

STUDIES  
IN  
BROWN HUMANITY

BEING  
SCRAWLS AND SMUDGES IN SEPIA  
WHITE, AND YELLOW

BY  
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## IN THE VALLEY OF THE TĒLOM

Where the forest yields to the open space,  
And the trees stand back to see  
The waters that babble and glisten and race  
Thro' woodlands trackless and free ;  
Where the soil is ploughed by a thousand feet,  
And the salt lies sweet below,  
Here nightly the beasts of the jungle meet  
To wallow, and bellow, and blow.

*The Salt-Lick.*

VERY far away, in the remote interior of Pahang, there is a river called the TĒlom—an angry little stream, which fights and tears its way through the vast primæval forest, biting savagely at its banks, wrestling impatiently with the rocks and boulders that obstruct its path, rippling fiercely over long beds of water-worn shingle, and shaking a glistening mane of splashing, troubled water, as it rushes downwards in its fury. Sometimes, during the winter months, when the rain has fallen heavily in the mountains, the TĒlom will rise fourteen or fifteen feet in a couple of hours, and then, for a space, its waters change their temper from wild, excited wrath, to a sullen anger, which it is by no means pleasant to encounter. But

places, the earth is trodden down to the water's edge in great deep clefts, such as the kine make near Malay villages, at the points where, in the cool of the afternoon, they go to wallow in the shallows of the river.

A bold sweep of the Misong, at this spot, forms of the left bank a rounded headland, flat and level, and covering some two acres of ground. In places, short, closely-cropped grass colours the soil a brilliant green, but, for the most part, this patch of open bears the appearance of a deeply-ploughed field. This is the Salt-Lick of Misong.

The earth is here impregnated with saline deposits, and the beasts of the forest come hither in their hundreds to lick the salt, which, to them, and to the lowest of our human stock also, is 'sweeter' than anything in the world. When the waters of the Misong are swollen, the salt cannot be got at, and the lick is deserted, but in the dry weather, the place is alive with game. Here may be seen the tracks of deer; the hoof-marks of the *siladang*, the strongest of all the beasts; here is found the long, sharp scratch made by the toes of the rhinoceros; the pitted trail, and deep rootings left by the wild swine; the pad-track of the tiger; the tiny footprints of the *kanchil*, the perfectly formed deer which, in size, is no larger than a rabbit; and the great round sockets, punched by the ponderous feet of the elephants in the soft and yielding soil. Here come, too, the tapir, and the black panther, and packs of wild dogs, and the jungle cats of all kinds, from the brute which resembles the tiger in all but bulk, to the slender spotted animal, built as lightly and as neatly as a greyhound. Sitting in the fork of a tree, high

## TUKANG BÚROK'S STORY

Though my bones be old, yet my soul within  
Is wrung with the old Desire ;  
Though my limbs wax cold, though my blood runs thin,  
Yet my Heart it is still afire !  
And ever I long, as the night shuts down,  
For my Love that was lost to me,  
And pray to the Gods of the White and the Brown  
That the villain who robbed me,—that base-born clown,  
Unworthy to finger the hem of her gown,—  
May be blighted utterly !

OLD Tukung Búrok, the fashioner of wooden dagger-hilts and sheaths, sat cross-legged on the narrow verandah of his hut, which, perched upon the top of the high bank, overlooked the Párit River. I squatted, smoking, at his side, watching him at his work, and listening to the tales of the days of long ago, which were for ever on his lips.

Forty feet below us the red, peat-stained waters of the Párit, banked up by the tide now flowing up the Pahang River, crawled lazily back towards their source. The thatched roofs of more than a score of rafts lay under our feet, so that anything rolling off the verandah would fall plump upon the nearest of them. Nozzling one another, and rubbing sides with a mighty creak-

ugly, as the word implies,—but it was thus that her folk had called her when she was little, and in my ears it was ever more lovely than the singing of the *thikir* women, and that, thou knowest, is no mean music. Hôdoh chanced to be alone in her house, all her people being gone to the fields, but she, being so near the appointed time of her wedding, stayed at home. Thus she only was at hand when a Sâkai man, named Pa' Ah-Gap, the Rhinoceros, came to her house out of the jungle, praying for rice and tobacco. Now these Sâkai, as thou knowest, *Túan*, be sorry animals, and our people love not to suffer them to enter our dwellings, for they are of an evil odour, dirty, and covered with skin disease, so that from afar they seem to be white, like a fair woman. The villagers of the interior bear little love to the Sâkai, and the women especially cannot abide their presence near to them, so when Hôdoh beheld the face of Pa' Ah-Gap, scarred with tattoo-marks, grimed with soot, as are always the Sâkai who sleep in the warm ashes of their fires, with hair in locks like the ragged sago-palm yonder, she shrieked aloud, cursing him for a filthy, unclean, mite-eaten Sâkai, and bidding him begone, crying "Hinchit! Hinchit!" as men do when they drive away a dog. Pa' Ah-Gap stood still gazing upon her, rubbing his left leg slowly against his right shin-bone, and scratching his scalp with one claw-like hand hidden in his frowsy hair, while Hôdoh abated not her railing, and ceased not from heaping shame upon him with many injurious words. Then he lifted up his voice and spoke.

“ Daughter of the Gobs ” (Malays), he said, “ why