THE MAGIC OF MALAYA

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BY

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TO

MY WIFE

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I

PAWANG HELAI

THOSE who are familiar with the bland pervasiveness of the Chinese in the Malay Peninsula will find nothing strange in the existence of Li Wang. He was a Chinese exactly like other Chinese. If you had seen him in a town you had not remarked him; had you seen him on a lalang plain you had seen nothing in him; if you had seen him cutting up timber in a jungle you had been conscious that there was a Chinese cutting up timber in the jungle and that was the end of it. Nothing remarkable about him—nothing of which to take hold, nothing to make you say, "Hullo, there is Li Wang." No, when you saw him you said, "There is a Chinaman." Pervasive merely,

not pushing; present, not obvious; here, but just as well anywhere else, he was, and his type still is, just Li Wang. Every one accepted him as one of the facts of life, one of the things that one takes for granted, on a par with any other phenomenon one meets in Malaya. Nothing in his life made him remarkable except his leaving it, for when he left it a gap arrived, which was singular enough, if one considers what an unregarded thing he was. For no one regarded Li Wang at any time. He came and went, whence or whither no one knew. Suppose him asked, "Whence come you?" he answered, "From the river," and suppose him asked, "Whither go you?" he replied, "To the river." On the river itself, the same questions had been answered, "From over there" and "To over there," or perhaps "From upstream" and "To downstream." But that was all. A silent, secretive, self-sufficient personality, all he wanted was to be left alone. On the Sungei Suang he got just that. Upstream and downstream he went alone, all by himself in his boat, without kith or kin, without wife, or friend, or child, simply Li Wang, the pedlar, a man magnificently

without imagination, trading, buying, selling, leading a harmless life which no one envied him, or sought to take from him.

But even Li Wang could not be always in his boat on the Sungei Suang, and so it was his custom to come at uncertain intervals to Kuala Suang. He did not seek Kuala Suang for rest and change or for amusement, but merely for business, and probably his times and seasons were regulated by complete irregularity, for he was never expected at any particular time or after any particular lapse of time. He came when his boat was full of bark or cloth of bark, of tuba root, of honey, of gutta, of rattan, of wood-oil, of damar and damar matakuching, of deer horns and skins, of all the strange things which for ages and ages have left this quiet middle of the world and gone East and West, masquerading under alien titles such as dragon's blood, cajeput oil and the like. For years his name had appeared on the books of the revenue officials as a trader in the comprehensive line of "jungle produce"; for years he had produced annually last year's receipts and received in exchange this year's receipts for revenue paid,

and with them the annual licence for trading. But so infrequent were his visits, so little did Kuala Suang mark them, that had he ceased to make them, no one would have noticed except Ah Tai, who was a shopkeeper of Kuala Suang. The only reason why Ah Tai would have noticed a continued absence was that Li Wang, whose commercial instinct was as strongly developed as it is in most Chinese, always left Kuala Suang in debt to Ah Tai. Nothing much of course in debt, but still just enough to keep his memory green in Ah Tai's books and to leave a balance in those books against his name. Whenever Ah Tai happened to turn Li Wang's page, he noted the adverse balance as a good debt, for it had been a good debt for so long. Bad debts a many, good debts a few, was Ah Tai's experience, and as Li Wang sold his jungle produce to Ah Tai at sufficiently profitable rates for the latter, Ah Tai was content to have a little money out. But he never knew what Li Wang did with the profits of his trading. He would have gladly acted as banker, but Li Wang apparently had his own bank and did not trouble Ah Tai to keep his money for him. What he made on sale of

the jungle produce he kept and took away with him in his boat when he left Kuala Suang. What he did with it afterwards no one knew.

Li Wang's customers were the aboriginal jungle tribes, and his stock in trade was such as appeals to the primitive all over the world. It consisted of everything that was shoddy, glittery, warranted useless to any civilised person. His mirrors—and a savage loves a mirror—were little squares of bad glass, badly silvered, badly framed in bad tinfoil, badly beaded, and badly tacked on to a wooden back with a white metal hinge which carried away on use. But a Sakai bride could see her face in them, and perhaps they lasted as long as her beauty, for after all beauty does not last any length of time in the jungle. So Li Wang always carried a strong line in mirrors. He also kept a stock of biscuits. Of all the horrible products of a vaunted civilisation perhaps the forged and fraudulent biscuit is the most horrible. Packed in an inferior tin, with a label bearing a far-off and colourable appearance of something familiar, the biscuit you find in out-of-the-way little Chinese shops in jungly districts, on sale to the primitives of the neigh-

bourhood as a rare luxury, is sodden to the taste, dull to the eye, provocative of thirst and altogether abominable. But it is most emphatically not "jungle produce," so in the jungle it can be sold. Li Wang sold it. A pedlar in other climes would have sold sweets of plaster of Paris and poison, but Li Wang sold none such. He did not sell them, not because of the possible ill-effects of the plaster of Paris or the poison, but because the children of the primitives are not very fond of sweets. The strong, piquant, poignant quality of the spices or vegetables in which their food is cooked seems to unfit the palate for sweets. But he sold other things which took the place of sweets, such as dried chillies, salt, little dry onions, salted and rotten eggs, and dried herbs of various unnamed kinds. Tobacco also he sold, the kind that is called Javanese in the trade returns, and matches to light the tobacco withal. Cigarettes he sold as well, in paper packets with alluring strange designs upon them. Why, the paper alone was worth the money to a primitive, or worth the gutta, or the rattan, or the various kinds of jungle produce which were exchanged for the

cigarette packets. Occasionally he succeeded in selling a violin, that the savage might soothe his breast, or an accordion which may have produced the same effect. The settled melancholy of the strains which for untold generations have been known to the Sakai, but never noted down, might at times be heard proceeding from a fiddle or an accordion on which Li Wang had made a profit. Iron things also he sold, such as parangs (the cutting wood-knife of Malaya) which cut, and knives which did not. Sometimes he sold an enamelled iron pot or saucepan, or teacup, or tumbler, for enamelled iron finds its way all over the world, and even when the enamel rusts off the primitive will value it.

Li Wang had a regular beat on the river. He left Kuala Suang and paddled or poled upstream, stopping wherever he thought he could do a trade or whenever he was hailed from the bank. He moved during the day, indifferently affronting the blaze of sunlight or the lash of rain, with the result that the colour of his skin had become red, of the bronze Redskin colour, quite different from the faded ivory colour of the true Celestial.

The skin on the palms of his hands, from continually gripping a paddle or a pole, and the surface of his fingers, from the same cause, had smoothened and was without wrinkles except at the joints of the fingers and across the palm where the large creases lie. His eyes grew a peering-ahead look from continually searching for sand-banks, logs, eddies and obstacles generally. He was a handy man at rapids, and perhaps even the vaunted intelligence of the savage was hardly superior to that of Li Wang when the shooting of a rapid was in question. Civilised man, and Li Wang came of a civilised race, will beat the primitive at his own arts if he only lives long enough to apply his intelligence. Li Wang had survived many perils by water, and from each he had learnt a little something, so that his sum total of knowledge continually stood him in good stead. His costume consisted of the conical hat which the Chinese wears, apparently, all over the world, suiting to the country in which he may happen to be the material of which the hat is composed. In Li Wang's case it was of plaited fibre, and had originally had a Chinese character or two on it in gold paint, of which faint traces

always remained visible. Also, he wore a pair of Chinese cotton trousers, broad but not baggy, short but not skimpy, long but not lengthy, in short, Chinese trousers—which are Chinese trousers everywhere and have a stamp of their own, whoever wears them. A black cotton coat he wore only when it rained, on which occasions it soaked and clung to his body in wormy wrinkles, so that it provided no protection whatever. The figure he presented was, in fact, the typical Chinese figure seen all over the Peninsula, and more easily seen than adequately described, for it is not easy to describe the commonplace. His customers were the Sakai people who lived upon the banks of the river, or lived up-country and sought the river-bank occasionally, reaching it either by some smaller stream or through the jungle along those paths so easily threaded by them, and so easily a snare to all others. Both the upland and the river Sakai partly subsist on fish, caught by the tuba poison method in the deeper pools and backwaters. The flesh of fish killed by this preparation of the tuba root is not poisonous to those who eat it, but it has been alleged that the foul skin diseases from

which the Sakai suffer are due to this food. They are not cleanly people, and very many of Li Wang's customers were covered with a silver, scaly scurf, highly scratchable, and flaking off from one to infect another, if there were others in the tribe or camp or family yet unaffected. From foul ulcers and spreading sores they suffered too, especially the children and bigger boys and girls. Altogether they were not a pleasant people from the close personal contact point of view, but they were simple-minded folk. Li Wang was alone on his beat, so he had the field of trade to himself. Their foulness did not worry him. He might have said that their money at least was clean had they had any, but money was the rarest of commodities with them, all their trade being by exchange and barter. He dealt with all of them; with the old men, who eked out their failing powers and strength by stores of recollection as to where to find the bees' nests, and how best to extract the honeycomb, or in what dark brake grew the best cane for the manufacture of the blowpipe; with the women, trading the produce collected in long expeditions by their menfolk who were away when Li Wang passed up or down; with

the young men, who, by strength, agility and skill killed the deer and stripped it of horns and skin; even with the small boys, who, no different from the human boy in other parts of the world, caught and tamed small wild animals, rats, squirrels, monkeys, for all of which Li Wang could find a market, if they did not die in his hands. Possibly the womenfolk were his best customers, for to them he sold at good prices the gaudy cloths so desired of the improvident Sakai belle, ignorant or careless as she is of the fact that the cheap aniline dye of commerce is a delicate tincture which does not stand ordinary washing, let alone the unwashen wear accorded to it by the Sakai. With all of them he traded, and with all he kept the most elaborate accounts, for all of them were always in his debt. Whether his reckonings were really so elaborate as they appeared to the wholly illiterate Sakai may be doubted, but he was in the habit of referring to blue-bound Chinese-paper books painted in each page with fat, square-faced Chinese characters very neatly disposed upon the paper. In case of dispute he regarded these as incontestable evidence, and as such he displayed them to the

Sakai. This habit and another habit were Li Wang's only miscalculations. In the jungle, as elsewhere, miscalculations may bring a man to a fearful end.

Li Wang's other habit was his only recreation, and it seems hard to say that he was a fool to indulge in it. Yet it certainly led to his undoing. He was accustomed, whenever he passed a certain spot on the river, to moor his boat under a high bank and take stock both of his goods and of his fortune. He had chosen the spot with a foolishness which did him no credit, for it was in the immediate neighbourhood of one of the curious salt-licks common enough in the Peninsula. To this place, which was a spring of mineral hot water rising a little way in from the river, the game resorted to bathe or drink or eat the salted earth, and it was from the game that proceeded the strange noises Li Wang occasionally heard. He would have been wiser to have chosen a sandbank in midstream on which to beach his boat, or a sunken log to which to moor it, for there at least he would have been protected by the water from approach of prying eyes. But he had chosen the river-bank in this place long ago, and

habit would not be denied. So it came about that twice on his trip any one who crawled, in chance pursuit of game or in evil design of robbery and murder, along the top of the bank, could have seen Li Wang going over his books, his stock in trade and his money. Here was the solution of his refusal to bank with Ah Tai, for his boat was his bank. As he never left his boat for any but the shortest of intervals, and as he kept his money, in notes and a little silver perhaps, concealed in the fabric of the boat itself, he felt it more secure than it could be anywhere else. Perhaps his long absences from the haunts of his fellow-men had made him shy of trusting them. But this hoarding habit and gloating practice were Li Wang's undoing. One night as he sat taking stock and casting up, the bright eyes of Aremon the young Sakai, as he crouched through the jungle with the peculiar bent-kneed creep of the jungle tribes, fell upon Li Wang and a lighted lamp in the boat beneath the bank. Turning silently, Aremon went back, and presently reappeared accompanied by another pair of eyes, not so bright perhaps, but gleaming with an evil lustre and bearing a message to a brain sharper

far than that of the young Sakai. The second pair of eyes were those of Pawang Helai, Helai the Magician, and their presence announced a turn in the luck of Li Wang. In the days of his wealth, when all things were well with him, when the return to China seemed to Li Wang quite within the bounds of practical politics, the hand of fate and the magic of Pawang Helai arose to set themselves against him.

It is quite improbable that Li Wang's occupation presented any definite meaning to Aremon's mind. All he saw was a Chinese whom he knew well handling papers and a few silver coins. That these papers were notes in the paper currency meant nothing at all to him, and it is doubtful whether he appreciated the value of the silver. Aremon was the full type of the unspoiled Sakai, a child of nature in a sense which is but poorly explained by that hackneyed phrase. In person he was most strikingly handsome, so excellent in face and form that to meet him in the jungle was, for the white man, a very distinct and palpable shock. The jungle folk are sometimes of a goodly countenance in early youth. Through maturity and in age they assume a brutalised look, both

in face and frame. Their life is so hard that it sears the face and warps the body. The hair, never tended, grows matted and filthy, whilst in some tribes the negroid, if it be negroid, element crimps it and breaks the lustre which its length should show. The face becomes flat, the jaw juts forth, the lips slobber, the wings of the nose splay out, the bridge of the nose falls inwards. The body loses that upright carriage and lithe alertness of youth, gaining instead a crouched and creeping character. To see an old Sakai walking on a flat road is to see a man out of place. He lifts his legs as if he were still going delicately over briers, logs, leaves and thorns. He carries his arms hanging loosely from the shoulders, without the elbow action common in those who are not always slipping through jungle. The whole body is lurched to a leant-forward poise, with the head well in front. Aremon had not reached this stage. His face was quite light in colour, with smooth rounded cheeks and well-shaped mouth and nose. His body was moulded with that adolescent development of flesh and muscle which is youth's heritage the world over. He went upright, and though small in stature still was

perfectly formed. From his wide-spaced dark eyes looked out a pleased wonderment which gave to his countenance an engaging, because ingenuous, look. Altogether he was a graceful figure. Of his father, Helai the Magician, none of all this could be said. He was of the brutalised type, the far commoner type, and had all its salient points repulsively exaggerated, for he was old, as age goes in the jungle, and he was a wizard. His long assumption of that character had given him a subtle and crafty expression. Plain savagery may be tolerable, but savagery enhanced by a very good opinion of one's occult powers is not to be endured. An arrogant belief in his own influence went hand in hand with Pawang Helai's contempt for every one except himself, and especially his contempt for civilised beings. The old man had had dealings with the various races in the Peninsula, knew something of all of them, even of the white man, and had thrown dust in the eyes of all. He had played on the superstitious Malay. He had traded with Chinese and cheated them, which is really no small achievement; had bargained for timber felling with Tamil overseers and cheated them, which perhaps

is not so difficult; had discussed boundary questions with the white man and successfully misled him. "Simple as tigers, innocent as apes," was Pawang Helai's pet phrase when describing himself and the people he claimed to represent. The picturesqueness of it, the artless jungle imagery of it, the primitive simile in it had often served his deceitful purpose with the white man. A horribly cunning old man was Pawang Helai, adept in guile was he, with a long, long memory and an intelligence keen in evil. But he was strong-minded, and was still a Sakai of the Sakais. He would at times indulge in the taste of spirits and the savour of opium, but he had quite enough sense to know that he must always come back to his jungles and his jungle folk, over whose lesser intelligences he held sway.

These two then peered over the bank at Li Wang in his boat below, Aremon listlessly, as awaiting some order, Pawang Helai with his brain at full stretch, marking, noting, plotting out a design. About and around them all was wrapped the clinging mantle of the chill jungle night. There was no moon, there were no stars,

no faintest glimmer of light from any sky, but above and below them on their bank, and along the opposite bank, came and went the snapping silver-point twinkles of the klip-klip, the fire-flies, who light their little lamps as at a signal, and as at a signal quench the gleam. From the river rose that mysterious glint which betrays water in the blackest night, and where the ripple ran from the sides of Li Wang's boat there rose, red and strange in contrast to the fire-flies' cold glitter, the warm reflection of his lamp. Without a sign, without a word, his tread making no sound, his body not wakening the sleepy rustle of a leaf, Pawang Helai turned and went, followed, with a like stealth, by Aremon. They faded into the jungle. The place that had held them suddenly held them no longer, and they were gone. Li Wang, his ciphering and his counting over, lay down and composed himself to sleep, for he had not seen himself as those others had seen him.

As Aremon had faded from the dim scene, so the scene itself faded from his mind. The stern necessities of the jungle existence, the hard realities of the savage life called aloud to him.

In trapping and in hunting his mind moved. Not so Pawang Helai. The magician, for whose wants Aremon provided, allowed full scope to his thoughts. In his miserable hut, built on piles, a crazy prototype of Malay style, the ground beneath it heaped almost half-way up the posts with a foul litter of refuse, breeding filthy swarms of buzzing flies, he sat, scratching his silvery hide for inspiration. The savour of a leg of monkey simmering in a pot on the fire at the back roused him not. In his mind he considered Li Wang, cursed Li Wang, coveted Li Wang's goods. That he should owe to Li Wang was a commonplace, for were not all the Sakais in debt? But that some of these foolish ones should have taunted him with the Chinaman's hold over him was a bitter thought. He brooded for long, and, without taking any one into his confidence, hatched a perfect plan, thereafter arising and going about his usual business as if his brain held no more speculation than those of his neighbours of the tribe. In company with Aremon he hunted, fished and trapped, sought the products of the jungle and traded them to Li Wang when that murdered

man passed upstream in his boat. When Li Wang, after the lapse of many days, passed down again in his boat, Pawang Helai and Aremon were not in the hut, so Li Wang, mercifully unconscious of his futility, made an entry to the effect that Pawang Helai owed him this and that article of barter and had not paid the same. He then pursued his way downstream, and after an uneventful passage brought up again under the bank near the salt-lick as the twilight died. All day long the thunder had groaned in the distance, and some atmospheric disturbance had given an intenser heat to the sun, so that it blazed without any quality of mercy throughout the afternoon. But when the sun went down, the last restraint on the gathering storm fell with it, and there burst upon the river and the jungle one of those monstrous tempests which are like the pressure of a vast hand, wide-spread and heavy, beating, beating, beating upon the unresisting leafy covering of a wide extent of jungle. It was preluded by a hush, in which all nature seemed to hump its shoulders and shield its face. Nothing moved. Not the lightest little air disturbed a leaf, and if one fell

it did not twirl as it might twirl at any other time. All things waited for the storm. Upon the hush followed a tiny breeze, a gentle, hesitating zephyr, so that the jungle looked about and asked itself, "Can this small thing be the forerunner of the mighty storm?" But upon the tiny breeze followed a going which moved in the tree-tops without impulse from a wind. The banks of heavy foliage, swelling under the bands of the creepers that would hold them, surged like waves, heaved and swayed, strained and panted above their trunks. Far off a hard sound began to rise, and rapidly grew to the heavy volume of noise made by streams of water pouring from a height. The thunder, no longer groaning, increased at once with rapid claps, and at the moment when the darkness was most solid, a crooked arrow of lightning tore the gloom aside, raced across the heavens and hid itself again in a rocking crash of thunder. The storm was overhead and there it stayed. The rain no longer fell pouring from the dark heavens; it hit the jungle with a fierce intent, each spear of water darting to seek its mark upon some leaf as if it had been deliberately aimed and shot

from above. The wind roared, howled, screamed aloud in a passionate fury. The driving of the water and the force of the air swung the trunks of the trees to and fro, the bursting crashes of the thunder set them trembling to their roots. But this chastisement spent itself at last and passed away in the distance, leaving behind a milder visitation in a thick sheet of rain over all the sky. Li Wang's kajang, covering the stern of the boat and the crouching form of Li Wang, had resisted the spears of the rain, for they came down so hard upon it that they shot off again into the river, but the steady downpour of the last of the storm soaked the kajang and soon rendered it a very poor shelter. Li Wang crawled out from under it, and huddling on his coat sat shivering and waiting for the storm to pass. The forked lightning which had ridden in the van of the storm was by this time miles away, and had been succeeded by those silver glares of sheet lightning which turn night into day, and swallow up the kindred gleam of the fire-flies' lamps. Li Wang sat shuddering in the boat, waiting for the rain to pass and wondering if the storm would raise the river on him.

As he sat, there struck suddenly upon his listless ear a gentle rumbling sound, not unlike the purring of a monstrous cat. The jungle is full of noises and the Chinese mind is void of imagination, so Li Wang took no notice. But a sudden rise in the note of the sound, changing it into a snarl close at hand, forced his attention, and with a quick movement he looked up to the bank above him. He saw nothing, for so thick was the blackness of the night that objects close at hand were invisible except when the sheet lightning illumined the scene. The snarl continued, to the dismay of Li Wang, who vaguely thought at last, as a quicker-witted, more timorous, or less Chinese mind had thought long before, of tigers. When there smote upon his nostrils a charnel-house smell, a stench of decay and rottenness, he *knew* that within a few feet of him was a tiger. Can you at all realise the madness of terror which rose in his mind? Have you ever found yourself in deadly instant peril, so instant and so deadly that the brain will not work for you, that you are conscious of nothing but a catching at the heart which stops its beats and paralyses the whole organism of the body?

Have you ever felt that unless this tension snaps you are utterly lost? Do you know the impulse, springing from habit, reason, instinct, or what you will, which rises suddenly within you, sends the burning blood to swell the heart to bursting and—makes you do something, anything, everything but control yourself? Li Wang knew these things in that moment and sprang to cast off his rope. As he did so a sheet of electric fire lit up the bank, and upon it, close to him, he saw the square underjaw, the white throat, the muzzle and the savage eyes of a tiger. The fierce reality at hand overset his balance, he pitched headlong into the river, and from that moment no man saw him more.

With a self-satisfied chuckle Pawang Helai shook himself back from the likeness of a tiger to the likeness of a man, and grinned a sardonic smile at Aremon.

"The Chinese will be drowned in the river," said Aremon. "His body will be eaten by the fish or the crocodile or the big lizard."

"Good!" said Pawang Helai, beneath his breath in the grunted speech of the Sakai, continuing with an undertone of mirth, "This foolish

person being in haste fell into the river and is gone to trade with the fish, leaving his gear and goods behind."

"Why did you change to the tiger shape?" asked Aremon.

"Peace," replied the magician. "Am I not a pawang?"

Aremon, always in awe of his father, said no more, and the old Sakai clambering down the bank possessed himself of Li Wang's store of notes and silver. The books he threw into the river, where the water soon reduced the soft Chinese paper of them to a pulp which the stream dispersed, leaving no trace behind. The boat they sank by the simple process of tipping her until she subsided in the deep pool by the bank, but Aremon, with the foolish, unforeseeing acquisitiveness of the savage, possessed himself of a pair of pale blue silk Chinese trousers which he found in the boat.

. . . . . .

"I did a considerable amount of travelling during the month and was able to visit the Sungei Suang and the Sakai tribes along its banks. These people seldom see any officer of Govern-

ment or indeed any one else. The Chinese boat pedlars do not seem to trade along this river, for Pawang Helai, the headman of the tribe, told me that only one Chinese came there, and that at very irregular intervals. Even he has not been seen for some months, and he has probably found the locality unremunerative. I noticed, however, some cloths and cheap goods such as the Chinese sell these people, and asked the penghulu whether Pawang Helai could be believed. The penghulu said that there had never been anything against him, and that for years he had been headman here. Pawang Helai has a reputation as a pawang locally, and the Malays with me were evidently somewhat afraid of him."

(*From the monthly report of the District Officer, Kuala Suang.*)

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The boat lazed down the stream, poled and paddled as occasion served, and under the kajang roof sweated the District Officer. The glare from the water hit at his eyes, striking up between the top of the gunwale and the edge of the kajang awning. The sandflies bit him by day and the mosquitoes by night. At no time

did the insect pest cease from troubling. The boat moved slowly and so peacefully that the D.O., even though he knew full well that this was the quickest way, and that time so spent was better spent than in writing with a pen, was, in a sub-conscious way, feeling guilty of "wasting his time." Flying swiftly from point to point in a motor-car, panting along on a bicycle, are so ingrained in a man nowadays that he chafes at the solemn progress of a large boat and a Malay crew. But though one may enrich other people quickly, by administering quickly, one does not grow wise quickly. The littlest whisper in the slowest boat may make for knowledge as much as the loudest blare of horn in the swiftest motor-car. The advantage of a boat is that you hear the conversation of the boatmen. There is nothing else to hear except the rush of a rapid or some bird calling on the bank. So when Mat Seh began to wander along a desultory path of talk with Mat Som, the D.O. followed them.

They yarned and yarned and at length "The Tuan saw too," said Mat Seh.

"I also saw," said Mat Som, "and smiled

not a little in my heart. Like a monkey dressed up! Looked like silk, Chinese wear."

This ridiculous comment hanging mysteriously, unexplained in the midst of uninteresting, part-heard talk roused the D.O. to ask, "Who was wearing what?" to which Mat Seh replied, "That Sakai youth wearing blue silk trousers, Tuan."

The D.O. nodded and said nothing, but across his mind went, "Where the devil did he get them?"

. . . . . .

Ah Tai was perturbed. Trade was bad. Absurd that a financial crisis in America should reach the Chinese Ah Tai in a Malay village in the jungles, but so it was. There was no business doing. Mines had closed down. Most respectable people "were no longer," as the Malays put it. Everything stagnated, and Ah Tai's turn-over stagnated too. So he bethought him that Li Wang owed him money. The depression could not have reached the Sakai and Li Wang's debt must still be safe. Yet it was annoying that when Ah Tai wanted him Li Wang was not. This, and his position in the rather large village

which was called the town, gave Ah Tai to think. He thought for long, for days, and for weeks. But Li Wang came not. Therefore Ah Tai with his heart in his mouth went to the Government Office and saw the Chinese Clerk of Courts, a personage who was clerk of at least nine other things as well. Ah Tai pitched to the clerk a very burdensome tale of which the long and short was that Li Wang owed money to Ah Tai.

"Yes, yes," said the Clerk of Courts, "I know. Which do you want? Summons? Execution before judgment? Arrest before judgment? 'Konglah!'" the usual Chinese for "speak up (and let me get on to something else)."

As Ah Tai did not want to sue Li Wang, but merely to find out what had become of him, he prevaricated to such an extent that the Clerk of Courts and other things asked him, "Do you wish to see the Magistrate?"

"Ho, ho, ho," replied Ah Tai, from which it being inferred that he did so wish, he was thrust with little ceremony into the presence of the District Officer, who was Magistrate and everything else that any one can ever be anywhere.

In the presence Ah Tai deserted his native tongue and made shift with Malay, mixed with Chinese, and horribly accented. The District Officer extracted from him in this jargon the main fact that Li Wang had disappeared and that Li Wang's beat was the Sungei Suang.

"Go, and in ten days return again," he ordered, and Ah Tai retired.

The next step in the investigation brought in the Sergeant, a Malay named Che Dul, not unreasonably intelligent, but gifted with the faculty of arresting first and inquiring afterwards, which, after all, is what you want in the wilds. To whom the District Officer said, "When do you go up the Sungei Suang?"

The Sergeant replied, "To-morrow."

"Good," said the District Officer. "Li Wang the pedlar is lost. You can look for him. He trades with the Sakai. Ask them. A Chinese has complained that this Li Wang has not come back and owes him money. But he does not ask for a summons and perhaps he knows something. Ask him."

Che Dul saluted and went out. That night he cross-questioned Ah Tai, but soon found that

he knew nothing except that Li Wang traded in certain goods with the Sakai.

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The police-boat lazed up the stream. The "all-eyes," as the Malays call a policeman, lounged all over it. Their tunics were open, and, horrible to relate, their belts were undone. Discipline, in short, was relaxed. Even the Sergeant was affected by the prevailing slackness and was wearing an old helmet of civilian pattern, which he found more grateful to the head than the little round cap of regulations.

"How many more bends to Pawang Helai's house?" asked the Sergeant.

"Not many," replied a constable, with a satisfying vagueness. "Curse the water of this river," he went on, "for it strives with us."

Upstream they forced along the boat, and much they regretted the ungentlemanly necessity for such exertion.

"I am told," said the Sergeant, "that in Singapore they use a motor-boat."

"How pleasant for the men of the police," said the constables, and they fell to reflecting on the ease with which pay was earned in Singapore.

At long last, when the day had turned and the sun began to beat less fiercely, the boat grounded on a bank and Pawang Helai's hut was reached.

It was with an unacknowledged diffidence that the Sergeant clambered up the bank and called upon Pawang Helai. But the old magician had seen him coming and was even then, in ostentatious surprise, climbing down the steps, groaning in Malay at intervals, "I am old," followed by, "and also feeble." He made a sketchy but humble obeisance to the Sergeant, who regarded him with a disgustful distrust. Pawang Helai was so very scratchful, and the Sergeant felt that pay was hardly earned when it meant dealing with such a creature, removed as it was, to his mind, from the brute creation merely by the supernatural powers it claimed. As a Sergeant of Police he was *ex officio* bound to make light of the supernatural. As a Malay his traditions held him to believe in them. Muhammadan though he might be by faith, he was, by upbringing, by inheritance, a pagan of the oldest school, steeped by right of race in the superstitions of those who believe in the elder gods.

Discomfortable thoughts rose in his mind as he regarded this high priest of the ancient cult of the land. How could he deny, with no Inspector, no District Officer at his elbow, the powers that this old filthy creature held? But habit came to his rescue for the time and he began to cross-question Pawang Helai, making the while great play with an official notebook, supplied, on indent, to him for record of the doings of the criminals of the district, jungly and otherwise.

No; Pawang Helai knew nothing of Li Wang; had not seen him for long; wondered where he was; observed that Li Wang was an uncertain person; added that people simple as tigers and foolish as monkeys could not be even expected to know anything of Li Wang; wondered that the so intelligent Sergeant should descend to ask of such hopeless people. In fact, he a little overdid it, and the Sergeant, reflecting that men do not turn into tigers by daylight, boldly suspicioned something, he knew not what. Yet, had he been of a stiffer intelligence, it must have cried aloud to him that the Sakai know the jungles and what happens therein. How could

a Chinese, and the only Chinese, have disappeared hereabouts, with his boat, his gear, his debts, his whole pervasive personality and no Sakai know of it? His intelligence was suddenly stiffened by a call from the boat, "Oh, Datoh! Marilah saat" (Come here a moment).

With Pawang Helai in front of him, he returned to the boat and saw standing by it, in the grasp of a very wet constable, Aremon the young Sakai—and Aremon wore a pair of blue silk trousers!

"I knew!" cried the constable excitedly. "Mat Som said so. He suspected. He told me. Silk trousers! *Where does he get them?*"—a damning indictment.

Aremon, seen at a short distance and smartly captured by the constable before he knew what was upon him, smiled foolishly, his appearance not the less full of tragedy for the fact that he wore Li Wang's trousers. Caught by his own vanity and youth, he was strutting in those borrowed plumes, and had been so tickled by the sensation round his thighs that the accustomed caution of his race had deserted him.

"Arrest both," ordered the Sergeant. "Hand-

cuff both," he commanded. "To-night we sleep here and to-morrow at dawn we return down-stream." Arrest first and investigate afterwards is an excellent method at times.

But consider how unfortunate a thing it is to be a policeman spending the night in the very centre of wizardry, guarding the wizard in person. The police grumbled as they unloaded the boat of their rice and food-stuffs, carbines and side-arms, belts and caps. There were so many tales of awe about this hut, of which the chief was that Pawang Helai's familiars, in the shape of tigers, nightly prowled about it and held converse with Pawang Helai. However, there the police all were, and in numbers is courage. So they made the best of it and boldly cursed the wizard for not keeping a better table in a better lodging. The sun went down in a rose and golden glory, and night fell upon the party just as they had made a meal. All of them crammed into the crazy hut, and several were indiscreet enough to throw open doubt upon its capacity to stand upright under the load. To keep each other's courage up, they jested and talked together, until one after another dozed off, except the one who did

sentry. For some half an hour none spoke. Then suddenly the sentry said, "What's that?"

"Where?" asked the Sergeant, with a suspicious readiness not at all that of a sleepy man.

"Outside," replied the sentry.

"Of course outside," said the Sergeant peevishly. "How can anything get in? There is no room."

"That!" ejaculated the sentry, and all heard a distant, dim, yet distinguishable rumble in the far jungle.

"Elephants," said the Sergeant, with the full optimism of officialdom, "certainly elephants."

The sound rose again. It was closer. Also it was obviously not elephant, and equally obviously it was tiger. Not to be put down by any elephant-crying Sergeant a tiger roared again and the police moved uneasily.

"Load," said the Sergeant sharply.

A shuffling clatter succeeded his words as each man's hand reached for his carbine. The handcuffs on Pawang Helai clinked.

"Silence," hissed the Sergeant, and then in a bitter undertone, "Curse the mother of this beast!"

In a swaying rattle came the roar again and then deep silence, cut into contrast by the "scree-scree-scree" of an insect. The hush continued and the lap of the river-water against the stranded boat was plain to be heard. Then—swish, and something passed, brushing through the vegetation outside.

"Ah, God!" called a man, and then again came silence.

Another sudden swish and "There are two," said an uncertain voice, and then, "What shall we do?"

"I shall look out," said the Sergeant.

"Don't open the door, Datoh! Don't be so foolish! Wait! Leave them alone."

"I shall look out," repeated the Sergeant, and rising to his feet he peered through the loose lacing of palm leaves which formed the side of the hut.

"Is it there?" said some one.

"It is dark, very dark," returned the Sergeant.

"Let me see," said another.

With a strained jollity one said, "Even let this cat look."

As he looked there rose from the other side

a grumbling cough, and the police on that side scrambled away from the sound.

"Don't do that," said the Sergeant, "or the house will fall. Curse the mother of this beast," said he, and struck Pawang Helai with the butt of a rifle.

A sudden commotion arose outside and something padded away.

"Another time like that," said the Sergeant menacingly to the Sakai, "and you get your head broken! Send them away, miserable beast!"

In these alarms the night passed. As many times as the tigers approached the hut, so many times did the police blaspheme aloud, and so entirely was Pawang Helai held to account that but for their belief in his power they would gladly have murdered him as he crouched, scratching and whining in their midst. But the tigers delivered no attack, and some of the police at length slept.

When men have passed a night such as this their nerve in the morning is shaken. Shone the sun never so fair, hastened the mists to rise never so quickly, morn yet came slowly to them,

and when its presence was plain to be seen they hesitated to leave even the frail shelter which had shaken to the tiger's roar. With care they undid the feeble lashings of the door and one said, gazing on it, "If last night——!" and eloquently broke off.

"Oh, we had guns," said the Sergeant; but it was he who insisted that Pawang Helai and Aremon should go down first, covered by those same guns. The actual light of day brightening the silver scale on the old Sakai and emphasising the young astonishment in Aremon's eyes—for he still did not realise his predicament—shamed them all into courage. But with courage there came an all-prevailing haste and insistence to be gone from this place of fear. They hustled the prisoners into the boat and in midstream drew breath of relief.

"To Kuala Putus," said the Sergeant, "and we will hand over these Sakai to the Corporal, who shall put them in the lock-up."

To Kuala Putus then they paddled, borne downstream easily with the rush of the river, Pawang Helai and Aremon tied together and coupled to the frame of the boat, lest perchance tigers

should arise from the river-bed and rescue them. It did not slacken the pace of the boat that once they heard a distant roar in the jungle. When the Sergeant suggested "*that* is a different tiger" the "all-eyes" grunted merely. They had their own opinion, and thought only of the stout brick piers on which the Kuala Putus police station stood, and of the satisfying strength of its Chinese-made plank walls and doors. At Kuala Putus the Corporal took over the prisoners, searched them, locked them up, set a guard, and then began to hear all about it. The tale, strange enough in itself, lost nothing in the relation, and in a short time something very like hysteria affected the small population of the police station and the Malay village near which it was placed. The Sergeant placed himself in communication with the authority, here represented by the penghulu, an old gentleman only moderately intelligent and somewhat bewildered with his experiences of an office which assigned to him duties more onerous than its rights were lucrative. The authority did not see its way clear to do anything of much use. He suggested "making report" to the Tuan, two days away

downstream. But what the Sergeant wanted was counsel for the safe-keeping of the prisoners for that one night. As he pressed this point, the authority called in the protection of a shield and buckler in the person of his nephew, officially designated the penghulu's clerk. This youth's sole idea of administration—and it is an idea not wholly foreign to many administrators—was to write upon paper with a pen and ink. So he called upon Che Dul to relate the circumstance at length. No doubt the Sergeant, by himself relating a set of circumstances to a British superior, was usually very fairly intelligible, but on this occasion he had no one to keep him to the point, and several zealous prompters to seduce him from it. People of hasty tempers who want lessons in patience and politeness are recommended to take down quite a plain tale from a Malay amongst Malays. Many years of practice may enable one to do this with fair to average success. The penghulu's nephew had neither years nor practice and his success was very indifferent. However, he succeeded so far as to exasperate the Sergeant beyond endurance, and to impress the audience with a belief that he was

a young man who would go far if he met with reasonable people. The Sergeant they thought was not reasonable. He wanted to do something, whereas what the clerk wanted was to write something. He wrote, eventually, something, and retired to write it all over again as a fair copy. His labours were so prolonged that his counsel did not come to the birth before dark, by which time the Sergeant had decided to take the usual action and follow the prescribed procedure, which is, by a convention recognised officially all the world over, all you should ever do in any conceivable set of circumstances—even in tigerish magical circumstances. He kept, therefore, the Sakai father and son in the lock-up, handcuffed, and over them he set the sentry. The population of the village then barred itself in and the police shut the station up, actions which everybody except the sentry thought very sensible.

It is not true that in the Malayan tropics there is no twilight, any more than it is true that the birds have no song, only scent, or whatever be that hallowed phrase, for there is a time between the setting of the sun and the falling of night

when objects are difficult to distinguish. Also, just at dark, a hush falls upon the air. The daylight noises are stilled, and the night-noisy insects have not begun their clamour. At this hour of the day things seem to brood, and a solid known noise is quite a comfort to a lonely man. The sentry rather wished he had ammunition boots on, for they make a satisfying slap on plank floors. To him, peering out over the rails of the verandah which ran along the front of the police station, well-known objects took strange shapes. He knew that the bullock lying under the coconut palm in the far corner was a stray bullock impounded there, for lack of the regulation pound, now many days. But it loomed mistily against the swollen butt of the palm. No one knew whence it had strayed, or why its yoke-fellow had not strayed with it. But it had been remarked by some searcher after causes that such divorce of pairs of bullocks has been the work of tigers, sometimes. The presence of the bullock meant more sandflies than usual, and the sentry slapped his neck and cursed them. He walked up and down, occasionally looking in at his prisoners in the lock-up by

the light of an inefficient lamp, which doubtless, in a town station, should have been reported as unserviceable and sat upon by a board with a view to condemnation. He sang, too, a whining song of love and the delight thereof, but suddenly broke off to observe that the now shadowy shape of the bullock had risen. He had hardly noted that fact before he heard the beast snort. Immediately on its snort followed a snarl. The bullock stayed not to make reply, but burst its rope and rushed incontinently straight through the bamboo fence round the compound and was gone. The sentry tightened his grip on his carbine and peered forth into the night, seeing nothing. He felt very like giving the alarm, but as he had nothing to point out except that the bullock had departed, and as people do not expect one to pursue after stray bullocks in the dark, he determined to take no notice. Again he paced to and fro and again inspected the two prisoners. Pacing to and fro is sleepy work. The sentry at length came to a halt, leant his carbine in the angle formed by the rail and the post at the head of the steps, and, as he had frequently done before, fell into an attitude of musing. He mused into

drowsiness and drowsed into sleepiness, as many a sentry has done and many will again do. Finally he had a waking or a drowsing vision in which he seemed to open his eyes and look full into the eyes of a tiger at the foot of the steps. The seeming passed, he shook himself and realised that the vision was reality, for he was actually gazing into a tiger's eyes. Like all Malays he was more or less latah, or subject to nerves, and he did what latah Malays do. He stared at the tiger as the tiger stared at him, and when the beast broke the spell by averting its gaze, he broke into a crash of blasphemous and obscene oaths. The tiger slipped back into the dark and the police station and barracks were suddenly buzzing with people inquiring what had happened. The sentry called for help and plenty of it. The Sergeant and the Corporal started up from the floor of the Corporal's room and burst out upon the verandah. A hurried explanation took place. With foreboding at his heart the Sergeant strode to the bars of the lock-up, calling sharply "Heh!" to the prisoners. The light was not good, but it was sufficient to illuminate

the emptiness of the lock-up and to reveal a hole in the floor.

. . . . . .

Somewhere in the jungles Pawang Helai still scratches his silvery hide, and somewhere in the jungles Aremon hunts food for his father still.

II

THE PLACE OF DEATH

"THE children do not like to pass by here after dark, Tuan," said the old Malay with me; "they are afraid."

"Afraid of what?" I asked.

"There are tigers here," said he.

"And this place, what is it? What is this patch of sand in the middle of jungle? The path runs past it, but no one's garden comes up to it. Why does the place lie alone, set apart?"

The old man's face worked as he replied, "It was once the place of death."

Then I fell into a muse and into a thinking. The sun beat down upon the patch of white sand, some twenty yards in diameter, lying in the midst of jungle, like a heap of white powder at the bottom of a green cup. Each separate little flake and grain winked back the sun at me. My

shadow had drawn itself together and lay around my feet. It was high noon. Yet I shivered.

"Under that bush was the place of execution, Tuan. There they knelt for the kris, the long kris which the Tuan knows. Here were the women stoned to death, as the Tuan also knows."

Full well I knew, and bade him be silent awhile. They rose before me, all the brown ghosts of the Malays of the old ancient days before the white man; all the victims of the bitter law of those days, though perhaps many had suffered also in our time had not their lot been cast in the beforetimes. The murderer for revenge, the murderer for pelf, the murderer for woman's flesh, spilling man's blood by man their blood was spilled even here upon the whiteness of this sand. How could it have been? The place was so very lovely; how imagine it the scene of such a gripping horror as the execution by kris? Yet, the longer I stood, the deeper sank into my heart the malign influence of the spot. Soaked with blood it was, and blood cried aloud from the sand. The birds' cries rang in the trees, and echoed the screams of long ago. A squirrel chattered on a branch,

voicing the ghost of a madness of fright. The lizard rattled in his throat as so many had choked into eternity. Would I had never come to this place, for I can see it all as it happened. Here is the girl who thought the world well lost for love. Ah, fool, death grips you! The little hands which fondled your lover are bound with the black ijok rope, the crescent eyebrows which he likened to the young moon are raised to wrinkle with the stare of terror. The eyes that drew him, yet scorned that worthy man, your husband, shall never glance aside again. Call aloud upon your lover, peradventure he will yet save you from the stones, for he has saved himself and added another agony to death, or, so strange is woman, by saving himself has lightened your burden of regret.

A shriek rent the air, so that I started aside.

"It is the launch on the river, Tuan," said the old Malay.

"I thought it was the girl," said I.

"What girl, Tuan?" said he, and looked at me strangely. But I made him no answer.

III

ROMANCE IS DEAD

"AS I told you just now, Tuan, had it not been for the old woman Timah, we could never have managed it, and Sman and I perhaps should not have known the jail here. But Timah was like all our old women. They are fond of money and, having lost their own youth, they like to help adventure still. I never could see much in the girl myself. That was Sman's business, but I could see well enough that Sman wanted her, and what could I do? He was my friend, and he asked me to help him. We had to be careful, very careful. In the old days, as I hear from the old men, we could have done the thing with armed force to fall back on if the stratagem had failed, but nowadays, well, we each had a knife, but it was not meant to be used. People have grown cowards since the white man has

been in the country, and the flourish of a kris will do more now than three ill-directed stabs in the old days. They guarded her well, that girl, and how Sman first managed to see her, he never told me. He said that he had heard that she was worth the attempt, had heard that there was a girl whom they kept guarded, and besides, he had a rivalry with her men, and the abduction would be a deed to cover their faces with shame. So he said ; but there was something deeper than mere love of adventure, though, as I say, I could not see much in the girl. The old woman was some relation of mine, though I did not remember that until we came to think of the plan. As the girl's guardian, she lived in the palace, and had to stay behind when we had succeeded. She wanted to be paid for that, and I am not surprised that she did, but she would have been wise to have come with us. They do things there, Tuan, still, when they are angry. You do not hear, but they do. Still, the old woman cost us much, and, after all, she was old. I am more sorry that they beat us in the end than that she remained there, where they did things to her. We planned it all in Raja Kechil's house, under their noses as it

were, for he was a friend of theirs. But he never suspected anything. Had we not long been his followers and servants? Our greatest point of safety was the number of people there. All round were, as you know, Tuan, little houses of wood and atap, where all his hangers-on lived. It was a big place, his kampong, and planted with fruit-trees, paths from house to house running between them. At night it was very dark, and, like all our kampongs, the place was neglected. It was nobody's business to see it kept clear of undergrowth, so no one troubled, as long as you could get about it by the paths. Sman met the girl first of all as she was coming from one of the small houses in the dark. The old woman Timah was with her, and they were coming back after visiting the girl's aunt. I could hardly see what happened, but the girl must have been prepared by the old woman. The three stood close together, and talked for only a moment, but that was enough.

"We love quickly in this country, Tuan, and a girl shut up by herself—of what else should be her thoughts? When Sman came back to me he seemed dazed, and I got him out of the place as quickly as possible. Where do they get the power,

these women? She made Sman quite foolish, and yet I hear now that she has not waited for him after all. I wonder whether this is true, and if it is, I wonder what Sman will do when he gets out? Perhaps he is less mad now, but he was mad then. It was madness, all of it. But well planned it was, and so successful. We should never have been caught had it not been for the white man's police. Yet I hold them guiltless, for how shall they not believe a man who swears his attendants have fled up to the Protected States with his watch and much money in dollars and notes? If he swears it on oath and others confirm the same, how shall they not act on the information? And if the watch was found on Sman, who knew the truth, that Raja Kechil gave it to him? They would not believe that, and of course Raja Kechil denied it. We chose a dark night, and the old woman arranged for the girl to visit her aunt again. No one there ever thought that on such a short journey, and within the precincts of a palace kampong, a girl could be spirited away.

"It all turned out successfully. They went to the house, and sat there talking for an hour, we listening outside. Sman muttered to himself, so

that I was ever nudging him to keep silence. At last we heard them rise to go, and then we thought, "What if some one accompanies them back?" If so, we should have put it off to another night. The old woman came down the steps first. We saw her ugly feet on the rungs of the wooden steps. Then came the girl. Her feet were very small and she had gold anklets, and Sman clutched me by the arm till it hurt me. Her aunt stood on the top of the steps, and said something about the darkness and there not being very far to go. As they went, we took another path, and met them at the crossing. Sman was first, and the girl flung herself at him, sobbing hardly, and there was some ado to get the two along the path to the outside. I think they had forgotten the old woman and myself. At the road we left the old woman, and she ran back, and getting to the path, began to scream that the girl was gone. That was part of the plan. We saw lights flashing behind us, and fled along the road till we got to where the gharry was waiting, and we drove into the town without pursuit. They had no idea which way we had gone, and the old woman was half hysterical when they found her. The steamer sailed the

next morning, and it took a day to get up the coast to the port for which we aimed. During the night we stayed in the town, and I hear that Raja Kechil never thought of inquiring where we were. We got on board safely in the morning and the vessel started. We thought ourselves safe, but we forgot the telegraph. The police were waiting, and they arrested us. The girl came too. They kept us in the lock-up that night, and the next morning they let us go. They said they had no grounds for keeping us longer. So we went to the house of Sman's friend and were there two days, thinking we were safe. But one of Raja Kechil's servants had been sent up to identify us, and they arrested us again. You were the Magistrate that time, Tuan, and you sent us back. What could you do, you did not know all? I wonder how Sman felt when the girl clung to him in the police station, and the two were forced apart for him to be taken back? She loved him then, and yet they tell me she has forgotten. It is six months since then. Can they forget in six months? I pray Allah that I be not struck with Sman's foolishness, but he was my friend, what could I do? I am glad

you came to see me, Tuan, for now you know the truth. But Sman will not trouble to prove it.

"You know our saying, Tuan:

"High are the rushes, but higher the corn,
Grains from the ear by the birds are torn,
Long though the month and long though the year,
Longer the memories I hold dear.

"And the other:

"Let not the plant be overgrown, but early prune it back,
'Tis better it be branchless, lest heavy boughs do crack;
Let not my love be long away. The proverb says aright,
'Where'er you see fruit ripening the birds will be in sight.'"

IV

THE HALLUCINATIONS OF MAT PALEMBANG

MAT PALEMBANG is a coolie on a coffee estate, and was found one day a quarter of a mile from the road at the foot of a kompas tree, with his right thigh fractured and severe cuts on his head.

What follows is his account of how he got there :

"Two days ago I finished my work at two o'clock in the afternoon, and I went to the coolie lines with the rest of my gang as usual. When we got there we found the midday meal prepared, and all of us took rice. Afterwards we lay down and went to sleep. I had not been long asleep when I heard the door of the lines open, and, looking up, I saw my father standing in the doorway. My father died in the month

of Ramthan three years ago. He was an old man, and, having nothing to do, he insisted on keeping the fast that month with more severity than any one else thought necessary. So strict was he in his fasting that he became very ill, and at length returned to meet the infinite mercies of Allah. Knowing, then, that he had died in the full promise of everlasting bliss, I was not afraid when I saw him standing in the doorway of the coolie lines, and I spake to him, saying, 'O father of mine, what is thy desire, and what may thy son do for thee?'

"He answered, 'My son, I have been permitted to return and hold speech with thee, seeing that I died during the performance of a just act and one imposed on all true believers. The one God, of whom Mahomet was the prophet, has allowed me to come and visit thee in order that thou, being the son of a just man, mayest be yet more desirous of following the precepts. Come therefore with me, and we will again partake of food together, as we did while I was yet upon the earth.'

"Hearing, then, these words of my father, I rose up from the mat on which I was lying, and

passed through the doorway, arousing none of the others who were sleeping. Sound they slept and heavy, for the eye of the white man had been upon them during the day, and did one so much as miss a single weed below the coffee bushes, greatly would the white man swear at him. Strange it is that the white man, though he be not able to speak our language well, can yet use hard words in our tongue with fluency as great as any of our own people. But of the white man it is not well to reason, seeing that Allah has afflicted all his race with madness.

"I followed, then, my father, and he led me through the coffee, following no path, but ever walking onwards. And at length, weary of much walking, I spake to him and said :

"'O my father, whither art thou leading me, and where is the house of that man with whom we shall eat rice ? '

"Then did my father turn upon me, saying, 'Is it not enough for thee that thou shouldst have been called to follow me, and yet dost thou desire to ask me whither I am going ? Do thou follow and I will lead.'

"Then was I silent, fearing my father. So at

length we passed through the coffee and came to the jungle. Now this was high jungle, never yet cut, and thorns were many in it. Yet my father passed through it, caring not for the thorns, nor for the long creepers, nor for the marshy places. And where he passed over lightly, my feet sank in, yet never did I lose sight of him, nor did he ever seem to be at a loss to find his way. And when we had gone some little distance, I saw that my sister had joined him, she who was Haji Nor's wife and died in childbirth, in spite of all that the doctors of our people could do with prayers and incantations.

"It was of her that the white man, my master, said that if she would have consented to see the white doctor who lived in the town, both she and the child had certainly lived. Allah is all-great. It was her destiny to die in childbirth, and how should the white man's doctor have helped her?

"As she walked beside my father, with the child in her arms, I spake to her and said, 'Sister, knowest thou that thy husband has married another?'

"Then said she, 'Nay, I knew it not; but let him marry four wives, never will he get a man-

child fair and strong as this which I am carrying in my arms.'

"Whereat I marvelled, seeing that the child she bore with her was small and had never sucked the breast, and both had been dead ten years. But I said nothing, knowing that it was not well to come between a woman and her children. And having gone a space farther, there joined us my brother, he who fell into the river and was caught by the crocodile. To him I spake, saying:

"'Brother, how is it that the crocodile seized thee in the presence of many, and yet upon thy body are no marks?'

"Then said he, 'Brother, knowest thou not that the crocodile killed me not? And knowest thou not that having seized me in the water and dragged me below, he raised me again above the surface, to testify that it was not he who caused my death but the water of the river?'

"Then I bethought me of the ancient saying amongst our people that the crocodile which seizes a man will ever bring him again alive to the surface, as evidence to all men that blood-guiltiness is not upon the crocodile but upon the

water. Yet spake I again to my brother, saying :

" ' How is it that I see no marks of teeth upon thee, seeing that the crocodile seized thee with his great teeth ? '

" Then said my brother, ' Very gently did the crocodile seize me and hurt me not at all, and having lifted me again to the surface, he sank again below, and bore me away to his haunt, wedging my body beneath a holt deep down below the bank of the river. There did I die, gasping for breath, yet not dying from the bite of the crocodile. And after many days did the crocodile come, and chasing away the fish that gnawed at my body swallowed it in pieces, and thereafter lay ten days taking no food. Yet at the end he incurred misfortune, being taken on a bait and dragged to the bank, and his limbs being bound with rattan, he was put into a boat and was brought to the white magistrate, who shot at him with a gun, wounding him in the head so that he died.' Then I knew that the words of my brother were true, for it was I who obtained the reward from the Government, paying therewith my debt to the mandor, and the rent

of my land to the Government, and buying a new sarong with what remained.

"Now when we had gone some way within the jungle we came to a large tree, a kompas tree of great girth, standing by itself. Beneath it the jungle grew not, for it had killed all lesser things. Below this tree stood my father, and turned to me, saying :

"'Son, we are now at the house wherein thou and I and these others will eat rice. Follow me, therefore, up the steps of this house, for those within await our coming.' But I, seeing the great tree only and no steps, knew not of what my father spake, yet because he was my father I said nothing. So he moved towards the great kompas tree and set foot upon it, and so, one foot above the other, and one hand above the other, he stepped up the trunk of the tree, as one climbs a coconut palm. From the top he called me and said :

"'Son, do thou also come up hither, staying not for an invitation, since this man is a friend of mine, and has prepared rice that we may eat.'

"So I set myself to the climbing of the tree, little doubting that I could not climb and should

fall to the ground again. Yet I went up as my father had done, and my brother and my sister followed, she coming last with the child.

"At the top the great branches spread, and upon them was a house, and in the midst of it bowls of rice and food prepared, and many strangers seated thereat. So I took my place among the rest and sat down. The women amongst them handed us water and we cleansed our hands, and the rest set themselves to eat. Then came a great fear upon me, and I thought within my heart :

"'How shall I eat with these people, and are they not all ghosts of those who are long returned to the mercy of Allah ? Surely if I eat with them, I also am but a ghost, and can never more return to earth, but must live here upon the tops of the jungle.'

"Thus I ate not, but sat staring upon the food, fearing greatly. So one called upon my father, saying :

"'Thy son eats not. Doth he fear poison in the food, or what is it that he will not eat ?'

"And my father questioned me and said, 'Hast thou indeed no desire for food ?'

"I answered, 'Truly, my father, I am not hungry, and desire not food.'

"Then said he, 'Evil, worthless son! Shall I bring thee to eat rice within the house of this my friend, and wilt thou shame me by refusing? Eat, then, lest I be angry with thee.'

"Yet I would not eat, saying, 'Nay, my father, I am not hungry.'

"Then said he, 'Eat, evil son, but a handful of rice, and it is well, and if thou wilt not eat, I myself will hurl thee from the house, so that thou shalt fall heavily to the ground below.'

"So I looked upon the faces of the company, and was afraid. For now they were not as when I entered the house; but my brother's face was gnawed by the teeth of the fish, and his body was scarred by the marks of the teeth of the crocodile. My sister was white, and deadly to look upon, and the child was as if it had never breathed. The body of my father was thin, and his face was drawn, and there was no substance of flesh upon him. Old and feeble was he when he died; old and feeble looked he now. Moreover, the company sitting round the food I feared, seeing that one was marked with the tiger's paw,

and the flesh of his face hung in strips, and the head of another was crushed as if a tree had fallen upon him. None were there who did not glare upon me, so that I screamed aloud and cried:

"'Never will I eat the food of the dead, by dead hands prepared, and deadly in the taste, lest I too become as ye are, and never walk upon the earth again.' Then they with one accord rose upon me, seized me with their hands, and pushed me screaming from the edge. Falling, I saw them gibber from the tree-top, mouthing and cursing at me, and I struck the ground, lying as dead. Two days I lay beneath the tree, and ever they threatened me, and at length by chance came woodcutters, who bore me away, so that now I lie in the hospital and the white doctor will cure my leg."

V

WITHOUT BENEFIT

IT had been arranged that the local headman and I should go up the river on a certain day to see a distant settlement, most easily reached by water. The arrangements for our transport were left to him, and a few days before the proposed excursion he told me that a certain sampan owner had agreed to take us. The matter being thus settled, it was with surprise that I heard the headman re-open the subject later by the brief statement, "We cannot go on Wednesday." Inquiry elicited the information that the owner of the sampan being dead, another suitable boat could not at present be found. The manner of the man's death was, of course, irrelevant, the fact of its occurrence being alone of importance; but an idle curiosity into this sudden taking off prompted the question,

"How did he die?" For answer came the very sufficient explanation, "A crocodile has eaten him." The correlations of the East are constant; and though the Malay Peninsula is hardly within a hail of Gilead, there is still in this, a common explanation of a sudden death, a flavour of the old Biblical phrase, "An evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." There was nothing very remarkable in the happening: people are frequently taken by crocodiles in this river, and it does not even bear such a bad reputation in this respect as other streams in the Peninsula. The man had just been knocked out of his sampan as he sat in the stern thereof paddling; the occurrence did not lack witnesses, who averred that he was twice lifted out of water by the crocodile, as one has seen a pelican shift a captured fish. But such a death never fails to evoke what may be called a local fury; not alone the dead man's relatives, but all the neighbourhood express themselves in no measured terms when speaking of the evil man-eating beast, and the chase is ever hot for a few days. Sampans, their occupants braving a like fate, shoot out

upon the surface of the stream, and a prolonged search is made both up and down its course, if, peradventure, the corpse has been insecurely wedged below the surface, or has been carried away to float with the tide. If recovered, it is buried with due rites, to the satisfaction of a simple piety; even if the search is unsuccessful, all that is possible has been done.

But, as apart from the recovery of the murdered water-sodden corpse, there is the punishment of the murderer to be considered. To this end it is usual to call in the services of a pawang, the harmless, necessary wizard of Malaya. He sets the alir, the bait and hook so often deadly to the greedy crocodile, and if it is taken he gets the credit; if it is contemptuously disregarded by the beast, he does not appear much disconcerted. In this particular instance the bait was duly taken by a crocodile, and there was little doubt in native circles that the magic of the wizard had arranged that the right crocodile was caught. That there are many crocodiles in a river was acknowledged, but your wizard will not allow that any chance, common, or wandering crocodile takes the bait set for the murderer.

It is not hunger that moves the beast to gorge the fowl or its hook; spells have their power, if properly applied by the initiate; and it is not becoming to treat the science of magic with disrespect.

Moreover, once make fun of Malay beliefs, and you will know no more about them for ever. So when this crocodile was caught, a mile up the river, there was not a little curiosity to see him when he had been towed down to the ferry where the river is crossed. He arrived there, of course, three-parts drowned, for when a crocodile is suspected of murder, it is not necessary to treat him with care. The brute had fought with his captors, even at that disadvantage, so that they had hacked him with parangs and severed the more important sinews. When they called me to go down and see him, the sight of the captive brute, now so helpless, formerly so dreadful in his cunning hunger, gave me distinct pleasure. It is seldom that civilised man nowadays confesses that he is glad to see an animal in piteous case; but it requires a peculiar delicacy of sentiment, and an overflowing wealth of humanitarian impulses, to make a

man who lives on a river in Malaya feel pity for a crocodile. So many human lives already to the count of the race, so many feeble old men knocked off logs whilst bathing, so many a woman, so many children caught and killed in small backwaters, ay, to my knowledge taken from the bank, so many young and lusty fellows, in life's prime, as was the sampan owner, swept from their boats, all these suddenly cut off from the bright light of day, the sad remembrance of them rouses me to a hatred of the crocodile. The sight of a crocodile tied and bound will always bring trooping into present memory the pale shades of those who have served to provide the hurried meal of the prisoner's family, a meal in which he himself has probably participated, for few crocodiles have the luck to dine alone. They are like sharks in that respect, of a horrible gregarious voracity.

The little life and power for harm left in our present capture was soon shot out of him by a police rifle, and as soon as the body had been dragged up from the water a solemn dissection was begun. The operator, or investigator-in-chief, was a Chinese pressed into the service

from the neighbouring market. He was a pig-slaughterer by trade, and handy with his tools. With the cultured precision of a master-hand, the slaughterer of pigs began his work. The day was hot and breathless. The sun beat down upon the river-water, and the river threw the rays up into our faces. A crowd surrounded the crocodile, and at least five nationalities had contributed to swell the gathering. The babel of tongues would have been strange had one not been accustomed to hear people speak and not wonder what they were saying. Such is the incurious attitude which must be of necessity adopted in the more populous parts of Malaya. The first incision made, there smote upon the nostril the dead crocodile smell. The Chinese pig-slaughterer, with the callousness of his trade, produced and held up something which looked like human hair. The question was decided against the realists by a Malay, who declared it to be the fibre of a certain jungle palm. Why the crocodile should have eaten such stuff can only be explained by reference to the known voracity of his kind.

The edge of expectation had been whetted

by this disappointment, and the Chinese was eagerly watched. This time he fished up a rounded, thin piece of something. "That is Dolah's skull," confidently declared a Malay spectator. What intimate acquaintance with Dolah prompted him thus to recognise the piece of skull did not appear; and when some one else, after handling the relic, declared with authority, "This is a piece of tile," the identifier of Dolah's skull retired in some disorder. Next came to the light of day a handful of bones, and, horror of it all, white and shining teeth. My nerves began to fail me; I could not longer stand and see the frail relics of a fellow-man thus loathsomely exhibited. The exclamations of the crowd recalled me to myself: "Certainly these are the bones, and also are these the teeth, of Dolah. Let them be collected." Some one tendered a handkerchief, which the Chinese refused to use. Then the crowd and the dead man's relatives became annoyed. "Why should this Chinese person thus wantonly refuse to gather up the poor remains?" Interrogated, he smiled inscrutably, yet with a superior air, and he continued to hold the bones and teeth in

his hand. At last, forced by insistent clamour into action, he rose from his knees and said, "These be not bones of man, but pigs' bones." With an open and a natural incredulity, the crowd howled at him that he knew nothing of such things, and it took some time to get the man a hearing; when, with a strong insistence, a final clinching of his former statement, he said simply, "Am I not a pig-slaughterer by trade?" Then we were convinced. To the Malays, had they had the European susceptibility of sentiment, it should have been most horrible thus hastily to have committed themselves to such an identification, to have claimed as the bones of a follower of Islam the foul remains of a swine. But they have not yet had such delicacies grafted into their present system, and no one felt more than a desire to laugh, and no one resisted, so that the place, lately full of protesting sounds, echoed with their cachinnation. With this still ringing in my ears I went away, not a little thankful for the relief of feeling.

VI

THE ROOM OF THE CAPTAIN

THIS strange loss, in calm weather, seemingly about midnight, gave to Mr. MacKenzie, the first mate, or, as our latest use prefers to call him, the Chief Officer, the command of a ship. A Scot well on in years, with grown sons and daughters, MacKenzie, though of good report and deemed worthy to command by all who knew him, had never captained a ship. He had been three years in the *City of Fortune*, bearing with the humours of her commander as discipline enjoined, and now, following on the self-slaughter of his superior, the command came to him. It was his first. The post for which, through long years, he had hoped, worked, maybe prayed, could not have come unwished, but the manner of its coming was startling. Few sailors would

view without some natural misgiving the outlook forced on him. To take the place of a man who had left it without a sign was to him, as it might be to many, a troubling thought. Had the Captain cut his throat, leaving bloodstains on the deck not readily to be rubbed away; had he hanged himself in the dark, and so given a shock to who first switched on the light; had he even gone mad openly, flung overboard, sinking before a boat could reach him—any or all these would have left a very different impression on the minds of MacKenzie and the ship's company. But the Captain had done nothing of these. He had gone, leaving no trace. No clay-cold body lay behind to betray the manner of his taking off. He had gone in the flesh, as it were. Spirit and body had together taken leave of his shipmates before they were aware of the loss. While the body was not to be found, could the same be said of the spirit? So at least was how they all looked at it.

The ship was searched, fore, aft, and amidships. Her dark caverns and her lighted spaces were fruitlessly reviewed. Nothing bettered the first belief that the Captain had gone overboard.

The mate, certain, by search, that the Captain, whether dead or alive, was no longer on board, took command, yet with misgiving. Struggling with his common sense, with his religious upbringing, with the mental result of the trials of a hard life, came and went the flickering thought that the Captain might be back again. It was, as he said to himself, time and again, "fair ridiculous" to harbour such a thought, and he put it from him strongly. It came back. With it came seven devils worse than itself in the shape of all strange stories of men who had died, yet walked to vex the living. The ship wanted some weeks to port, and he had to command her. There was no way out of it. But what he called respect for the dead did not allow Mr. MacKenzie to take the Captain's cabin at once. He retained his own for two nights. But at the end of that time he gave orders to have the Captain's belongings shifted and himself took the empty room. The change was made, and, after his watch was relieved, MacKenzie stood in the Captain's room before turning in. Looking at the bunk, he could not hold the foolish thoughts flitting through his brain. He tried, against his

will, to recall how the Captain slept. Was it on his right side, or left? Did he use a bolster and pillow, or pillow only? Why was the switch for the light at the foot of the bunk? What was the Captain thinking when he last laid himself down to sleep? What when he last rose up? Was there anything in the room which made people walk in their sleep? Would he, MacKenzie, walk in his sleep—overboard, perhaps, like the Captain? The useless, yet troubling triviality of these thoughts was with him as he lay down, and that night he had no sleep at all.

But he saw nothing of the Captain.

The habit of being commanded had been driven into MacKenzie through all his sea-faring life; and other life, save as a small boy, he had had none. There are some will envy the life of a sailor who sees so much. Alas! and many of them feel it, they see so little. Big and large, all ports are one to their view. The entrances alone are not alike; some are easy, some difficult; but once alongside, or riding at anchor, or swinging to a buoy, the last port is like to the first. Indeed some sailors will tell you that the

only change is in the colour of the people who work the cargo. And this is the more true of the great ocean-going steam-vessels which run to time, which must be at Colombo this week, at Singapore the next, and on again elsewhere the week after. Laziness and lying long in harbour are not for them. They must run to time, haste being no virtue and delay a vice. The time of the officers when in port is the ship's, not their own, and this is most the case with all below the rank of Captain. MacKenzie, then, had little knowledge of aught save his ships, on which he had ever been the commanded. Now he was in command. He had thought over it often, distrustfully wished for it. Here it was his, the ruling of others. MacKenzie, not the first man of his kind, would have been fit enough to command if he had never been a captain of a ship. And if the thought of responsibility in being so weighed upon him, how should he combat ghostly terrors?

Also he was getting on in years, so that the weight of the charge now his was not lightened by the spring of youth, or carried easier by the steadied habit of middle age. But as he said

to himself, he had to go through with it, and he was aware that the eyes of the others, his officers, were upon him to see how he should acquit himself. Not that they envied him. He might sleep in the "old man's" bunk for them; indeed, for them he was kindly welcome to it; for not a man amongst them but would have preferred his own. Their behaviour showed it. The would-be careless asking, "Slept well, Sir?" in other times the mere politeness of usual inquiry, took on a sinister tone, as of who should follow on the answer, "Quite well, thank you, Mr. Jexsom," with "More than I should!" if he dared. The talk amongst them set steadily in the direction of strange takings off. Each capped the story of other with story more disturbing still, but in the company of their Captain out of due season other topics were broached. So that MacKenzie's mind rested not from following the one train of thought, "What had become of the Captain?" or rather, seeing that this was fruitless, all possible search having been made, the question in his mind was, "Would the Captain be back again?" The mere folly of such a haunting thought gave it power, for it is

of the essence of superstition that it should have rule over the impossible, making the " not-to-be " into the " to-be."

The ship ran on ; all worked together as usual ; the screw churned and watches were relieved, time bringing, for three days, no incident to vex MacKenzie. So that he took courage and said to himself that it was reasonable enough for a man to feel queer at first, and the feeling had worked off. But this did not last. On a night of calm, about two in the morning, MacKenzie woke with a start, and putting hand to shoulder felt a dampness. He rose and, switching on the light, took off his flannel jacket and looked at it. It had a patch of wet just on the shoulder, seeming as if some one with a wet hand had gripped him as he lay sleeping. He hurried out and, calling the officer of the watch, inquired whether all was well, receiving in reply, " A calm night, Sir, and no lights in sight." MacKenzie went back and, sitting on the edge of the bunk, thought. Now that he was thoroughly awake, he was sure that he still felt a grasp, or the feeling left by what had been a grasp, on his shoulder. A grasp by a wet hand ! " And who should it be," thought

he, "save——" But he put that thought from him, and cutting off the light again retired to bed, not happy in his mind. Yet he said nothing about it.

The next night the same thing happened, and on his again springing out of bed his feet lit in a pool of water on the floor, gradually spreading in the dark stain on the carpet. Beside it was another pool, "for all the world," he thought, "as if some one dripping wet had stood there." His jacket was wet. He looked up at the ceiling, wondering what, of things of this world, might have caused it. Rain? But the decks were dry. A bucket of water upsetting overhead? But there were no buckets above him. Moreover, there was no drip on the ceiling. He changed the jacket, and next day, feeling that the mystery was too much for him, he took the new Chief Officer aside and entrusted the matter to him. "You might," said that worthy, "have been a-dreaming."

"How could I have dreamed?" said MacKenzie. "Why, when I got up, there was the jacket."

"Was it wet?" said the chief.

"It was that," answered MacKenzie.

"Sweat, perhaps," ventured the chief.

"Sweat!" said MacKenzie scornfully. "This is not the Red Sea nor yet the Indian Ocean."

"Ah!" said the Chief Officer; and being a man of one idea at a time held off from further ventures.

"I don't understand it at all," pursued MacKenzie.

"He never had any grudge against you, had he?" asked the chief.

"Who?" said MacKenzie.

"Why, the Captain," replied the chief.

"The Captain's dead, man," said MacKenzie.

"Just so," said the chief.

MacKenzie turned on his heel and left his officer feeling that he had said the right thing at the wrong moment, or, as he said afterwards, hit the right nail on the wrong head.

MacKenzie stumped up and down the deck, raging inwardly. So that was what they were all thinking, and the chief had the nerve to put it into words! He would show them that he would have none of it. Getting his officers together, he told them that he would not have

the late Captain mentioned. One more courageous than the rest ventured, "But we never have mentioned him to you, Sir." "Well, see that you don't," answered MacKenzie, and let them go. Then he raged again to himself, knowing he had betrayed a weak man's bearing. His officers scattered, but met each other later with grins, when the third told a funny story of how he had known a dog betray a theft of meat "by looking as if he hadn't."

Thus every night MacKenzie suffered, for custom bred no measure of contempt. Rather the eeriness of it grew upon him. The Captain, or what he had every reason to suppose the Captain, materialised slowly. The wetness on MacKenzie's shoulder grew wetter, the pools on the floor more pronounced. Besides these outward proofs, his shoulder ached after a while from the growing strength of the grasp. One night he thought he heard a voice, leapt up, ran to the bridge, and asked if any one had called him. But no one had called. He retired cursing, and mopped up the wet stains as well as he could, not wishing the matter to get abroad in the ship.

The night after that he clearly heard a voice,

and the words were the prosaic order, "Come out of that!" To the voice he could not, on that night, have sworn, but the next night it was clearly the voice of the Captain. MacKenzie cursed his luck, his senses, his ship, and his trade, chewing with bitterness the cud of the sailor's scoff, "Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea?"

His nerves fell to pieces. One night he roared out, "What in hell do you want?" which brought down a quartermaster with, "Did you call, Sir?" MacKenzie swore at the man. Afterwards he thought upon the sin of foul swearing and cursing, wondering whether the provocation would excuse him. He took to reading the Bible before he turned in, but this made no change, nor was it a salve to the bruise on his shoulder, neither did it dry up the wet stains on the floor. At last he could stand it no longer, so that, confessing defeat, he left the Captain's room and slept a night in his own cabin, saying, as if by chance, that the rats were bad in the Captain's room. The next morning curiosity drove him thither. The place showed no sign of a visit from the spectre. The bunk had not been slept in. So the following night he enticed the ship's cat into

the room, where he locked it in. In the middle of the night a quartermaster let it out. MacKenzie, not finding it the next morning, asked who had let out the cat he had locked into the Captain's room to catch the rats with which it swarmed. He happened to ask the quartermaster, and the man replied :

" That cat, Sir, 'ee made sich a noise with a-'owling and a-screaming, as we couldn't 'ear nothin' on the bridge, so I let the brute out, Sir. An' beggin' your pardon, Sir, I never 'eard the Captain speak of rats in his room either."

" Damn the Captain," swore MacKenzie ; " you are all crazed on the Captain."

" Yessir, certainly, Sir," said the quartermaster, and withdrew.

The end of it was that MacKenzie gave up the attempt, and when the ship reached Liverpool he refused the offer of the owners to make him Captain " in the room of " the dead man. That was the turn of speech they used, and it put an edge on MacKenzie. He answered :

" Thank you, gentlemen, but I have always been the chief, and I don't know that I want the command."

The owners looked surprised, but, supposing he had reasons of his own, they put in another man. They were right. MacKenzie had reasons, but did not wish to show them. The new man came aboard and took over. When MacKenzie told the story to him:

"Well," said he (he was a youngish man), "I never saw the man and he never saw me, and I shan't worry over his loss, seeing that I have a family to keep."

Nor did he, and MacKenzie—well, MacKenzie does not know what to think, save that he is more comfortable as chief than he ever was as Captain.

VII

AH HENG

A ROLLING waste of plain, covered with the stiff and useless lalang grass, the air above it dancing in the shimmering haze, the soil below it wretchedly unproductive—such was the place where Ah Heng elected to make his garden. He was three miles from the town, and any produce had to be carried in two Chinese baskets, slung at the ends of a carrying-stick, balanced on Ah Heng's shoulders. But the land was cheap. He squatted on it and no one said him nay : only a very weary and very white Government official came once a year, and took two dollars from him as the price of his tenancy. Ah Heng always made him welcome, smiled a Chinese smile at him, protested that he had no money, offered him a Chinese cigarette, wore him out with protesta-

tions, watched him go away, allowed the white man's followers to take a few sticks of sweet sugar-cane, and then ran after the party with the two dollars taken from the thatched roof whilst no one was watching. With the receipt for the two dollars, which was also a permit for another year's occupancy, together with many Chinese curses freely offered by the weary white man, Ah Heng returned smiling to his hut.

The permit of occupancy he stored with last year's permit in a tobacco tin with his money, and hid both in the thatch. Then he wondered a little as to how the white man had learned no more of the great Chinese language than a very few of its curses, took a draught of weakly warm tea from the ever-ready pot, smoked a pinch of tobacco in a long and very foul pipe, and then turned again to his tilling of the ungrateful earth. He had about an acre of it under cultivation, and he made money out of that acre. Not a foot of it was wasted. The land was thin, and in the dry season he had to water it by hand, but his well never failed him, and the vegetables grew as they will grow when a Chinese tends them.

His only companions were the pigs. Of these he had several by now, all the produce of one specially beloved sow, a fertile member of her race. She had been bought on credit, and paid for on sale of her progeny. Buying the sow had been a risk at first, but it had all the elements of a gamble, and a gamble appealed to Ah Heng's national instincts. The raising of hogs is, in a small way, very remunerative, and Ah Heng trusted to them more than to his garden. This latter, indeed, was more useful in feeding the pigs than in providing vegetables for human food. Ah Heng had a contract with a large Chinese eating-house in the town. This he supplied with a few fresh vegetables every day, and took away from it the refuse of the food. The refuse, mixed with chopped vegetables, formed the food of the pigs, and mightily they throve on it.

For some years Ah Heng lived alone in his little hut. His neighbours were few, and all, like himself, occupied in tilling ungrateful soil. He saw little of them, having no time for the idle enjoyment of society and little inclination. He had fallen into a groove and become self-

sufficient, fond of living alone, and hopeful of saving enough money to go back to China and stay there.

At the beginning of the Chinese year it is customary for great rejoicings to take place amongst the Chinese community. Those who live in the country come into the town at this time and make merry with their fellows. Ah Heng had done this year after year, and had hitherto always returned to his hut in the plain, glad to be rid of the crowd and noise, for he was little accustomed to them. This year his fate was otherwise, and he happened upon the woman who became his wife. She was, by trade, one of those unfortunates who are sardonically said to increase the gaiety of nations. Her profession was to please, and—God knows—to suffer, but the latter in silence. Sold by her parents in her youth, there had lain before her all her life, happily perhaps little understood, no other prospect than this. In her youth she had perhaps some taste of happiness, but this left her with her beauty, and at length she became, with hundreds of her kind, a mere unit in a crowd of women, without hope of relief save in attracting

the permanent attention of one amongst her patrons. Excepting this only and remote possibility, she was dependent on those who clothed her, housed her, fed her, and lived upon her earnings.

The coming of Ah Heng to her place at the Chinese New Year proved the turning-point in that monotonous existence. He came at first with a friend, little thinking that here was the woman who was to share the little hut on the plain. What her attractions were, or how they appealed to him, who shall say? It is enough that Ah Heng determined to acquire this chattel and take it back with him to his house. The negotiations were protracted, since Wee Neo suddenly acquired an artificial and enhanced value, now that he had appeared on the scene. She had never been of much account before; for her beauty, such as it was, had begun to leave her, but now that a would-be husband had appeared, her value went up. Yet Ah Heng was persistent, and with the strong patience of the Chinese he adhered to his resolve. Were there not in this town, he argued, many such women? Ought not the proprietor of the house to be

thankful that some one should appear ready to take her away, now that she was no longer young, seeing that she must inevitably earn less money month by month, and she would not eat the less or cost less to clothe? The proprietor at last allowed himself to be persuaded, as he insisted on regarding the transaction, and one day Ah Heng and Wee Neo left the house in the town for ever, and set out for the little hut upon the plain.

It may be wondered what Wee Neo's first impression of her future home was like. The place itself was not attractive, or even comfortable. It was little more than fifteen feet square, and the earth itself had been rammed hard to provide a floor. This had grimed with the dirt of years and presented an uneven surface, hard where the feet of the occupants trod, but looser under the rough tables and beds. Indeed, the fowls found their favourite dusting bath under the tall table that stood in the middle opposite the picture of the joss.

The walls of this hut were of thin sticks, laced together by the ingenious Ah Heng. Some of them had rotted out, and their place had, or had

not, been supplied by others, according as to whether they faced the rain quarter or not. There had never been any attempt at lashing them tight together, and from the inside of the house a spreading view could be obtained through the walls. The roof was perhaps the best part of the whole construction had not its supports been so faulty. The four posts at the corners had originally been sound timber enough, but the white ant had sought them out, and now they were propped from the outside by long poles with a fork at the end. The roof itself was made of the lalang grass laid as thatch is laid in England, and a leak was easily mended by the addition of more thatch. It was inflammable but had never caught fire yet, and it was a handy place for storing valuables. The furniture of Ah Heng's mansion was not remarkable. Three or four stools of home construction, a bed of the same, provided with a grass-woven mat, a skimpy and remarkably dirty mosquito curtain, a kitchen range, and a shelf for burning joss-sticks comprised practically all the furniture. The kitchen range, ingeniously constructed of clay, was capable, under Ah Heng's skilled supervision, of

turning out a savoury, if Chinese, meal. The cooking arrangements are those most carefully planned in a Chinese house, and Ah Heng's were no exception to the rule.

The fact that the pigs lived under a lean-to built out at the back, and that the drainage therefrom collected in a green and fetid pool at one corner of the house, was no drawback to the site from the point of view of the occupants. Pigs kept any distance away from their owner's house are so likely to be hooked out of their sty by tigers, or even deliberately driven off by evil-disposed Chinese of marauding tendencies. If kept close to the house, they grow fat under the master's eye, and thieves of whatever kind are less bold to touch them. The cesspool, too, in its position at the corner of the house, was positively most conveniently situated. All the cooking slops drained into it, and the whole formed the most excellent manure for the vegetables in the garden, and had not to be carried far. Ah Heng had grown accustomed to the smell, if, that is, he ever recognised that there was a smell, and pigs are always kept in this way by the Chinese cultivator—which is a very good reason for Ah

Heng's keeping them so. True, he did at times clean out the cesspool when it overflowed, and then he carried the contents to a deep clay tank in the garden, where it remained until wanted for agricultural purposes.

Such was the home to which Ah Heng brought his bride, and indeed, unpleasant as its description may appear to those of fastidious taste, it was a better place to live in than that to which she had been accustomed. Better it was to live in the open plain, amidst the sun and air and rain, than in the little narrow room where most of her life had been spent.

So these two lived together, and if love, as Europe knows it, had not brought them together, some feeling not altogether dissimilar to it grew up between them. The presence of a woman certainly made things brighter, and, moreover, Ah Heng had now greater opportunity for labour. As a bachelor he had had to devote a certain amount of valuable time every day to cooking his food, and, though he cooked well, it was a pleasant change for him not to be personally and intimately acquainted with his victuals before he arrived at the point of eating them. The time

saved from cooking he devoted to cultivation, and set about taking in more land. Before doing so some consideration was necessary. If he took in that extra patch and made his garden four-square, would the addition be too noticeable? Would, that is, the white official keenly spy it out and demand an extra twenty-five cents for occupancy? Fifty cents, perhaps, would even be asked, and fifty cents was a round sum of money, a matter to be considered before taking hasty steps.

So he and Wee Neo talked it over, and the woman's wit evolved a plan. Let him not take in that extra patch. Rather should he take in five feet or so all round the ground already cultivated, that extra five feet which, though not under cultivation, he had always kept hoed up and under control to prevent the ever-imminent inroad of the greedy lalang grass. The work would be easier than fighting a whole new patch. Had he not often told her that even five hoeings could scarce break the spirit of that noxious weed? Had she not herself seen gardens in little less than a month overwhelmed and eaten by lalang when the occupant had neglected

it? No, not the extra patch, but the half-tamed belt of land should be taken in, and she, even she, would help in the work. Ah Heng deliberated. This certainly was an idea, yes, and a good idea. The white official came but two months ago; for another ten or more he was not likely to appear again; by that time the new land would be under close cultivation. The addition to the area would need a keen eye to detect, and though Ah Heng had learnt from experience that the white man had a shrewd glance, still, a decent lie well conceived and brought forth at the moment would lull suspicion. And again, perhaps, it would be a new white man. All white men looked alike to Ah Heng, more or less, but it was possible to distinguish differences, in height, for instance, even in manner. But he rather dreaded the white man's attendants. The clerk who interpreted for him was a fairly constant factor. He seemed to come year after year. Ah Heng could see his straw hat bobbing above the lalang as the white man and his clerk threaded their way towards the patch of land. Ah Heng's mind's eye figured that too acute Chinese sizing up the garden, com-

paring it in his thoughts with the garden of last year, and if, if it struck the clerk that the patch was larger, would he not inform his superior, and doubtless receive compliments upon his sagacity? The clerk was the disturbing element, but the peon was worse. Did not Ah Heng remember that boy? A half-breed of sorts, a friend had told him, half a Malay and half a Kling, but anyhow a brown foreign devil, a small person with a red cap, and a leaf stuck under it, a shoe-wearing little creature, clad in brown cloth, and with a positively vicious sugar-cane habit. One stick contented him not, nay, three were not enough for him; and the last time Ah Heng had complained of his raids; but the white man had laughed, and taking one of the canes from the little robber, had driven him ahead, and cast the rest back to Ah Heng, who gathered them up gratefully. Perhaps that had been a mistake. That too precocious child wore a red cap, and had ideas as to his position as a Government servant possibly, and next time he would certainly remember Ah Heng, to Ah Heng's possible undoing in the matter of the extra cultivation. But he could placate the little

creature. Yes, he would invite him to take sugar-cane, and perhaps the papau tree would be in fruit. Wee Neo should offer him tea, and chatter Malay to him. Surely Wee Neo spoke Malay.

Ah Heng reflected over these matters, and took courage. As for the clerk, he would address him in a servile manner, taking off his broad hat, and making himself little before so important a personage. Of the white man he could not reason. Sugar-cane charmed him not, nor did the lifting of a hat disarm him, for that was due to him. Well, the possible discernment of the white man was the last uncertain factor, the last turn of the chance. The whole arrangement seemed good to Ah Heng, and, with Wee Neo, he took in that belt of land.

But the collector of licences for temporary occupation arrived untimely, before the year had really expired, before, that is, twelve months had elapsed. Ah Heng, grubbing and gardening at midday as usual, had straightened his back an instant, and discerned, bobbing up and down a quarter of a mile away, a white helmet and a straw hat above the sea of lalang grass. And

he saw—could he believe his eyes? Yes, he did see a red patch behind them. Certainly it was the cap of the triply accursed little attendant. This was dreadful. Why had they come so early? Had Ah Heng made a mistake? He flung down the hoe and ran across his precious garden produce to the house. There he consulted the missionary almanac, drawn up in Chinese for the better reaching of the heathen. No, he had made no mistake. The day upon which last year they had come was far distant. Yet his Philistines were even now upon him. Wee Neo inquired the cause of this agitation, and he told her. She said nothing, but put more hot water into the tea-pot, and Ah Heng went out to confront the enemy.

He took up the hoe again, and bent himself to the gardening. The enemy came on. They wound in and they wound out, they took the wrong path and retraced it. At length they were so close that Ah Heng could hear the peon rending sugar-cane with his strong white teeth. A pang shot through Ah Heng's heart. Yes, he would infallibly lose all. Certainly luck was against him. Sugar-cane would be taken, and

the extra fifty cents for certain. How new that belt looked! Why had not the ubi grown thicker? And then—the white man said something to the clerk, and they moved past Ah Heng to the house. The peon gazed upon Ah Heng with a lack-lustre eye, but an evil gleam came into it. The memory of those sticks of cane came across the boy. Would he not make it hot for the accursed pig Chinese? But he followed his master, and Ah Heng trailed after them. The procession stopped at the door of the house and Wee Neo came forth, smiling all over. She had a pleasant, comely look, and the white man asked her for a chair, and said he would stop and take his food there. Wee Neo offered him a sticky Chinese cake, which he firmly declined; tea, and he waived it aside; water, and he appeared to shudder. But he sat down on the chair in the shade of the house and spoke to the clerk.

Wee Neo and Ah Heng watched him producing a jargon of barbarous sounds and knew nothing of what he said, but it was as follows: "Which one is this? Have you the number?" The clerk turned to Ah Heng and asked for last year's

permit. Ah Heng produced it. "Well, how much does it show?" queried the white man.

"Two dollars," said the clerk.

"Tell him to pay it then."

"Boh, boh, boh," said Ah Heng.

"Ask him what he means by saying 'boh' (no)," said the white man.

Wee Neo hastily interpreted in Malay, "Belum bulan lagi."

"What does she mean?" the white man said. "Not yet one month? I came to collect two dollars, not to talk about it."

"She means," stated the clerk, "that the month in which we came last year has not come round again."

"Tell her I don't know anything about months," said the white man. "Their rent is due from the beginning of this year. Tell them the Government year is different from the Chinese year. Tell them I want the money paid. They always say the same thing, and never seem to learn anything. I seem to remember this man before."

The clerk translated to Ah Heng, who beamed, pretending great satisfaction at being recognised,

and talked long and learnedly about months and years to the clerk. Meanwhile the white man munched his sandwiches. The peon had not been idle, and, under cover of the discussion, had wandered round the house. A chopping sound struck upon the white man. He listened. "That little waster, Babujee, at it again! I believe he would eat an acre of sugar-cane. Babujee!"

"Tuan!" answered Babujee innocently.

"Come here; what are you doing?"

"Nothing, Tuan."

"Nothing!" ejaculated the white man; "you were cutting sugar-cane. How often have I told you to leave it alone? Go inside and sit down."

Babujee, looking sulky, retreated into the house, but Wee Neo had noticed what had happened and she offered him tea, also a cake. The peon deigned to accept these, and Wee Neo said she did not mind his taking sugar-cane.

"It's only one cent a stick," growled Babujee. "Orang China saiang duit. The Chinese *are* fond of money."

Meanwhile the wrangling between the clerk and

Ah Heng had proceeded, the white man paying little attention to it. Ah Heng always protested like this, and now the white man began to remember the place. "There was no woman, though, last time I came," he said to himself, "and somehow the garden looks bigger. Ah Heng has been taking in an inch extra of land, I suppose." The sandwiches were finished, and the white man prepared to make a move. He had started at seven, and was getting a little sick of it.

"Have you got the money?" he asked.

"No," said the clerk, "he says he hasn't got it."

"Tell him I know he has it, and I have not come all this way for nothing. Tell him I am going now, and I want those two dollars."

Stretching himself and putting on his sun helmet again the white man went forth and the peon followed. "This garden is bigger than it was last year," remarked the peon; and meeting no answer, he continued, "This is a larger garden now."

The white man smiled to himself, and turning to Babujee said simply, "Don't talk so much."

The plain upon which stands Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Federated Malaya, danced shimmering in the heated air before the white man's gaze. Ah Heng and the clerk chattered Chinese behind him; in front stretched a great waste of stiff, high lalang grass. On an extreme edge lay Kuala Lumpur, climbing up the hills, here and there a white bungalow, showing out from amongst the greedy vegetation kept under partial control. The Chinese town lay upon the edge of the plain itself, and between it and the hills on which the white residents lived, ran the river, bridged at intervals with the bridges that grew and broadened with the ever-increasing population of the town. The atmosphere was clean and no defiling smoke rose from the town, for fires are not necessary in the warm Malayan climate. Ah Heng's house lay almost in the centre of the plain, and from it could be seen the range of low hills bordering the outlook. The hills had trees and jungle upon them, save where in patches the busy miner had scored their sides, dug wealth or ruin from the desolation he had made, and left his working to be decently clothed by the ever-ready lalang. Some of

the patches had been made by dead-and-gone cultivators, people of the several races and tongues who had grown something—now long since dead—upon the slopes, and had then either realised their possession and gone elsewhere or had given up cultivation. In places the jungle had swallowed the insult put upon it by the miner and the cultivator, and was engaged in spreading itself over the lalang-covered wastes. But the process was slow, and, spreading from the hills downward, had as yet left the flatness of the plain unrelieved. Any change in that dull monotony of grass was welcome, and the white man glanced towards a clump of coconuts about a mile away where at any rate was shade and the road to the town. He began to be annoyed with the unreasonable householder behind him, and, resolved on strong measures, turned to the house again.

But Ah Heng had allowed his intelligence to be pervaded at last with the idea that the sum of two dollars had to be paid then and there, and had actually produced it. The receipt-book was brought forward, and the precious counterfoil made out, signed by the clerk, and signed

again by the white man. It was torn off and presented to Ah Heng, who held it gingerly in two earth-brown hands.

Then the little party went away, and Ah Heng and his partner were at last in peace, and alone. They congratulated each other. Ah Heng smiled; so did Wee Neo; then both glanced towards the fringe of their cultivation, as if, perhaps, not having paid anything extra for it, they should find it suddenly blighted by lalang, as it had been a few weeks ago. But there it was, and nothing extra had been paid. Ah Heng said, "We need not have been afraid, for none of them noticed it." But Wee Neo was wiser, and, with her slight knowledge of Malay, had understood the peon's malevolent promptings to his master. She related what had been said. Ah Heng chuckled over his little foe's discomfiture, but to this day he considers that particular white foreigner to be a fool; for Ah Heng's perception is compacted of small meannesses, and by his own measure he metes others.

VIII

THE SINKING OF THE SCHOONER

"IF a man hold the outer gate, shall he not tax those who would leave the city?" Such was the principle upon which my present friend, the former pirate, guided his conduct in the days before the white man discouraged the pirate industry. My friend regrets those old days, but being now known as regenerate, if not by faith, at least by force, he is not shy of speaking of them. Sometimes, I think, the recollection of his former valorous deeds outruns the sense of truth which should appear in their telling, but he knows that I have little, or nothing, of knowledge which might serve as touchstone of his veracity. I have never sought to check his tales by any cold-drawn, chill application of the principles of evidence, and I have been rewarded. Faith, childlike in

its ingenuousness, flattering in its application, has ever been my method, and he finds some subtle compliment in my patient receptivity. One day I went with him down the river to look at certain agricultural developments from which he expected, or hoped it to be believed that he expected, great profits, both to himself and others. I remember that I was not so sincerely enthusiastic as perhaps I might harmlessly have been. A polite distrust, appearing probably in my manner only, combined with a somewhat ironical deference to his mature judgment in such matters, seemed to have made itself more felt between us than I had thought possible. Perhaps I should not have quoted, in meditative fashion, a certain Malay quatrain about strangers and birds, how both will fly whither they list when the season is over; his proposed settlers were Banjarese, and they are not native to this part of the country, though they will plant you paddy better than most. But paddy has its seasons, and is no more permanent than the Banjarese.

Piqued at my attitude, he appeared, as we returned against the tide, to be anxious to make

himself valued, if not for his experience of agriculture and certain classes of agriculturists, at least for his experience of war. Mark you, I am a man of peace, one following, and having ever followed, a quiet life. I have not fought, or slaughtered many, nor have I known the lust of battle, or even taken share in ambushes, saving those directed against an animal. Therefore I know little of what this man and his band may have felt as they trained their gun upon the point which the tide-drawn schooner must round at length on her slow way up the winding river. But he did his best to make it clear, and when he had finished I felt, if not indeed a regret that I had not been on his side, at least a thankfulness that I had not been in the schooner on that occasion. What her exact mission in these waters was, who owned her, and why he risked her so far up the river was not very clear, but she was an armed craft and had probably been sent to bring away a load of tin by collusion with one of the warring factions which distracted the country in those old days. Her hold was never destined to receive that cargo.

We passed a point, the end of a long reach,

and here, said my friend, was the ambush and its gun. He pointed out the exact spot, showing where a chain, or some kind of primitive boom, had been stretched across the river, invisible at a fitting tide, cunningly contrived, lovingly set forth at right level. My mind figured to me the schooner. Could I not see her, the blind thing drifting with the tide-run, catching the current on her stern as she rounded the points, sails set and flapping, now bellying to a puff of breeze, anon drooping and languid? Her steersman staring at the haze a-dance up the river feels an enormous anxiety. On his head be it if she grounds and is attacked at low water. Could he not wish, fantastic thought, to spy round the corners, to know, or ever he turned her for the point, what the next reach would bring forth? And her crew—Malays to a man, the so-called bloody pirates of the Peninsula. Fair-spoken, civil-dealing gentlemen when not afloat; fathers of families, perhaps, some of them; others with youth's hot blood pumping in the veins, half longing that the river passage should be disputed by the enemy and spoiling, blind as the fool's heart, for a fight. Her captain, honest man,

this trip shall make or mar him. Has he not been retained, at a great fee, for this service? May not he depend upon his crew to see that the fat Chinese, who mentioned that certain sum, pays to the uttermost fraction of a dollar? But her pilot, the man whom they pressed into an unwilling service, the harmless river fisherman caught in his dug-out creeping down the river to visit the fish-traps—of what are his thoughts? That stake, gyrating in the water-sway, marks the spot where is a fish-trap. That fish-trap is his. When he first set it, his little son went with him, that the child should learn to follow his father's arts. And now—he must act as pilot, and well the captain knows that he will pilot aright. Such is his one point of safety if he would see his home, his wife, and little ones again. What cares he for tin and the winning thereof? What knows he of schooners and their sinking? Yet will he know soon, for Rantau Panjang, the long reach, opens out to view. At the upper end of that reach is the boom, the gun, the gun's crew, and the ambuscade. Blundering round the lower point of the reach, the schooner gropes upstream, as near the middle as may be, and

with little show of animation. But a short way up a breeze is blowing, and she catches it fair. Ripple runs the water from her bows, and at a fair pace she sets towards destruction.

Those in the ambuscade congratulated each other. The gun's crew felt nervous, but confident of a grand mark of aim when the vessel should strike the boom. Was it not so contrived that she should hang on it helpless, and give time for the training of their cumbrous weapon? Such indeed was the upshot. On she came, not without some air of swashbuckling, swaggering, ignorant, to her undoing. Suddenly her swift course was arrested; she hung amazed against this obstruction; the gun boomed heavily; the musketry opened irregular fire; and the schooner, recoiling from the shock with a large rent in her vitals, settled in mid-river.

I did not inquire what became of her crew, nor was my friend a volunteer of any further information. But he told me, and I confess that I heard it with a certain sense of satisfaction, that the gun, restive under its heavy charge, had plunged from the bank into the river, and was there yet.

IX

EXCEEDINGLY VENOMOUS

"ALLAH!" ejaculated Mahomed of Palembang, as he leapt for the bows of the boat, causing her to rock violently even in that smooth sea, and "——," an obscene oath came from Hitam, as he plunged for the stern, and lighting on or about the stern-post gathered up his feet under him. I looked up mildly from my task of sorting fish from meshes and meshes from fish. Both men were glowering at something in the bottom of the boat, not so far from my hands, and each fingered nervously a fish-scale-covered knife.

"What is it?" said I.

"Snake," they replied, two in a breath.

"Snake?" I queried, and naturally, for sea-snakes are common on the Malay coast.

"The worst snake in the sea," said Mahomed

of Palembang. "There is no worse. Exceedingly venomous. Most poisonous."

I looked down again, and there, writhing forth from among the fish, the scales, the mesh, and the sea-washed gear beneath my feet, was indeed a snake, such as we had caught many, and having caught, tossed overboard again on the flat of a parang. But having no natural sympathy with serpents, I even dealt this one a slashing blow behind the head, and he was snake no longer. Seeing him harmless, the two men descended from their perches, and sorting with solemn care the wriggling pieces of the worst snake in the sea, they committed them to the deep. This ceremony over, Hitam remarked, somewhat shamefacedly :

"I was not a little startled."

"You look it," said I.

"And I also," added Mahomed of Palembang. "That snake was of the most poisonous breed. Moreover, now, at the beginning of the monsoon, they are all more venomous than usual."

"It seemed to me," I said, as I continued the fish-and-net-sorting process, "that was like most snakes. A brown snake, a mottled snake, a

head and tail alike serpent—are they not all much the same?"

"The Tuan does not know that snake's race," said Hitam. "Amongst snakes he is peculiar, and as Mahomed of Palembang has said, exceedingly venomous."

I knew that the landward Malay will always assure you that the snake twisted in death at your feet is the most poisonous of his kind, and the thinner, the more whip-like it is, the more they will persist in endowing it with all the evil qualities. But these men dwelling by the sea, making a livelihood out of its waters, were accustomed to snakes, and I had never seen them so put about by a snake before. So I said, "Tell me the history of this serpent."

Hitam, not being absolutely averse to the sound of his own voice, as I had long ago learnt, started to tell the tale of the ular gleri.

"The python," said Hitam, "the largest snake there is,—the Tuan has seen the snake?"—I nodded,—"was once very venomous. If he bit a man, that man went away and died, or he died without going away. The python, being equally dangerous to mankind and animals alike,

got a wide berth from both. So the python, rejoicing in his venom, and being respected by all his acquaintance, had a mind to have a fish-pond of his own. Therefore he found him a fish-pond in the jungle, well stocked with fish, and at the edge of that fish-pond he lay, so that none dared approach into it. And having eaten many large fish out of the pond, he would at times go away to sleep in the jungle, leaving the pond to take care of itself. He was well assured that no one in the world would steal his fish, since the fear of the venom of the python was with all creatures. Yet one day, having slept and feeling hungry, he returned to the pond, on whose banks he saw a man. The man was fishing. Now the heart of the python grew hot against the man who fished even before his eyes. So he spake to the man and said, 'What are you doing here?' though he knew well that the man was fishing. The man answered, 'Your slave is fishing for fish, and if my lord like it not, my lord's slave asks pardon for fishing.' 'It mislikes me,' replied the python, and at the word he bit the man in the thigh. The man being a strong man, Tuan, ran into the jungle, and so

writhed along a path homeward, where he fell against the steps of his house and there died. He being dead was afterwards buried.

"The python brooded over the pond, and selecting the largest fish, ate it slowly, whilst all the time he thought that no other man would fish in his pond. After eating he went away to sleep. Next day coming again to the pond, he saw a crow upon the bank. The crow, perching impudently upon a fish-head, was picking at the eyes. The python came close to him and said, 'Very bold are you to eat at my pond where I bit a man but yesterday. Is not that man dead? And shall you not also die? What do you here?' But the crow leered at him and said, 'The man dead? Dead? Dead indeed? And what do I do here? Here? I await the feast.' Then the python was very angry, and said within himself, 'If this crow is awaiting the feast, the man whom I bit yesterday is not dead, and my venom in which I trusted is a poor thing. Surely the man is feasting to celebrate his recovery and the crow will feast on the fragments. I have no use for venom such as this.' So he went away, and leaving the pond in the

possession of the crow, he struck through the high jungle, and came out upon the seashore. Now the tide was ebbing, and the python coming to the edge of the sea, lay upon the sand and spat forth venom into the sea. The sea-snakes also came close and said, 'Is not this our relation the python?' To them the python answered, 'It is I—having no use for this venom, I discharge it into the sea.' Then the sea-snakes swam together, so that each got a little. But the ular gleri, being a cunning serpent, took the largest gobbet. Therefore he and his kindred after him are the most venomous amongst all the snakes of the sea."

Here Hitam paused, and I asked, "But why is the ular gleri most venomous at the beginning of the monsoon?"

"Because," said Hitam patiently, and Mahomed of Palembang nodded, "it was at the beginning of the monsoon, a long time ago, that the python spat his poison into the sea."

X

THE MALAY SERVANT

"OF all the hopeless wasters I ever struck, this man is the most hopeless."

"Yes, he has been with me about ten years now. That child was born when he first came. I should feel quite uncomfortable without him."

Two different judgments by two different people passed on two different Malay servants. They are the type and essence of the general judgment on the Malay as a servant, and inasmuch as the evil that "boys" do lives in the memory after they have departed, and also because it is easier to damn than to find grounds for blessing, the first judgment is the most popular. It seems to be based on the following considerations. The Malay servant who is a failure will usually be found to have some such qualifications for

serving a white man as the following. He is young and unmarried; therefore he follows after the flirtatious Malay women of the neighbourhood, and when his Tuan calls he "is not." He comes from some remote kampong to which he knows he can return if he is incontinently flung out by the enraged white man. Therefore he takes no thought for the morrow. He is fond of finery, and his wages do not run to finery. Therefore he wears his master's things, and is honestly amazed when the Tuan goes about to beat him for it. He is lazy by nature of his race. Therefore he shirks work of all kinds, not seeing the necessity for it when it can be avoided. He does not understand the white man's accent. Therefore he drives his Tuan into frequent furies by saying "Ta'tau," or worse still, "Ta'taulah." He does not realise that most people rather fancy their Malay accent if they speak with the meanest facility. Again, domestic service under a foreign race is really quite a new thing in his country, and he rather despises it. Indeed, he is full of self-pity at having come down to such a job. So his heart is not in it, and that reacts on his work. His master probably takes no interest

in him, never praises good work, but is quick to blame. So that his first and most enduring impression of a white master is a person who causelessly flies into rages. He does not understand, and his master never thinks of explaining, that the white men of this country are at work all day long and want automata for servants, silent machines who work with precision, not erratic personalities who are human.

So finally he gives it up in despair, and drifts along from one master to another, lazier, stupider, more shiftless, more apt to try to borrow money, until probably he becomes a peon in an office. That is not work which demands energy or even intelligence. It does demand punctuality and dispatch. As our young friend cannot command these, he is finally fired out of half a dozen peonships, and retires from a stage which never had much use for him. It is idle to wonder what becomes of him, but bullock driving is probably his end.

There is, happily for some of us, another kind of Malay boy. He is of a certain age, married, with children. Therefore he has given hostage to fortune. Unlike the bachelor boy, if he is out

of a job, he has no lady-love to keep him. And he would be ashamed to return home with wife and children, a confessed failure. His wife rubs that in. Her sister So-and-so wears jewellery costing such-and-such, and her husband earned it for her. Her other sister lives in a very fine house with a beautiful kampong. Her husband worked for it. She alone is ashamed before her sisters since her husband cannot compete with his brothers-in-law. So the married Malay servant does not lightly fling up his situation and his scrapes together. He stays on, and if his Tuan curses him, he amends. Gradually he grows to realise that his wages "paid regular" are worth having. He begins to wonder if he can decently ask for more. Each addition to his family is a reason for an increase, each year of service is the same. Gradually he learns to understand his master, in spite of the extraordinary white man accent. Understanding his speech, he perceives that his Tuan's actions are governed by reason such as governs his own. Finally he even begins to doubt whether his own master is so incurably crazy as people make out all white men to be. When he has reached this

stage he should be carefully preserved, for he has advantages. To begin with, he and his employer can converse in a language understanded of both, and native to at least one of them. Herein he is less trouble than servants of Chinese nationality, to learn whose language is reputed to send men mad. Thus very few learn it, master and man talking a hideous gibberish which leaves room for a misunderstanding at every full stop, not to mention the commas. Again, as the servant has a wife and child, the master will commonly consider the fact. Faults that would break a bachelor are perhaps pardoned to the man with children. Moreover, he is always on the spot. His wife sees to that. He is not prone to displaying elsewhere borrowed plumes, for his wife sees to that too. Lazy he remains, but experience teaches him how lazy he can be and 'scape slanging. In time his Tuan believes in him as a rather hard-working fellow, and will resent comments such as, "That boy of yours has a soft time of it, I should think." In time the hard edges of master and man are rubbed smooth. They accommodate each other, appreciating each other's foibles. The final result often is long years

of faithful service, terminated usually only by the advent of the inevitable "mem." Before her the boy, who has known how to manage his master for years and give him a sufficient satisfaction, at once quails. Her absurd notions, her continual presence in the house, her irritating knowledge of the details of house-cleaning, her magnificent ignorance of his language, all go to break up the Malay boy's traditions. He is indeed a pearl without price who has served his master man and boy, married and single. I think, on careful reflection, I know of one such, but of no more.

XI

THE BULLOCK-CART DRIVER

THE stupidity of the bullock is pronounced; so is the stupidity of his driver. One of them whom I know was brought to me as a substitute by a driver, whose excuse for leaving was that he had to go away to plant his paddy under pain of fine by his District Officer. When I asked, "What is the name of this man who is to succeed you?" the new man said "Tahir," and the old one "Said." As there seemed to be some difference of opinion and they began to dispute about it, I let it go at "Said," and for months called the man "Said." But he

"Answered to 'Hi' or any loud cry."

It is still uncertain what his name is, some holding that it is "Aid," others that it is "Said." I fancy the truth lies between them, and that

the real explanation is "Si-aid." The "Si" prefix, according to the dictionary, is "usually half contemptuous or familiar." Thus probably "Si-aid" means "That Aid fellow." The practice of giving oneself a name easily pronounced is common amongst Malays. "Sehidin," for instance, will call himself "Mat," which he imagines simplifies matters, though one would think that it would lead to a maddening confusion in a country where "Mat" is by a long way the commonest name.

"Who drives fat cattle should himself be fat," is perhaps a good maxim. "Who drives stupid cattle should himself be stupid" is, on analogy, a sound proposition. Yet at times it is trying, very trying, in results.

"Take Wahap's bicycle and my luggage in the cart to the 25th mile."

Answer, "Tuan."

"What are you going to take, now?"

"Take Wahap, as you said, Tuan."

"Who said Wahap? What I said was"—and so on, until he gets it right and can repeat it. But you must send some one else to see that he does take the bicycle and does not take Wahap,

or he will infallibly come back to say that Wahap contumaciously refuses to go, flatly in defiance of orders which you gave, which is a shocking thing, a thing abominable, and what is he to do now?

There is a primeval simplicity about the conduct of the bullock carter and his bullocks which has an unholy fascination for me. I catch myself wishing I was a bullock-cart driver. What an absolutely ideal life it is! They move along, thinking of nothing at all, a unit in a long string of carts, all moving along, thinking of nothing at all. The first carter meets a friend on the road, and stops for a chat. Five-and-twenty other carters stop also, though they have no interest in the conversation and cannot hear a word of it. One driver lights a cigarette, another goes really to sleep as a change from the cat-naps in which he has been indulging. A third lifts an arm, disengages a bottle from its sling under the tilt and takes a drink of water. Yet another wakes up and goes to sleep again. The bullocks meditate, glad, as a bullock always is, to stand still. In the distance appears a Tuan driving a large yellow horse in a high

red dogcart, his sais bawling horrid yells at the carts still a hundred yards away. The first driver thinks it is time to get a move on him. He kicks one bullock with his right foot, and pokes the outstretched fingers of his left hand at the haunches of the other. The bullocks resent the hasty impulse. They shy across the road. Frantic exertions, curses on the mothers of both bullocks, and a wild beating and kicking move them to the near side. The Tuan drives past. You can see him swearing with persistence. He gets down the line to half-way and finds that the original impulse from the head has not reached the middle. He comes to a full stop. There are words. Deeds have been known on such occasions. The bullock-cart driver who knows his business usually sidles off his perch on the pole and alights on the near side where the whip may not reach him. The real culprit, the first driver, cranes round the cart at the head of the line, smiling a far-away smile. It is none of his business. How stupid are those fellows behind, thinks he.

The Malay bullock-cart driver sees a good deal of his corner of the world. He can go from

Malacca to Pahang, and take just as long as he likes about it. Unless some evilly disposed person of the baser sort steals his lamp or his yoke-pin, nothing need stop him. He may crawl about the country at his own will, so long as he has a number, an unobscured number. Adventures are open to him, and his Peninsula is before him. Some men take their wives on these trips, and children, peeping from inside the cart like birds in a cage, with eyes as bright. The lady often reclines at her ease in a hammock under the tilt, sleeping continuously, which is probably a very suitable form of exercise for one of her race in this country. Anyhow, up there she is out of mischief. They all live on the land. The bullocks eat anybody's grass and most people's tender young trees. The moving tent is nightly pitched at the side of the road. A fire is lit close to the wheels. The pot heats and the rice swells in it. The savour of herbs, unknown to the white man, rises gratefully to the nostrils of the family party squatting on, in, and beneath the cart. The bullocks, tied to the pole, lose themselves in an ecstasy of stupidity. The children squabble over the pisang which they

have begged or conveyed from a neighbouring garden. A peaceful scene and a common, too common to be often remarked. But it has its points. We toil and fret and drive ourselves and anybody else who is foolish enough to be driven, and then go home to die hastily. We watch other races doing the same, and applaud them, saying, "How splendid it is to see such energy in this enervating climate. How thrice blest is it to put the steam-roller over everything, including ourselves If all be flat, ourselves not excluded, is it not really quite magnificent?" That is all *vieux jeu* to the Malay. He knows it is all very well for people who bring a store of energy from elsewhere, from a bracing northern climate, expend it, renew it again, and so pass. But it is not for him. He has to live, and his race has succeeded in living, in the country. He hopes his children will do the same. But none of them have done or will do it strenuously. I fancy they tried it ages ago. I can imagine them energetic once. Then arose a prophetic spirit who said, "Go to, and cut your coat according to your cloth," which they have done ever

since, possibly with unnecessary emphasis at times.

"If you think," said the driver, "that I can knock more than two miles an hour out of bullocks carting bricks, you are mistaken." Expostulations come from the Tamil overseer. Two journeys a day, not less, was what he was paid for. "One," said the driver, "is all I care for. I fancy the bullocks think it too much. But the best of everything is good enough for me. I will take it in dollars and go away if you like." As all his co-carters agree that he is in a sound position, and carts are scarce, he gets his one journey a day allowed. Does he rejoice? I think not. It is a matter of such absolute indifference.

"One journey and I make twenty dollars a month. Two journeys and I make thirty. Difference, ten dollars. What use have I for ten dollars? What became of the last ten? Supposing I were rich beyond the dreams of avarice how am I profited? I was born in my kampong, I shall die there. I have upkept it, as my father did. He planted fifteen coconuts. So have I."

The limit of effort is reached, and he is content. Content with so little! How much happier he would be if he were discontented! The only thing about it that matters is that he does not think so.

XII

THE SHOAL OF THE SKULL

ON a lonely stretch of the West coast of the Malay Peninsula there is a creek called Sungei Beting Tengkorak, or "The River of the Shoal of the Skull." The little river itself runs, from the point where it leaves the firm ground, for some three miles through the characteristic mangrove swamp of the Peninsula. At high tide it seems little more than a channel in the mangrove; at low tide it is a small stream of water running hurriedly between banks of the grey and noisome mangrove mud. At high tide the sea comes up and floods the mangrove swamp, hiding half its horrors; at low tide a vast mud flat extends beyond the mangrove fringe some two miles out to sea. Not a pleasant neighbourhood, but in the old piratical days those who lived up the little stream felt

secure in the conviction that even if they had a difficulty in getting to the sea, the sea rover had at least greater difficulty in getting to them. Thus the firm ground beyond the mangrove curtain had a value, and this is why the ancestors of those who lived there now chose the place to dwell in. But the white man's coming soon put a stop to all piracy, and the settlement soon found its proper level as a wretched little place where, if the coconut palms grew well, their owners took little profit from them, since they had no market within reach where they could dispose of the nuts. Gradually, therefore, the families dwindled. Some departed in a body; some lost now one member and now another, until those who were left numbered but twelve souls in all, and only two houses still stood amongst the neglected coconuts.

Che Kasim and Che Abu were the two heads of families, both being married men. Che Kasim had five children, the eldest a boy of twelve. Che Abu and his wife had three small children. Both men were of that strange type of Malay which lives and moves and has its being only, doing as little as possible, thinking as little as

possible, almost without vices until some ancient curse of the race begins to stir and work within them, and they look upon a woman to lust after her in their hearts. Abu was the younger man, and he had always lived on good terms with his neighbour Kasim, taking no account of his neighbour's wife, Kalijah. He had been at Kasim's wedding, and Kasim had been at his, and neither had, until the date of this tragedy, thought with an evil longing of the other's wife.

Began then the old story of intrigue, mad passion, and horror at the last, so commonplace that it scarce needs telling. Living as the two did so close together, their opportunities for keeping the unsuspecting Kasim in total ignorance were many. Did he go fishing in the creek, taking some of the children with him, how should he suspect that his wife met his friend under the coconuts whilst he was away? What, indeed, was there in his wife to tempt his friend?—for the Malay woman of thirty rarely retains her looks, and Kalijah was no exception to this rule. Abu's wife, too, never had suspicion. Her children occupied her, for she loved them, and they were little ones as yet.

For Malays, however, there is always one, and that a satisfactory explanation of the strange and almost impossible. Living as their race has done for centuries, only slightly affected by their profession of the religion of Islam, there is amongst them a great mass and body of superstitious practices and observances in which they really believe. In this, then, they sought for an explanation, and they needed not to seek long. It was pointed out, after the tragedy, that living under Kasim's house was a black pariah dog, and that in the house itself there lived a black cat. Moreover, near the house there grew a tree whose leaves may be used in magic charms, and the simple explanation then was that Kalijah had taken hairs from the right whisker of the black cat and hairs from the left whisker of the black dog, mingled these with the leaves, made over them the necessary incantation, and managed to introduce the potion amongst food which her lover Abu took. Thus Abu's heart was turned from his wife, and he was at once under the spell of Kalijah.

For months, as the woman confessed afterwards, they deceived the other two, and for

months the tragedy to come brooded over the little settlement, but at length the strain proved too much for the man, and he could no longer bear to put off the catastrophe inevitable. He was not jealous of Kasim, but he could not give up Kasim's wife, and he knew that some day recognition would come to Kasim in a flash, and—Abu was a coward at heart. The Malay who lives still far away from the influence of the white rule, still avenges his honour in the old sharp fashion, and first he kills his wife with the kris, and after he mingles her blood with that of her lover.

Abu, then, was a coward and had a coward's cunning. He dared not kill his friend himself, but he knew how to urge the wife to murder her husband. To her credit let it at least be said that Kalijah resisted this last and dreadful temptation for long. But at length Abu prevailed, and once the resolution taken, the means for carrying it out were easy. The end came thus. Her husband returned on an evening from looking at the fish traps in the little river, and they all slept through the night as soundly as only Malays can sleep. Kalijah slept too, and

why should she not? The decision was taken, nothing could avert the result, success was certain, and—she slept. In the morning, with the first of the dawn, Kasim and his wife awoke. He went to the door, opened it, and stood shivering in his single sarong at the top of the steps. Then he began to go down. As he stood on the top step his wife came behind him, and with the long chopping-knife, the parang, which is kept sharp in every Malay house, cut him with a back-handed and a downward blow upon the nape of the neck. He fell to the ground, and she followed. Finding him still stirring, an instant and a bloody fury came upon her, so that she hacked and cut upon the helpless body, as if she would hew it in pieces. The first heavy blow had sunk deep into the neck, and in her wild paroxysms she cut the head from the trunk.

Then came revulsion, with perhaps exhaustion, and looking up she saw upon the top step her eldest son, staring at the scene with the child wonder in his eyes. Happy was it for him that he and the other children were not attacked. Of this she never thought, but lifting

the mutilated and headless body, bore it forth to the edge of the mangrove. Then she returned to the house, taking thence a changkul, the digging hoe of the country. With this she buried the body, and then returned to the house. The boy had disappeared, but the blank eyes of her husband gazed upon her from the head still lying upon the ground. She raised it, scarce knowing what she did, and cast it into the stream whose tide was ebbing fast. Then she went back to the house.

Her son had gone straight to Abu's house, and Abu, hearing his tale, and ever a coward, told him to go to the headman who lived some miles away. Then things took their usual course. The police were informed, they came and arrested Kalijah, and from her found out what had happened. The only thing she would not, perhaps could not, tell them was what she had done with the head of her husband. Tried and convicted in due course, she can interest us no more, but there are yet to be traced the wanderings of the husband's head.

Some time after all these occurrences certain Chinese fishermen, aground on a shoal at the

mouth of the river, saw a round object, which was not a coconut, or any easily recognisable thing, lying on the mud at the mouth of the little river. Having nothing else to do till the tide rose, one of them waded in the mud, and brought back to his companions all that remained of the head which Kalijah had thrown into the river.

XIII

MALACCA

THE earliest date to which the existence of a town at Malacca can be assigned is a little later than 1377 A.D., when the Javanese drove a Malay dynasty out of Singapore to settle eventually at Malacca. From Chinese sources it can be established that in 1405 the Malays sent to China from Malacca an embassy which was doubtless intended to renew relations existent between the Malays and the Chinese before the Javanese invasion of Malay Singapore. A hundred years of freedom from Javanese attacks or, it may be, of successful repulse of these, made of Malacca a flourishing town, whose fame gradually grew great all over the East Indies. When Vasco da Gama, Chief Captain of the Portuguese, in 1498 reached Calicut (Calcutta), doubtless he heard of Malacca, as

would Afonso de Albuquerque, "Chief Captain of three vessels," who set out on the 6th of April 1503, also for the Indies. But it was not until 1508 that Diogo Lopez de Siqueira, Chief Almotacel of the kingdom of Portugal, "went to explore the island of S. Lourenco, and not finding therein the silver, cloves, and ginger that it was reported to contain, passed over to explore the island (*sic*) of Malacca." Four vessels formed his fleet, and one returned with him safe to Portugal, one to India, and two were destroyed. In the commentaries of Albuquerque, written by his son, it is related how Siqueira, whose contemporary portrait, by the way, shows him with a most unmistakable Malacca cane walking-stick, returned from Malacca "with his head broken," that is, with sixty of his four hundred men killed or taken captives, and he himself having run great risk of losing all his fleet, if it had not been that he was advised in time of the treachery which had been arranged against him. The intention of the Malay King of Malacca had been to seize the Portuguese Admiral, and all who accompanied him on shore, at a banquet, but a Javanese Malay woman, "the lover of one of our

mariners, came by night swimming to the ship," and she warned the little fleet.

The chroniclers of the time, and of later times, are never weary of censuring the relations of the Portuguese with the native women, "courting the girls in the town," but in this case had it not been for this romantic episode of the Javanese lover of one of their mariners the first Portuguese had infallibly been cut up in Malacca. Even so she availed not to save them all, for the King laid hands upon Ruy de Araujo, the factor, and twenty other men who were with him on land attending to the collection of cargo for the ships. This, and probably losses on the voyage from accident and disease, obliged Siqueira to burn two of his ships because he had not hands sufficient for their navigation and to sail away from Malacca.

"To be nameless in worthy deeds exceeds an infamous history." May we not imagine the Malay heroine, first overhearing some scrap of talk not meant for her, then weeping for the probable death of her lover, then drying her tears, and at nightfall plunging through the foul mud of the mouth of Malacca River, feeling it

change from slime to water around her, knowing it full of crocodiles, yet pressing on, through the sea, for the lights of the four little ships twinkling between the Ilha das Naos (Pulau Jawa), "within a gunshot of the town," and the Ilha das Pedras (Pulau Upeh), "beyond the range of gunshot," where the Portuguese carracks and galleons used to anchor in four or five fathoms of water?

When Albuquerque took Goa in 1510 the echo of its fall and of its sacking reached as far as Malacca, for Goa had been very much renowned in all the parts and kingdoms of India, and it is recorded that the Bendahara who governed the kingdom of Malacca for the King, his nephew, lost no time in providing his city with quantities of supplies against the wrath to come, but, "with his accustomed dissimulation and subtlety," he tried to set himself right with the Portuguese by visiting Ruy de Araujo and the other captives, giving them better quarters and treatment, and telling them that the tumult which had arisen against the Portuguese was due to the Gujeratis and Javanese, and that he himself desired very much to be on friendly terms with the Portuguese, and to see them carrying on a trade with Malacca.

Though it is not recorded, yet we may feel sure that he prefaced his remarks in the usual Malay manner by assuring them that he was a poor creature but had a good heart. He went so far as to provide the captives with money and some of the trade goods of which they had been despoiled, and to promise them a settlement of their accounts and the making good of their losses when the Portuguese ships should arrive. The Portuguese seem to have thoroughly disbelieved him, for they managed to send a message by a trading junk to Albuquerque, begging him for the love of God to keep them in remembrance, and rescue them out of this captivity, and warning him that if he should come to Malacca it ought only to be with the greatest fleet possible, and that on arrival he should show a friendly, rather than a revengeful, spirit. In 1511, Albuquerque decided to go and winter at Malacca, and see if he could chastise the Malays for the treason which they had practised upon Siqueira, but he carried instructions from Dom Manuel, King of Portugal, that the commerce of Malacca should not be destroyed. His arrival at Malacca must have been a picturesque sight, for he reached

there one day at evening, the sun dying in the west behind him, yet lighting up for the eyes of those on shore his fleet all decked in flags. To the roar of all his artillery saluting the city, and to the plunge of all his anchors and rattle of his cables the sun sank, and immediately there pushed out a messenger from the King, bringing what seemed to the Portuguese an "artful apology" for things past. Of this, probably the most acceptable part was the news that the Bendahara's head and his policy had been abolished together.

Apparently he had not been allowed "the honourable privilege of dying by the kris," and the Portuguese believed that he had really perished in an attempted palace revolution, not as a sop to them. For days and for weeks the negotiations went on, the Malays at times completing their defences, urged on by harangues to the effect that the Portuguese were renegades and thieves, desirous of lording over the whole world, and at times listening to the forebodings of those who pointed their lamentations by asking their hearers to look at the cannon, the men, and the boats of the Portuguese just outside the port.

Meanwhile, Albuquerque and his fleet had ample time to look at Malacca from the sea and to wonder whether it was true, as people then said, that the city from its small beginnings under its first Malay king had become so noble that with its suburbs it contained a hundred thousand inhabitants and extended a good league's length along the sea. But both parties were agreed on one point, and that was that the port itself was very safe, for there were no storms to injure it and never a ship was lost there. It formed a point where some monsoons begin and others end, hence the Malay division of the peoples of the world into those above the winds and those below the winds, the West and the East. They were also agreed that the place formed a general mart of all nations and was well worth a fight. So a fight it was, and upon the morning of the 25th of July, the day of St. James the Apostle, the fortunate day of Albuquerque's patron saint, the day on which he had successfully attacked Goa. Ruy de Araujo, handed over by the Malays some weeks before, was asked his opinion, and gave it that they should first attack the bridge on the river, between the palaces of

King Muhammad on the hill and the houses of that part of the city then known as Upeh. There has always been a bridge at Malacca, shown in all the old plans, and a bridge is there to-day. The bridge lay, then, on the river, and looking at it from the sea, as we may do from the seaward end of the pier, the Portuguese saw on the right or south the hill with its Malay palaces, and at the hill-foot close to the bridge-head, also on the right, was the mosque, a strong place kept by a garrison. On the left or north of the bridge was the city, its sea (west) and land (north) fronts protected by those palisades which have given it the present name of Tranquerah. Two hours before the break of day Albuquerque ordered the trumpet to be blown, and the landing party repaired aboard his ship, where all made a general confession and then set out together and came to the mouth of the river just as morning broke. Each battalion in its proper place, undaunted by the first fury of the Malay artillery, they raised the warcry of "Sanctiago," and with one accord fell upon the stockades.

The mosque, in spite of the presence of the King, mounted upon an elephant and his son upon

another, together with many other elephants armed with wooden castles, fell almost at once, thus delivering the works beyond the bridge-head on the south to the Portuguese, and Albuquerque on the north side of the bridge seized that head also.

Poisoned darts, shot through "sarabatana" (the Sakai sumpitan or blowpipe, of course), "espingardas" (matchlocks), long spears and Malay krises and swords, wounded many Portuguese, and of those wounded by the poisoned arrows but one escaped death. The bridge itself, strongly stockaded, was held by the Tuan Bandar and seven hundred Javanese who fell upon Albuquerque's rear. He beat them off. The Malay king and two thousand men, pursued up the hill on the south, turned on the Portuguese, but his own elephants charged the Malay force and routed them, as is the unhappy habit of the elephant.

The scene may be pictured thus: the elephants, restive already, constitutionally averse to hurrying, especially downhill, prodded on by their gembalas, jolt down and down, get close enough to be wounded, "and whereas elephants will not

bear with being wounded," they turn tail and lumber uphill again, probably close by the site of the present Stadthaus, gembalas tugging at their ears with the angkus, and Malays on foot frantically cursing them, their mothers, and their remotest ancestry. The King's elephant, mad with a mortal wound, seized its gembala with its trunk and, roaring loudly, dashed him in pieces, spitting the body on one tusk, setting a foot upon head or legs, and then with an upward jerk riving the man into two separate pieces, as still at times happens in Malaya. The battle raged until two in the afternoon, all through the hottest hours of day, and as yet the men had not eaten anything. The captains at length warned Albuquerque that no more could that day be done, and, carrying with them fifty captured bombards, the Portuguese retired to their ships after the setting of the sun.

For about a fortnight neither party attacked, unless desultorily, the Malays using the time to repair damages and the Portuguese occupying themselves in fitting out a junk with which to attack the bridge direct. The Javanese Utimuti Raja or headman sent secretly to put himself

right with Albuquerque, and the Chinese asked that the blockades might be raised so far as to allow them to sail for China lest they should lose the monsoon. Albuquerque took the opportunity of sending by them a letter to the King of Siam. He then assembled his captains and made a speech, in which he showed that once Malacca city was gained, all the rest of the kingdom was of so little account that the King would have not a single place left where he could rally his forces. The city itself, he said, was the last headquarters of all the spiceries and drugs of the world which was not yet in Portuguese hands. If they took Malacca, then "Cairo and Mecca are entirely ruined, and to Venice will no spiceries be conveyed except that which her merchants go and buy in Portugal."

A great prize then, this Malacca, and Albuquerque attacked it again in the spirit of those who said, "Let us kill the heir and the inheritance is ours." Identically the same reasons applied to the capture of Malacca by the Dutch, and would apply to the capture of Singapore, that great trading-place, to-day.

The second attack soon gave the Portuguese

possession of the bridge, the key of the position, for they had sent up the junk on a high tide and it dominated the bridge-works. Having secured the bridge, they covered it and the junk with nipah atap thatching, for the sun was very strong, and from this shelter they sallied forth on either side, taking the mosque again, attacking the palisaded area, both north and south, from the inside, whilst the sailors along the shore rowed up and down killing the fugitives who had cast themselves into the sea. Night fell again, and all through it a continual cannonade went on, so that at length it was a terrible thing to look upon the city, for, on account of the constant bombardment, it seemed as if it were all on fire. For ten more days the Portuguese so continued, killing without intermission or remorse of slaughter the miserable "Moors" (Malays), who from the south side risked their lives to go and look for food in the city on the north side. At length the various headmen of the different races came in for mercy, the Utimuti Raja of the Javanese, and Ninachatu, head of the Hindus, the latter assisted by Ruy de Araujo, to whom in captivity he had shown kindness. Albuquerque

then realised his victory, and after the usual custom of those days gave permission to his men, as a recompense for past labours, to sack the city, allowing safe-conducts to all except the Malays, who were to be put to death wheresoever they were found.

No certain evidence of the number slaughtered is procurable, but it is stated in the "Commentaries" that "of the Moors, women and children, there died by the sword an indefinite number, for no quarter was given to any of them." Three thousand pieces of artillery were taken, of which two thousand in bronze, and one very large gun which the King of Calicut had sent to the King of Malacca. Large matchlocks, poisoned blowing tubes, bows, arrows, armour-plated dresses, Javanese lances, and other sorts of weapons—it was marvellous what was taken, besides much merchandise of every kind. The gunfounders of Malacca in those days were as good as those of Germany, it is related. For himself, Albuquerque took only six large lions in bronze for his own tomb, and to the King Dom Manuel and the Queen Donna Maria he sent young girls of all the races in the country; but this unhappy

consignment never reached Portugal, for all were lost in the ship *Flor de la Mar* on the voyage back to India. The early history of Portuguese exploration is full of losses of ships, "so that if any of them come safelie into Portingall it is onlie by the will of God, for otherwise it were impossible to escape because they ouer lade them and are so badly prouided otherwise, with little order among their men: so that not one ship commeth ouer but can shew of their great dangers by ouer lading, want of necessaries and reparations of the ship, together with unskilful saylers," as Linschoten wrote nearly a century later.

The ill-fated King and his son drew off to wait for his Laxamana, the Malay admiral who was south of Malacca with a fleet, but as the Laxamana never arrived, being too wary, and as Albuquerque was evidently intending a permanent settlement in Malacca, the King withdrew three days' march away. The party eventually separated. The Prince stockaded himself, but fled on the appearance of a Portuguese force, abandoning much spoil for the Portuguese, amongst it his palanquins, very rich, gilded, and painted, and seven elephants, with their castles and hous-

ings. Reduced to a following of fifty men, the King, the Prince, and their wives and children, together again, but quarrelling with each other over the loss of the kingdom, and suffering from the discomforts of famine, shaped their journey for the kingdom of Pahang on elephants, through a deserted and marshy region.

Fifteen hundred slaves of the King, the Malays rounded up by the Javanese, the people of Ninachatu, "called Quilins and Chetins" (we recognise the Kling and the Chetty), and the Portuguese directing and aiding them, were all set to work to build the very strong fortress, "A Famosa," of stone and masonry discovered in some ancient sepultures of bygone kings. Of this, the Torre de Menagem or Castle-keep was four stories high. Artillery on this tower would dominate the slope of the hill over against it. Albuquerque also built a church, "Nossa Senhora da Annunciada," later called St. Paul's.

Thus did Europe knock upon a door of Asia and with no uncertain hand.

The Portuguese, left by Albuquerque at Malacca, were subjected during their tenure of the place to perpetual attacks from the Malays,

who formed coalitions of the Johore Malays, the Javanese, the Sumatra Malays, and even of Malays from high up the east coast of the Peninsula, but against all they held their fortress of Malacca and from it dominated the Malayan East. The place was reckoned, for strength of fortification and size, superior to any other in the Indies; it had been the seat of Malay kings and the greatest mart of all those seas. It had been a great prize to win when the Portuguese took it, and at length the Dutch could no longer endure it, still a great prize, to remain in Portuguese hands. With the naive self-righteousness of those days, the Dutch historian Valentyn records that the Portuguese "really could not be astonished at the terrible destruction of this town by war, famine, and pestilence (the three scourges of which God so often makes use to punish similar places), for they had led such an incredibly godless life." However that may have been, and whatever reasons moving them thereto, the Dutch "resolved to attack in full force and, if possible, to take that strong and famous town." So Their Honours of the Honourable Company entrusted the execution of this important business

to Sergeant-Major Adriean Antonissoon, an old, experienced, and brave soldier. He left Batavia in Java for Malacca in May 1640, and by June was rigorously blockading. On 2nd August he landed in Tranquerah and possessed himself of all that suburb, but was brought up short in his attack from it on the fortress by the river between Tranquerah and the hill. From the north bank of the river he battered the fortress with sixteen 24-pounders, and his ships, drawn up in a half-moon on the seaside, harassed the Portuguese with an uninterrupted cannonade, thereby killing many people, but also, to the disgust of the thrifty Hollanders, "wasting much powder and lead." The Portuguese did not fail to reply patiently and bravely from extraordinarily heavy pieces on St. Paul's Hill, where Albuquerque had built Nossa Senhora da Annunciada. Portuguese "pride and stubbornness" still lived in Malacca, and several offers of what the Dutch deemed "a reasonable capitulation" were rejected with contempt. Five months and many remarkable encounters on sea and land passed without the smallest improvement but with great expenditure and loss on both sides, the Portuguese

hoping against hope for relief from Goa or a raising of the siege by the Dutch.

Famine arose in the town and the Portuguese expelled many women and children and all useless mouths. At length, at daybreak on the 14th January 1641, six hundred and forty men of the Dutch in three columns crossed the river from Tranquerah, stormed the bastion Sam Domingo (at the New Market of to-day), drove the flying enemy along the walls to bastion Madre de Dios, took that after a weak resistance, and so successively round the fortress they seized the small bastion, the Santiago bastion, the Curassa, and the Hospital Bulwark, thus arriving at Albuquerque's fort "A Famosa," or bastion Sam Pedro. Here the Portuguese, their feet upon the very stones of that Fortallessa Velha built by Albuquerque, desperately rallied, and, with a courage worthy of that notable warrior, kept back the Dutch to the Hospital Bulwark, until the then Dutch commander, Heer Kaartekoe, and the Portuguese Governor, Manuel de Souza Coutinho, arranged a capitulation. There was no sacking of the town, and nothing was heard of murder, brutality, or ravishing, for the Dutch

controlled their own men, and the Johore Malays, who arrived to help the Dutch, when all was over, were not allowed to enter the fortress. "Thus, not without great loss of men and money to the Honourable Company, we at last conquered that famous strong and powerful mercantile place of the Portuguese, the matchless Malacca, which they had possessed one hundred and twenty years."

The Dutch, under Heer Johan van Twist, the first Governor, at once began to set their possession in order, and in May 1641 were already repairing the Sam Domingo bastion (renaming it Victoria) and the bridge. They also began to pick up all the threads of trade dropped by the Portuguese, so that by 1726 they had no less than thirty-eight trading stations on the coasts of the Malay Peninsula. The capture of Malacca by the Dutch was a blow fatal to the Portuguese, and they never recovered their footing in Malaya. The Dutch had a very uneasy time of it at Malacca. Up to 1785 they were almost continually engaged with risings against them in the interior of Malacca and threatened attacks by the Malays upon the town itself. Of these, the most successful was that led by Raja Haji,

who in 1784 got so near the city on the Tranquerah side that he was killed by a round shot fired from the Dutch fleet at sea.

The first mention of the British at Malacca is in 1641, when the English ship *Anne* arrived there on 8th August, seven months after the Dutch capture of the city and fortress, sailing again on 8th September for Palembang in Sumatra. This was a trading ship. In 1785 the British obtained a settlement in Penang, and occupied that "barren and uninhabited island" on 12th August 1786.

The Dutch retained Malacca until August 1795, when it surrendered to a British expedition after a show of hostility which deceived no one. In November 1795 it was considered to have been held by the British for the Prince of Orange, who was then H.S.H. William V., in strict alliance with King George III., but in 1818 the Dutch denied that Malacca was to have been restored in 1803 at the Peace of Amiens. This peace was inoperative, and the British held Malacca until 1818, administering the law of Holland and seeing carefully to it that all decrees were passed in the names of Their High Mightinesses the States General. On 21st September 1818 the British

Resident, Colonel Farquhar, handed back Malacca to Dutch Commissioners, but in 1824 it was finally ceded to Great Britain. In 1807, during the English occupation, when they were anticipating the restoration of Malacca to the Dutch, the English blew up the fortress in order to render its recapture more easy should such necessity subsequently arise. To destroy this fortress which the Portuguese took thirty-six years to build the British spent the large sum of 260,000 rupees. "This being now removed, the houses are distinctly visible, and, by their modern appearance, afford a pleasing contrast to the fine old ruin of the church, dedicated by Albuquerque to the 'Visitation of our Lady,' which crowns the summit."

With such "pleasing contrasts" as these the taste of later generations could well have dispensed. "Nossa Senhora da Annunciada" and an old gateway—nothing beside remains. Fortallessa Velha, Baluartes Sam Domingo, Sam Pedro, Madre de Dios, Santiago, Curassa—the pleasant-sounding names of them and the romance that clings to ancient story are all that are left to us of that part-religious, part-commercial, part-military furor of the Portuguese which gave them

being. Recall him once again—Afonso de Albuquerque, "this great Captain, a man of middle stature, with a long face, fresh-coloured, the nose somewhat large, greatly feared yet greatly loved, very valiant and favoured by fortune, very honourable in his manner of life, and his greatest oath which he ever took when he was very much annoyed, 'Curse my life,' who on his death-bed, writing to his King Dom Manuel, set down, 'As for the affairs of India I say nothing, for they will speak for themselves and for me.'" The city and fortress of Malacca indeed spake with a loud voice for him nigh three hundred years. After four centuries they are almost silenced, or speak at most in whispers. To hear them we must mount the hill and, facing to the setting sun, call up the galleons and carracks of Albuquerque to lie beyond the river mouth; look down to the river below the bridge, and call up the stones of Fort-allessa Velha, "A Famosa," till the crest of its Torre de Menagem rises to meet us. It may be that as they fade again we shall glimpse on a far horizon the ill-fated *Flor de la Mar*, sailing into the sun's path and bearing Albuquerque and his fortunes from Malacca.

XIV

A BERI-BERI HOSPITAL

THE Doctor was to come down to the port by the midday train, and the beri-beri patients were to arrive by the train before that, so that our cargo of suffering should be aboard the launch by the time we were ready to start for the beri-beri hospital by the sea. But finally they came by the same train as the Doctor, so I was on the platform when they arrived.

It was a lovely day; the sun shone, the breeze blew from the sea, and the waves rippled under the jetty. The beri-beris were Chinese. As most of them could not sit, lie, or be anyhow otherwise than as they happened to be laid, they had been sent down in covered trucks, arranged as comfortably as possible, in charge of a dresser and attendants. The train which brought them

went back, whilst we (I as a spectator) started to unload the cars. Ah, those patients! Few could walk. Here was one, thin, so that all his bones were visible, looking as if they should break asunder at a touch. And one—it had run in his case to water, his body being swollen and huge. Another's flesh showed the depressions made when he was taken up and lifted into the stretcher.

They went past me, some with eyes shut, others staring at the blue and unwinking sky, others again with that dull gaze of sickness so difficult to meet and not shrink from it.

Five-and-twenty in all were taken from the trucks and laid at the end of the jetty. The tide, of course, did not suit, and the launch lay below the level.

The scene at the railway station was repeated here, but with a variant. The Doctor, ever the same, of even temper, though dealing with the most exasperating stupidity on the part of his attendants, devised a shute with a stretcher, along which the beri-beris were lowered down. When they arrived safely on the launch they were carried to the stern, and there disposed, one by another, for the voyage.

All aboard at last, I followed and we cast off. It was but a two hours' run, and only part of it at sea. The first few miles were smooth water, and we throbbed along.

The beri-beris were as comfortable as they could be, but with beri-beri one is never quite comfortable, I take it. To see one's leg move and wonder why, to drop one's arm and not be responsible for the action, to roll over without exercise of the will and to remain unable to alter the position—these are things the beri-beri patient has to bear.

When we got out to sea, there was a little choppy motion to which the launch gently inclined herself, as it lifted and lifted her. The beri-beris were not good sailors, so sea-sickness added to beri-beri must have been an additional trial. Moreover, they could not keep position. The attendants were continually propping this man from the scuppers, lifting this fellow from the other over whom he had fallen. Feeble co-ordinations failed in this extremity, so that the movements of the launch did with them as seemed fit to the sea.

At long length, as it had seemed to me, we

arrived opposite the hospital. This was a severely useful building situated on the white beaches, as close to the sea as it could be placed. The tide was right and all had gone well, had it not been that the expected boats, in which the patients were to be landed, were not to be seen. Our eyes searched those deserted stretches, lighting on nothing save the high waving of the coconut palms, the white columns of the trunks beneath their nodding heads, and along and below all, the white beaches stretching in the sun, winking, glaring, pressing their whiteness upon the vision, as though pushed towards us by a moving impulse. Sea, the beach, the hospital, this last looking out of place, exotic in this land of sun, sand, and palms, but never a boat pushed out from any creek, and again we came to the so common conclusion that the arrangements had gone wrong. The percentage of arrangements which do not go right, merely because they pivot upon a Malay mind, should indeed be very great. This swelled the total. Yet I have heard people of no experience wonder that the white man grows irritable here. But a doctor cannot be irritable, nor was my companion

an exception. With an air of ordinary determination he asked for the loan of my boat, which we were towing, with its five of a crew, behind the launch. The boat was lent and came jumping alongside. We lay sideways to the sea, and the wave that rolled the launch jested with the boat, so that the faces of the Malay crew who stood fending her off rose jerkily to us, descended as suddenly. The brown hands clutching the launch's rail tightened as the boat sank, released as she rose. I lay and watched the transhipping of the beri-beris. My boat was large and roomy, meant for a sea and sailing. Into it they put many of our twenty-five patients. In spite of the sickness which gripped them all, each man had some little thing to which he attached the importance given to trifles by the mind of the sick man. Had one a short stick by which he could almost manage to shuffle on the ground, that stick must be passed along into the boat before he was handed down himself. Yet another had a long semambu cane. It was of a very inconvenient length, but that too was sent down into the boat. The man whose case had struck me before, whose legs were thin to breaking,

his arm-bones fragile to the touch, had a red handkerchief to which he attached far more importance than to the set of his Chinese trousers. These latter fell anyhow, and he had no strength to cover even his nakedness. One man, swollen, huge, and dreadful, delayed the boat, whilst he insisted in a Chinese which we all understood, though nobody spoke it, that he would not leave his bundle behind. It was found, handed down, and placed between his feet. I think he could not hold it in his hands. So we pushed them from the launch, and, just as they were making for the shore, there appeared the arranged-for boat, with the local dresser on board. He must have detected a reproach on the Doctor's face, for his first words were, "Sir, I arranged with these people that they should be ready this morning, but when I went to get them and their boat they said it was the fasting month, and how should they do work during the daylight?"

Of such is the Malay. They did not seem to mind, however. What was it to them whether Chinese beri-beri patients were safely landed at the hospital or not? Allah alone knew why that strange power, the "Kompani," the Govern-

ment, had troubled the peace of the place by building a hospital there. But they came alongside in the usual serenely good temper. Their cockleshell danced, pitched, was pushed off, came on again. Abu was reproached for the foolishness of his steering, and retaliated upon Awang, who knew not how to fend off from a launch but must needs push the whole craft away altogether.

To them were entrusted four patients, the little fleet setting off for the shore with the Doctor in charge. The landing of the beri-beris I watched from the launch. The big boat and a rowing boat which had been borrowed from the launch treated the passengers kindly, but the Malay cockleshell shipped a sea on grounding and all hands leapt out to bail her with energy. The plan for getting the patients out was very expeditious. There ran down to the boat a Chinese hospital attendant, who seized upon a beri-beri, speedily carried him up the beach, laid him on a bed in the hospital, and thence returned to take another. This went on until all were safely in the hospital and the Doctor came back.

An idle curiosity prompted me to ask him

how many out of that twenty-five would die. "Not more than one or two, and the others would recover, probably all of them become entirely well."

So we proceeded on our voyage, afterwards returning to the same place to take away recoveries. I went to see the hospital. There were many beds in it, each occupied by a Chinese dressed in white coat and trousers. In one ward the Doctor told them to get up and walk. They all rose. The long room was filled with Chinese walking with the beri-beri walk, which is something between the way in which a duck swings its feet and a hen lifts up her toes. They walked and jerked, some reeled, some were proud of their recovery, and walked just as if on an errand. One fat-faced man said he was well, and proceeded to prove it by walking in what seemed to him the ordinary fashion. But we were not deceived, for we had not, like him, passed months among beri-beris, and we had not forgotten how a man should walk. Doubtless, as he gradually recovered, he had spent his days upon the sea-beach, walking before his companions, showing them how to walk, but his recovery

was not complete, and he had yet to pass many a day giving his walking lessons.

We took back some half-dozen patients cured. These too were commanded to walk. So excited were they that their walks broke into little trickling runs, so that they had to be told to walk slowly. Then they walked strongly and solidly as a man should do who carries baskets of earth in a mine all day. So we returned again, and the Doctor said the system was a success. I wondered to myself whether the recoveries felt any gratitude towards the " Kompani."

Note.—Medical science has, since this was written, discovered a more certain mode of cure than was formerly employed as here described.

XV

ON THE PATH

THE presence of two Chinese and only thirteen Malays seems to indicate that there are not many cases in the Land Court this morning. The District Officer, for the time being a Collector of Land Revenue, alights from his car in the bright blaze of sunshine, and, in his capacity of Chairman of the Sanitary Board, walks to the nearest dust-bin on the side of the road and inspects it. Much of his life he has spent in inspecting things, and he is an expert in dust-bins. The present receptacle is full to the brim and running over with the ovoid shapes of durian fruit skins, glittering white in the inside, and pickled-olive green on the out. The Malay penghulu comes up, salutes him, and complains that people throw these fruit skins wildly and blindly on to the road, thereby causing a dis-

orderly litter. Is he to prosecute such persons? The Chairman of the Sanitary Board thinks it is not worth while. "The durian season," says he, "is like a flood, and we must wait until it abates, as did Nabi Noh." The penghulu smiles respectfully at the jest, privately congratulating himself on having exhibited such zeal for sanitation without having incurred the trouble of having to continue to exhibit it. In spite of the sunshine there is a dampness in the air, and in every direction beneath the coconut trees on both sides of the road are pools and puddles of water. For it is the rainy reason, and the village of Katang has been favoured with seven inches of rain in twenty-four hours, and also with high tides in the Katang river. The penghulu observes that there are two feet of water on the road farther on. The District Officer replies that in this case he will refrain from inspecting the Police and the Customs Stations beyond it. There being nothing further in sight to inspect, the Collector of Land Revenue enters the square ground-floor building used as a Land Court, and takes his seat on the bench.

The cases to-day are not very interesting.

Ng Peh Yeow lays claim to 3 acres 3 roods and 4 poles of land which belonged once to Ng Seh, whom he alleges to be dead. All is in order and his claim sufficiently clear. Almost too clear, perhaps, thinks the Collector, for Ng Seh is stated to have died on the 17th day of the 5th moon fifteen years ago. Does claimant remember that date? Not in the least. Then how does he come to state it? Because he read it on the tombstone. A careful people, the Chinese, they record such things on the graves. A Malay would not have had any more than a very vague notion of the date, and in the overgrown welter of vegetation which is the first and last characteristic of a Malay burial-ground no record is usually to be found of any one's death.

The case of Milah who claims her dead husband Abdullah's land next engages the Collector. Milah has four children, two girls and two boys. Of these Minah is twenty-two, and has a husband. Milah disclaims the claim now, and says she meant to ask that the land's title be transmitted to her children. But three are legal infants. Very well then. The title shall be transmitted to Minah. Minah's face lights up, and the Collector

notes within himself that he does not speak Malay so very badly after all. Minah is all smiles. The Collector notes that if she gets the land she will sell it and her husband will waste the proceeds on women strange to Minah. There will be a caveat by the Collector put on the title, and nothing will be done with the three children's shares until they are of age, when they will each get their share registered. The register in Minah's face indicates depression. The children's bread is saved from being cast to female dogs, anyhow. Minah must seek more legitimate means for retaining the affections of her husband.

The day seems likely to hold fine, and the triplicate official decides that he will not return to the District Office and work at a mass of papers, but will take a walk. Close at hand is a six-foot path which wanders into the rice fields and the fruit orchards of the district. It needs inspection, so do the gang of Malays who are paid to keep it in order, so do the bridges on it, and the schools at either end and in the middle of it, as well as the two mosques and the irrigation, the paddy-planting, and in general the life of the Malay community. It is the snipe season, and

though most birds have probably found the water far too deep for the probing of their bills, a few are likely to be found in odd patches not too far from the path. So a gun and cartridges are unloaded from the motor and a start is made. The first stop is at a school. As the District Officer mounts the steps the master calls, "One, two, three," and an elaborate salute is made by each little brown right hand. It is returned, and another inspection begins. A Malay book is handed to a bright pupil who opens it at the accustomed place and would have read aloud had not the District Officer taken it from him and opened it at the unaccustomed place, the place which he does not happen to have by heart. The child makes shift to read, and after several false starts, gets so well into a sing-song of reading that he can with difficulty be stopped, but on being asked to say in his own words what he is reading he is struck dumb with surprise. Reading and understanding are apparently two separate matters for him. Yet this, too, he eventually compasses, and writing on slates proceeds. Here again strange words are demanded and with difficulty produced in writing. But the final

test of dividing three hundred dollars' worth of buffalo by three tails of these cattle—such is the, to us, topsy-turvy idiom—is for some time too hard mental arithmetic for many, though even this is at last solved. The attendance is bad, only a third of the boys are present. Why? Many are ill. Why? It is the durian fruit season. They eat too much durian. Many are merely absent. Why? It is the durian fruit season. They are too much occupied in carrying durians from the orchard to the roadside market where Chinese higglers buy them. Still are many merely absent again. Why? It is the durian season, and they are about the congenial business of watching the great fruit, as big and bigger than a boy's head, drop from the trees. The durian season seems to pursue the party. The smell of the fruit encompasses them. The District Officer, like all Europeans, loathes it; everybody else loves the fruit to sickness. They push on beyond the school. At an unexpected turn in the path they meet the upkeep gang, but not unexpected by the mandor, for all his men are at work, all so industrious, all rejoicing in labour. Moreover, the real number of men is written in

ink on the check-roll, and there is altogether nothing to carp about. The path would adorn any garden, so neatly kept is it just here—but a little farther on it crosses the swamp and has to be maintained by the arduous labour of carrying solid earth in baskets some fifty yards. Is it all right there? A little poached by the rain, he is told, the rains are so heavy now. He is not surprised when he sinks to his knee at the expected spot. "Let them concentrate their efforts here," he says to the penghulu, who replies that it shall be so. Whether it will be so is matter for the next inspection. A likely spot, this, for snipe. The penghulu, who is not so active as the District Officer, though he is younger, is left on the path, and the assistant penghulu follows into the mire of a paddy-field. The District Officer is glad there is no audience. Usually at least seventeen people will congregate on the path and in loud tones comment on the agility of snipe and the difficulties of shooting a flying bird. The assistant penghulu relates a tale of a certain District Officer who always refuses to fire into flocks of snipe. He prefers, it appears, to shoot at one at a time—singular

preference, and not to be explained to the Malay mind. A few snipe are found and much mud of a holding quality. The path is regained and followed to the point where there is a girls' school. It is one of the mysteries that schools are invariably close to a path or a road. In consequence, whenever a person or an animal or any moving thing whatsoever passes along the path, a score of little heads bob up along the windows to stare—and forget the task for a moment. After all, perhaps, this is a merciful dispensation of an all-wise administration designed to prevent school life being too utterly wearisome to the small Malay child. As the District Officer approaches there is a flutter in this feminine dovecot. The elder girls giggle and look roguishly at each other, the smaller ones goggle their eyes. For be it remembered that in these remoter Malay kampongs the white man is still a strange phenomenon. The only English men who are ever seen here are the District and Assistant District Officers, the Surveyor and the Engineer, and the Education man. Their visits are all rare, and all except the District Officer and his assistant, who may be a Malay,

and the Education man, avoid girls' schools. So a visit from the District Officer is a really interesting event. To-day it is not so interesting to him as it might be, for out of forty girls who should be present, he counts but nine, and these mostly tiny children whose education so far has made little progress. The small things are squatting on the floor with slates, copying from the blackboard. As he approaches to examine their work they clutch their slates in an ecstasy of shyness and are with difficulty persuaded to show them. But when he sees the writing he notes a feminine neatness about it which compares well with the writing of children of this age in a boys' school. Two older girls are seated near a loom where a woman is weaving a sarong in a complex pattern of blue and gold thread. Some unusual turn of the coiffure or pallor of the complexion leads him to look more closely at her, when he sees that she is a Japanese. So low has fallen the weaving of cloth by Malay women that the only local person who can teach it is a Japanese who has married a Malay. He asks a question, "Does any girl keep up her weaving after she has left school?" "No,"

replies the mistress. "And why?" says he. "They get married, and have enough to do to keep a house, and husband and children; moreover, imported clothes from India are so cheap and good that it is not worth while to weave in Malaya." Weaving in silks was at one time and in a few very remote places practised by Malay women, but as trade with India was in full force before the days of Albuquerque, there can be little doubt that weaving was never a real industry generally. In this country there are no unappropriated female blessings, the feminine Malay population being always less in number than the male, and life is made so easy by Nature who lavishes crops upon the least industrious labourer that no need is felt for any industry to supplement the fruits of agriculture.

Farewells are duly taken of mistress and pupils, and again the path is followed. At a turn they come upon an old Malay pottering about near the path amongst the paddy. It is noticeable that much of the flat land near by which should be in paddy is still in jungle, and a secondary growth that looks about ten years old. Whose land is this waste and unproductive patch, then?

Whose but the old man's himself? Then let us ask him all about it, and why he defies the rules which enforce a communistic cultivation of paddy, so that no one's jungly patch harbour destructive rats and pigs. The penghulu hails him and finds he is very deaf, but he is obliging and polite like all Malays, and leaving his labour comes up and salutes the Collector of Land Revenue, who has been transmuted into this from District Officer since he left the school.

"How is it, father, that this land is not cultivated so that it is likely to grow rats and pigs when it should grow paddy?"

"Ah," says the ancient, "I had it all in paddy once, long ago that was, when I was younger."

"And your sons and daughters, do they not help you?"

"They have lands of their own, paddy and fruit lands, and must till them, so I am left alone with this. What little I can, that I do, but it is getting beyond me."

"But could you not sell some to some one who would cultivate?"

"It has always been mine and I should not like to sell it."

"But you would have more money and could keep that without need to cultivate it."

"What should I do with money? I have no use for money. Kept in the house it would be a burden to me, and if I buried it, would not some one evilly dig it up?"

"What is to be done with the old man, Tuan?" asks the penghulu.

"Even let him alone," says the Collector, "yet tell him that what he has cultivated is fair to see, and that I think he does his best."

These words, shouted in the ancient's ears, bring a smile to his face. The law has been flouted, it is true, but if the laws were always enforced life would be largely intolerable. In this case it is not for long that the old man will disregard the rules. Malays do not live to great ages. Very old men are curiosities. Deep-seated malaria always current in the blood, lack of medical attendance, and plenty of quack Malay medicine-men see to it that age is infrequent. Soon the greedy heir will succeed the old man, and on that heir will descend the wrath of the penghulu, the warnings of the Malay assistant, finally, perhaps, the summons and the

fine, so that when the old man's land knows his feeble scratchings no longer, some one stronger than he will hack down and burn up the jungle, hoe the land, flood it, plant the paddy, and this patch of unkemptness vex no longer its neighbours.

Again the path is followed, and sitting to rest under a tree, the District Officer engages in conversation with yet another ancient and his wife. He too is deaf, but his wife's volubility discounts that weakness. They have a request to make. It is like this. The Malays of the place built, at great expense, the Government helping them with dollar for dollar, a mosque. This mosque is the pride of the neighbourhood—it is the largest in the parish. If it had a cement tank for ceremonial bathing it would rival the mosque three miles away. It is very atrociously ugly, a square wooden box of a building, with a corrugated iron roof, but it is totally unlike any Malay building, approximates in appearance to one of the Government halting bungalows, and is consequently considered very superior by the Malays, whose taste in architecture runs to the exotic. However, it is on solid cement founda-

tions, and as every beam has been laid and every nail driven by the Chinese contractor under the close scrutiny of the village elders, the timber and materials generally are of the best. For many years to come it will serve the needs of the simple piety of generations of worshippers. The site for the mosque was provided by this old Malay. To have that site cut out from his own land he went to much trouble and some expense. First of all he had to extol to his neighbours this as the only possible site, and all other sites possible and impossible had to be depreciated. This alone was a matter which may have taken him years, for in these peasant communities all moves are slowly made. Then the District Officer had to be approached and his approval solicited and gained. There was nothing to prevent the Malays building this or a dozen mosques anywhere they pleased, but to hold the benevolent approval of the District Officer was necessary for the sake of politeness at the least, and the gaining of a sense of security. Next came the making of a request to the Council of the State for assistance from the public finances. A petition had to be drawn setting forth the deplorable condition

of the old mosque, tumble-down, riddled by white ants, small, and altogether beneath the dignity of the place. This petition ended with the request that for each dollar collected by the people and banked by the District Officer, a dollar should be contributed by the Government. The request was granted, but it is much easier to get the Government's dollars than to collect those of the congregation. Promises were made and misfortunes of all kinds retracted them. Some gave little of their abundance and some of their poverty gave much. Slowly the money came in, but at long length enough was collected and the Government, as agreed, doubled the amount. But a contract with a Chinese carpenter had to be made, and this necessitated the intervention of the District Officer again, and, for the greater security of the project, the contract was made between him and the Chinese. The work at last was begun, and then only did the old Malay begin to move in the matter of having the site cut out of his land-grant. This brought the Malay Settlement Officer on the scene, noisily, on a motor-bicycle. He conferred with the donor, consulted plans, set forth pegs, returned, and the

next visitor was the Surveyor. Chains and compasses put it all forth accurately and stones were set up to mark the boundaries. Again the Settlement Officer came, met the owner, and was assured that the site was perfectly demarcated. He left, and after many days the old man was summoned to produce his grant, receive two new documents in exchange, and surrender to the Ruler of the State that one of them which evidenced the title to the mosque site. There was signing and witnessing and paying of fees, and the site was assured. For all this was the old man to have none but a spiritual reward? Surely some material benefit should reach him, he thought, hence his present request, put forth at first with much vagueness by himself and volubly explained by his wife. When he dies may he be buried on the mosque site just beside the mosque? Now the law is strict in matters of corpses. No person shall bury a corpse here, there, or everywhere. Each community has a burial or a burning ground. The adherents to the various religions of all the world have many graveyards set apart in this country, and elsewhere may no man bury, unless he be licensed in that behalf.

May this old man's heirs, executors, and assigns be licensed in that behalf? The District Officer considers, the old man regarding him with his eager, deaf look. It means so much to him. There is not now left so overmuch in life that death has terrors for him. When "the order comes" he will be the readier to meet it if he knows that his body is to lie here near the mosque where he may hear the blessed mutter of the Friday services for ever. He gets his answer. If the Health Officer is not against it the British Resident shall be asked to license in that behalf the old man's heirs, and if he agrees to license them then they shall be licensed. So much is gained, but when will it be settled for certain? Let him inquire again in one month's time, and perhaps there will be an answer ready. In a month's time it came, approval.

But what are these loud shouts of warning that come along the path? "Hai, hai," and again "hai," shouts a Chinese coolie, heel and toeing it briskly, bearing a strange burden.

"Beware, Datoh," says the District Officer, "be very ware, here comes a pig."

"A pig, indeed it is a pig," and with a hasty

jump the penghulu is off the path and in the long grass. The Chinese passes, his body, dripping in sweat, glistens from waist to head, for he bears a heavy load. Slung at each end of a carrying stick balanced on his shoulders are the two halves of a large wild pig. Pleasure at the sight of this very dead beast, so destructive to crops, does not allow the District Officer to forget to ask how it was killed. "Who shot it?" he flings after the coolie.

"Spring-gun," gasps back the reply.

"Oh, monstrous! Who dare use a spring-gun?" wails the penghulu. "No one may set a spring-gun."

The coolie is probably well aware of that, to judge by the speed with which he races down the path, twists round the corner, and is gone. Yes, it is so. Without permission no one may set a spring-gun, for of all dangerous devices this is the chief. For a tiger, or for a panther, well and good, a spring-gun. When these are a-prowl no human is likely to be killed by the spring-gun, for people retire early to their houses and bar the doors. But casual spring-guns for mere pigs are likely to kill the neighbours, so the penghulu

will find out who broke this unwritten law, and he will warn him and advise him and inquire of him and blame him, and generally so trouble him that he adopts other methods, possibly the more laborious method of fencing his crops.

This talk of the spring-gun suggests a question, and the District Officer asks, "How about the tiger of last month?"

"Gone, Tuan, and has not been seen for long. Perhaps it has gone across the hill."

At this point, jutting above the path where it circles a jungle-clad hill, is a high huge rock, overlying another huge rock, both granite boulders, the decomposition, under heavy rain, of whose fellows has left these two naked to undergo the dripping of the rain and in their turn to provide the smallest subdivision of an inch of earth for the plain below. At some long future day this twin pair will be no thicker than a sheet of paper and spread in sandy ruin over the flats. But to-day their giant faces jut from the hill amongst the soft growth of leaf and palm. It is apparent from below that between them is a space where a man may stooping stand, and the District Officer thinks he will stand and

stoop there. This incomprehensible desire is made known to the penghulu, who is at once against it. He thinks that with tigers about you never know. His feeling is perhaps that acknowledged by the crew of a launch who once protested against the District Officer bathing in the sea from their craft "because if you were drowned or taken by a crocodile, people would say we murdered you, and much vexation would be incurred." But with a "tigers don't eat white men" the District Officer is off and up, painfully followed by the other two. He gets there first, lays his gun on the dusty platform which is the top of the lower rock, hauls himself up into the narrow space, and looks about him. The tiger has been here. In the dust, never reached by the rain, are the moulds of his pads. In this, nothing very remarkable, but is it not worthy of remark that in the centre of the platform lies one green leaf, fresh, quite unfaded, a thing of this hour, and upon that one green leaf, also fresh and slightly glittering to the eye, there lies, like a red pearl on a green shell, a gout of blood? So worthy of remark seems this, and so unworthy thereupon seems his shot-gun as sole weapon of

defence, that he forbears to wait the tedious arrival of the penghulu and his assistant, but slips off the rock and rejoins them, not without celerity. He tells the tale. They look fearfully upon him, and the three descend in silence to the path. For this tiger is no mild-mannered beast. It has killed a man; worse, a woman saw the man killed. It was on this wise: The two, man and wife, Malays of a village hard by this place, fared forth on a morning to collect sticks for firewood. They made a bundle and the man shouldered it. His wife preceded him along the narrow path. In time some little distance separated them. He had stopped, perhaps to shift the load. At a sound behind her she turned and faced a tiger. Now this woman was latah, hysterical, and when startled she became a senseless mimic of anything that was opposite her at the moment. At this moment a tiger was opposite her, with its mouth slightly open and snarling. To mimic the beast she squatted down, opened her mouth, and also snarled, all this quite unconsciously. Thus the two for a great gap of time faced each other, snarling, both tigers. The tiger turned away

into the jungle, the woman sprang up and was woman again, screaming woman, who fled adown the track and burst yelling into the open space about the houses. These buzzed amain. Taking spears and krises the men reversed her route, marked where, printed in the mud, were the footmarks of the woman and the beast, called for her husband, called in vain, and so found him, lying face downwards, dead. The tiger's coughing snarl, on this side and on that, pulsing out at intervals from depths invisible of forest, followed them home. She, for the woman swore her female, would not face the open to attempt a rescue of the prey, but slunk in and out of the skirts of the forest which lay, as round so many Malay villages, like fringe upon a petticoat. The place was eight miles from anywhere, and anywhere, when reached, was a cart road. To avoid the vexatious appearance in the village of police, doctors, and magistrates, and prolonged inquiries by way of witnesses as to the condition of a long-buried body, they decided at once to convey it to the police station. A party went ahead along the path and then along the road, and along the road were to send

back a bullock-cart. The body was carried, mute witness to its own end, along the path, and with the bearers went the tiger, mourning not loss of life but lack of meat. The day was hot, the wounds were dire. The sun beat upon dead and upon living. A poignant scent from time to time nauseated the Malays and whetted the anger of the tiger. She ceased not from following, snuffling unseen in shadows, till they reached the road where met them not a bullock-cart after all, but a cart with a small pony. His quick trot bore away the body and the party of Malays turned for home. Single file along the narrow path they went, and the last man knew that behind him might be treading that striped and sudden death.

These shuddering stories somewhat shake the party, nor are they reassured on reaching a muddy piece of path to find that the tiger is apparently preceding them by a few minutes, for there are the tracks in the clay, and in the cup of each pudgy toe-mark is washing to and fro the muddy water. But the brute has turned off somewhere, for shortly they meet a Malay holding a wet bathing-cloth in his hand and coming

towards them. His face is grey with fright. The healthy brown colour has disappeared. "I was there, washing this cloth at the spring, and I heard the tiger snarl, I heard the tiger snarl. And Ahmad was near me and he heard it too, and now he has fever and is shuddering in a cold fit." A singular thing this, thinks the District Officer, and proceeds to interview Ahmad, who is found seated on the top step of the ladder up to a Malay house a little farther on. Ahmad is very evidently in the cold fit of a malaria. The rattling of dice is under his lips, for he has lost control of the jaw muscle, and his teeth are chattering briskly. He is wrapped in a series of dirty cloths, and has the general appearance of a large sick bird on a perch. He can hardly speak, but can at last say that it is even so. He heard the tiger's snarl and he fled to his house, and he fell into an ague. Well, the tiger is gone and a good riddance, but here is Ahmad full of fever. This exasperates the District Officer. He knows that quinine is to be had from every police station, every school, every hospital, and every penghulu in the country, and he knows that Ahmad to be now in this state must have

neglected or refused to get and eat quinine, or he would not be so million-full of malaria parasites that a fright from a tiger could cause them instantly to sporulate, send forth their poison in that act and send up Ahmad's temperature. Why, why has Ahmad not taken quinine? This question is fired at the penghulu. The penghulu opines that it is not his fault. But it is, but it is. If this one man is full of fever is he any different from the others? Are not all Malays full of fever, and how many hundreds of times has he preached to all and sundry, using occasions convenient and inconvenient, talking to persons ignorant and persons intelligent, that there is no medicine but quinine, that by quinine alone they may be saved, that lack of quinine-taking accounts for fever, that he must, and will, have them all take quinine, provided free by Government, therefore and beyond contradiction, being so provided, an absolute guaranteed cure for malaria, and if they are still full of fever, whose fault is it? Is it not the penghulu's? Why does he not force it on them? What happened to the quinine sent to the thirty-seven Malay native doctors whose addresses had to be procured

with such difficulty, so shy were they (and perhaps so conscious of their murderous incapacity !) ? The penghulu does not know what happened to the quinine, but he knows what happened to the medicine-men. What ? The majority were exceedingly frightened. Many ran away. Some ceased practice. " That," bitterly remarks the District Officer, " must at least have saved many lives ! "

As they leave Ahmad, who is far too sick to care whether the District Officer is annoyed with him, rightly or unrighteously, and would, so violent is the attack, lift no finger to prevent himself being torn in pieces by a hundred tigers, the District Officer continues to fume in his heart. This is the curse of the country, the bitter, deep, abiding, constant, ancient, and native curse, this malaria. Show him a Malay who has never had malaria, and you will show something that was never yet. The babes of Malaya are born fever-stricken, actually and not so uncommonly born suffering from malaria. From that early age the boys and girls of the nation continue on to young men and maidens, to old hags and aged men, still malarious, suffering at

uncertain intervals, for uncertain times, for uncertain causes, from constantly reiterated attacks of fever. What can be hoped from a race so doomed from birth? Bitterly and truly he replies to himself, nothing. Nothing is expected of them by other races. Seventeen years has he served this people as he would serve, nay, better than he would serve, his own, and he knows that here, in the Malay's own peninsula, the Malay is, amongst the welter of other races, not of the force he should be the instant you start comparing him with others. And races do not any longer live isolated. From under his coconut shell, the Malay of old times could say to himself, "Verily we are the people, and wisdom shall die with us;" but to-day, if it were not for malaria, which afflicts immigrant aliens quite as badly as it afflicts Malays, the Malay's position would be even worse than it is. There is a large Chinese population. The Chinese has to fight an unaccustomed climate plus malaria. The Malay fights malaria only. The Chinese has the heavier handicap. Why is he the more successful at whatever he takes up? He would not be—the District Officer almost

stamps with vexation as his mind reaches this point—if the Malay were not so malaria-ridden. The Malay could get, were he not so full of malaria, health, wealth, and happiness out of his own country ten times more abounding than he gets now. Those, by some philo-Malay sophists, reckoned amiable characteristics, indolence, laziness, pococurantism, unambition, slothful content, dull happiness, and stupid self-conceit, which may all be found well-developed in any Malay, are all malaria characteristics. The plain fact is that the world does not know the real Malay character, so overlaid with malaria is it. That ostensible character is little better than a fever temperature chart, and bears as little relation to what might be normal as does a high temperature to health.

Every organ of the Malay body and every kink of the Malay mentality is malaria-mined—and I, suddenly thinks the District Officer, am growing malaria-mad.

The boy with the owl is a welcome diversion. It is a fluffy and a yellow little owl, like a toy, with goggling eyes bright as glass, and two horns of feather sticking out from each eyebrow. They

hoot at night, says the penghulu, and if a man be dying in a house there, they hoot worse than ever. That is why they are called the haunt-you bird, the ghost bird. A cosmopolitan superstition this, evidently. The boy explains that the owl was on a tree, that the tree fell, and the drowsing owl was taken. They cut the longer feathers of its wing, tied a long piece of soft bark to its leg, and have had it five days.

"And upon what do you feed it?" asks the District Officer.

"Upon rice," says the boy, in a tone of finality.

"Then it will die," says the District Officer, "for its natural food is mice, or a bat perhaps, at least something of flesh and blood."

The boy then shyly says he gives it these things, catching birds with bird-lime. Apparently he gives it rice as a luxury, and is rather proud of lavishing rice on an owl. Would he like to sell it? Well, he will sell it if this great gentleman wishes to buy it.

"But I don't think I do," says the District Officer, "for consider, if I buy the owl and I take him home and he dies, upon whose head is the

blood of this creature of Allah's creating? Is it not upon my head?"

Yes, the boy thinks it is.

"And if it dies in your hands?"

The boy looks graver, and the District Officer wonders if he has been too unkind and hopes the owl at least will profit. "Is it at all sick yet?" he asks.

"Not a bit," says the boy stoutly.

"Looks a bit depressed, perhaps," says the District Officer.

"Well," says the penghulu, "ask this woman —she is a doctor."

Three women have come along the path, each with a primitive fishing-rod and a small basket for captures. The streams and pools of Malaya swarm with fish, and fish is a staple food amongst country Malays. These three are typical Petani Malay women, and their most striking characteristics are neglected hair, dirty clothes, ugly faces, lips vermilioned with constant chewing of betel-nut, and teeth which look as if they had been filed in youth down to the soft centres, as indeed they have, for it is considered better to have artificially treated teeth like this than teeth white

like a dog's, as is disdainfully said of others who use not this custom.

"So our elder sister is a doctor, is she?" asks the District Officer.

"Not a doctor," says she, "but a midwife, and her principal patients are women in labour."

The District Officer glances at her filthy hands, wonders how many cases she needlessly loses, but considers that the enormous majority of births amongst peasant populations are normal parturitions and present no excuse for homicidal interference. Thus he finds some consolation for the many cases known to his experience where ignorance has killed the young mother and the child together. It is these cases that he hopes to save when the new lady doctors in the district next door over the hills get to work, and have taught their English methods to a few selected Malay women; but he feels not over-enthusiastic, since it is well known that a little learning is a dangerous thing, and to him it is further well known that it is not a Malay's characteristic to drink deep of the well of knowledge, even though the water thereof be brought to the ladder of his house.

The three women do not seem interested in the owl overmuch nor in the District Officer. He has a vague feeling that he has seen them before. Probably they have sat at his feet at some land court and have, as hour followed hour and case followed case, chewed their betel-nut, nursed their own or other people's babies, and discussed in undertones the make, shape, clothing, and probable mentality of the District Officer until they feel they know him quite well. At a land court or a rent collection the attendance ranges from the little old gnome of a Malay who is far gone in senility and insists on attempting to shake the Collector of Land Revenue by the hand whenever he can get near him, and is never without a propitiatory bunch of the very best langsats—down from him it ranges to the newly-born babe, who wails when its attack of malaria is due and is removed beyond crying distance by its mother.

"Come, and bring your friends," is the word on these occasions, and a whole parish will cull forth a holiday and combine claims to succession to land with shopping in the Chinese village close by. A great advantage this, and encouraged by

the Collector, for a liar has to be bold indeed who lies in the immediate presence of all the other interested parties, and all their relations and friends and his own too. Moreover, corroborative testimony is seldom lacking, and everybody's affairs may be threshed out with wealth of detail and an expansive hilarity, often, which does much to relieve the tedium of the law.

The three women wander off down the path to their fishing near by, and the District Officer, the penghulu, and the assistant penghulu walk on, shortly reaching the end of the path, where the motor which went round is waiting. He gets in, bids them good-bye, and is off. What has he effected in his morning's walk? In sooth he has accomplished little, has he not? Merely—he has been seen by men. What is there in that? Why, nothing in England, but very much in Malaya, where are simple folk.

XVI

THE ACCIDENT

"THAT, and that, and that," screamed the Tunku Chik passionately, "take that, and that, and that." She paused, panting. At her feet lay a Malay girl, swathed in a sarong up to the waist, her ankles held by two strong women, and her hands, stretched above her head, by two more. The Tunku Chik paused; her sarong, caught up above her breasts, had slipped to her hips, and she had to replace it.

"Now," she said, "go, go, whither you will, you bastard, you spawn of unmarried parents, you person of no descent, child of a mother who——" but the true Malay climax which she used is not within the scope of modest English. "Go," she said, "and as for the marks of the beating, there will be none. Truly, Minah," to one of the old

women near by, "you are crafty. I had refrained from punishing this accursed one, for fear of the marks. The last time—when Maimunah, curse her, escaped—the marks were yet upon her. Therefore she went to the Tuan, who saw that she had been soundly thrashed. But this evil girl—let her go, Minah, for who will believe her story that the Tunku Chik's feet have danced upon her breast? For there will be no marks, you say, Minah?"

"No marks, Tunku," answered old Minah. "I remember well the cunning punishment your mother used to her girls left no marks."

"Let her go, then," said Tunku Chik, "am I not weary of her? Away with her! Come, you others, the youth we saw to-day, and bade do us reverence at eventide, where is he?"

"Please, Tunku," answered one of the women, scarce able to restrain her mirth, "he will not come. He"—she smiled—"dreads your favours."

"What," said the Tunku Chik, "he will not come? Nay, then, but he must be prevailed upon to greet us as we will. Let one go fetch him——" Her voice died away in the distance,

and the room remained empty, save for the gasping figure upon the floor. Silence occupied the place, broken only by sobs from the half-naked girl. She lay for some time helpless, the pain of the punishment being hot upon her; but at length she gathered strength to hitch her sarong above her heaving breasts and raised herself upon her arm. The tropic twilight gathered in the room, and scarce revealed the crouching figure. At length it rose slowly, and staggered to the doorway. The last breeze of evening fanned the girl's cheek as she gazed fearfully into the growing shades of night; but taking courage from the memory of her wrongs, she passed down the steps, and fled into the shadows.

In those days there were only two white men in the place. One was a trader and the other was a Government official.

The trader sat upon his verandah, the lamp behind him, a book in his hand, a cigar in his mouth, and whisky and water at his elbow. He had reached the evening of his usual day, and was longing for the time when his servant would announce dinner. Forthwith he would eat it,

and thereafter go to bed. He sat thus, in the full glare of the light, wrapped on all sides by the thickest blackness of the night, and the heavy jungle, a-scream with shrill insect voices, was but a few yards from his chair. Dinner was long coming, and the white man communed with nature and his own thoughts.

"Tuan!" said a voice at his feet, and again, "Tuan!" The white man might perhaps have started up had not long training told him that the barefoot Malay does not always cough loudly to assert his presence; so he betrayed little interest in the matter and said simply:

"Siapa?" (Who is it?)

"Sahya" (It is I), said the voice, with usual Malay failure to explain who "I" might be.

"Siapa?" said the white man again, with an emphasis intended to show that he could not see the speaker.

"Sapiah," said the still unseen visitor. This told the white man nothing, except that the owner of the name was a woman.

"Sapiah siapa?" (Which Sapiah?)

"Apa handak?" (What do you want?) queried the white man, still at a loss. Then

followed a torrent of words, an incoherent telling of a tale, clear enough to the speaker, but unintelligible almost to the hearer. Only he learnt, perhaps guessed chiefly, that the mysterious visitor had been entreated evilly of certain persons highly placed, and here sought protection. The trader called up his only trusted servant, and said :

"See this woman ; she has come to the wrong house. Let her have shelter for the night and remind me of her to-morrow morning. Also tell the cook that if he does not send up dinner, I will infallibly strike off his head and his cheating extra charges together."

This horrible menace, though well known, by dint of frequent iteration, to the household, eventually resulted in dinner being served. The white man sat down to it, and dined sparely of tinned provisions and newly-slain chicken. After lingering as long as he could manage to keep his cigar alight and his book between his hands, he went to bed, desperately sleepy and quite forgetful of the commonplace episode before dinner.

Next morning, when the day broke, the

mists rolled up from the river valley and fled away before the strong shining of the sun, and the Government official walked out upon his verandah. He looked down upon the river and wondered idly whether the people already bathing below ever felt a twinge of liver: also he wondered whether the day would bring forth "another circus," as he bitterly termed the murders, quarrels, fights, snatchings of damsels, thefts, and various other happenings with which his lot was to deal. For he was the officer-in-charge, that is to say, he had been provided with a set of elementary notions concerning the rights and wrongs of matters judicially regarded, and it was hoped that he would succeed in imposing these notions upon a set of people to whom they were the worst of annoying anathemas, more especially as he and his notions were quite inevitable, and himself but a spoke in the wheel, the wheel of a steam-roller. The "circus" which he vaguely anticipated, possibly by instinct, arrived quite promptly in the person of a very fat and intensely respectable Malay gentleman, correctly dressed, if out of breath.

"What is the news, Datoh?"

"Good news, Tuan," answered the Datoh, which is the equally usual answer. This fair opening was belied, however, by the haste with which the Datoh plunged into his message.

"There was a great trouble this morning, Tuan, yes, not at all a small uproar—and Tunku Chik," here he puffed portentously, "Tunku Chik —Allah, what a hill is this, I have no breath— Tunku Chik sent me——" Here he collapsed, and the other said soothingly :

"And so Tunku Chik doubtless sent you to tell me all about it."

"Yes, Tuan, yes, that is it, Tuan. She thought you ought to know at once ; such a thing, disgraceful ! Tunku Chik hopes you will take steps, ah, immediate steps. Doubtless you will take immediate steps to——"

"But what is it, Datoh, that has happened ? "

"I myself," replied the Datoh, "cannot imagine what has come upon the country. In my young days, was it not an honour for a girl to be an attendant, but now, yes, even a little reproof they will not endure. Extraordinary it is ; most strange ; as I have said, Tuan, it is about that

Sapiah. Ah! she has no shame. Such a thing! Amazing!!"

Losing himself in his amazement, genuine or diplomatic, the worthy man paused, and looked at the white man. It may be doubted whether what he saw in that face entirely reassured him, for he began to relate the circumstances more clearly. It appeared, from his statement, that one Sapiah, maid of honour to the Tunku Chik, had, absolutely for nothing, merely for being reproved for not carrying out her duties properly, fled at night, and was now, even at this very moment, in the trader's house. The white man listened, and the more he listened the less he liked it, and the less he liked it the more he remembered tales he had heard of the Tunku Chik and the mildness of that lady's reproofs to her handmaids. The Datoh, with a not uncommon native quickness, read these thoughts, and he said gravely:

"Tunku Chik desires me to assure you, Sir, that there can be no reason for this girl's so suddenly leaving the palace, and she will be glad if you will see that she is restored to her proper guardians, for it is not fitting——" here he dwelt a moment, and was answered by:

"Be good enough, Datoh, to say that I will investigate the affair, and will let her know what I would recommend later."

So the Datoh departed with his message, and the other went to breakfast with what appetite he might, for he foresaw the usual trouble.

Investigation, which meant the interviewing of Sapiah and the trader, resulted in a formal message sent through the Datoh, to the effect that it was to be feared that the information was perhaps at fault, and that Sapiah would appear to have had grounds for her hasty action. Tunku Chik in reply stated that she had no doubt that the Tuan was, as usual, quite right, and that the matter would probably settle itself.

I remember that at this point my informant, the man who told me this tale, which is, as I forget whether I told you before, probably quite untrue, did not seem exactly able to say how it happened, but he did state clearly that in the trader's house there had for some time been engaged a young Malay boy as peon, or general message-runner. So the rest of the story resolves into two actors—the girl and the boy. Here comes the difficulty, because nobody

but the boy knows the truth. Moreover, nobody is quite clear as to where the boy came from, or whether, when interrogated, he told the truth, but many think he lied, and if he did—but nobody will ever know. Anyhow, the matter, as had been remarked, settled itself—thus—at least this is what the boy says. It fell on that day that the trader went out, and left, with the usual carelessness, a pistol lying about, inviting the curiosity of the boy. Upon him snapping the hammer idly, the girl came and asked why he fooled with the pistol. For answer, he snapped it again, and this time it exploded, shot her below the left breast, and killed her at once. The affair was an accident, and thus " the matter settled itself."

XVII

THE TIN-STEALERS

THE considerable towns and even some of the small villages in British Malaya derive their water supplies from catchment areas in the hills and mountains which are usually but a few miles from town and village. The catchment area will converge to a single valley at low level, and here or hereabouts is the water caught as in the neck of a tilted bottle. At any spot in this valley deemed favourable for the purpose a tank is constructed, of the granite blocks which lie handy and of cement to bind them together. Some of the reservoirs are large and some small as need dictates and money serves, but upon their freedom from contamination depends, where the filter beds are non-existent, or are liable to be overtasked, the purity of the pipe supply. Upon this purity

depends again human life in the towns and villages. The Asiatic, no less than the more backward of the Europeans, is careless about his water supply. By him any water which looks not absolutely muddy may be drunk, and of water-borne diseases he recks as little as he knows. The fresh salad, sewage-fed in youth, is in its marketable mid-age, and on its way to market, soused, to preserve its freshness, in any wayside ditch. It arrives, harbouring typhoid in every one of the cool crevices amongst its leaves, ready to distribute that disease to purchasers. Wayside ditches, therefore, have slain their thousands but wells their ten thousands, for it does not incommode a dweller in the brick and tiled houses and shops in towns to draw drinking water from a well in one corner of a tiny courtyard and to use a leaky latrine in the other corner, so that water mingles with sewage and sewage with water. Yet something have these people already learnt, for an order from Authority to close the well will evoke protests on the score of expense, and a vehement denial that the water is ever used for drinking. With some slight touch of pride at his acquaintance with " Western

knowledge," the worthy Chinese householder will tell you that all his drinking water comes in buckets from the stand pipe in the street. If a person living in a private house prefers to maintain a presumably typhoidal well he risks destruction for himself and his household alone, but when he maintains a well and eating-house, public-house, coffee-shop, or other place of common resort, the chances are that to save expense of water-carrying he serves out typhoid with meat and drink to others than his family. These at least must be protected, so "close that well" goes forth first to the sellers of food and of drink, and secondly it goes forth to the private householder. Such orders cause some annoyance, but what will you? If the British are to justify their presence in this land, by their works must you know them, and amongst those works sanitation is foremost, or should be.

Thus we have arrived at the other end of the pipe, at the tap in the street, and up the water we must go again through the town, under the angsena trees, dropping odours in their golden blossom, past the mosque, the temple, and the church, past the gaol, the racecourse, and the

mines to the dense bush, child of the long since vanished jungle, to the narrow valley, where the catchment area's water comes down. Here are the waterworks, the service reservoir, various tanks, and pipes, and sheds, all of a singular hideousness, but that hideousness redeemed by their jungle setting. They are like a common gem in a mount too rich for it. But we lift up our eyes to the waterfall and are satisfied. That is still unspoiled in spite of the able and the energetic schemer who would like to tap its power and draw away its jetting strength to the dull purposes of money-making in the mines. So the waterfall plunges and spume arises from it, and the spray of its leaping is seen across the country, glittering white, its radiancy enhanced by the walls of high green jungle which on either side hem it in. In spate on those dull, cloudy, rain-swept days, when thunderstorms brood and burst on the mountain above it, the waterfall comes down a turbid yellow, thick and natural to such a stream. Yet, sometimes, on a day of cloudless blue sky, when rain is not upon the mountain, when, if every one had his rights, the waterfall should show bright white, when nothing but the

hand of perverse man can possibly be disturbing the high-set sources in the catchment area, then, and for such reason only, does the waterfall run a sad yellow; another tincture clouds its argent, and Authority, ceasing for a moment to drive an irksome pen, looks up and across and says to himself, "Tin-stealers again! That water is not as white as it should be."

Authority makes the same remark, and others more cogent, to the telephone, and ends with, "It means typhoid, and it has got to be stopped."

At six of a bright morning on the day following, two Englishmen, one Sikh mines-overseer, one Chinese clerk, English-speaking, one Indian Muhammadan policeman, and one Sikh policeman leave the town, and, walking as quickly as may be, arrive at the neck of the catchment area's lowest valley with the comfortable conviction that nobody has got past them to give the alarm, and the uncomfortable foreboding that somebody is as likely as not now going by a different route to the top of the mountain for the purpose of giving that same alarm. The party does not expect to be out long, and though each English-

man has a small box of sandwiches, the others have nothing. Speed being of the essence of success in these expeditions, they hasten along a stony path by the side of the valley's stream, dripped upon by last night's rain from every branch they touch. The police knock the toes of heavy boots against the boulders and, in their own tongue, swear discreetly under their breaths. The path begins to mount, progress becomes slower, and the details of the way are a little observed. At one point, after crawling from one rock on to another higher up, they come to an overhanging rock where in days of old, when tin-stealers were more bold than now, sticks had been cut in the jungle and laid on poles to form a seat or bed. A black mark on the under surface of the rock shows where a fire had been lit. One of the Englishmen remarks on the discomfort of camping under rocks. Up mounts the path again, preposterously steep, slippery, and long on that grade, so that finally it is only by gripping at tree roots that progress can be made. The stream now courses far below in the valley, and when they crossed it, hardly knee-deep, it had lost last night's spate. But it is discoloured, and

not, it is probable, by soil washed into it by rain, but by tin-stealers.

Between the party on the path and the stream itself there stretches a thorn-infested jungle, dark, dripping wet, hanging on the sheer hillside. The little, hardly visible path meanders, just wide enough, as is pregnantly observed, to allow the passage of a man carrying, after the Chinese fashion, a stick across one shoulder, from either end of which stick depend rattan loops where rest two baskets, and in those baskets two bags of stolen tin ore. It is a little difficult to see how a heavily-laden coolie—and tin ore weighs very heavy—can pass down such a path, but the reflection that there is money in doing it offers an explanation. As the party mounts, the air grows cooler with the altitude, and their skins cease that output of sweat which has soaked through their light clothes. The path too, having reached a long, straight, and comparatively flat spur, is now easier to travel. Therefore they hurry along, for indications point to their being still far below the tin-stealers. These indications are simple, for they consist merely of the colour of the water of the small streams which run down

the mountain-side. So long as a stream is clear there is no tin-stealing along it. If a stream be muddy, and there is no rain to account for that mud, then some one is troubling the water up above. That some one must be a tin-stealer, for there is no agriculture upon this side of the mountain. It is certainly unfortunate for the tin-stealer that he must, so long as he is working, provide such plain tell-tales of his illicit labour. As the party mounts up and ever upward, they come at last to an open space. Its brighter light warns them that they are reaching it before they leave the jungle which till now has concealed their movements. At this point they call a halt, and the two white men move cautiously forward to reconnoitre. As the jungle path is about to lead them into the cleared space, they halt and, peering through the last screen of vegetation, take stock of the place in front. It lies on the steep hillside, covers several acres, and is exposed to the sun. A murmur of several streams arises, an irregular splashing and jumping of water, different from the monotonous drone of the natural hill stream. For here nature's drainage has been altered. The waters, no longer confined

to the several few and small channels ordained to them from the beginning by the growth of the forest, no longer cooped within the ways themselves have worn through the rocks in dropping down the mountain, now pass by devious paths, through a welter of raw granite boulders, under, round and over the very bones of the formation of the mountain. For this is an old working of the tin-stealers. Here they have evidently in the past maintained a long and undisturbed burrowing. Feeble folk though these Chinese tin-stealing coolies be and ready to run from Authority's first footsteps, yet here they have lived amongst the rocks and set a whole hillside aslide and astumble. On this mountain, though isolated boulders of granite not rarely jut forth from the soil, yet usually the covering of earth, laid down by the thousand dead generations of trees, is so thick that, except where streams have worn it through, it is difficult to realise that the whole surface underlying the skin of earth consists of piled and repiled and again piled blocks of granite, poised, leant, slanted against, and on each other.

The tin-stealers' operation of skinning the

mountain-side and exposing its bones to view borrows from geology itself, and proceeds upon the same lines as those on which Nature works when her rain washes away a top formation and brings to light another underlying it. The skin of the mountain, a soft, yellowish earth, is easily rubbed off by the action of water. The concentration of several small streams diverted from above and impinged upon the soil in any given spot washes down the earth and with it the black tin sand. The tin ore may be rich on the surface in favoured spots, but is usually far richer deep under the rocks, where it lies in pockets and holes. Thus the tin-stealer is not content to wash off the uppermost cuticle of the mountain, but maintains his spouts of water upon it until he lays bare its cyclopean bones. In doing this he destroys the balance of the boulders; venturing and meddling, each stroke of his tool and each spurt of the water may make the rocks totter above him, and the farther he burrows the deeper digs he what may be his grave. The gathering of tin ore by these methods is a fearful trade, and many a revenge must the outraged majesty of the mountain take. Well the Chinese know

this, and all about the rocks are traces of the red candle-wax where tapers have been lit and scented joss-sticks burnt by the tin-stealers to propitiate the spirit of the mountain. The two white men, who have sweated up here on no other errand than to catch and prosecute the tin-stealers, find themselves considering with a natural admiration how into the dark caverns now before them, under rocks which a touch might set swinging, and deeper yet under rocks which only stand upright because a rock above ready to swing has not yet swung and toppled, there have crawled these Chinese coolies, clutching each a short-handled hoe in one hand and a candle in the other, not knowing whether last night's heavy rainfall has loosened the mighty keystone which till last night maintained the balance of the whole, not knowing whether one stroke, nay, one half-stroke, into the water-soddened soil shall provide a last exasperation of the mountain's spirit and decide it to bring its whole titanic fall-trap down. Here under these mighty ribs of the earth they have been wont to creep about and scrape around, and to carry away the sand and ore in shallow baskets, each

time they descend affronting the spirit of the mountain, each time they ascend arising as from a grave prepared. Yet each has gone down, if even to his death, a free coolie, owning allegiance to no foreman, earning his own living on his own terms, self-tempted to these hazards, realising the illegality and the risk, counting, no doubt, the pains and penalties likely to be exacted by Nature and by the white man as nothing to the chance of wealth beyond all dreaming.

It is plain to see from the colour of the streams issuing from the tier of rocks lowest down the hill that no one is at work here. Each rivulet comes forth quite clear to sparkle in the sun and thread its way downwards some three thousand feet to the waterfall and the reservoir. So the reserves are called up and the party strikes across the bare rocks, where no path shows, using such foot and hand holds as have been left by the tin-stealers, and after some uncertainty finding an upwardly path to follow. Once again they are in the deeply silent spaces of the jungle, the huge trees ranged round them seeming to defy the fate of their lately standing comrades, whose naked stems and leafless branches lie tossed down above

the bare rocks as they have been hurled by the workings of the tin-stealers. At this height the air is lighter, and an exhilarating sparkle is felt in the little breeze which begins to blow. The party hastens on, and several men step across it before one of them recognises that the little stream they have now reached is muddy. The announcement brings them all to the alert. The police, who have been carrying their tunics and marching in blue flannel shirt sleeves, now put on the tunics again and even button them. The two white men confer together, and, trying to gauge the nearness of the tin-stealers by the yellowness of the stream, decide to creep on quietly and make a rush at the right moment. There is only room on the path for single file and the footing is bad. For some little time great caution is exercised, but at length the continued muddiness of the stream and the continued failure to reach any workings lead to a doubt as to how far off the tin-stealers may be, and to an unconscious quickening of pace and relaxation of caution. The result is, that in pressing on round a rock the first white man comes plump upon a Chinese coolie stooping over a runlet of water

and raking therein at the mixed sand and tin ore slipping past him. The coolie happens at the same moment to look round, and with a cry of dismay flings aside his hoe and leaps headlong down the hillside, here a little clear of timber, gathering impetus as he goes, and finally disappearing in the thick jungle before he can be caught by the less nimble police who hurry in pursuit. Not otherwise does a startled deer bound madly down a hill till he reaches cover in the impassable jungle. The police pant up again, and revenge themselves by picking up the coolie's tools and baskets with a handful of abandoned tin ore, such being the only spoils for the victors. The white men advance again with the annoying conviction that to-morrow the same man will be working in the same spot, even more wide awake and less liable to capture than he was to-day. The stream is clear again above the working and so are many subsequent streams until at last the party reaches an amphitheatre in the hills. This place has been differently planted by Nature from the rest of the jungle, for it is studded by great groups of the bertam palms bearing their accustomed armour

of long black spikes down every frond, the ground beneath the plants themselves being sown with bertam leaves in every stage of decay, but in all stages equally piercing. Viewed from below, this amphitheatre hanging on the hill is seen to be even more gloomy and dark inside than the jungle which surrounds it. It is drained by a single stream which is discoloured but not precisely muddy. A council is held and it is decided to divide and converge on the amphitheatre. Accordingly this is done, and, as usually happens in broken country covered with jungle, in two minutes neither party has any idea where the other may be and still less idea where the tin-stealers are. The party which went to the right afterwards related that they had come upon a hut made of leaves and branches where a bag of rice, several empty tins—your tin-stealers can afford to live on the local fat of the land in tins—and some tools showed plainly that this was a tin-stealers' bivouac. But of tin-stealers they saw none. The other party had the more entertaining experience, for it broke, unexpected either by itself or by its objective, into the heart of the amphitheatre of bertam and stumbled

upon a number of Chinese coolies, washing tin ore in basins, who ran, yelling wildly, in the gloomy murk. The rain was heavily falling by now; it splashed through the leaves with a noisy clamour; at moments rending crashes of thunder shook the whole mountain-side; whilst vivid flashes of lightning came again and again as if to illumine a scene from some inferno. The whole place was full of bertam spikes, and any sudden movement of foot or hand would run them deeply into the hand or foot; falling on the slippery surface meant several thorns in the back. A few minutes of a wild delirium, with Chinese flying yowling past, shadows on thudding feet, with police shouting, thunder roaring, lightning flashing, rain hammering, and darkness growing visibly, reduced all but the tin-stealers, who were familiar with the place, to complete helplessness. The Chinese vanished. Everybody lost everybody else, and when any discovered another, both were picking out bertam thorns and looking foolish. Eventually the two police and the Chinese clerk joined the white man, the washed tin ore was seized, and a search for the rest of the party began. No one who has not tried it

knows how difficult it is to rendezvous in the blank jungle after a separation and a scrimmage. There are no particular places in which to rendezvous unless some large rock or large tree is selected, and since the whole vast mountain range consists of large rocks and large trees, they are useless as marks, more especially as sight does not serve beyond some dozen yards, so thick is the growth. But, fortunately, though one may be lost in such a country the way home is never lost, since following the streams downwards infallibly leads to the plain, and the plain having all, in the past, been mined, offers no obstacle on the return home. But the present situation was not pleasant. The elevation was about 3000 feet, which meant 3000 feet of slipping and sliding and clambering, if a path were again found; and if a path were not found, and the line of a stream were to be followed, the descent would be steeper and also have to be pierced through jungle. The day was far spent, for it was by now half after three of the clock, and darkness might be expected in the jungle at six, or earlier if the storm continued. It was heavily raining, and each individual was already

soaked to the skin. There was not any prospect that the rain would abate; the little streams met with on the upward journey would be raging torrents on the downward. The other half of the party was hopelessly lost by this half, and no amount of calling and miserably wandering availed to effect a meeting. Nothing had been done to control the tin-stealers; disappointment was visible on all faces; and, hardest of all, everybody was hungry and no one had anything to eat. However, with plenty of luck, it might still be possible to get out that evening, and the descent was ordered. The path of ascent had long been lost, and the only indications of the homeward way were the slope of the mountain, and the flow of the water. The white man went first, the Punjabi policeman came second, the Chinese clerk third, and last of all the Sikh policeman, he limping in trying to save a bruised foot. Then began a progress downwards whose every single step was misery. Cold, weary, drenched, empty, stuck with thorns, footsore, they started to fight their way through the dreary sodden jungle. For fighting it is to walk straight ahead through the virgin jungle.

The strength and agility of the boxer to ward off or dodge the swinging blows of the branches, the wristwork of the fencer to thrust aside the dangling vines are demanded and must be found, together with the best of eyesight to detect the straight spikes, the retorted thorns, the scimitar spines of the more malignant creepers. The torrential rain had quickly filled all the streams, and to descend on the left bank of the main stream on reaching the lower part of the valley through which they had ascended alone offered any chance of outlet. But the difficulties of the terrain drove them unwittingly to a point where to reach the left bank meant a scramble across wet rock faces swept by momentarily increasing streams of water, and prudence decided against it. Thus it was inevitable that a slipping, sliding, swinging, swaying progress downhill, through the embracing, detaining, clinging jungle, should bring them at last, and as darkness fell, to a point where the true homeward path was recognised, but across a raging spate of yellow foaming water, belt-deep, for the white man tested it. Here a dejected four crept under a rock below which ran a little trickle of

GLOSSARY

ALIR	A floating bait and hook.
ANGKUS	An elephant goad.
ATAP	Palm-leaf thatch.
BABA	A Chinese born in Malaya.
BOY	A servant.
CHANGKUL	A digging hoe.
DAMAR	Resin.
DAMAR MATAKUCHING	Resin of *Hopea globosa*.
DATOH	Grandfather, also used as a title of distinction.
GEMBALA	A mahout, elephant driver.
GHARRY	A four-wheeled carriage.
IJOK	Vegetable fibre.
KAJANG	A matting of palm-leaf.
KAMPONG	A hamlet or collection of buildings and land round it.
KRIS	A dagger.
LALANG	A tall grass, *Imperata cylindrica*.
LANGSAT	A fruit, *Lansium domesticum*.
LATAH	Hysterical.
MANDOR	A foreman.
MEM	A European lady.
NIPAH	A palm, *Nipa fruticans*.
PAPAU	A fruit tree.
PARANG	A chopper.

PAWANG	A wizard.
PENGHULU	A local headman.
PEON	A servant or orderly or messenger.
PISANG	A banana.
SAKAI	An aboriginal tribe.
SAMPAN	A boat of Chinese type.
SARONG	A sack-like skirt held in place by being folded and cross-folded about the waist or below the arms.
SEMAMBU	The Malacca cane, *Calamus scipionum*.
SUMPITAN	A blow-pipe of reed.
TA'TAU	I do not know.
TA'TAU-LAH	I don't know.
TUAN	Master, sir, lord.
TUBA	A plant, *Derris elliptica*.
TUNKU	A title.
UBI	Any tuberous root.