

632.4.92.9

TWENTY YEARS IN BORNEO

By
CHARLES BRUCE

With Sixteen Half-tone Plates



CASELL AND COMPANY, LTD
London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne

1924



Photo. by C. Woolley

THE HEAD-HUNTERS

Both are wearing *chauat* loin-cloths. The lad in the tree tiger-skin is carrying a head in its wrappings. The other is armed with a *sumpitan*.

A native pony which has been used much on bridle-paths is far better left alone to pick his way over the pitfalls which await one even on the best kept path, but the temptation to help him is hard to resist. It is sometimes equally foolish to insist on a pony going on when he jibs, unless one can see and avoid the trouble which is stopping him. I was riding on a pitch-dark night along a path which skirted the banks of the Tempasuk river. The pony jibbed, and I, having been half asleep, pushed him on and touched him with the whip. The next moment he and I were in ten feet of water, the river having cut the path clean away. Luckily, it was a good hard bottom, and we swam out of the hole and managed to scramble out again to terra firma, but the rest of the ride, until the sun rose and dried us off, was not pleasant.

Being mostly open rolling country, the Tempasuk district affords good scope for a keen horseman, and to this attraction is added good shooting. Snipe and duck in their season, pigeon of two or three species provide a mark for the shot-gun, while rhinoceros and wild cattle are found occasionally in the wilder country on the northern and eastern boundaries of the district. The standing dish which offers an infinite variety of sport and so never palls is the hunt for sambur deer. Whatever his faults may be, the Bajau is a splendid sportsman, and the whisper of a "buruh" for deer would always draw a field. The pack of prick-eared, skinny pariahs was never much to look at, but it would pick up a deer in a covert, if one were there, and with a chorus of shrill yapping

keep him moving out into the open. The field was in keeping. Every man who owned or could beg or borrow any animal larger than a goat was there. Cattle, buffaloes and ponies of all sizes, shapes and sexes gave the gathering a rather motley appearance, but man and beast played their parts well. The "heavies," on buffaloes or cattle, could not, of course, take any active share in the operations, but they were always useful as "stops" to bring the deer up to the horsed contingent or to the "guns." I have seen few finer sights than during the tense moments when a deer breaks from the jungle and, realizing the position, gets going across the rolling country for another covert. In a second twenty scallywags on twenty sorry little nags are after him hell for leather, yelling at the tops of their voices, spear in one hand and riding-whip cracking in the other. The ponies, for all their scraggy appearance, no longer wear that dejected mien which is habitual to them, but seem to share the excitement of their riders. It is fearsome country to ride. Grass two or three feet high conceals all manner of pitfalls, but the ponies seldom put a foot wrong. The chase, with any luck, is soon over, and the stag goes down to a spear-thrust, followed by the usual rite of throat-cutting to render it fit food for the followers of Mahomet.

A day spent like this gives one the best side of the Bajau, which is not apparent to anyone who only knows him officially. He is a bit of a blackguard in many ways and a difficult citizen to handle; but, personally, I have always felt that half the crimes