

THREE MONTHS' LEAVE IN THE MALAY PENINSULA.

LAST May, Long and I went to the Malay Peninsula for big game shooting, and though we were not very successful; in view of the 1st Battalion going to Singapore next year, it may be worth while giving our experiences. A fortnight after leaving Hong Kong found us on our ground with a tracker "Kari," by name, and a dozen coolies, in light marching order, as the difficulties of transport are great. The first day in the jungle we found tracks of elephant, rhino., &c., but the country was dry, so we decided to push on.

In the evening we came to some open grass land, where, to our joy, we saw a solitary *sladung* (bull-bison). A somewhat long stalk and a wade through a swamp brought us to the place where he had been feeding, but by the time we got up he was about 120 yards off, making for the jungle. We fired a volley which only increased his pace, and then ran as hard as we could, but failed to get another shot.

It is worth noting that Long was shooting with an 8-bore "Paradox," while I had an 8-bore gun. These weapons are good enough for the close-quarter shots one gets in the jungle, but they are not nearly accurate enough for anything over fifty yards.

However, the beast got away, and though we found some blood, there was not enough to warrant our wasting

the next twenty-four hours as we did in the farce of following him up.

Three days' marching brought us to Passoh, where a gold reef has been discovered, and, as none of our coolies turned up, we were much relieved to find an English prospector there who entertained us very hospitably, in a rough and ready way, for three days; Long and I sharing a small loft with an opium-smoking Chinaman and some evil-smelling fish.

We were much interested in the mine, but perhaps more so to hear that hardly a week passed without elephants coming round the hut at night, and a herd having been reported a few miles away, we set off the next morning, meeting the shikari on the road.

We followed them up all day, slept on the tracks that night, and followed them up next day, but without ever getting very close; and, as they were evidently on the move, we returned to Passoh and pushed on to the river Triang, where game was more plentiful. Here we had still further to reduce our kit and also leave behind two guns, rifle and cartridges, owing to coolies getting fever.

Transport is very difficult. There are no paths, often not even a track, wading is frequent, and Malays are the very worst coolies. Moreover, one has to take food enough to last the party the whole time one is away. Here we found a village and open ground, which was a relief after the dense jungle.

We arranged to stay a week, so hired a Malay hut from an old Mahomedan, who had made three pilgrimages to Mecca. The result was, to say the least, disappointing; the old rascal looted our cartridges and everything else he could lay his hands on.

Having crossed the Triang we found fresh tracks of

an elephant and a *sladung* ; which latter we heard going off into the jungle. We followed up the elephant, and while doing so crossed the tracks of a herd only a few hours old. Two hours' rapid tracking brought us up to them in very dense jungle. Kari pointed to one which he thought was a bull ; so creeping up we fired a volley at the shoulder, which was all we could see, and rolled the beast over. Alas ! not a tusker. It is almost impossible in this jungle to pick the bull out of a herd. This beast was only twelve yards from us, and we waited some minutes to get a clear shot. We returned to the *sladung*, but did not get a shot, though we got pretty close to them.

Early next morning we found fresh tracks of elephant which we followed, and soon came up with the herd ; six cows and two calves. We sat for nearly half an hour watching them bathing within twenty-five yards of us.

The next day we dropped down the river in a canoe. A herd of elephants had crossed the river that morning, but we did not go after them, as we wanted to get a single bull. Found a *sladung* track, which we followed up most of the day and at last came up to him. The first shot failed to stop him, but running forward, Long got in a good shot and dropped him in his tracks. The *sladung* is the same as the Indian "*gaur*," but darker, and, I think, has a finer head.

The Malays feasted and made merry ; they will not eat elephant meat. We tried to do so but were defeated, which is not surprising, when one considers that it may be 200 years old. Not the least pleasant part of the day was one's evening bathe in the river—cool and clear from the hills.

Malays live in or on the water. Rivers are the only

means of communication; and one sees children steering heavily laden canoes down the rapids without the slightest fear. Malays are pleasant people to live amongst; clean, civil, and always laughing; but they are abominably lazy, and it is seldom that one can get any real work out of them.

We now separated our forces; Long going off in a new direction, while I went down the river.

Long had very bad luck. He hunted a *sladung* for ten hours, and got within a few yards of the beast, but could not get a shot. This occurred time after time, and makes one doubt whether shooting here is really worth one's while. It is very hard work, and very disappointing.

The jungle is simply terrific; and for hours one may have to cut one's way step by step through bamboo, palm, and tree fern, laced together by rattan and hanging creepers. This is varied by wading through mangrove swamps. A compass is in constant request. Leeches are a fearful nuisance, nothing keeps them out, and one is always stopping to pick them off one's clothes; I counted over one hundred one morning which I thus disposed of.

Our stores were now at an end, so we made a twenty-mile march to Pertung. The coolies did not get in till next day. Here I was laid up for a few days with fever. Long left to meet Percival in Singapore, but was delayed there for a fortnight with a bad attack of fever, during which time Mr. Swetenham, Colonial Secretary, with whom he was staying, most kindly looked after him.

He met Percival later in Java, and they sailed 300 miles round the island in a 2-ton cutter; but having got to their ground, the natives refused to enter the jungle,

which was too thick to work through alone, so their shoot had to be given up.

Mr. Keyser, the Resident of Jelebu, having kindly asked me to stay with him, I spent a very pleasant week, and thoroughly appreciated the benefits of a good house, food, and stables. The morning I arrived, a black panther was brought in—trapped, the skin in perfect condition. There are any number of these animals, and also tigers; but though many attempts have been made, it has always been found impossible to shoot them in these jungles. I believe there is hardly a case of one having been shot; and as they carry off a good number of cattle and Chinamen every year, it has been found necessary to resort to the miserable expedient of poisoning tigers and trapping panthers.

Jelebu is covered with tin mines. Two-thirds of the tin now produced comes from the Malay Peninsula. The mining consists chiefly of surface working for alluvial tin. It is carried on entirely with Chinese labour—some of the mines employing over 2,000 coolies. The management of these large gangs by a few Englishmen is very creditable, especially as the coolies come from the worst and lowest class of Chinamen. There has never been any serious trouble, although there are no troops and only a handful of Sikh police.

Having secured a boat and fresh trackers I went on down the Triang River. I was lucky enough to get a Sakai as tracker. These aborigine live in the heart of the jungle, build their huts in trees, wear little or no clothing, and decorate themselves with leaves and grasses. Their only weapon is the blow-pipe, by means of which they kill birds and small animals with poisoned darts. They are shy of Europeans, and though grateful for

kindness, it is difficult to induce them to leave their villages to act as guides or messengers. This man was a marvellous tracker, and stood by me well.

We soon got on the tracks of elephants, a bull, cow, and calf, and some trees freshly rooted up proved that they were not far off.

Late in the evening we came up to them in a bamboo jungle, at the foot of a hill. I got up to the bull, but he was facing away from me, so I could not get a shot, and while trying to get round he heard us and moved off. It was getting dark, so we hurried on, and soon came up with them again, but one of the party coughed and they went off.

We heard them trumpeting close by most of the night, and in the morning found that they had gone down the river; so, sending word to the boat to follow, we pushed on without delay, and had a long day's tracking, crossing the river several times, and only came up to them late in the afternoon. Again, I only got a very awkward shot as he was standing half right, but as he was pretty close I aimed at his shoulder and fired both barrels. He crashed off through the jungle, and we followed, but finding from the length of the strides that he did not mean stopping, we gave up the pursuit, and returned to the river, as we had no water.

On our way back, as we were struggling through a mangrove swamp, we met the cow and calf trumpeting and squealing within a few yards of us. Fortunately they could not see us, as the cow would certainly have charged if she had, and at such close quarters we could hardly have stopped her.

A second time we met them in some bamboo. One of the party here got between the cow and calf, when, to our relief, they crashed away and allowed us to go on.

A third time we met them on the path by the river, and I was glad enough to reach the boat and put the river between us. During dinner they came out on the opposite bank and serenaded us.

The Malays wanted me to shoot the cow, so that they might try to catch the calf, but I did not do so.

That night there was a storm that I have never seen equalled, even in the Himalayas. For hours the lightning never ceased, accompanied by an incessant roll of thunder, varied by an occasional crash, as some tree fell. The jungle, seen through the sheet of water pouring from the roof, was as clear as by daylight, except for moments of pitch darkness. We got no sleep that night, bedding and clothing getting soaked.

The bull went thirty miles across country to another river, and we never saw him again, though he must have been badly wounded. On our return to Kwalah-Klawang we heard of a herd of elephants doing damage in a certain village, so I went after them with some Sikh police, but failed to come up with them.

Before leaving, the head-man of the village, a certain Datu Rajah, brought in a splendid pair of elephant tusks. He had been out with an English hunter after a rogue, which they failed to kill, and he had on that occasion been accused of showing the white feather. He was very indignant, and vowed not to return until he had killed the beast, which he had followed for nearly two years, and finally killed after hunting him through most of the States, and having fired fifty bullets into him.

I now left Jelebu and returned to Seramban, where I stayed with the Resident, Mr. Lister, who had most hospitably entertained Long and I on our arrival.

After a very pleasant week here I received an invitation from Mr. Rodger, Resident of Selangor, to stay

with him and shoot; so, having laid a "dak," I drove over, and on arriving at Kajang received news of a herd of elephants that were devastating a certain village; so, though there was no tusker in the herd, I arranged to go and drive them out, and, if possible, catch a small calf that was known to be among them.

Dr. Scott and Mr. Lindsay accompanied me. We left the same evening, dropped down the river by moonlight, and arrived at the village before daybreak.

The elephants had just been there, so when it was light enough to track we followed them, and after some difficulty, owing to the size of the herd, came up with them. We were attacked twice on the way by bees. Unfortunately the noise we made wading through a swamp disturbed them, and it took us another two hours to head them.

We could see nothing of the calf, so decided to fire as they passed us, and killed two. The herd stood about for some time, and then slowly withdrew. We followed and caught a glimpse of the calf, but the others were standing in line and we had to beat a retreat.

The next day, fifteen miles down the river we found the calf in the water trying to climb up the bank. The herd had crossed and he had been washed down by the current. After a long struggle and a good deal of excitement he was finally captured on the opposite bank, secured with rattans, and rolled down into the boat. On the way back he several times nearly swamped us; but he soon got pretty tame, and as long as he was allowed to suck somebody's hand remained fairly quiet. With great difficulty he was landed and put into a cart, but he did not at all appreciate driving, and his screams frightened the bullocks till they bolted down the road with him.

This was the first elephant that had been caught in this part of the world, and caused great excitement. He soon became very friendly, drank fourteen bottles of milk daily, and ate as many bananas as he could get. He now belongs to the king of Siam.

I spent a pleasant week with Mr. Rodger, who kindly sent me round to Perak in his yacht; the Resident, Mr. Swetenham, having kindly asked me to stay with him. Perak and Selangor are the two chief States in the Peninsula; and it is curious, when one sees their railways, towns, with churches, banks, schools, hospitals and public buildings with electric light everywhere, to reflect that twenty years ago this was dense jungle, and ten years ago a collection of mud huts. The revenue of each of these States is very nearly equal to that of Singapore and all the Straits Settlements combined; while Perak bids fair to become one of the most important Crown Colonies in the Empire.

The revenue is derived chiefly from a ten per cent. export duty on tin, an import duty on opium, and from the gambling farms. When tin is exhausted, as it must be within a measurable period, the present prosperity will fall unless there is something to take its place. Fortunately, agriculture is likely to do so, and in some parts has already. Liberian coffee has been tried in most of the States, and has succeeded everywhere. Labour is the only difficulty.

My last expedition was up the Perak River with Mr. Hulbert, the District Officer of Kwalah Kangsa. We had a delightful three days' punting in a house-boat. The country is perfectly beautiful. The dark jungle, colours that can only be seen near the Equator, the silence, and wonderful sunsets leave an impression that can never be forgotten. We depended chiefly on fish

for food. A great amusement among the Malays formerly, was to dynamite the pools. Malay children live in the water, and it was very amusing to see several of them struggling with a large fish after an explosion, shouting with laughter all the time. This, however, has wisely been stopped. About two miles from the river are some sulphur springs, at which animals come to drink, so we decided to sit up for them. It was an ideal place for night shooting. Two huts had been built in trees on the bank of a narrow stream. On the opposite bank was a small spit of white sand, where the sulphur bubbled up. There was a full moon—light enough to read by.

The first two nights we saw nothing, though we heard animals moving about in the jungle, and in the morning found that an elephant had passed close to us. The third night a rhino. came out, and began to dig up the sand, offering a perfect shot only thirty yards off, so resting the rifle, I fired both barrels, and rolled him over, but he got up at once, and crashed off into the jungle. I had left the elephant gun behind, but this was a 10-bore, and ought to have settled him. We followed him in the morning on elephants, but he got away, alas! probably to die in the jungle. Rhino. are very seldom shot by Englishmen, though occasionally by natives, who sell the horn to the Chinese, who use it as medicine, and believe that it prolongs life. A good horn is worth 500 dollars.

My time was now up, and I had to make my way down to the coast. This is probably as good a place as any in the Peninsula for shooting. A good bag ought to be made in ten days. At Ipoh I took passage in a small cargo boat, with an Arab captain and a very mixed crew, and I was not sorry to land at

Penang, where I stayed with Wegg-Prosser, an old Rifleman.

The Regiment at Singapore furnishes a detachment of two companies at Penang. There is a hill station here, good club, racing, and cricket. The snipe shooting is probably the best in the world—the record bag last year being 110 couple to one gun. The Sikh police are a fine body of men, one old N.C.O., with a row of medals, had taught his two sons, aged 6 and 7, to go through the manual exercise with toy guns; they did it perfectly. I told them that they would cry “Meri Ma” in battle, at which they laughed and the old man replied, “A Sikh’s son is never afraid!”

On my return to Singapore, I paid a flying visit to Johore—a very disappointing State after the others. There are only two towns, one on the coast opposite Singapore, the other close to Malacca. The country is utterly unexplored. There is, no doubt, any amount of shooting, and when quartered at Singapore, it might be worth trying.

I add a few shooting notes. Take as little as possible. A Malay load in the jungle is about twenty pounds. Tents are out of the question, but Malays rig up a shelter of palm leaves in a few minutes. Take food to last the whole time, and rice for the coolies; none can be obtained in the jungle or in the villages. A waterproof sheet, two blankets, one change of clothes, three flannel shirts, rifle, cartridges, quinine, compass, putties, are all that are necessary. A double-barrelled 8-bore is probably the best weapon.

Pahang and Perak are the best districts. I should advise getting a boat and shooting down one of the rivers. It is worth learning a little Malay. It is a very easy language—a mixture of Persian and Arabic; no

grammar, and two hundred words will carry one a long way.

I cannot close these notes without a word of thanks for the unlimited assistance and hospitality that I received from all quarters. Eastern hospitality is said to be a thing of the past. It is certainly not so in the Malay Peninsula; and anyone visiting the States either for shooting or racing may be sure of a warm welcome. The racing is first rate—horses—no Hong Kong ponies; and as each State has a good race-course, there is plenty of it.

This is a somewhat dull record of facts, and I am tempted to add accounts of meeting tigers face to face on the road, and other "shikar" stories of which I heard plenty; but the people for whom this is written have not yet learnt to believe, and as they have not yet digested other elephant stories, it would be useless to add more.

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