

THE ADVENTURES
OF
REUBEN DAVIDGER;

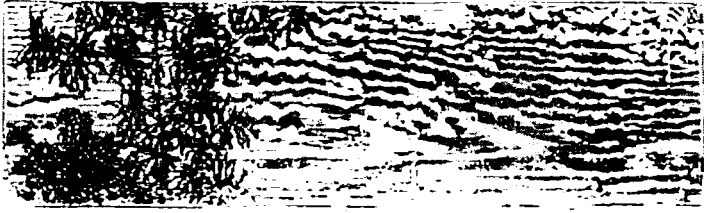
*SEVENTEEN YEARS AND FOUR MONTHS CAPTIVE
AMONG THE DYAKS OF BORNEO.*

BY
JAMES GREENWOOD,
AUTHOR OF
"SELAS, THE CONJUROR," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY B. HULLULA AND OTHERS

WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED,
LONDON, NEW YORK, AND MELBOURNE.

Q731



CHAPTER VI.

Tom and I entertain the chief with the game of hot boiled beans—I turn school master—Our house on the hill—We enjoy a long spell of good luck—Lowering clouds—The details of a terrible conspiracy—Breakers ahead!

FOR all the knowledge, however, the chief and his people were likely to derive as to the art of writing by simply watching the passage of our correspondence, they might as well have stared at a sound egg in hopes of penetrating the mysteries of the growth of the chick within; it happened, therefore, that, by the time the exchange of bark notes had continued for ten minutes or so, the chief began to yawn and exhibit signs of impatience, pushing away the last note which was submitted to him with a gesture which plainly implied his growing suspicion that we were fooling him.

To allow his suspicion to continue was to let his favour cool, yet how to reassure him seemed to me the most difficult thing in the world. Suddenly, however, my good genius put into my head an idea which I resolved to act instantly. First warning Tom as to what I was about to do, I took from my arm one of the six gold rings, and placing it in the hands of Anakraja, made him understand that he was to conceal it where he chose, I meanwhile turning away so that I might not see, but Tom looking on, and assisting me to discover the whereabouts of the hidden ring by means of a few words written on a piece of bark. In fact, it was nothing but the old English game of "hot boiled beans" simplified by the hunter being informed where the game lay.

Ridiculous as it was, however, it captivated their ignorant minds at once; and no sooner had Anakraja explained to the chief the miracle I was about to attempt than the old fellow brightened up

could we have spied a ship of any sort within swimming distance, we would cheerfully have turned our backs on Magindano and the fair prospect it offered, and, leaving our rings, and our necklaces, and our raiment of costly fur, and every other present we had received on the shore, swam naked away.

Not that we were for the present at all depressed because no ship came to relieve us. We had suddenly grown to be individuals of importance, honoured by the chief, and with the services of his slaves at our command. We resolved that our house should be after the English pattern—that is, as far as our ingenuity would serve. On the summit of the hill we planned the building, and round about it, stretching about forty yards either way, we had the ground cleared, and fenced, and an outhouse built for our poultry, and an enclosure for our goats and bullocks, and a sty for our hogs; for Ribut Bungat was kind enough to give us permission to select such poultry and animals as we might desire from his own stock, which, by-the-by, in reality meant the entire produce of the island. We should have liked to have added a horse, or at least an ass or a mule, to our establishment, but such animals are unknown in this region, as is likewise the dog. This latter fact rather alarmed us when first we were informed of it, as, from the little we had seen of the gloomy woods, we imagined that they must be inhabited by lions and bears, and that, without the warning voice of a dog, we should some night be attacked by a troop of ferocious animals, who at the least would devastate our goat-pens and pigsties, even if they failed to penetrate to our house and devour us also; but to our satisfaction we were, with truth, informed that neither the lion nor the tiger, nor, indeed, any of the larger breed of the feline species, were known at Magindano. Neither could we hear that a wolf, or a bear, or a fox had ever been seen on the island. In the forests are found the rhinoceros, or "bodok," as these people call him, and the stag and the buffalo, also such "small deer" as the rabbit and the mouse, and the rat. Nor must I forget to mention the orang-outang, the "wild man of the woods"; indeed, it would be uncivil not to make mention of a beast who, on our first attempts at settlement treated us with marked attention, rooting up our fences, and devastating our sprouting crops and beans, and cucumbers, and strangling our fowls, seemingly for the mere pleasure of the performance. Nor should I forget the host of little monkeys, some of them no bigger

would have consumed it in less than a fortnight, so after the first few days I suggested that he should make do with bark instead, using a quill pen and some of the white lime-wash as ink.

It was not, however, till I began to teach Ribut Bangat that the business began to be really lucrative. The old chief was not apt at learning, and the task of teaching him involved twice the patience, and at least three times the writing-paper, compared with that expended over Anakraja; but when he had mastered only as much of the art of writing as enabled him to play the game of "hot boiled beans," as introduced by me, his delight was unbounded; and I never went to his house but I came away with a present either of cloth or gold rings; and on one occasion he gave me a great yellow diamond from the island of Landa, of the value of which I had no idea till, many a year afterwards, it was submitted to a diamond-merchant in Bishopsgate.

Ribut Bangat was now never contented unless I was with him, except when he accompanied his fleet on piratical excursions, when we were invariably "advised" to keep within doors, or, at all events, not to stroll away from the foot of the hill atop of which our house was built. Nor were we at all likely to forget the said "advice," for if ever we attempted, while the chief was absent, to set out on a longish walk, or to take a boat for a row, we were sure to encounter some "head man" or other who would politely intimate the propriety of our turning back—if from the woods, because of a vicious rhinoceros, or because of head-hunters of a distant tribe who were known to be prowling there; if from sea, because of an approaching storm, because of sharks—any excuse, in fact, to induce us to refrain from a journey. Thus we were never so unhappy as when the chief was away, because it was at those times that the fact of our being prisoners was made so manifest. The saddening reflection was not, however, without its consolation; since the chief was so careful of us, and so alert that we did not escape, it was certain that there existed a means of escaping if we could only find it out! It was I who urged this argument, and sorry indeed was I afterwards that I should have been so indiscreet. Notwithstanding his repugnance for the inhabitants and their manners and customs generally, since our residence in the little house on the hill, Tom had become much more contented with his fate, as indeed was not surprising, since he was so well provided for, and his only em-