

SOME GLIMPSSES

INTO

LIFE

IN THE

FAR EAST.

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by John Turnbull THOMSON

of their Paganism. They were Mahomedans, but had not yet lost the traditions of their forefathers.

We did not sleep very soundly, but were astir early to gain the summit, which we had not reached the night before; but when we arrived at what was thought the summit, our disappointment was great to find that we had been guided to the eastern mountain, which is much lower than the western, and between which an immense gulph yawned. Our thermometer showed a temperature only 5° lower than what it stands at on the plain, consequently we could not have attained above 1500 feet of elevation. Our provisions ran out, so we had to return that day. By noon we slung our guns on our backs and scampered down the mountain. Young W—— M—— and I led the van, which was the cause of our losing a great treat, viz., an encounter with two rhinoceroses; one of which was shot, the other escaped. The dead rhinoceros was held to be a trophy of great distinction, so the finder got the head by way of precedence, and the hind feet fell to my share. What took us a whole day to go, only took us four hours to return; for in that space of time we arrived at the Malay village, where we slept that night. On the next morning we visited some Chinese miners searching for tin, but they had not met with success. Leaping into our boat again, we descended the *Sakodai* and arrived off *Kranjee* by dark. Here the Doctor and I left the party, intending to ride across the island

of Singapore, by the road just then newly finished. Our horses were expected to be at the first Chinese *gambier bangsal* (gambier works), so we made for it.

It was now pitch dark, and we had great difficulty in groping our way through the close high scrub, but at length we arrived at the *bangsal*, and stood before the outer gate. On our first appearance a great hubbub took place among the Chinese, the cause of which was that they had lately been attacked by Malays, so they were more than ordinarily alert for such episodes in their backwood habitation. The *bangsal* was stockaded round, and on the Doctor and I advancing to the gate, the inmates evidenced the greatest alarm, and at length set upon us with spears and double swords. The Doctor was a brave man, so by advancing too closely to the stockade, got nearly thrust through by a spear; fortunately his white dress was seen in the dark. He was recognised as an *orang putih* (white man) by the Chinese, who immediately dropped their warlike demonstrations, and with great joy opened the door and let us in.

On asking the *toukay* (head man) about our horses, it appeared that they were at the next *bangsal*, so after a cup of tea with the old man, we departed, and got the horses at the place indicated. A ride of fifteen miles over a good level road brought us into town by early morning, and thus ended the Doctor's inroad upon the savage wilds of the Malay peninsula.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE KISSANG.

THE British territory of Malacca is bounded to the south-east by the Kissang river. I think this river worthy of notice, even though of small importance; for on its banks are disclosed, in an eminent degree, all the wild features of a primeval Malayan country. It is entered from the sea over very extensive mud-flats, which are infested with alligators.

It was at three o'clock one morning when I attempted to get into it by means of a small canoe, manned by four Malays. Small as our canoe was, we stuck on the bar; and so afraid were the Malays of the alligators, that they would not venture out of the canoe to push it over, so we had to wait patiently till the tide rose. Once inside the bar, we found the Kissang a dull sluggish river, bounded by mangroves for several miles up. After this, alternate lalang (long grass) plains succeeded tall forests. The forests here abound in elephants and rhinoceroses. Snakes and serpents hang on the

jutting branches of the forest trees, and alligators float in the water. There being very few inhabitants, the beasts of the forest, and reptiles of the waters, have it all to themselves. In the forests the trumpeting of the elephants was frequently heard, and also the rush of the rhinoceros through the tangled branches. The alligators were so tame that we struck them with our paddles before they would condescend to sink to the bottom. This afforded great sport to the Malays, who hate the reptile, and are glad to get a poke at him. We ascended till within a few miles of Gunung Ledang (Mount Ophir), a majestic mountain, towering over the adjacent hills and plains. Here the scenery was magnificent, wild, and rugged. The forest trees, reaching two hundred feet in height, rose out of the foreground, in most fantastic order, and huge creepers and orchideous plants hung to them in graceful festoons. Such scenery as this presented many a study for the admirer of nature.

To those who would search for glimpses of majestic tropical scenery, wild and uncultivated, the Kissang is worthy of attention; and if the visitor be a sportsman, the wild animals of the forest will give him ample scope.

*The Kissang is a river which flows
not 50 yds wide at the bottom, &
two boats can hardly pass each other
the greater part of the course*