discord in the villages. The gates of all the least desirable passions were flung unwontedly wide on this occasion, for hitherto the coming of a *ma'iong* had been a very unusual event in the interior, and a series of deplorable incidents were presently reported to me from many localities in the wide Pahang Valley. While the *ma'iong* was playing, and it played morning, afternoon, and evening, no one had any care for the crops; the women left their babies and their cooking-pots, and the elders of the people were as stage-struck as the boys and maidens. When the strolling players broke up their *panggong* and moved forward upon their way, having squeezed a village dry of its last copper coins, many of the peasants followed in their train, cadging for food and lodging from the people at the next halting-place, enduring every sort of discomfort, but unable to tear themselves away from the fascination of the players and the contemplation of the actresses. Many lawful wives found themselves deserted by their men, and the husbands and fathers in the villages had to keep a sharp eye upon the doings of their wives and daughters while the *ma'iong* folk were in the neighbourhood: for when once the drab monotony of their lives is accidentally disturbed, the morality of the Malay villagers, which ordinarily is far better than that of the townsfolk, goes incontinently to pieces like a stranded ship in the trough of an angry sea.

Of all the actor-managers who were then roaming up and down Pahang, none was so successful both with the playgoers and with the women, as Saleh or

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

'Leh, as he was usually called, Malay energy rarely being equal to the effort of articulating more than a fragment of any given proper name. In their mouths the dignified Muhammad becomes the plebeian "Mat"; Sulehmân—our old friend Solomon—is reduced to plain "'Man"; Abubakar becomes "'Bakar," Ishmail "'Mail," "Patîmah," "'Tunah," or even "'Mah," and so on with all the sonorous nomenclature of the Bible and the "Arabian Nights." This is worth noting, because it is typical of the Malay's propensity to scamp every bit of labour, no matter how light its character, that falls to the lot of man in this work-a-day world.

Leh was a man of many accomplishments. He played the fiddle in excruciating wise to the huge delight of all the Malays who heard him; he had a happy knack of imitating the notes of birds and the cries of wild and domestic animals, and as the *pran* in the *ma'iong* he was genuinely funny. In order to act this part, he used to put on the grotesque mask which is assigned to it by tradition, a thing of a violent red colour with a piece of dirty sheepskin for the hair, and prominent forehead, bulging eyes, and foolish, inflated cheeks, which together give to the uncovered, lower part of its wearer the appearance of an impossibly receding chin; and thus arrayed he interwove with his appointed dialogue a succession of pungent and frequently unprintable topical jokes, which he improvised with an astounding facility. Above all he was a skilled rhapsodist, and with that mellow voice of his would sing the wonderful story

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

of Âwang Lôtong—the Monkey Prince which is a bastard, local version of the *Ramayana*—until the cocks were crowing to a yellow dawn. He travelled with me on one occasion for a fortnight and I had the whole of this folktale written down from his dictation. When completed it covered sixty pages of foolscap of fine Arabic manuscript, which compresses a great many words into a surprising small space; yet Leh, who could neither read nor write, knew every line of it by heart and could be turned on at any point, invariably continuing the story in precisely the same words. He had learned it from an old man in Kĕlantan, who in his day was reputed to be the last surviving bard to whom the whole of the tale was known. It was one of the most plain-spoken pieces of literature ever committed to writing, abounded with archaic phraseology, and the corrupt Hinduism to be traced in it lent it a very special interest. In due course, I sent the manuscript with a translation and elaborate notes to the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society by which learned body the whole thing was presently lost with the usual promptitude and despatch.

It was always a marvel to me that Leh escaped having some angry man's knife driven into his body during his wanderings through Pahang, for the Malays of that state were accustomed to discourage too successful lovers by little attentions of the kind, and Leh was adored by the women both high and low, throughout the length and breadth of the country. Whether he owed his survival to cunning or to sheer

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

luck, I do not know; but he certainly lived to return to Kĕlantan after an absence of about a couple of years.

This was rendered possible for the *ma'iong* people by the sudden and violent death of the Maha Mĕntri. That great and good man—the self-appointed champion of Muhammadanism in its strictest forms, the enforcer of public and private prayer, the orderer of fasts for the mortification of the erring flesh—had one little weakness that marred the purity and the consistency of his character. He was so scrupulous that he would not suffer himself to be photographed when a view of Kôta Bharu, in which several hundreds of people figured, was being taken, since he held that the making of pictures was contrary to the Prophet's ordinances. In the name of religion, he had contrived to make his neighbours' lives as little worth living as possible; but all the while he was aggressively attentive to an increasingly large number of the said neighbours' wives. Meticulous regard for the letter of the law, combined with an ostentatious disregard for its spirit, is only to be found in its full perfection in Asiatic lands, but the Maha Mĕntri dovetailed the incompatabilities together with an unprecedented persistence and shamelessness.

The mild folk of Kĕlantan bore with him and with his amiable peculiarities for a considerable time, and they might perhaps have endured them even longer had it not been that his zeal for religion was pushed, in directions that were not distasteful to him personally, to extremes which rendered life a very weari-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

some ordeal. Upon a certain evening, therefore, it befell that the Maha Měntri was shot through the flooring while he lay abed in another man's house by the aggrieved owner thereof ably and actively assisted by two other injured husbands, who were quite convinced that there was not room enough for the Maha Měntri and themselves upon the surface of the same planet.

Everybody knew the identity of the Maha Měntri's executioners, and the king, who was fond of his minister, would dearly have liked to punish them with a lingering death. They chanced, however, to be under the protection of a young prince with whom, for political reasons, the king could not afford to precipitate a quarrel; so he and his advisers professed to be lost in speculations as to who could have been so unmannerly as to shoot the pious Maha Měntri in three several places and at that the matter rested in spite of the clamorous protests of the dead man's relatives.

Very soon the glad tidings of the Maha Měntri's death reached Pahang, and the *ma'iong* people packed their gear and started back for their own country, leaving many men and women lamenting, and a set of utterly demoralized villages behind them.

Leh went back by sea with half a score of broken hearts in his wallet; and soon after his arrival he was appointed to the post of court minstrel and warden of the royal dancing girls. For the Kĕlantan to which he had returned was a very different place from the land he had quitted when he started out

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

for Pahang. As soon as the worthy Maha Mĕntri had been laid in his grave, the reaction which always follows a paroxysm of religiosity set in with full force, and Kĕlantan became forthwith a pleasant land for unregenerate folk to live in. The five hours of appointed prayer were suffered to slip by unregarded of the people; no man troubled himself to fast more than his stomach thought fitting; and the music of the *ma'iong* broke out anew, flinging wide the gates of all the unmentionable passions.

In this new and joyful Kĕlantan, Leh found himself very much in his element. His wit and his many accomplishments caused the old pillar dollars, which in those days were the standard currency of the country, to come rolling in, and he was thus able to go forth among his fellows lavishly clad from the waist downward in a profusion of gaudy silk *sârongs* and sashes, such as the Kĕlantan folk affect. From the belt upward he went naked, of course; for unlike most Malays the people of this state never wore coats, though these exotic garments were occasionally used by the *râjas* and nobles at court functions when strangers chanced to be present.

It was never Leh's habit to keep all his good fortune to himself, and not only a select few of the king's dancing girls, but a goodly troop of other dames and maidens—who should rightly have been occupied exclusively with their lawful lords and masters—came in for a share of the spoil. Given a well-set-up figure, a handsome face, gay apparel, a witty tongue and a superfluity of ready money, and a far less

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

clever and engaging fellow than Leh, the strolling player might confidently reckon upon a brilliant series of successes at the court of a Malayan king. He came upon the scene, moreover, at a time when the soul of the Kĕlantan people was stretching itself luxuriously after its release from the moral bonds with which the Maha Mĕntri had fettered it, and it was not long before the best favoured half of the female population of Kôta Bharu, a town famous for the beauty of its women, were, to use the Malay phrase, "mad" for Leh. The natives of the Peninsula, who are philosophers in their own way, recognize that love, when it wins a fair grip upon man or woman, is as much a disease of the mind as any other form of insanity; and as it is more common than most other forms of mania, they speak of it as "the madness" *par excellence*.

Such a state of things, however, caused much dissatisfaction to the rest of the male community, and the number of the malcontents received constant recruits as the madness spread among the women. The latter, as time went on, became more and more shameless and reckless, and threw off all disguise, for they were too numerous for any unorganized system of wife and daughter beating effectively to cope with the trouble. When they were not occupied in waylaying Leh in sending him notes or presents, in making assignations with him, or in ogling him as he swaggered past their dwellings, cocking a conquering eye through the doorways, the ladies of Kôta Bharu were now frequently engaged in shrill and hard-fought

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

battle one with another. Each woman was wildly jealous of all her fellows, mother suspecting daughter, and daughter accusing mother of receiving more than her fair share of Leh's generous and widely scattered attentions. Many were the scratches scored on nose and countenance, long and thick the tussocks of hair reft from one another by the combatants, terrible and extravagant the damage done to one another's *rival wardrobes* by the infuriated ladies; while the men beholding these impossible goings-on with horror and dismay, said among themselves that Leh, the warden of the king's dancing girls must die.

He was a hefty fellow and known to be a good man of his hands, wherefore, badly as they all felt about him, no one saw his way to engage him in single combat, though there were half a hundred very angry husbands and lovers who were anxious to take an active part in assassinating him. At last a committee of three specially aggrieved citizens was appointed by general consent to act for the rest, and they lay in wait for Leh during several successive evenings, hoping to catch him returning alone from the *ma'iong* shed.

It was on the third night of their vigil that their chance came. The moon was near the full, and the heavy shadows cast by the palm fronds lay across the ground like solid objects. The footpath, which leads from the main thoroughfare into the villages around Kôta Bharu, branches off some twenty yards from the spot where the watchers lay concealed. The committee of three sat huddled up just within the clustering compounds, hidden from sight by the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

patch of shadow cast upon the bare earth by a neighbouring house, and the vivid moonlight revealed every detail of the scene around them—the yellow, sun-baked soil, the green of the smooth banana leaves, even the red of a cluster of *rambut-an* fruit on a tree near at hand.

Presently the sound of voices talking and laughing light-heartedly came to the ears of the listening men, and as the speakers drew nearer the committee of three were able to distinguish Leh's mellow tones. At the parting of the ways he turned off by himself along the footpath, his companions keeping on to the main road. Leh took leave of them with a farewell jest or two, which sent the others laughing upon their way, and then he strolled slowly along the footpath humming the catch of a song under his breath. The three in the shadow of the house could see the colour of the gaudy cloths wound about their enemy's waist, the fantastic peak into which his handkerchief was twisted, the glint of the polished *kemûning* wood and the gold settings of his dagger hilt, and the long, broad-bladed spear that he carried in his right hand. They watched him drawing nearer to them, still humming a song, and with a half smile upon his face. They allowed him to come abreast of them, to stroll past them, still unsuspicious of danger; but no pity for him moved them. All had been injured in too deadly a fashion by this callous, light-hearted libertine, who now went to the death he knew not of with a smile on his face and the stave of a song upon his lips.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

As soon as he had passed them the committee of three stepped noiselessly out of the shadow, poised their spears aloft, and plunged them into Leh's naked brown back. As they struck they rent the silence of the night with their *sôrak*, a war-cry into which they compressed all the pent-up hatred of their victim which had been devouring their hearts for months. Leh, giving vent to a thick, choking cough, fell upon his face, and a few more vigorous spear thrusts at his prostrate body completed the work which the committee of three had been appointed to perform.

They left the body of Leh, the strolling player, lying where it had fallen, face downward in the dust of the footpath; and though the king did all that lay in his power to secure the detection of the murderers, and though his efforts were seconded by half the women in the town, the men who had planned the deed kept their secret well, so no punishment could be inflicted upon those who had actually effected the assassination of the warden of the king's dancing girls.

In the eyes of Malayan justice, however, if you are unable to punish the guilty, it is better to come down heavily upon the innocent than to let everybody get off scot free. The house near which the body of Leh had been found happened to be tenanted by an old crone, her widowed daughter, and three children of tender age. That they were not concerned in the murder was obvious; but none the less their abode was taken as the centre of a circle of one hundred

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fathom' radius and all whose houses chanced to lie within its circumference, whether men or women young or old, whole or bedridden, mothers great with child or babies at the breast, were indifferently fined the sum of three dollars each, a large sum for a Malayan villager of those days to be called upon to pay, and producing, from the king's point of view, a refreshingly big total, when all heads had been counted, for in the neighbourhood of Kôta Bharu the people herd together as closely as kine in a byre.

This system of wholesale mulcting was recognized in Kĕlantan as having several advantages attaching to it. In the first place, it did something to enhance the revenues of the king, which was a matter of moment; and for the humbler folk, if a man chanced to have a quarrel with a neighbour, with whom he was otherwise unable to get even, he could punish him by the simple process of leaving a corpse at his front door. In a land where human life was as cheap as it used to be in Kĕlantan, this was not a difficult matter to arrange, and if the corpse chanced to be that of yet another enemy, two birds, so to speak, could be killed with a single stone. Which is economical.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

TÛKANG BÛROK'S STORY

OLD Tûkang Bûrok, the fashioner of wooden dagger hilts and sheaths, sat cross-legged on the narrow veranda of his hut, which, perched upon the high bank, overlooked the Pârit River. I squatted, smoking, at his side, watching him at his work, and luring him on to talk of the days of long ago.

Forty feet below us the red, peat-stained waters of the Pârit, banked back by the tide now flowing up the Pahang River from the sea, crawled lazily toward their source. The thatched roofs of more than a score of rafts lay under our feet, so that anything falling off the Tûkang's veranda would drop plump upon the nearest of them. Nuzzling one another, and rubbing sides with a constant creaking, twice as many large native boats were moored. Each of them was furnished with a substantial deck-house, high enough to accommodate a seated man, walled with wood and protected by a strong roof of *kâjang*,* which rose in a graceful curve toward the stern and supported the *mâgun*, or steersman's perch, which

Kâjang—The name given to mats made from the dried and prepared fronds of the *mêngkûang* palm, sown together with rattan. They are yellow in colour, and have a glazed surface which renders them water-proof. They are used for roofing boats and temporary shelters, and serve in the Peninsula many of the purposes to which in Europe tarpaulin is put.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

was similarly roofed. The punting platforms, which occupied rather more than a third of the available deck space, were also covered in with temporary *kâjang* roofs, and from boats and rafts alike a thin smoke was slowly rising, for numbers of Malays of both sexes and all ages were living more or less permanently aboard them. The red waters of the Pârit possessed some property inimical to the borers which destroyed the bottoms of craft left to ride at anchor in the lower reaches of the Pahang; wherefore this narrow stream formed the most popular mooring-place in the vicinity of the capital.

A narrow fairway opened between the boats and rafts, and up and down this there passed two broken threads of traffic, composed of tiny dug-outs, shooting swiftly in and out amid the numerous obstructions.

The bright colours of the Malay's garments made little splashes of red or green or yellow against the tawny waters of the river, and the dusty mat roofings of rafts and boats. The flickering fronds of the cocoanut, sugar, betel, and sago palms, and the spreading boughs of fruit trees of many varieties—dividing among them almost every conceivable shade of green—stretched forth from either bank friendly hands that nearly met above the ruddy waters of the stream, upon which they cast a sun-flecked, shifting shadow, infinitely refreshing to the eye. Above, seen through the mass of fronds and boughs and foliage, the cloudless Malayan sky arched over us; and below us the browns and yellows of the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

palm-leaf roofings of boats and rafts relieved the even redness of the river.

A gentle breeze, which had sped upstream from the sea, playing catch as catch can with the flowing tide, sighed dreamily in our ears, and the heavy silence was broken only by the monotonous thud of a paddle handle against a boat's wooden side, the faint bleat of a goat, the whisper of an occasional stronger gust among the palm fronds, and the purring sound of old Tûkang Bûrok's polishing tools.

"*Tûan*, the girl was very fair, and the madness came upon me, and I loved her."

He held a beautiful piece of the buttress root of the *kămûning* tree between the toes of his left foot and sat working at its surface with a mass of rough *ĕmpĕlas* leaves held in both hands. Even in its raw state the wonderful, bold markings of the wood, the great curves and patches of black against their yellow background, were plainly to be discerned, an earnest of the magnificence that would be revealed when finally worked up and varnished, and the old Tûkang handled it lovingly.

"Your servant was a youth in those so long ago days, and when it comes to the young, the madness is very hot and burning so that the eyes will not sleep and the belly hath no desire for rice, and the liver is like a live ember in the breast. And, in truth, old age changes a man but little. Behold the lusts of him are as great as of yore, only his bones are stiff and his limbs have turned traitor, and rage assails his liver as he watches the maidens playing the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

game of eye play with the children who deem themselves men, shooting their love-darts before his very face, without modesty or shame, and never so much as casting a glance his way, unless they would seek his help to aid them in their intrigues and their stolen meetings. *Ya Allah!* It is very evil, *Tûan*, to grow old, and age cometh apace. One day a man is young; on the morrow—or so it seems—youth has fled; a little more and the eyes wax dim, the ears are heavy of hearing, and only the liver within him is unchanged in the fury of unsatisfied desire. To each one of us age is a surprise—so quickly have the years slipped by, so short the time that has sped, so gradual the decay of the body, yet so much swifter is it than the change wrought in the soul. Some there be who turn their thoughts to money when the maidens will have nought of them; but what music is there in the *clink-a-clunk* of silver pieces compared with the love words whispered in the darkness by the lips of a girl, and what beauty abides in the moon face of a coin by the side of the pale face and laughing eyes of a maiden ripe for love? *Ambui!* It is very hard to grow old. I, your servant, sit here all the day long, fashioning *kris* hilts and dagger sheaths for the youths, that they may make a brave show in the eyes of their lights o' love, and the young folk pass hither and thither in my sight, and I mark the glint in their eyes as they look the one upon the other, till tears of envy well up in these old eyes of mine, for well I know that never again will a girl have unbought love to offer me.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"Therefore, *Tûan*, I sit here musing over the days of long ago, and at times tears gather in my eyes, so that I can barely see the wood to fashion it. In my time, after the way of men, I have loved and been loved by many women; but now that I am old, ever my thoughts and my longings play around the girl whom I held dearer and more desirable than any, she who in an evil hour was lost to me ere yet I had known her for my wife. In truth, *Tûan*, my lot hath been *chĕlâka*, accursed of Fate.

"Be pleased to listen to my story, *Tûan*, for it is very strange. Moreover, though my affliction was great, men made a mock of me and of my grief, and derided me by reason of the nature of my calamity.

"It was very long ago, when the old Bĕndahâra reigned in Pahang, and he who to-day is Sultan was a fugitive from his wrath; and these things happened far away in the *ûlu*—the upper reaches of the river—in those distant places where, the streams being slender, men regard a gallon of water as a deep pool, as the saying goes. I was wandering through the country, trading, for I had incurred guilt owing to a trouble that arose concerning certain love passages between myself and a maiden of the Bĕndahâra's household. For a while, therefore, my father deemed it prudent that I should quit the capital, where the king was very wroth, and hide for a space among the villages on the banks of the shallow, bustling streams, where the folk are peaceful and foolish, and ready to do aught that they are bidden by a man belonging to the Bĕndâhara's court, since

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

they hold such people in awe. It was here that I beheld the maiden, and forthwith the madness came upon me and I loved her.

"I was astonished that such beauty should be found in so remote and so barbarous a place; for this girl was a daughter of the village folk, and their women are commonly coarse and big and ill-favoured, with their hands roughened by hard labour, and their faces tanned black as the bottom of a cooking-pot by exposure to the sun, since they do much work in the rice-fields. But this girl, *Tûan*, was slender and delicate, and her face was light in colour, and had the effulgence of the moon when it is at the full—in truth I cannot tell to you the wonder of her beauty. Even now, when I am old, as I then was young, my liver waxes hot at the thought of her loveliness. For every man in the world there is always one woman. Allah knoweth that our loves are many—so many that no man may retain in his mind the memory of all of them; but the others are as shadows while one is the reality. So it hath been with me. I was a son of the king's city, born to mate with one bred gently in the precincts of the court; yet at the sight of this village maiden, my liver was crumbled to atoms, and I knew that life held nought of worth to me until I could have her for my own. Therefore, I sent the marriage portion to her parents, who were much elated that my father's son should desire to wed their daughter.

"A day was set apart for the feast of the Becoming One; and while I awaited its coming, I was de-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

voured by impatience and by desire, so that the days were like a heavy burden strapped upon my back; but when evening fell, I used to creep softly under her parents' house, and peep at the maiden through the interstices of the floor or of the walls of wattled bamboo, feasting upon her loveliness, until the lights were extinguished, and I went away through the darkness sadly to my sleeping-mat. I was filled with a madness of desire, but also I was happy, since I knew that in a little space the girl would be mine.

"Now it was upon a day, about a Friday-span from that which had been fixed for the Becoming One, that calamity came upon me, utterly destroying me, as the blight withers the ripening crop, making the ears empty things and vain. It was in this wise. Listen, *Tûan*, and then say was ever trouble like unto mine, shame comparable to the disgrace that was put upon me, or sorrow akin to that whereby I was afflicted.

"Hôdoh was her name. Yes, as you say, she was ill-named, for in truth she was beautiful, not ugly, as the word implies—but it was thus that her folk had called her when she was little, and in my ears it hath lost its meaning and is ever the dearest of all names.

"It chanced that Hôdoh was alone in the house, all her people having gone forth to work in the crops, leaving her because the hour of her wedding was so near at hand. Thus no one was near when a Sâkai man, one Pa' Ah-Gap, the Rhinoceros, came to the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

house out of the jungle, praying for rice and for tobacco.

"Now these Sâkai, as you know, *Tûan*, are sorry animals, and our people do not suffer them to enter our houses, for they are of an evil odour, indescribably dirty, and are, moreover, afflicted with skin diseases, so that from afar off they appear to be as white as a fair woman. The villagers of the interior bear little love to the Sâkai, though they do much trade with them; and the womenfolk hold them in special loathing and contempt, and cannot by any means abide their proximity. When, therefore, Hôdoh beheld the face of Pa'Ah-Gap, scarred with blue tattoo-marks, with hair in locks like the top of the ragged sago-palm yonder, and his body, naked save for a loin-clout, gray with the warm wood ashes in which he had slept, and with skin flaky with lupus, she was at once angered and afraid. Accordingly, seizing a *pârang*, she threatened him with it and cried aloud bidding him be gone, cursing him for a filthy, misbegotten, mite-eaten Sâkai. Also she shouted "*Hinchit! Hinchit!*" after the manner of men who drive away a dog.

"Pa' Ah-Gap stood gazing at her in silence, rubbing his left calf slowly against his right shin bone, and scratching his scalp with one clawlike hand hidden in his mop of hair; and he gazed insolently at Hôdoh, who abated not her railing and heaped shame upon him with many injurious words. Then, when she paused breathless, he lifted up his voice and spoke.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"'Daughter of the Gobs,' he said. 'Why do you thus miscall your lover? Behold, in a little while, you shall seek me in the forests, imploring me to have mercy upon you, and to take you for my own, and in that day, if I have a mind to pleasure you, you shall be to me my light of love.'

"At this, Hôdoh, overcome with rage and shame, fled into the house, shutting the door and barring it, shrieking abuse and threats at Pa'Ah-Gap, who stood without, laughing harshly, as the frogs croak when the monsoon is upon us.

"Then, when Hôdoh had retreated into the house, Pa' Ah-Gap began to patter a charm in the Sâkai tongue, for these folk are greatly skilled in magic, the gods of the ancient days, whom we have abandoned for Allah and his Prophet, abiding with them, as of old they abode with us, and these gods are the children of Iblis. Also, very slowly, he picked his bark loin-clout into little flecks and shreds with his fingers, standing mother-naked in the open space before the house; for these people are shameless, like animals. Then he cast seven pieces toward the north and toward the south, and toward the place where the sun cometh to life, and toward the place where daily the sun dieth. Next he shouted three times in a very bestial fashion, so that the people in the rice-fields heard him and fell a wondering what creature it was that was crying from the jungle. Lastly he danced silently and alone, making a complete circuit of the house. All these doings Hôdoh observed, as she peeped at him through the chinks

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

of the bamboo walls; and when all had been accomplished, Pa′ Ah-Gap slipped into the forest, making no sound in his going, as is the manner of the jungle people. But, as he went, at each step he let fall little pieces of his unravelled loin-clout, leaving behind him a trail such as a man makes who chews sugarcane as he walks.

"At the hour when the kine go down to water, the parents and brethren of Hôdoh returned from the rice-field, and she made complaint to them concerning the evil behaviour of Pa′ Ah-Gap, the Sâkai; and her father was very angry, swearing that he would punish the animal, and that with no sparing hand, for thus molesting his women kind. There was much talk in the house that night, and I, hiding beneath the flooring, heard all that passed; and I, too, vowed that I would belabour that Sâkai for daring thus to insult the woman who was to be mine.

"Now it chanced that, shortly after sleep had come to all within the house, save only to Hôdoh, who lay wide-eyed upon her mat, that a mighty burning came upon her, consuming her body as it were with fire, assailing her from her head even to her feet, and making of her heart and her liver and her spleen and her lungs so many red-hot embers, scorching their way through her flesh; and at the same time, speech was wholly reft from her, so that she could by no means cry out or summon any one to her aid. Forthwith, moreover, a sudden knowledge came to her that the cool, dark jungles could alone abate the agony she was enduring; wherefore,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

she arose softly, and making no sound, stole out of the house.

"The moon was at the full, very bright and vivid, so that the girl found it an easy matter to pick her way out of the village and into the forest; and though our people, men and women alike, love not to journey into the forest alone, even during the daytime, Hô-doh was this night wholly devoid of fear. Also she was impelled by something within her to gather up the shreds of Pa′ Ah-Gap's loin-clout, pressing them to her lips and nose, for the contact with the rough bark cloth seemed to cool a little the burning pain within her. Thus she followed in the path which Pa′ Ah-Gap, the Sâkai, had trodden, travelling on and on alone till the moonlight was wrestling with the yellow of the dawn. The shreds of loin-clout grew fewer and fewer, each piece at a greater distance than the last; but only by their aid was she able to assuage the pain consuming her, and so they led her on and on.

"The sun had come to life when at length she came out of the jungle on to a big clearing, in which the Sâkai had planted a catch-crop, and in the centre of it were the rude huts in which the forest dwellers herd. At the foot of the low ladder leading to the first of these, and facing the track by which she had come, sat Pa′ Ah-Gap, waiting for her.

"He sat quite still, looking at her with eyes that mocked; and of a sudden she knew that only the embrace of this man would extinguish the magic

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

fires that were eating out her life. Also, shame, which is as an eternal fetter clamped about the ankles of women, fell from her, and she was aware of a mighty passion for this aged and depraved creature springing up hot and masterful in her breast. Therefore, she ran to him, casting herself at his feet and across his knees, entreating him, with cries and pleadings, to have his will of her. Thus was accomplished all that he had foretold.

"What say you, *Tûan?* Was not the magic of this accursed Sâkai very powerful and marvellous? Even among our own folk, Muhammadan with Muhammadan, no maiden willingly throws herself into the arms of her lover, love she never so dearly; for Allah, in his wisdom, have so fashioned women that they feel shame pressing upon them like an overwhelming burden, which so crushes them and the desire within them that they may not move hand or foot. This hath been prudently ordered, for were there no modesty among women, great trouble would ensue, seeing that their passions are greater than the passions of men; and even now, though shame still lingers in the land, there is trouble and to spare of women's making. But, behold, it now befell that Hôdoh, a Muhammadan and a virgin, my betrothed, my love, the core of my heart's core, one who was rendered by her beauty the most desirable among women, yielded herself with entreaties to this infidel, this wild man of the woods—a Sâkai, filthy and diseased—praying for his love, and caressing his soot-begrimed hide. Was ever madness or magic

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

like unto this? *Ya Allah! Ya Tûhan-ku!* I cannot bear to think of that which befell."

Old Tûkang Bûrok paused in his narrative, and spat disgustedly and with emphasis into the stream below. His lined and wrinkled face was working queerly. He had let his tools fall from his grasp, and his hands were trembling. Even after the lapse of many years, the memory of his balked desire, and the thought of his love surrendering herself to a despised jungle man, aroused in him fierce passions of rage and jealousy.

For a minute or two he was silent; then selecting a chisel with care, he set to work to bevel the *kămûning* wood with great delicacy and finish. Presently, after again expectorating emphatically, he resumed his story.

"She dwelt three full days and nights with this accursed Sâkai—may Allah blight him utterly!—ere ever we learned from some of his own folk that she was among the jungle people. Then Che' Mat, her father, and her brethren and her relatives—men knowing the use of weapons—went, and I with them, making great speed, to the Sâkai camp. But, alas, Pa' Ah-Gap had fled, and Hôdoh had gone with him. Some men, however, remained in the camp, and these, by means of the *tûas*,* we persuaded to

*The *tûas* is a very simple and effective torture in considerable favour among Malays when more elaborate appliances are not available. The victim is placed upon the ground in a sitting position, with his legs extended before him. A stout piece of wood is then placed across his thighs, and a second piece is then passed over the first, and inserted under his buttocks. Next, using the second piece of wood as a lever, and the first piece as the fulcrum, great pressure is exerted, in such a manner that the thighs of the victim are crushed down toward the ground, while the buttocks are pushed violently upward, causing acute pain.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

show us the path which the fugutives had taken. Thereafter, during many weary days, we followed on his trail—at times close on his heels, at others losing all trace of him; but though Hôdoh went with him willingly, she had no wooderaft and could not conceal her tracks, and also she went slowly, and so aided our pursuit. On that so terrible journey I ate no rice, though I drank deeply at the springs, for my throat was parched; and at night sleep did not visit me, till I was like one demented. Moreover, the madness of love was upon me, and my rage was like a red-hot goad urging me onward.

"For how many days and nights we journeyed thus I cannot tell, but Che' Mat and all his people were wearying of the quest, which I would not suffer them to abandon, when in the fullness of the appointed hour we found Pa' Ah-Gap asleep, with Hôdoh, clad only in a loin-clout, by his side in the warm ashes of their camp fire. The Sâkai dog had tattooed her face, as is the wont of these so animal-like people, and she was moreover very thin and worn, and much aged by her sojourn in the forest, and she was begrimed with the dirt and the wood ashes of the Sâkai lairs. We caught him alive, for he slept heavily, being wearied by his long marches; and I and one other, Hôdoh's brother crept very cautiously upon him. Also, I think, Allah whom he had offended, for he was an infidel, while the woman was of the Faith, gave him that day into our hands, for mostly the jungle-folk sleep with one ear cocked and one eye agape.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

"We bound him hand and foot with cords of rattan, which ate into his flesh as this chisel eats into the *kămûning* wood, and we used such force that he screamed aloud with pain. She who had been Hôdoh fought and bit at us, like a wildcat newly caught in the woods, so we were obliged to bind her also, but gently, with the cloth of our *sârongs*, doing her no hurt. Thus we bore them back to the village whence Hôdoh had fled upon that fatal night; and thereafter we put Pa′ Ah-Gap to the torture of the bamboo."

"What is that?" I asked.

Tûkang Bûrok smiled grimly, his old eyes lighting up with a thrill of pleasurable recollection.

"It is not fitting, *Tûan*, that I should describe it with particularity," he said. "There be certain methods, none the less, whereby the quick-growing shoot of the small bamboo can be taught to grow into the vitals of a man, causing him such slow agony as even the Shetans in Jehannam have scarce dreamed of.

"When first we bound him to the seat whereon he was to die, he glared upon us with the eyes of a wild beast, giving vent to no sound; and I was grieved that he did not pray for mercy, that I, with mockery, might refuse it to him. But later, when the bamboo began to grow, he prayed to be spared till I, who sat beside him, keeping a ceaseless vigil and gloating over his pain, even I was nearly satisfied. His agony was very lingering and keen, and soon he entreated us to kill him, suing for death, as a lover

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

importunes his mistress. Often, irked by his clamour, I smote him on the lips—those lips which had done her dishonour. Then for a space he became mad, flinging his body this way and that, and raving night and day; and this made me sad, for while the insanity was upon him he could no longer *feel*, as I had a mind that this man should feel even to the brink of the hour in which death snatched him from us. And at last, when he was dead, my rage was still unsated, and I besought Allah, the Merciful and Compassionate, that his agony might endure forever.

"In the hour when he died, Hôdoh came back to us out of the enchantment which had held her captive, for the spell laid upon her was broken. But her memory held the recollection of all that had befallen her, so that she was well-nigh distraught with shame. Also her body was weakened by her life in the jungle, and she was racked by fever and many aches and pains. Moreover, the burning of her skin, she said, was that which Pa′ Ah-Gap had inflicted upon her by his magic on the evening of the day when she miscalled him.

"She had no desire to live, and very soon she returned to the mercy of Allah, and I was left alive to mourn during all my days for the fairest maiden ever born of woman, who had lighted in my breast fires of desire than the years have never quenched. And how bitter is the thought that such a thing of beauty was wasted upon a dog of a Sâkai—the vilest

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

of our kind. It is that memory which is my perpetual pain; wherefore, *Tûan*, when as occasion requires, you pray unto your Christian God, bid Him join with Allah in the utter blighting and destruction of the soul of Pa' Ah-Gap, the Sâkai."

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

IN CHAINS

IT WAS rather more than five and twenty years ago that I returned from leave of absence in Europe, and took charge of the district which forms the interior of the native state of Pahang, and is the exact core and centre of the Malay Peninsula. It was a big tract of country, over three thousand square miles in extent; and in those days was reckoned the wildest part of the protected Malayan states. It did not boast a mile of made road or bridle path in all its vast expanse; it was smothered in deep, damp forest, threaded across and across by a network of streams and rivers, the latter the best of our highways; and a sparse sprinkling of Malay villages was strewn over its surface—a dozen or two of thatched roofs in shady palm and fruit groves adjoining wide, flat stretches of rice-field and grazing grounds studded with rhododendron scrub. Besides the Malay population there were a few camps filled with Chinese miners engaged in fossicking for gold; a band or two of sulky Australian prospectors, sorely discontented with the results which they were obtaining; and an odd thousand or so of squalid aborigines, living in dirt and wretchedness up in the mountains. For the rest the inhabitants of my district were native chiefs, the overlords and op-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

pressors, and Malayan villagers, the serfs and the oppressed. The power of the former (which was usually exerted for evil) had not yet been broken or fettered; the spirit of independence which to-day animates the latter class had not at that time been awakened, and the world into which I was suddenly precipitated—an influence shot straight out of the civilized nineteeth century into a living past—was one as primitive as any which existed in Europe in the early Middle Ages.

I had a hut on the banks of the Lîpis River, a single room staggering upon six crazy piles some fifteen feet in height, which was at once my dwelling, my office, my treasury, and my courthouse. The ceiling was formed by the browny-yellow thatch running up into a cone, supported upon an irregular arrangement of beams and rafters in which by day the big, black, flying beetles bored their holes, covering me with fine wood dust, while at night-time the rats chased one another along them, squeaking dismally.

When I looked out of my window, a little lopsided oblong of sunlight sawn unevenly out of the ragged bamboo wattle, my sight dropped fifty feet sheer into the olive-green waters of the Lîpis, for the long stalk-like legs upon which the flooring of my hut rested were canted dangerously riverward. From under their feet the bank fell away in a headlong pitch, so that I lived in the expectation of seeing my habitation take a leap into the cool waters of the stream; and when the wind came down in the heavy gusts which, in the spring, heralded the daily afternoon

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

downpour, I could feel the whole thing bracing itself for the jump, with a creaking of timbers and a noisy whining of the strained wattling.

It was not much of a hut, it must be confessed, and I speedily got myself into much better quarters; but in those days I stood in no great need of a dwelling-place of my own. The district under my charge was extensive and it seemed to be cut off from the rest of the world almost as effectually as would have been the case if it had been located on the surface of some alien planet. I had been set apart from my fellow civil servants to learn all that was possible concerning it, to win the shy confidence of a people to whom white men were a new and suspect breed, to make myself a factor in their everyday life, and thereby to establish a personal influence among them, the which, in a new land, is the first, surest foundation of British rule. All this meant that it was my lot to rival the restlessness of the Wandering Jew; to sleep rarely more than a single night in the same casual resting-place; to live on what I could get, which often enough did not amount to much; and little by little so to familiarize the natives with my ubiquity that they should come to regard me and my visits as among the commonest incidents in the experience of every village scattered up and down a wide countryside.

It would not be easy to conceive a life more delightful for a healthy youngster blessed with a keen interest in the much which he was learning and in the little that he was slowly and cautiously teaching.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

A hurried meal soon after the dawn had broken; a long tramp from village to village while daylight lasted; a swim in the river; a huge plate of rice and curry, cooked by the womenfolk of the place and eaten with a hunter's appetite; a smoke and a yarn with the elders of the place, picturesque figures grouped around one in a semicircle, chewing betel nut, as the placid cattle masticate the cud; a dispute or two, perhaps, settled between smoke and smoke, without any magisterial formalities; a shred or two of information picked up here and there upon matters which would some day be of importance; and then sound, soul-satisfying sleep, and early waking, and another long day of labour and of life. By boat and raft on rivers small or great; tramping through the gloomy depths of forests hitherto unexplored by white men or across rice-swamps sizzling in the midday heat; camping at night in my boat on the river, in a headman's house under the peaked roof of a little village mosque, or in some crop watcher's hut; sleeping out on a sandbank, or on the ground in the dead jungle, with my mat spread upon a bed of boughs and with a green palm-leaf shelter to ward off the worst of the drenching dews; shooting rapids, paddling down or poling up the rivers; skimming the cream of inviolate snipe grounds, or watching for game on the edge of a salt-lick—however I travelled, wherever I stayed or halted, no matter who the strange folk with whom I daily consorted, I tasted to the full the joys of a complete independence, the delights of fresh, open air and hard exercise, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

enough work to keep the mind as fit and supple as the limbs. I had been jerked out of the age in which I had been born, out of the scurry and bustle of European life, out of touch with the mechanical contrivances which restrict a man's freedom of action and judgment and cause his love of responsibility to atrophy into a world of unfettered freedom among a semi-civilized people, where nature still had her own way unchecked by the intrusions of applied science, and where men and things were primitive and elemental.

I had had plenty of experience as a jungle-dweller long before I took charge of the interior district of Pahang; and since a knowledge of how to travel and how to live in a Malayan forest land is more than half the battle, I escaped, for the most part, the heavy troubles of which so many newcomers are able to tell such moving tales. None the less, the jungles played their pranks with me more than once, and the first trip which I took after my return to duty was packed as closely with small adventures as is the average boy's book with hair-breadth escapes and perils miraculously overcome.

I left my hut early one morning with half a dozen of my Malay followers trailing behind me in single file. A Gladstone bag, a japanned despatch box, and a large basket carried knapsackwise, and filled to the brim with cooking-pots, plates, dishes, and miscellaneous kitchen utensils, were the three principal loads. A fourth man carried my bed. I remember thinking, when I was a small boy, that the facility

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

with which the man sick of the palsy complied with the divine command, "Take up thy bed, and go unto thine house," was the major part of the miracle; and this impression was confirmed by a picture in the old family Bible, in which the whilom invalid was represented staggering away under the weight of a vast four-poster. It was not until I came to the East that I realized how simple a matter is the sleeping gear of the average Oriental. My "bed" consisted of a native mat of plaited *mengkuang* palm leaves, a narrow flock mattress, half an inch in thickness, and a couple of European pillows. The whole thing did not weigh more than twenty pounds, unless it was saturated with rain water, when it tipped the scale at about double that figure. It had the additional advantage of possessing no sharp corners of projections calculated to gall the bearer's back, and consequently it was the most popular piece of my baggage, and was usually annexed by the strongest and most violent-tempered of my men. The unyielding despatch box generally fell to the lot of the man among my followers who was least capable of sticking up for his rights and who was accordingly the least fit to bear the burden.

It was a bright, cool morning when we started with a little ribbon of cloudlike mist showing above the treetops as one looked up the valley of the Lîpis, marking faithfully the windings of the river. The birds were noisy and a few gayly feathered paroquets fluttered from bush to bush as we made our way through the low scrub jungle near the bank of the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

stream. The spiders had been busy all night, and their slimy webs stretched across the footpath we were following glued themselves so unpleasantly to my face that, contrary to my wont, I bade Akob, one of my men, walk in front of me to keep the way clear of these frail barriers. In this manner we had trudged along steadily for a couple of hours and the heat of the tropical day was already beginning to make itself felt, stilling the noisy life of the jungle and drying up the dewdrops, when suddenly Akob halted abruptly and pointed, in evident excitement, at something ahead of him. We were standing on the brink of a narrow creek on either side of which a steeply cleft bank rose at a sharp angle from the water's edge. Leaning forward to look over Akob's shoulder, I saw half a dozen yards away, upon the surface of the opposite bank, a curious patch, irregular in shape, and discoloured a peculiarly blended black and yellow. It had a strange *furry* appearance, but shimmered with a suggestion of restless life. All this I noted in an instant, not realizing in the least the nature of the object at which I was gazing; and then, without any warning, the patch rose at us, rose like a cheap black and yellow railway rug tossed upward by the wind. A humming, purring sound accompanied its flight, and a second later it had resolved itself into its elements, and had precipitated itself upon us—a swarm of bees, mad with rage and thirsting for blood and vengeance.

Akob, hiding his head in his arms, slewed round sharply and charged away, nearly knocking me off

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

my legs. I followed headlong, broke through my bewildered followers, tore out of the little belt of jungle which we had just entered and sprinted for my life across a patch of short grass beyond. For a moment I believed myself to have given the enemy the slip, and I turned to watch my people, their burdens thrown to the winds, tumbling out of cover, yelling like madmen, and beating the air with their wildly whirling arms. Another instant and I was again put to ignominious flight. I pulled my huge felt hat from my head and flogged with it the cloudlike squadrons of my foes. All the while I ran as fast as my legs would carry me, but the bees were not to be outpaced. They plunged their stings deep into my flannel shirt and into the tough Cananore cloth of my rough jungle trousers; they stung my bare arms, and hands and neck mercilessly, and I had the greatest difficulty in warding them off my face and eyes. I was panting for breath, sweating at every pore and was beginning to feel most uncommonly done and to experience something akin to real fear, when suddenly I caught sight of the waters of the Rengai, a little river which flows through these forests to the Lîpis.

"Take to the water! Take to the water!" I shouted to my howling men, and only waiting to slip my pistol belt with its pouches for watch, compass, money, tobacco, etc., a delay for which I had to pay a heavy price in stings, I plunged neck and crop into the shallow water. My Malays came after me helter-skelter, like a flock of sheep following at the heels of a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

bell-wether; but with us all came the army of bees, stinging, stinging, stinging, for the life.

I was thoroughly winded by the time I took to the water, and it was impossible to keep under for more than a few seconds; yet when I rose to the surface the bees were still there more angry than ever, and I was driven under again, while my lungs pumped and sobbed painfully. Again I rose, again was set upon, again was driven under water. My heart was leaping about in my body like some wild thing seeking to escape; I was so distressed for breath that my senses were reeling; I was rapidly becoming desperate. It flashed across my mind that to be drowned or stung to death in a puddle by a swarm of insignificant insects was about as ridiculous and as ignominious a way of making one's exit from life as could well be conceived; yet, at the moment, it seemed almost certain that this was the preposterous lot which a capricious fate had assigned to me.

As I came sobbing to the surface to meet yet another furious assault, I heard Saleh, my head boatman, cry aloud:

"Throw a bough for them to alight upon!"

The words were in my ears as I was again driven to dive, and in a flash their meaning was made clear to me. I struggled toward the bank, tugged off a branch from an overhanging tree, threw it on the surface of the stream, and dived once more. One or two of my men followed suit, and when, having remained under water as long as I could, I rose once more in a state of pitiful exhaustion, I saw half a

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

dozen branches floating gayly downstream covered three deep by clusters of struggling and stinging bees.

I rose to my feet, waded to the bank, and for a good quarter of an hour sat there panting and hawking and fighting to regain my breath. Then we fell to counting our losses and to estimating the damage done. One of my men, a Sumatran Malay named Dolman, was in a fainting condition. He had been stung in nearly two hundred places; his face was reduced to a shapeless mass in which no feature was any longer distinguishable; and he vomited so violently that I feared for his life. We put him into a boat and the neighbouring villagers of Dolut undertook to send him back to my hut at Penjum. Then the rest of us limped across grazing grounds to the village and lay down upon the clean mats spread for us on the veranda of the headman's house, where we endured the fever that was burning in our blood. Our hands were like great boxing gloves, our heads and faces were swollen, and puffy, and we had to abandon all idea of proceeding farther upon our journey that day.

We were profoundly sorry for ourselves, and we were less relieved than disgusted when one of our number, who had been missing and whom we had reckoned as dead, came in half an hour later perfectly unharmed. He had seen the bees coming, he told us, and had squatted down and remained quite still to await their assault. They had covered him from head to foot; but as a bee is aware that using his sting usually results in his own death,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

he never strikes unless he has persuaded himself that the last sacrifice is demanded of him on behalf of the hive. Accordingly the clouds of insects had settled all over my Malay, had investigated him closely, and then had passed on leaving him unhurt. It was exasperating to realize that we had had our frantic stampede, our fight, our suffocation under water, and the pains we were then enduring for nothing, and that all might have been avoided by the exercise of presence of mind coupled with a sufficiency of cool nerve. The latter, of course, was the really vital possession and fresh from my recent encounter, I questioned whether I had enough of courage in me to enable me to sit calmly under a load of investigating bees, knowing that a single voluntary movement would entail a peculiarly painful and ugly death. Therefore, I sat in silence, listening to my follower's account of his proceedings, while he picked six and thirty stings out of my felt hat and more than a hundred out of my flannel shirt.

The bees, he said, were irascible and unreasonable creatures. Their nest had, on this occasion, been swooped down upon by a kite, which had borne off a portion of the nursery before the fighting part of the population had become aware of the danger. Then the standing army had been called out, and since we chanced to be the next living thing to come their way, they had mistaken us for the thieves and had promptly declared war upon us. Therefore we had been made to bear the punishment due for the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

sins of a kite, and had run ourselves dizzy and had half drowned ourselves in the river when we should have done better to sit still. The situation was sufficiently humiliating.

Next day we continued our interrupted march, and nothing worth detailed record happened for a week or so. At one village a stealthy visit was paid to me by three young nobles, whose father had recently had a difference of opinion with the rulers of the land, which had resulted for him in a violent death. His sons who had had no share in their father's misdeeds, had promptly taken to the jungle, and as they were fighting men of some repute, all manner of wild rumours as to the trouble they were meditating were afloat in the district on my arrival in it. I had known them intimately before I left Pahang on leave, and as soon as they learned that I was once again in their neighbourhood, they sought me out for the purpose of talking matters over and, if possible, of making their peace with the Government. They crept into my camp in the dead of night, armed to the teeth, very apprehensive, and ready for all eventualities. At first they were like hunted jungle creatures that feared a trap, but they ended by spreading their sleeping mats alongside mine and snoring contentedly until the daybreak woke us.

Another night I passed in a mining camp, where a crowd of depressed Australians were squatting in a couple of makeshift huts beside a pool filled to the brim with dirty water, green with arsenic and duck-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

weed. This was all that at that time represented the Raub Mine, which later became a rather notorious centre of speculation, and was at one time expected to prove one of the great gold producers of the East.

From Raub I tramped on to the foot of the main range, where people of many nationalities were busy sluicing for tin; and thence I decided to cut across the forest so as to strike the head waters of a river called the Sempam which at that time had never been visited by an European and was *terra incognita* to all save a very few of even the Malays of the district.

Not without difficulty I succeeded in enlisting the services of an aboriginal tribesman—a Sâkai—who undertook to guide me to the banks of the Sempam, but stoutly declined to have anything to do with my proposed attempt to descend that rock-beset river. He moved along in front of my party, with the noiseless, catlike gait which distinguishes the jungle-folk, and once he complained bitterly that the "klap-klip-klap" of my canvas shoes on the ground behind him was so bewildering that he feared that "the doors of the jungle would thereby be closed to him," which was his way of suggesting that he thought it likely that he would lose his way. In common with the rest of his race, he possessed no power of instituting a comparison between one thing and another, and when we were within a couple of hundred yards of our destination he still obstinately maintained that it was as far ahead of us as our orig-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

inal starting-place was behind us. When, a few minutes later, this assertion was disproved, he remained quite unabashed. The difference between the two distances—a matter of some seven miles—was to him, he declared, imperceptible. They were both "a long way," and viewed from this standpoint, they were to the limitations of his intellect indistinguishably alike.

At the point where we struck the Sempam River, its banks were covered by dense clumps of bamboos of the kind the Malays call *buloh padi*, graceful, drooping stems, tapering to slender shoots five and twenty feet from the ground, all rising, plumelike, from a common centre, and set with innumerable delicate branches and feathery foliage. The river, at this point about a dozen yards in width, ran swiftly and silently, an olive-green flood, flecked here and there by little splashes of sunlight. The forest around us was intensely still, for the hot hours of the day were upon us, and a sense of the wildness of the place and of its utter remoteness from mankind, filled me with a sort of awe. It was with a feeling akin to shame that I gave the word which was to disturb the profound peace and to set man's defacing thumb mark upon all this inviolate beauty.

As soon as they had stacked their loads, however, my men drew their woodknives and set to work felling bamboos from which to fashion our rafts. The ringing notes of their blades smiting the hollow stems carried far and wide, awaking the forest echoes, and the bamboos creaked and groaned like things in

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

pain, as one by one they slowly collapsed, toppling into the river, whence they were towed into the shallows to be trimmed of their branches and cut to the requisite length. A couple of hours' hard work saw four stout rafts floating high out of the water, the river fretting and fuming about their slippery green sides, the newly cut rattans exuding a milky sap as my men bound the bamboos together by means of strong cross-pieces fore and aft and amidships. Small raised platforms were erected in the centre of each raft, and on three of these we stowed our baggage. The fourth raft was reserved for me; and when I had rewarded the Sâkai for his pains with a wedge of coarse tobacco and a palm-leaf bag filled with black rock-salt, I took my seat upon the platform prepared for my accommodation and bade my men push out into the stream.

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!" they cried; and my raft slid across the glassy surface into the tug of the current, the three others following us in single file.

Until you have had the good fortune to taste of it, the peculiar fascination of exploring a belt of country in which no white man and very few human beings of any kind have hitherto set foot cannot easily be realized. To find one's self penetrating, the first of all one's kind, into one of Nature's secret fastnesses, where free from the encroachments of mankind she has worked her mighty will during æons upon æons of unrecorded time, is extraordinarily stimulating to the imagination. One looks round

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

upon a world in the fashioning of which the hand of man has had no part. Age has succeeded age; race has swept forward, has surged up and has obliterated race; history has been made and unmade a thousand times by myriads of puny men; but all the while in this hidden cranny of the globe the great Mother has been working her gradual miracles. It is old, old, old; older than record; older than speech; older than man; and yet for you it is newer than aught else, a secret kept faithfully through all the ages to be revealed at last to you. You look around you with a keen delight, with eager eyes that find a fresh interest in all they light upon, with a heart chastened by the solemnity, the mystery of this unfrequented wilderness. The awfulness of your surroundings, the aloofness from your fellows, the sense of your exclusive privilege, impart to you a feeling akin to that by which the newly initiated priest may be inspired when, for the first time, he lifts the veil that cloaks the inner temple of his worship; but here there is no grinning idol to dispel illusion, but rather a little glimpse vouchsafed to unworthy man of the vision of the true God.

For nearly an hour we glided downstream through long, calm reaches, where the sunlight flecked the dancing waters between banks thickly set by bamboo thickets backed by impenetrable forest, and each bend in the winding river revealed yet another perfect picture of the beauty and the splendour of this jungle paradise. We were heading for the unknown, passing thither through untrodden ways, and

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

at every turn we looked for some surprise, some difficulty to be encountered and overcome, some wild prank that this untamed river might try to play upon us. It lent a fresh zest to our journeying, put an additional throb of excitement into the scanning of each reach of running water, as the frequent twistings of our course displayed them to us one by one.

On either hand low hills ran steeply upward from the water's edge, smothered in vast clumps of bamboos, the stems resembling some gigantic, irregular palisade crowned by bunch above bunch of feathery plumes, the highest making a broken, undulating line of fretwork against the colourless afternoon sky. Near the river brink huge *ngeram* trees leaned outward, clasping friendly hands above our heads, throwing a grateful shade, and staining the waters to a deeper olive tint with their sombre reflections. From root to branch tip they were festooned with innumerable parasites, great tree ferns, smooth or shaggy, with their roots in deep, rich mosses; orchids of many kinds with here and there a little point of colour marking where a rare blossom nestled; creepers and trailing vines, some eating into the marrow of the boughs to which they clung, some hanging from the branches like fine drapery, some twined about and about in an inextricable network, others dropping sheer to the stream below and swaying constantly as the current played with their tassels. It was a fairyland of forest through which the river was bearing us, and I lay back upon my raft, feasting lazy eyes upon the constantly shifting scene,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and fully conscious of my own supreme well-being. How fair was my lot, I thought, compared with that of the average young civil servant who rarely got much beyond a pile of dusty files on an overloaded office table.

The stream ran rapidly with a merry purring sound and the rafts, kept end on to the current by polers at bow and stern, slid forward at an even pace. Suddenly we whisked round a sharp bend, and before we knew what awaited us we were caught in the jaws of a formidable rapid. I was aware of a waste of angry water, white with foam, stretching away in front of us; of a host of rugged granite blocks, black with spray, poking their sharp noses out of the river, which boiled and leaped around them; of an instant acceleration of pace, and then I found myself standing in the bows of the raft, punting pole in hand, helping my forward boatman to fight the evil-tempered thing which a moment earlier had been the placid, smiling river. We were travelling at a headlong pace now and the raft reeled and wallowed and canted with such violence that, even bareshod as we were, it was no easy matter to keep our footing on the slippery, rounded surfaces of the bamboos. Of the length, extent and difficulties of the rapid into which we had been so suddenly tossed we, of course, knew nothing. Of prospective dangers, however, we had no leisure to think, for we were wholly preoccupied by those which we were already beset, and every instant decisive action had to be taken to meet crowding emergencies, grasped, met

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and dealt with all in a breath. At the end of a hundred yards of running fight we reached a point where the stream was split in twain by a great outcrop of granite, and in a flash we had to make our selection between the alternative routes offered. Instinctively we chose the left-hand channel, which looked the more likely of the two, and on we whirled at a perilous pace. The battling waters broke above my knees; the uproar of the stream deafened me; the furious pace set every nerve in my body tingling gloriously; the excitement of each new danger averted or overcome filled me and my Malays with a perfect intoxication of delight. On we whirled, yelling and shouting like maniacs, plying our clashing poles, leaping down fall after fall, our raft submerged, our souls soaring aloft in a veritable delirium of excitement. It lasted for only a few moments and then the end came—came in a jarring crash upon a rock which we had failed to avoid, a violent thrusting upward of one side of the raft till it ran almost on edge, a sudden immersion in the wildly agitated water, and three sharp yells, stifled ere they were fully uttered. Presently I and my two Malays found ourselves clinging to an outlying projection of the rock which had wrecked us, though none of us clearly knew how we had got there; and to our surprise, except for a few cuts and bruises, we were entirely unhurt. The raft, bent double like a piece of folded paper, lay broadside on across a wedge of granite, one side lifted clear of the stream, the other under water, the two ends nearly meeting on the far

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

side of the obstruction. Such of my gear as had been placed upon my sitting platform had been whirled incontinently downstream, and I could see portions of it bobbing and ducking on the tumble of waters thirty yards below me. Then, one by one, these bits of flotsam dropped suddenly below the line of sight, disappearing at a point where an upleaping line of foam seemed to cut the stream at right angles from bank to bank.

Looking upriver, we saw the second of our rafts plunging down toward us, the two Malays at its bow and stern trying vainly to check its wild career; and even as we watched, the catastrophe befell and they were left clinging to a rock in the same plight as ourselves. Their raft, breaking away, darted down toward us, scraped past us by a miracle, and disappeared in a shattered condition in the wake of my lost baggage. My men on the two remaining rafts had become aware of the danger in time, and we could see them making fast to the bank a couple of hundred yards upstream.

Sitting stranded upon a rock in the middle of the river with the boiling waters of the rapid leaping up at me like a pack of hounds when its kill is held aloft, we shrieked suggestions to one another as to what should be our next move. The only thing was to swim for it, and cautiously I let my body down into the torrent and pushed out vigorously for the shore. The current fought me like a live thing, but the river was narrow, and after a rather desperate struggle I drew myself out of the water on the left bank

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

and sat there panting and gasping. I had come into violent collision with more than one rock during my short swim and I was bruised and cut in many places, but it seemed to me then that I had escaped almost scot free, and I and my fellows screamed congratulations to one another at the top of our voices above the roar of the rapids. Then we rose to our feet and picked our way along the bank, through the thick jungle, to rejoin our companions farther upstream.

Here a blow awaited us. The raft which had been following mine proved to have contained, among other things, our cooking utensils and our store of rice, and its loss meant that our prospects of having anything to eat that night was unpleasantly remote. We knew that there existed a few Malay villages on the banks of the lower reaches of the Sempam; but what might be the distance that separated us from these havens of refuge we could not tell. This was a problem that could only be solved by personal investigation, which for hungry men might well prove a lengthy and therefore painful process.

The first thing to be done, however, was to find out the nature of the river below the rapid which had wrought our undoing, as we still hoped that it might be possible to lower our two uninjured rafts down the falls by means of rattan painters. Those who have never seen a Malayan forest will find it difficult to realize the difficulty which "getting out and walking" presents to the wayfarer in an unfrequented portion of the country. The rivers in such localities

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

are practically the only highways, and the jungle upon their banks is so dense, so thorny, so filled with urgently detaining hands, that progress is not only very slow, but speedily saws your nerves and temper into shreds. I bade Saleh, my head boatman, follow me, and the other Malays stay where they were until we returned to them. Then I climbed back along the steeply shelving bank to the foot of the rapid in which the remains of my raft still flapped feebly, and thence scrambled through the dense forest and underwood to a point whence a view of the next reach of the river could be attained. It took us the best part of half an hour to gain this point of vantage; but at last, clinging with one hand to a stout sapling, I swung out to the very edge of the forest-clad hill and looked about me.

Then my heart stood still in my body, for there suddenly was revealed to me the appalling danger which we had escaped by providentially coming to grief at the point where the rapid had defeated us. Certain destruction had awaited us only some thirty yards lower downstream.

From where I clung to the hillside I could look upriver to the point where the flotsam from the raft had dropped below the line of sight, and their abrupt disappearance was now explained. The Sempam ran here through a narrow gorge, enclosed by steep hills smothered in jungle; but at the top of the reach the river fell in a shaggy white curtain down the face of a precipice, which was walled on either side by black dikes of granite, clean-cut as though hewn by a single

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

stroke of some giant's axe. With an intolerable roar, the whole body of the river leaped in a sheet of foam into the black abyss seventy feet below, throwing great jets of spray aloft that hung like a mist in the still air, drenching rocks and trees for many yards around till they dripped with moisture, and churning up the waters of the pool into which it fell, so that their surface was a boiling, heaving mass that looked as white and almost as solid as cotton wool. A little lower downstream the pools widened out somewhat, and here the waters were so deep a green that they were nearly black, circling slowly round and round in innumerable, sullen-looking eddies, ere they shot forward again upon their course to plunge down fall after fall in never-ending strife. Even under the brilliant afternoon sunlight the place was steeped in a profound, mysterious gloom.

From where I was perched I could see for near a quarter of a mile along the river's length—a most unusually extended view in the heart of a Malayan jungle—and at every yard of the way Death was written in unmistakable characters for any living thing that the falls might succeed in sucking into their grip. Had we taken the channel on the right, instead of that which we had chanced to select, nothing could have saved us; had our raft not come to wreck exactly where it did, a moment later matchwood would have been made of it and of us: for once within the clutch of the upper fall, nothing could have saved us from a dreadful death. As I

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

gazed at the masses of water plunging sheer down the face of the rock, I realized with a shock how closely I and my fellows had looked into the eyes of death so short a while before, and how unthinkingly, how light-heartedly we had scampered to the very brink of destruction while half intoxicated by the fierce joy of living.

I sent Saleh back for my fellows, and sat down where I was to await their coming. I wanted a cigarette to aid my meditations upon man's precarious tenure of life; but the river had rendered tobacco and matches alike useless.

The insistent roar of the rapids filled my hearing; the wild beauty of the scene held me spellbound; but most of all was I impressed by the insolent *freedom*, the vigour, the complete, unrestrained savagery of the river. Here was a stream which for countless ages had leaped and thundered down this granite-bound pass, had slain innumerable living things in its day with the callous cruelty of the mighty, and had never known an instant's restraint, a moment's check, a second's curbing or binding. As the stream below me tossed its white mane of spray restlessly to and fro, it seemed to me to be in truth some wild monster escaped from a primeval world, charging down this rock-pent defile, instinct with life and liberty. The very roaring of those resistless waters seemed to me a shout of triumph wherewith they boasted of their freedom; their furious commotion mocked aloud at the restraints of nature and of man. It was the embodiment of unfettered power, this

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

river—it was free, free, free—and the noise of its falls set my nerves quivering with a sympathetic excitement.

When my men had rejoined me we pushed on through the thick jungle and by dark we had succeeded in passing out of hearing of the resonant thunder of the falls. But there were other rapids all along the river, and the music of the troubled waters was constantly in our ears. We camped on a sand bank by the river's side, and we went to bed supperless. We had paid tribute to the river of our last grain of rice, and Saleh, my head boatman, who had been selected for that post because he combined in a remarkable degree a short temper and a long vocabulary, expressed himself on the subject of fate and of our situation with refreshing latitude.

The dawn broke grayly through a dense and drenching mist, and it found us very hungry and unhappy. We made an early start and scrambled and swarmed along the shelving river bank, through the bamboo brakes, the thorn thickets, and the tangled underwood of that unspeakable forest, hour after hour, to an ever-increasing accompaniment of famine and fatigue. It was not until the afternoon sun was beginning to creep down the sky that we at length reached a place where it seemed possible again to make use of rafts with some prospect of success. We set to work in sullen silence, and an hour later we set off downstream, looking eagerly for a village as each bend was rounded, and accepting the recur-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

rent disappointments with such philosophy as we could muster.

The night shut down upon us once more, but we did not call a halt. We had no knowledge concerning the distance that still separated us from the nearest human habitation and we were running a race against hunger—an opponent that never grants an armistice. We were already so spent that we dared not rest lest we should lack the force and courage to renew our efforts, and the pangs we were suffering—for none of us had now tasted food for five and thirty hours—were goads that pricked us onward. Therefore, we fumbled and groped our way down the Sempam with the dogged, spiritless persistency of the desperate. Our discomfort was completed by the fact that we had got ourselves smothered in jungle ticks, crablike monsters that fix their claws into selected nerve centres, whence they can only be withdrawn at the cost of acute pain.

At about half-past eight we saw a point of light ahead of us and a few minutes later we were eagerly devouring all the available cooked rice in the little village of Chĕrok.

"The falls of this river are very difficult, *Tûan*," said a village elder to me, as I sat smoking and talking to the people of the place, after I had crammed myself with fat, new rice. "They are very difficult, and no man may pass up or down those which are of the largest size. Moreover, even we, who are children of the river, may not approach the lesser

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

rapids until fitting offerings have been made by us to the spirits which have in them their abiding place. Strangers who, being smitten by madness, make free of this river thrust their heads into a noose whence it is not easy to draw back.

"The great fall, which is full twelve fathoms in height, is named the Fall of the Kine-cleft Bank, for it is a narrow pass such as giant kine might make at the spot where they were wont to go down to water. The next fall is named the Fall of Dew, for by reason of its spray the rocks and trees around it are perpetually drenched as it were by dew; and the last of all is the Fish Trap, for from out of its grip not even a fish can escape.

"Ah, *Tûan*, it is not well thus to tempt the Spirits of the Sempam, for they are very vengeful, and if they had killed you a great shame would have been put upon our people. Our Spirits are *ôrang mêrdhêka*—free folk—who care not at all for *râja* or overlord, and have no respect even for white men, *Tûan*, before whom the *râjas* themselves must give way, if all that men tell us be true. And this, too, *Tûan*, the Sempam hath taught you in hunger and in travail, it will bear no chains!"

And the old fellow chuckled, well pleased by his jest and proud of the prowess of his native stream. Fresh from my view of the falls and still aching from the rough handling which I had received at the hands of the river, my thought echoed the old man's vaunt. The wild freedom of the Sempam was what impressed me—the freedom of some savage creature,

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

instinct with unrestrained vitality and a fierce, splendid liberty.

Nine years later, by which time unregenerate Pahang had become a solid portion of the British Protectorate, and I, as resident, had been appointed to preside over its affairs, I visited the Sempam Falls again.

I was driven to them from the foot of the mountains in a smart dog cart by the manager of a mine, and I spent the night in a well-appointed bungalow after dining at a table which fairly groaned under the good viands that it bore.

From end to end of the falls a made road skirted the right bank of the river for a distance of about a mile. In the valley, below the bungalow, stood a square power station with a hideous roof of corrugated iron. From it, running upward upon a sort of staircase of wooden sleepers, a line of black pipes three feet in diameter climbed a succession of steep hillsides to the skyline half a mile away. This line of pipes communicated with a solid concrete reservoir, which in its turn was fed by a large, square, wooden flume, which burrowed through the hills like a tar-smeared snake, and rose upon a gentle incline to the head of the Fall of the Kine-cleft Bank. Here the Sempam had been dammed across from bank to bank by a solid wall of concrete. Such of its waters as were not for the moment needed by the tyrannous white men were suffered to flow down the old channel; but the rest of the river was cribbed and confined

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

by the wooden walls of the flume, was stalled like a tame ox within the four walls of the reservoir, was forced, protesting but obedient, into the unsightly piping, and at the power station, three hundred feet below, was compelled to yield up its angry strength to the service of man, its master, in order to work and light the gold mines at Raub, seven miles away.

I listened as the engineer in charge told me, with the air of a lecturer upon anatomy, how many gallons of water per minute went to the pulsing of that once free river; how much of its strength was taken for the electrical works, how much left to the diminished waters of the torrent.

The scene, as I stood looking down at it, was wonderfully little changed from what it had been that day long ago when I, first of all my kind, had gazed in fascination at those boisterous falls. On the left bank, where I had clung, the jungle still ran riot to the skyline. An outcrop of white limestone, which I remembered having noted, stood out prominently as of old, a glaring landmark, bare of vegetation on the flank of one of the higher hills at the foot of the falls. Through the deeply cleft walls of granite the river still danced and leaped wildly, though with sadly diminished volume, and with a voice that was like a mere whisper compared with the roar and thunder of other days. Except when my eyes rested upon the works of man upon the right bank, all was as beautiful as in the past. But the supreme freedom of the river, the quality which for me had had so overmastering, so compelling a fascination,—had van-

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

ished utterly. The valley was no longer one of nature's inviolate and secret places, and the river was no more the strong, unfettered, vainglorious monster of my memory. It was in chains, a thrall to man, and to me it seemed to bear its gyves with a subdued and chastened sadness at once bitter and heartbroken.

The next morning I left the Falls of the Kine-cleft Bank and rode fifty miles to the residency of Kuâla Lîpis. My way took me through country which had once been wild, where now the great trunk road strung village to village, like onions on a string, and the whole line of my ride was marked by newly occupied plantations, and by signs of the commercial progress and material development which white men and their civilization bring in their train. Then as I neared my home and turned my thoughts to the piles of official correspondence which I knew must be awaiting my return; caught sight of the hurrying telegraph peons, and remembered how at the end of that infernal wire there sat men whose business it was to impede me with instructions concerning matters which they imperfectly comprehended; as I heard the *pat, pat* of the tennis balls on the court within the dismantled stockade and saw the golfers driving off from a neighbouring tee—suddenly the thought came to me of what my life in that district had wont to be less than a decade earlier. And then, though all the changes around me had been things for which I had worked and striven with all my heart and soul, somehow it seemed to me for the

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

moment that it was not only the river that had lost its vitality and its freedom. Together we had shared the wild life which we had known and loved in the past; together in the present we went soberly, working in chains.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

L'ENVOI

To My Brethren in Malaya

The grim Recording Angel turns the pages of the Book,
  And the days are thrust behind us past recall—
All the sorrows that we tasted, all the pleasure that we took
  In that life we shared together, Brothers all!
But to-day the forest whispers and to-day the *ungkas* whoop,
  Where the big, slow river lumbers down to meet the sun-lit sea,
And the village drones and drowses while the palm-fronds lift or droop,
  For the old life glideth onward still—with ne'er a place for me.

In the hut and in the palace, in the sun-fleck'd forest glade,
  Where the vast trees crowding stagger 'neath their load of fern and vine,
In that world of untouched Nature, 'mid the marvels God hath made,
  You are living on in listlessness the life that once was mine.
Hark! I catch the thud of *tom-toms*, and the drone of old-world song,
  The sleepy hum of insects, and the rush of startled beast—
And I lack the words to tell you, O my Brothers, how I long
  For the glory and the glamour and the wonder of the East.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

You be far—too far—my Brothers, gnarled brown faces that I know,
Men who dealt with me aforetime, friend with friend and heart with heart—
Our paths lie worlds asunder, since the Fates would have it so,
For behold "the Order reached me,"* and to-day, old Friends, we part.
Yet you will not quite forget me, O my Brothers over sea—
Let me keep that fond illusion: it will help me on my way—
And I pray you tell the little ones, who gather round your knee,
Of those days we saw together in the land of the Malay.

And my thanks are yours, my Brothers, for a thousand acts of grace,
For the trust wherewith you trusted, for the love wherewith you loved.
For your honest, open greetings, lifted hand and friendly face,
For the kindness that you dealt me when through all your land I roved.
It was mine to toil and struggle, it was mine to war with wrong,
It was mine to labour for you, aye, to sorrow, hope, and yearn;
But I'll shout it from the house-tops from Barbados to Hong-Kong—
If to you I rendered service, I from you had most to learn.

HUGH CLIFFORD.

Sulah sampai hukum—"The Order hath come!" A Malayan euphemism signifying that such-an-one has died.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

MARCH 29, 1946
ROOM DEN
SANTA BARBARA CAL.

Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

COLLEGE LIBRARY

This book is due on the last date stamped below.

Book Slip–35*m*-9,'62(D221884)4280

Digitized by Microsoft

UCLA-College Library
PR 6005 C609f 1922
L 005 672 614 4

College
Library

PR
6005
C609f
1922

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 001 173 693 1



Univ Calif - Digitized by Microsoft ®