



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO • DALLAS
ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
OF CANADA, LIMITED
TORONTO

Pahang



WILLARD C. BUSH



New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1938

influence of arrack. Hypnotized myself by the pulsing, vibrant atmosphere, I felt a growing urge to join them in their abandoned writhings, their sensual songs and shouts. The drums sounded louder. I failed to notice that the young girl attendants had not lighted my cigarette. My eyes were intently focused on the play in front. In another moment I would join them.

Then—I felt something drop on my bare right forearm like a heavy bracelet with teeth around the edges. I looked to see what it was. And the spell I had been under was violently broken by the sight of a loathsome eight-inch centipede as large around as my thumb, that had apparently dropped from the table's edge to my bare flesh. The thing hung there while seeming to get its bearings. Thorn-like feet pricked into the skin of my arm, its huge, venomous mandibles at times touching it. I dared not stir nor twitch a muscle. In a moment it moved in the direction of the chair arm and, as it crossed to the rattan, I sprang up and away from it and killed it with my cane.

The show was over for me. Back to earth again. I thanked the head kangani for the entertainment and went to my bungalow and to bed—squirming.

RETURNING from a short ocean trip, I learned that my kaboon had been sold to the company that had taken over Section 2. I was to go into northern Johore to clean up Lappan Blas, a recently purchased estate, and put it in order.

A fortnight later I arrived at the new location, after a trip to my former kaboon where I packed and cleared away after the usual arrangements. Taleb and Mardu Singh wanted to go with me, but I insisted they remain and carry on with their contracts.

Except for its run-down appearance, the location and the appearance of the new estate delighted me at first sight. Much of it had been in bearing for several years, the trees well lined out and of great size. Buildings were in need of repair, and much underbrush and lalang had been allowed to accumulate in various blocks. But the rolling terrain, the well packed cart roads, the absence of so many swamps within the boundaries, led me to believe the days ahead would be much happier than any I had experienced as a planter. Perhaps I should not have been so optimistic.

The survey, estimates of expenditure, the letting of new contracts to mandors who soon learned of my arrival, all the thousand and one things to be done kept me at a steady grind for four months. Then I traveled to Singa-

pore, purchased a motorcycle, and had it shipped by coast boat to Batu Pahat; from there I rode it to my kaboon. It was in my mind to see the whole length of the country as soon as I could arrange my work. The narrow government road from Singapore to Siam wound through the deep jungle within twenty miles of me.

Then, early one Saturday morning with an express rifle across my lap, I started for Johore Bahru. My first adventure through the jungle on a Harley. Three heavy downpours of rain drenched me on the way, but before I arrived at my destination the torrid sun had completely dried me.

Checking in at the Sultan's rest house, I spent a glorious evening becoming acquainted with other white men of the southern district at the Civil Service Club located in the same building. During the evening I learned that I had been given the title "The Mad Yank" on account of certain performances of mine which appeared to be very foolish and unnecessarily risky to the conventional and very British mind. When they heard that I had ridden a motorcycle to Johore, they were all the more convinced of my madness.

However, the return trip was without incident except for a sudden fright. During a violent storm, lightning struck a near-by tree as I passed, nearly knocking me from my Harley. It reminded me that, if I had fallen and injured myself, I should have lain there for days before being picked up. The road was rarely used.

Two days later, while returning to my bungalow for breakfast, I heard a shout. Looking in the direction from which it came, I was amazed and delighted to see trooping toward me Taleb and his whole tribe, followed at a short distance by Mardu Singh with his company of about forty

tall Hindus. Both hurried on to greet me, and, after their profuse salutations, I went into mine. The ceremony ended with a grand mixture of Hindu, Malay, and English greetings which would undoubtedly have sounded, as well as looked, silly to one unfamiliar with our former associations.

But they were two natives I could trust in any jungle emergency.

Then a month later I again felt the urge to ride, and on a Sunday morning before daylight started once more for Johore Bahru—this time without a rifle.

Hasbrook, from Ayer Kuning, hailed me with his booming voice as I ran up the dazzling, white-painted stone steps to the veranda of the Sultan's rest house.

"Come have a stengah (half whisky and soda) with me, Yank."

"Thanks, but it's too early in the day for me, Hasbrook. I'll take a ginger beer. I don't drink whisky till the sun goes down."

"Rot!" he scoffed heavily, turning his bloodshot eyes at me. "Look at me. Do I look like a weakling? Plenty of whisky and quinine is what a man needs out here if he wants to keep out of the hospital."

I looked him over. I didn't care much for him. A bit bloated, and his manners rude.

"How'd you come down?" he rumbled.

"Motorcycle."

Hasbrook's eyes popped wide.

"A motorcycle!"—loudly. "Idiot! No wonder they call you the mad Yank. Motorcycle, indeed! You'll come a cropper *yet*. You'll see." And he nodded his head knowingly.

A European, his white helmet shining in the sun, passed

in a rickshaw and waved a friendly greeting at Hasbrook.

"Know 'im?" Hasbrook queried.

I told him I didn't.

"That's Barry. Runs an estate in northern Johore. That's up your way too. Jolly chap, but he's a queer one. Went through the Boer War, then came out here to make a fortune. Good family. Pater's a noted surgeon; sister's a famous singer. Mother's a grand lady. But Barry, now—he's a blinkin' idiot. The jungle is getting him, and he never *will* grow up. He could go home and live like a gentleman. Fine connections and all that sort of thing. But he won't do it. Doesn't want to disgrace his family. Says he will go home when he makes a pile of money and not before. Proud gander, but tries to hide it. Always trying to figure out a big scheme to make money, but the damn thing never develops. Probably got another scheme in his muffin right now. Oh, well!" Hasbrook took another drink and set his glass back on the marble-top table. "The silly ass will probably die here. You should call on him. Boy!" But I got to my feet and thanked Hasbrook for the drink.

"Why toddle off now?" he asked.

"There's a hundred miles of jungle between me and dinner," I told him as I went down the steps and walked over to the big Harley.

Hasbrook's bleary eyes followed me as I started the motor and took the machine off its stand.

"Don't be an idiot," he called. "It will be pitch-dark before you are halfway there. One doesn't ride motorbikes through the jungle." I grinned at him and slapped the .45 automatic on my leg. "Cheerio, Hasbrook."

He shook his head sadly while tapping it with his forefinger and watched me riding away.

Maybe Hasbrook *was* right about riding motorcycles

through the long stretches of jungle; narrow roads with many abrupt curves, the high jungles on either side. One could never tell what might be around the next one.

If a rider were thrown and injured, he might lie for hours and die before aid appeared. And, of course, there were always tigers and other large carnivora on the prowl for meat.

I decided that rounding a turn at slow speed would bring me to a full stop with my front wheels right in the laps of any animals in the road. That would leave me helpless—unable to use a gun. So—from now on I would ride "hell for leather" all the way. Then, if an animal, excepting an elephant or a rhino, blocked my path, I would hit him hard, with a chance of breaking his back or neck, and the impact might throw me clear.

Of course, hitting an elephant at high speed would result in the rider's being flattened like a swatted fly. But even that would be preferable to stopping alongside and having your arms, legs, and head pulled off one at a time.

As I rolled out of Johore Bahru, I kicked open the muffler cut-out. The motor rumbled sweetly, and I opened it up to fifty miles per hour. A large pair of colored glasses subdued the sunlight and kept the insects out of my eyes. My lips were tightly closed to keep stinging insects out of my mouth. Crane, from Selangor, had opened his mouth at the wrong time, while riding his motorcycle, and a bee of some sort had flown in stinging him in the throat which swelled shut. His body was found lying in the road some time later.

Twenty miles north I took a curve at forty-five miles an hour and there ahead of me where the road went through a cut, I saw on the right bank of red earth a large amount of white clay. My eyes followed the white streak down the

bank and across the road in front of me. Some large animal had caused that, and as I followed the sign up the left bank probably six feet above the road, my heart skipped a few beats at what I saw.

Standing with its hind quarters towards me was a big rhinoceros.

This all happened faster than I can tell it. Hearing me, his ugly horned snout snapped to the right and I saw him turning to face me. I was going too fast and was too close to stop. I opened the throttle wide, and as I shot past within ten feet of him, heard a pounding of earth as he went into action. I didn't stop to see if I had bent his fender. A rhinoceros can bite the leg off an elephant!

ONE afternoon shortly after my meeting with Hasbrook, I mounted my Harley and with an express rifle across my knees started out to call on Barry. Perched on a knoll on a side road and several miles from the Johore Road, I found his shack. A lane led from the main road to the bungalow.

As I came to a stop and put my bike on the rack, I looked up to find a Malay girl standing in the door of one of the outbuildings, staring hard at me. She was a tiny thing with a face as flat as a door and complexion like rich mahogany. The first thought that entered my mind was, why on earth would any man keep such a plain and hostile-looking person around the diggings? Her very look and attitude made me feel angry, although she had not uttered a single word, nor moved a finger, nor blinked an eye. She took me in from head to foot, paying particular attention to the big revolver on my leg and the heavy rifle I had in my hand. Her expression was a fierce challenge, a tense demand to know what I wanted; and in her eyes was the courage of the black panther, who never retreats.

I spoke to her in Malay. "Is Tuan Barry here?"

She continued to look at me for some seconds; then, without taking her fierce eyes from mine, turned her head slightly and pointed with her chin toward the bungalow.

I turned from the tiny bunch of dynamite with the