

LIFE IN THE FORESTS

OF

THE FAR EAST;

OR TRAVELS IN NORTHERN BORNEO.

BY

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FORMERLY H.M.'S CONSUL-GENERAL IN THE ISLAND OF BORNEO,
AND NOW
H.M.'S CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES TO THE REPUBLIC OF HAYTI.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE SULU ARCHIPELAGO.

FIRST VISIT.

DURING all the voyages I have made, I have never beheld islands so picturesque as those scattered over the surface of the Sulu Seas, or whose inhabitants more merited notice. I will therefore give a short account of the visits I made thither, before the attacks of the Spanish forces had altered the ancient state of affairs. I have already delineated the north-west coast, and will therefore commence my description from the island of Balambangan, to the north of Maludu Bay, which must always be of some interest to Englishmen from our two unsuccessful attempts to form a settlement there.

Sailed from our colony of Labuan in H. M. S. *Mæander*, Captain the Hon. Henry Keppell, a fine breeze carrying us rapidly along the north-west coast on our way to the Sulu Seas. We dropped anchor off Balambangan, which at night appears a low wooded island. I visited it in the morning in a cutter, and vainly sought any fresh traces of human beings, though we found some old deserted huts of the fisher-

men who frequent this shore for tripang or sea slug. Continuing our explorations, we noticed something moving along the beach, and there were various conjectures among our party, some affirming it to be a buffalo, others a man; I never was more deceived in my own estimate of the size of an animal, as it proved to be a large monkey, which with its companions was seeking shell-fish on the sands; it was certainly very large, but not of such dimensions as to warrant its being compared to a bull, but there appeared to be some optical illusion caused by its looming over the water.

Pursuing our path along the beach, the seamen at last thought they saw houses among the trees, but on landing we found we were again deceived by a row of white rocks, prettily overhung with creepers. Though no traces of inhabitants were to be found, yet animal life was well represented, innumerable monkeys swarmed at the edge of the jungle, while flights of birds of every kind kept rising before us. I never saw more monstrous pelicans, but after having been so deceived by the monkeys, I must not attempt to estimate their height. The best birds, however, for culinary purposes, were the curlews, some of which are as large as small fowls: unfortunately we were not provided with shot, and ball fell harmlessly among them.

Balambañgan is admirably situated to command the China seas; however, if its position be superior to Labuan, the latter has coal to counterbalance that advantage. While strolling along the beach we came upon the tracks of cattle, deer, and pigs, and another party from the ship had the good fortune to secure a

large supply of excellent fish with the seine. This island, as well as the neighbouring coast of the mainland, appears to swarm with game; I landed on the latter, and found an extensive open plain, diversified with a few low eminences, backed by some cleared hills, and there the tracks of wild cattle, deer, and pigs were innumerable. The rhinoceros is also reported to be occasionally seen, but we came across no traces of it.

Continuing our voyage, we passed the island of Banguay, in the northern part of which there are fine peaked hills, with inhabitants and plenty of good water, therefore far preferable to Balambangan for a settlement; as if the harbours be not good, there is sufficient shelter against both monsoons.

The next island is Mali Wali, and here we anchored to examine it. We tried at many places, but found the little creeks shallow and lined with mangrove swamps; but landing on the south side, at the east end of the stone beach, there is but a few minutes' walk in dry forest between the shore and the cleared land. The appearance of the island is remarkable; for miles the hills apparently are clothed with grass, with only a narrow belt of jungle skirting the shingly beach; the reality, however, disappointed us, as we found that this verdant-looking land was but a heap of soft sandstone, with long coarse grass growing up between the crevices. However, there is a good supply of clear water from tiny streams and springs, and the tracks of deer were observed in many places, while on all sides a species of wild jasmine grew in luxuriance, bearing a very sweet-scented flower.

Among the principal animals which frequent the forests of Borneo may be mentioned the elephant, the rhinoceros, the tapir, wild cattle, deer, swine, bears, a small panther, otters, and a variety of felines. The first three have not yet been seen by Europeans. When ascending the river Baram, in the north-west coast, one of the guides I had with me said he had frequently traded in the country where elephants abounded, and that was in the interior of the Kina Batañgan river, on the north-east coast. When we went round to look for that district we failed to find the entrance of the river, so my personal knowledge of the elephant is limited to noticing their traces on the beach, though I have met dozens of men who have themselves seen these animals wandering in herds, and I have often had their tusks brought to me for sale at Labuan and Sulu; one I measured was six feet two inches in length, including that portion which is set in the head, and this was purchased by Mr. Scott, the Governor of Natal.

It is generally believed that above a hundred years ago the East India Company sent to the Sultan of Sulu a present of some elephants; that the Sultan said these great creatures would certainly eat up the whole produce of his little island, and asked the donors to land them at Cape Unsang, on the north-east coast of Borneo, where his people would take care of them. But it is contrary to the nature of the Malay to take care of any animal that requires much trouble, so the elephants sought their own food in the woods, and soon became wild. Hundreds now wander about, and constantly break into the plantations, doing much

damage; but the natives sally out with huge flaming torches, and drive the startled beasts back to the woods.

The ivory of Bornean commerce is generally procured from the dead bodies found in the forests, but there is now living one man who drives a profitable trade in fresh ivory. He sallies out on dark nights, with simply a waistcloth and a short, sharp spear: he crawls up to a herd of elephants, and selecting a large one, drives his spear into the animal's belly. In a moment, the whole herd is on the move, righbened by the bellowing of their wounded companion, which rushes to and fro, until the panic spreads, and they tear headlong through the jungle, crushing before them all smaller vegetation. The hunter's peril at that moment is great, but fortune has favoured him yet, as he has escaped being trampled to death.

In the morning he follows the traces of the herd, and, carefully examining the soil, detects the spots of blood that have fallen from the wounded elephant. He often finds him, so weakened by loss of blood, as to be unable to keep up with the rest of the herd, and a new wound is soon inflicted. Patiently pursuing this practice, the hunter has secured many of these princes of the forest.

One can easily understand how startled a man unused to an animal larger than a pony would feel on suddenly finding himself face to face with a huge elephant. My favourite follower, Musa, has often made his audience laugh by an account of the feelings he experienced, when, pulling up the great river of Kina Batañgan, he steered close in-shore to avoid the

strength of the current, and, looking up to find what was moving near, saw a noble tusked elephant above him, with his proboscis stretched over the boat to pick fruit beyond—"The paddle dropped from my hand, life left me, but the canoe drifted back out of danger."

The rhinoceros is a rare animal, though it is reported in some of the wilder parts of the country, and the existence of the tapir rests on the same testimony. Wild cattle I have myself often seen, and they are very large, while their horns are elegantly curved, and their feet small; though generally of a dun colour, I on one occasion saw a piebald among them. As a rule, the wild bull rarely disturbs or attacks the aborigines, but flies at their approach; but they are easily brought to bay by the yelping curs of the Muruts, when the beast is despatched with spears. It is, however, dangerous sport, in which they rarely engage. A Bisaya chief with whom I was acquainted killed three in the following manner: he was well acquainted with their feeding grounds, and when the young moon gave just sufficient light to discern objects, he allowed his small canoe to drift down the stream near the shore. When he heard the sound of grazing he prepared his spear, and as he passed the wild bull he would hurl it at it, and then pull away out of danger; next morning he would land at the spot, and track the wounded beast, and easily slay it when faint from loss of blood. I have still in my possession the horns of a fine bull, and they are extremely handsome. The wild cattle occupy a considerable extent of country, being found, to my knowledge, from the equator to the farthest northern point, and probably in the south they are

equally numerous. It must be remembered, however, that they are seldom discovered near well inhabited districts, but occupy those vast tracts of country which are rarely trodden by the foot of man. The natives say there are two species, and distinguish them by those who wander in herds and those who live in pairs, but I think this a very arbitrary mode of separation. The horns, however, which I have seen seem to prove there are two species.

Deer are of various kinds, and include the great Malayan rusa, with long double-branched horns, and a small, plump hill deer, with short horns, having one fork branch near the roots. The former is called the *Rusa Balum* and the latter the *Rusa Lalang*. The Dayaks speak of a third kind, but after making many inquiries it appears to be the same as the *Rusa Balum*. Occasionally deer are met with whose horns are completely encased in skin.

The natives snare them with rattan nooses and loops fastened to a long rope, which are of different lengths, varying from twenty to fifty feet. A number of these attached to each other, and resting on the tops of forked sticks, are stretched across a point of land where the hunters have previously ascertained that deer are lying. After they have arranged the snares, the party is divided, one division watching them and the other landing on the extreme point; barking dogs and yelling men rush up towards the snares, driving the game before them. The deer, though they sometimes lie very close, generally spring up immediately, and dart off bewildered, rushing into the nooses, catching their necks or their forelegs in

them, when the men on the watch dash up and cut them down or spear them before they can break through. They occasionally secure as many as twenty at one time, but generally only one or two, and they snare indifferently by day or night, though the former is perhaps the favourite time. Deer are often hunted with dogs, and the former suffer so much from heat that in very oppressive and dry weather the Dayaks declare they can run them down themselves. The deer have regular bathing and drinking spots, which are well known to the natives, and a salt lick is of course much frequented. The wild tribes have a method of preserving venison, which is very ingenious: they cut the flesh into long strips, and dry them in the sun; they then wind these strips round in the bottom of a jar, and pour honey in till they are covered, then another layer of venison, and more honey, until the jar is full; they say the flesh will keep twelve months, and be exceedingly tasty when consumed.

The Kijang, a species of roe, is a lovely creature, of the most graceful and elegant shape, with fine pointed horns bent a little forward, and of a light brown colour. There are two species; but the most remarkable creature of the kind is the plandok, or mouse deer, of which we have three species. The largest is not very elegant in appearance, as it keeps its head down whilst running, and the head is rather coarse; but the smallest species is exceedingly elegant, and does not exceed eight inches in height, whilst its eyes are of a liquid beauty to rival the stories told of the gazelle.

The Dayaks, expert in everything appertaining to

forest life, hunt for game with dogs, and are generally very successful. They are passionately addicted to pork, and pursue with unabating earnestness the wild pig, of which there are three species in Borneo. The Dayak dogs are very small, not larger than a spaniel, sagacious and clever in the jungle, but stupid, sleepy-looking creatures out of it, having all the attributes of bad-looking mongrel curs as they lurk about the houses; but when some four or five are led into the jungle, dense and pathless as it is in most places, then they are ready to attack a wild boar ten times their size. And the wild boar of the East is a very formidable animal. I have seen one that measured forty inches high at the shoulder, with a head nearly two feet in length. Sir Henry Keppell also was present when this was shot, and he thought a small child could have sat within its jaws. Captain Hamilton, of the 21st M. N. I., a very successful sportsman, killed one forty-two inches high. Native hunting with good dogs is easy work; the master loiters about gathering rattans, fruit, or other things of various uses to his limited wants, and the dogs beat the jungle for themselves, and when they have found a scent give tongue, and soon run the animal to bay: the master knowing this by the peculiar bark, follows quickly and spears the game.

I have known as many as six or seven pigs killed before midday by Dayaks while walking along a beach: their dogs searching on the borders of the forest, bring the pigs to bay, but never really attack till the master comes with his spear to help them. The boars are very dangerous when wounded, as they turn furiously