

#16048

TRAPPING WILD ANIMALS
IN MALAY JUNGLES

BY
CHARLES MAYER



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to run the merry-go-round for him. I stayed for a week to get the enterprise started; then I went up to the lumber mills to see if the lumbermen needed elephants. When I returned to Singapore, I had a commission for six large elephants.

It was a better vacation than I could have had in Europe. I had made many friends and attended to some animal business and I had £700 clear profit in my pockets.

At my animal house I found a letter from Mr. La Soeuf, the director of the Perth Zoölogical Gardens, saying that he was anxious to get a rhinoceros and asking what I could do for him. I did not want to go into the jungle again immediately, for I was afraid of a return of the fever, but I replied that I would see what could be done and I sent out word to all my native agents. Both Mr. La Souef and his father, who was director of the gardens at Melbourne, were great friends of mine, and their gardens had been my best market for animals. Quite naturally, I wanted to do everything I could to help them, and so, when word came from an agent in Trengganu that some rhinoceroses had been located there, I packed up my kit and started out.

At Trengganu, the Sultan welcomed me, and I spent several days with him, telling him what was happening in the world and discussing his problems. The problems were largely financial. He owed some money, and, knowing that he had something

in the treasury, I asked why he did not pay his debts.

He thought for a time and then replied: "Well, I'll tell you. If I pay those people, they will forget about the Sultan of Trengganu. If I don't pay them, they'll never forget me."

The conversation turned to the subject of prisoners. On my way to the palace I had passed the cages where the prisoners were kept. Many of them were starving to death, for, unless their friends or family cared for them, they got no food.

"Why don't you feed them?" I asked.

"Why should I?" he replied. "If I feed them, my whole country will want to go to jail."

Finally, after he had satisfied his craving for sociability, he gave me my official permit to go into the interior and to force labor. I started out for the upper end of his state, bordering on Lower Siam. At the mouth of the River Stû, I found my agent; we gathered a crew of ten men and went up the river as far as we could. When the weeds became so thick that we could not force the boats through, we took to the jungle and began cutting our way to the mud-puddle where the rhinoceroses came to wallow.

We took great precautions in approaching the puddle, for once a rhinoceros gets the scent of a hunter, he is off through the jungle as fast as he can go. The hunter, who spots his animal and shoots, has an easy time of it; but the collector, who

must capture, has a more difficult job. He must work and build his trap at the very spot frequented by the animal and he must do so without exciting suspicion. A rhinoceros seldom charges when he sees a man, and his charge is not dangerous, for he is short-sighted and cannot gauge his direction accurately. Most often he runs, and it is almost impossible, even when the collector can find him again, to chase or lure him back to the trap.

No animals were at the puddle when we arrived, and I had a good opportunity to examine the location. Then we withdrew and I told the men how we should go about making the capture. We made camp, building platforms between the trees for living-quarters, and I detailed some of the men to the work on a rattan net, which measured twenty by fifteen feet, with meshes ten inches square. I felt that we had a good chance of getting a rhinoceros in a net-trap and should save ourselves much time and labor if we could do so. When the net was ready, we put it in position at a likely-looking approach—half on the ground, where the animal would step into it, and half suspended, so that he would catch it with his head and bring it down about him.

Then we turned our attention to making pits. As I have explained before, a heavy animal was sure to injure himself in falling into a square pit such as the natives generally dug, and, of course, an injured animal would have been of no use to me.

Hence the four pits that we dug around the puddle were made wedge-shaped, instead of square. They were six feet wide at the top and tapered to three feet at the bottom; they were eight feet deep and ten feet long, with the approach tapering down so there would be the least possible chance that the beast would injure himself when he fell.

Over the tops of the pits we built platforms of bamboo poles, and covered them with mud and leaves, taking care to leave no traces of our work. To the building of each pit we gave a whole day of hard labor and we were constantly on the alert for fear one of the rhinoceroses might surprise us. Lookouts were already stationed to catch the sounds of the beasts as they broke through the jungle, coming to their bath.

One morning a native came running with the news that a rhinoceros was trapped. We gathered our tools and hurried off to the puddle. There, grunting and fighting, lay a two-ton rhinoceros, firmly wedged in and helpless. When he saw us, he became furious, squirming in the slime of the pit, pounding with his feet and grunting.

I divided my crew, putting half at building a cage of heavy timbers and the others at digging away the ground in front of the beast. By the time the cage was put together and bound securely with rattan, we had an incline running down to the pit, with two feet of earth walling the rhinoceros in. Then we placed skids on the incline and let the cage

slide down. A native, who had been sent back to the nearest *kampong*, or native village, to recruit men and water-buffaloes, had soon returned with a score of other natives, driving six water-buffaloes before them. Then I went through the usual business of holding a meeting and explaining carefully, in the greatest detail, exactly what we were about to do and how we were to do it; what each man was to do and when and how. When they understood perfectly, we set about digging away the wall that separated the rhinoceros from the open end of the cage. With a little more than one foot of earth remaining, we began to prod him. The immense beast pounded his feet on the bottom of the pit, grunting and moving forward as rapidly as he could get foothold. He put his head against the wall and rooted; the wall toppled over and he lurched out of the pit and into the cage. The natives slipped the end-bar into place.

The capture was finished—but not the work. A rhinoceros cannot be broken and driven through the jungle like an elephant; he must be hauled every foot of the way. With the six water-buffaloes straining and every native giving a hand, we pulled the cage up the incline and mounted it on the runners. It took a week of steady cutting to clear the way, so that we could drag the cage to the Trengganu River. There we built a heavy raft and floated the cage down to port. Another two weeks



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passed before we could ship the beast to Singapore, for transshipment to Perth.

I received for the animal £200, which was about one quarter of its value. But it was as much as the Perth Zoölogical Gardens could afford to pay, and I was glad to be able to put so fine a specimen into the hands of Mr. La Souef.

One day when I was busy in my animal house, Ali came to me with the message that three natives from Pontianak, Borneo, were outside. They had something important to tell me, Ali said. When they came in, I found that I knew one of them; he was an animal trader from whom I had bought some birds and monkeys. The other two were headmen from the interior of Borneo.

The headmen had gone to the trader with the story of two large orang-outangs that were terrorizing their villages, and the trader was bringing them to me for advice. We sat down in the shade and discussed the situation. The orang-outangs had run off with a young girl and had recently killed one of the men. The natives had tried repeatedly to kill them, but without success, and now they were afraid to venture into the jungle.

For several years I had had a standing order from the Antwerp Zoölogical Gardens for a good specimen of orang-outang, and I had planned to go, just as soon as my health permitted, into Borneo, to see what I could find. Orang-outangs command unlimited prices because they are so hard to cap-