

## A Botanical Excursion to Gunong Jerai. (Kedah Peak.)

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The great isolated mountain commonly known as Kedah Peak, which forms so conspicuous an object in the view from Penang, has been several times ascended by Europeans, but as far as I am aware no account of it has been published. The following description of its ascent may therefore be useful to those who intend to scale it.

I left Penang on June 4th, 1893, in the "Rosebud" launch, accompanied by Mr. Curtis, intending to make the ascent from the village of Yan, which lies at the foot of the mountain and is the best starting point, though there is another route from the Merbau river. The weather was very bad and when we had arrived opposite Yan, a heavy squall came up and we had to fly for shelter to Pulau Song-song, where the water was deep and quiet. With some difficulty, owing to the strong headwind and dense rain which completely hid the view, we managed to get under lee of the island, and shortly after the rain abated we determined as it was rather late to spend the night at Pulau Song-song, especially as the surf was breaking heavily on the coast and would make it difficult for us to land the baggage from the boats. We therefore landed on the island and took up our quarters in a native hut. The village is small and the inhabitants gain their living by catching and curing fish and by collecting turtle eggs. The island is rocky, the prevailing rock being clay ironstone with ferruginous sands and clays. It is thickly wooded with fairly large trees, among which were *Swin-tonia spicifera* and *Anisoptera Curtisii*, both in fruit. The former appeared very abundant and was very conspicuous on account of its masses of red-winged fruits, but the trees were too tall for us to secure good specimens. Strolling along the shore we

sent an armed guard to watch over the house at night while I was there, as well as a patrol who rambled about at night armed with spears and lanterns. The use of the stocks for malefactors was not abolished here, and in one house we saw a native fixed in them by one leg.

The natives recommended that I should start early in the morning for the Peak, as it rained frequently in the afternoon, so it was determined to remain in Yan for the rest of the day. Mr. Curtis returned to Penang and I occupied the time in collecting in the nearest patch of jungle, where were a number of trees hardly or not at all known to me. Among them a large *Magnolia* (*Talauma* sp.) with very large white fruit with pink seeds, *Strophanthus Jackianus* with its long-tailed orange flowers, a pretty *Elettariopsis* (*E. latiflora*) with white, crimson and yellow flowers, and the shrubby *Bauhinia mollissima* with red flowers, one petal of which is white and yellow, especially claimed attention. Specimens of a small tree called here Nasi Sejuk (cold rice) were brought me by the men. The branches bore a handsome fruit as large and of the same colour as a good orange. It contained several large seeds wrapped in a sweet well-flavoured pulp. The tree proved to be *Salacia flavescens*.

I secured a specimen of a small prettily marked snake with remarkably large eyes and later in the day a large black and white Typhlops was brought me. These were all the reptiles I saw except the common green tree snake *Tragops porcinius* and a very large tortoise which I perceived creeping along the bottom of the river in the early morning as I went down to bathe. It burrowed under the bank and I could not get it out. There were said to be no crocodiles in the river.

About three miles from Yan is a fine waterfall which is well worth a visit. The route to it follows the telegraph line towards Kedah. The fall is visible for a considerable distance out at sea. After remaining a day at Yan, I started with the coolies to ascend the mountain. Passing through a little open country interspersed with woods, one reaches the dense jungle which covers the mountain-side. A guide is necessary for at least the first part of the way, as there are many tracks made by charcoal-burners and timber-cutters, which are likely to lead the explorer astray. The lower woods would well repay a thorough botanical investi-

gation, as there seemed to be very many plants of interest, but time did not permit of a careful search. The path was strewn with fruits and seeds of various kinds fallen from the trees. At one place were innumerable fruits of theellow flowered *Wormia meliosmaefolia*, at another those of the Minyak Kruen, *Dipterocarpaceae pterygocalyx*. *Melannorhea Curtisii*, one of the trees known as Rengas, was loaded with its red-winged fruit and formed a conspicuous object. The timber of this tree was in request by the woodmen, and felled trunks could be seen lying in the wood. The heart wood is hard and dark red, and as there is much soft white sap wood, the felled logs are left on the ground till the termites have eaten off the sap wood, when the heart wood untouched by them is dragged to the foot of the hills on buffaloslids. *Vitex coriacea*, a small tree, was bright with its innumerable violet flowers which attracted hosts of butterflies. Leeches are rather troublesome in this part of the wood but disappeared in the higher parts of the hill. The track is an easy gradient but long and toilsome and was decided by my boy and the plant collector to be worse than that up Mount Ophir. At one spot a fine view towards the northwest is to be obtained, but otherwise the path is entirely closed in by jungle. At about 2000 feet altitude the flora suddenly changes. The trees are smaller and more slender and the ground in the more rocky spots is covered with orchids and ferns. The path traversed a thick scrub of the curious fern *Oleandra neriiformis* as high as one's head. Here and there were open grassy spots on which grew many pink-flowered *Sonerilas*, white *Hedyotis* and yellow *Xyris*, the latter being a new species described as *Xyris Ridleyi*. 7

The turf was ploughed up at one of these grassy patches by rhinoceros, but the animals were not seen. The camping ground lies in the highest of these spots between two peaks of the range, the highest of which lying towards the south is a thousand feet above it, and is the summit of Gunong Jerai. There is a good stream of water and plenty of firewood here. The rocks consist of quartzite, sandstones, and micaceous schists and piles of stones were pointed out as relics of tin mining operations abandoned some few years previously. A little way below the camp was an outcrop of iron ore (haematite). Close to the hut were evident very recent traces of a large tiger,