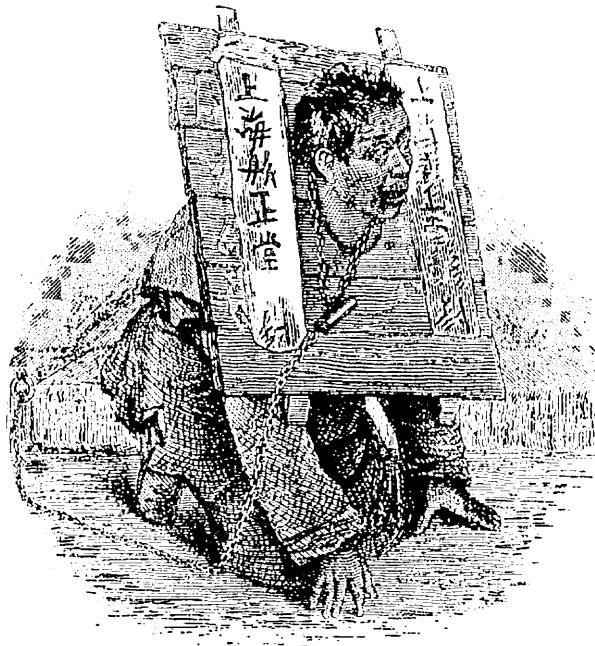


THE STRAITS OF MALACCA,
INDO-CHINA, AND CHINA;

OR,

*TEN YEARS' TRAVELS, ADVENTURES,
AND RESIDENCE ABROAD.*

BY J. THOMSON, F.R.G.S., 1837-1921
AUTHOR OF 'ILLUSTRATIONS OF CHINA AND ITS PEOPLE.'



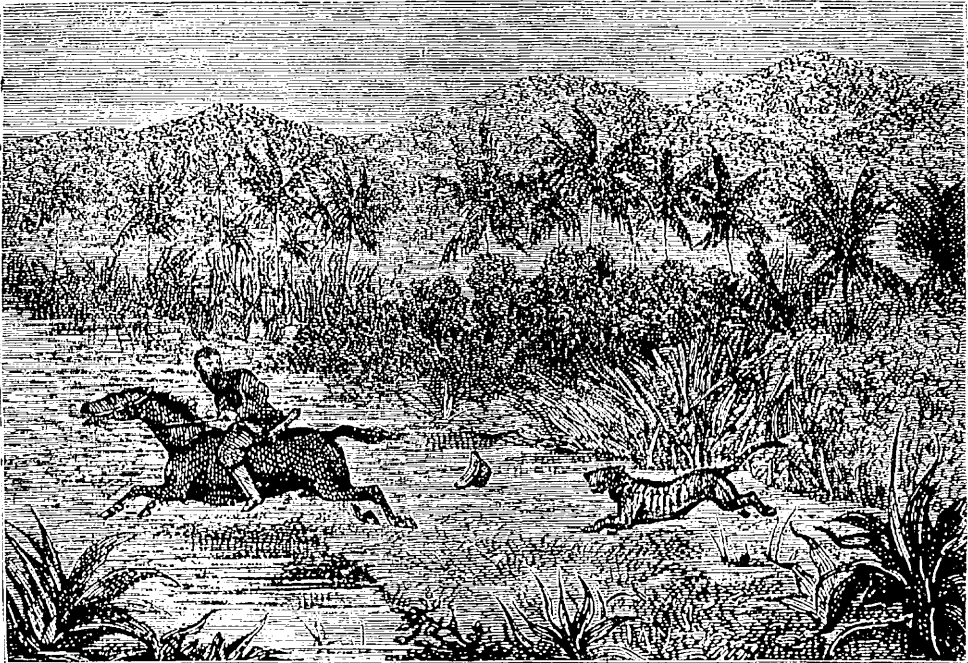
ILLUSTRATED WITH UPWARD OF SIXTY WOOD ENGRAVINGS BY J. D. COOPER,
FROM THE AUTHOR'S OWN SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

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1875.

Wild animals, as I remarked, have in a great measure been driven from the province, and were therefore by no means so abundant, as I had been led to expect. One might reside on a plantation for years, and never once be pursued by a tiger, like the fortunate Mr. MacNab. Planters of necessity live far apart, but their custom was to meet about once a week at each other's houses in rotation. This festive gathering was known as 'Mutton night,' as a sheep, when they could get one, was slaughtered for the repast. In former days planters were all bachelors, but the meetings were none the less convivial on that account. Many of them had to travel long distances for their dinner, and on one occasion, when feasting was over, when they had chatted and sung until the night was far spent, a 'dock and dorack' of Scotch whiskey was dispensed at parting to keep out the cold, and brace the nerves against the attack of a stray rhinoceros, an 'orang-outan,' or a tiger. It was rather dark, and verging on the small hours of morning, when MacNab, mounting on his trusty steed, set his face towards home. Feeling at peace with all men, and even with the beasts of prey, he cantered along a road bordered with mangroves, admiring the fitful gleams of the fireflies that were lighting their midnight lamps among the trees. But soon the road became darker, and Donald, the pony, pricked his ears uneasily as he turned into a jungle-path which led towards a stream. Donald sniffed the air, and soon redoubled his pace; with ears set close back, nostrils dilated, and bristling mane. Onward he sped, and at last the angry growl of a tiger, in full chase behind, roused MacNab to the full peril of his position, and chilled his blood with the thought

that his pursuer was fast gaining ground, and that at any moment he might feel the clutch of his hungry relentless claws. Here was a dilemma ; the cold creek before him, and the hot breath of the tiger in the rear. A moment or two were gained by tossing his hat behind him, then Donald cleared the stream at a bound, the tiger lost his scent, and MacNab reached home in safety, by what he delighted to describe as a miraculous



PURSUED BY A TIGER.

escape. How frequently a man lives to discover his worst enemies in those who profess themselves his truest friends ! MacNab's associates, with wicked incredulity, refused to believe in his tale of the baffled tiger ; indeed, they attributed the pony's terror and the frantic headlong rush for home to the presence of a little bit of prickly bamboo which had accidentally got fixed beneath the saddle-girths.

During my visit to one of the plantations a tiger

scarcity of water. The districts which lie between Penompinh and Kamput are perhaps the most productive of any in the present kingdom of Cambodia. Rice is grown there in such abundance as to admit of a considerable export trade, although that grain is the staple food on which the people depend for their sustenance. Palm-sugar is another important article of commerce raised in this quarter. Silk also is produced and manufactured into the rich langoutis, prized no less for the brilliancy of their dyes than for the durability of their texture. At one spot in a plain which we crossed, a band of rebels had formerly been overthrown, and the skull of a ring-leader who had been captured and put to death was still to be seen impaled upon a post, as a warning to evil-doers. The intense heats of the day were followed by a clammy night air, and by heavy falls of dew. Once, after a heavy day's march, we stretched ourselves out, as usual, to pass the night on the open plain; and at daybreak, when I awoke and turned round to where my companion lay, I felt my limbs stiff and racked with pain, and I saw how my friend, where he still slept, had his head and hair glistening with a thousand drops of dew. After a while the rheumatic pains wore off, but we took care henceforward to observe greater caution in the selection of a resting-place. Passing through a rocky defile between mountains clad in evergreen forests, and rising five or six thousand feet above the plain, we emerged on April 9 on the cultivated lands around Kamput, having spent about five days in the accomplishment of our journey.

Kamput stands on the coast near the southern extremity of the Gulf of Siam, and is approached by a small shallow river not easily navigable, and having

a bar at its mouth which obliges the ships that trade at the port to anchor in the road outside. The chief merchants at Kamput are, as a matter of course, Chinamen. It is the Chinese, too, who cultivate the rice, sugar, and pepper which form the chief articles of the local export trade. But the business of the place had fallen off, and the port, at the time of our visit, was said to be blockaded by a piratical fleet of junks, owned and manned by men of the same race as the merchants whom they sought to plunder, but hailing from different provinces; the merchants belonging mostly to Fukien, and the pirates to the island of Hainan. It was reported to us that some of these junks were bound for Bangkok; and one of our own servants, a Hainan man, who brought us the information, suggested to us to embark among his piratical kinsmen; but an old Malay chief, whom we fell in with at Kamput, gave us a hint of the danger, and we therefore declined the proposal.

This Malay chief was an officer in the service of the King of Cambodia; one who, with his trusty sword, had aided more than once in suppressing rebellion in the land. I enquired of him if, for any consideration, he would part with that sword. Bending the blade nearly double, and allowing it to spring out to within an inch of my throat, he replied 'No, sir! when I part with my sword I part with my life.' There is at Kamput a Malay settlement, of fighting men as far as I could make out. But our friend Mohamet, as I shall call him, though I did not learn his true name, told me a long story about a peaceful mission with which he had been entrusted, and one affecting the prosperity of the kingdom. He said, 'I was despatched to the dis-

tant mountains to search for a white elephant reported to have been seen by some "Orang Outan" or "Orang Bukit," wild men of the mountains, who dwell there.' 'But who are these wild men?' I said. Mohamet, assuming an expression of compassion at my ignorance, replied, 'Ah, you seem to know a good many things, and yet you don't know that.' 'Did you ever see one yourself, Mohamet?' 'No, sir, not exactly, not altogether, but I have seen them flying off through the forest. They are very black and hairy, have a language of their own, eat nuts and fruit, just like monkeys, and shoot game with the bow and arrow.

'Come with me and I will show you them. Moreover, if you are fond of sport, there are the elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, deer, besides a multitude of other animals which inhabit these wilds, and on which the "Orang Bukit" feed. More than that, if you give me ten days, as you hold the King's letter, I will take you over yonder mountains to a place near the summit of them, where sacred lotus pools are to be seen, and lilies big enough to sit in. There, at night, you hear the whisperings of strange beings around the pools, and see the weird lights of the "Orang Anto" (spirits), as they feed the reptiles that dwell in the waters. On the summit of the mountain there are foot-prints of animals of all sizes in the solid rock, some three feet in diameter, some smaller; some cloven, and some with toes and nails; all of them perfect, as if they had been moulded in clay. But I am coming to what I desired to tell you about, and by the holy prophet of Mecca it is true!' Here he made a gesture, as if to cut his throat, as a token of his veracity. 'On the mountain top there stands a ship made of stone. It wants the