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THE FIELD-BOOK OF A JUNGLE-WALLAH

*BEING A DESCRIPTION OF SHORE,
RIVER & FOREST LIFE IN SARAWAK*

BY

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Another story recounting how the Animals of the Jungle, observing Man's success, resolved upon a tuba-fishing of their own, the trituration of the root to be performed by ordinary chewing. Unhappily the only four-footed creatures who could deal with *Derris elliptica* without harm to the system, were the Porcupine and the Rhinoceros, who thereupon set to work. The Porcupine did his bit, and the Rhinoceros (whom legend credits with a somewhat pompous humour) chewed Tuba-root for twenty-four hours at a stretch, finding perhaps that it promoted a healthy action of the skin. The two then proceeded to the river-bank and discharged the juice, much to the consternation of the fish but to the satisfaction of the other members of the Animal Kingdom, which was thus able to prove its superiority.

Pollution by the *Derris* root is, however, not the only terror of these placid waters; for near the water lurks that noisome pest, the man-eating crocodile (*Crocodilus porosus*) waiting for animals who come down to drink. A very short shrift is the victim's; I once saw a crocodile seize a good-sized pig and disappear with it under water. Perhaps

two minutes later, half the pig floated to the surface. In these circumstances it is hardly to be wondered at that swimming in the open river is not popular among Europeans, even in the heat of the day. The best that one can do is to confine one's self to the shallow water near the edge, with a boat moored a short distance out, in which natives sit, banging with their paddles on the side to keep the brutes away.

This crocodile is not only very fierce, but very large, often measuring twenty-three feet or so in length. Its skin in clear water is of a greenish-black and yellow, but when it reaches the swamps and muddy banks lower down the river it accumulates on its skin such an amount of mud and slime that it looks very much like a log and often is mistaken for one by its innocent prey. Its eggs are prolate, *i.e.* longer than they are broad, and measure about three and a half inches in length; the shell is pure white but semi-transparent like delicate porcelain. The female lays thirty or forty at a time in a depression scooped out of the mud, where grass and herbage can be found.

A rarer species occasionally met with in Borneo

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bird is known to the natives as *Kruai Manang*, which means the Doctor of the Argus Pheasant; for he is said to have removed the curse of sickness which befell the Argus Pheasant after his scurvy treatment of the *Bubut*. *Kruai Manang* holds a high position in the Bird Aristocracy, according to legend; and, by his beauty he certainly deserves it.

CHAPTER VI

A MOUNTAIN TREASURE HOUSE

Salt-licks—The Bear-cat—A Reconnaissance—An Edible Monkey—Tree-shrews—Offensive Protection—The Leopard-cat—The Barking Deer—Broadbills—Hornbills—Their Nesting Habits—Providing for the Widow—The Rajah's Breakfast—Spiders Bigger than Birds—A Curious Orchid—The Uses of the Woodpecker—The Smallest Owl in the World—An Invisible Target—Gossamer—The Storm Spirits—The Peregrine Falcon—Collector Turned Naturalist—Flying Squirrels—Some Rare Cats—The Mountain Babbler—Bald Birds—Francolins—Overlooking the Forest.

DURING the course of this day's journey we were agreeably surprised to find a sort of ready-made path cleared, as far as one could guess, for our special benefit; on either side of the track the bushes were sprinkled with mud. On making enquiries I was told that a rhinoceros or some other large creature had passed that way. The Bornean rhinoceros is a smallish species and quite the most grotesque of his kind; he has two horns and his hair is tough and bristly, almost like fine wire. He fre-

quents the foot-hills below the mountains, and comes down in the heat of the day to take his ease in what are called "salt-licks," muddy baths formed by springs of saltish water. The clearing and the mud on the bushes were, I was told, caused by the creature's trampling movements on his way home to his lair higher up the hills. My informants were quite right, for very soon we came across one of these salt-licks, although we found no one "taking the course." However, the Langur named after me (*Semnopithecus hosei*) frequents these spots, partly for the water and mud, and partly for the saltish taste. A peculiarity about this agile little monkey is that in its gall-bladder are found the curious Bezoar stones—hard, brittle, oval-shaped concretions of a dark olive-green colour, and much prized by the Chinese for their medicinal properties; there is probably some chemical substance in these "salt licks" which is said to help in their formation. A soft form of stone, but otherwise similar, is found in the intestines of the Bornean porcupine; while another substance rather like Bezoar stones, and also much valued by Chinese, is found in the bodies of animals (usually monkeys) which have been

shot, but not immediately killed, by poisoned darts from the blow-pipe; very often, in the centre of the bezoar a portion of the dart, sometimes an inch or more in length, may be found encrusted in the materials.

This same day we came across a fine Bear-cat (*Arctitis binturong*) swinging itself about in the branches of a tree with the help of its prehensile tail; apparently it was in quest of food, a rather rare thing in the daytime as the animal is usually nocturnal. This quaint cat-like animal is black in general coloration with a grizzled head, it has an extremely long tail, longer than its head and body together, covered with straggling hairs longer than those on the body. It usually lives in the trees of the forest, on a diet of small mammals, birds, earth-worms, insects and fruit; of the latter they are very fond, and in search of it will leave their ordinary haunts and raid gardens and orchards for bananas. It is easily tamed and is often kept as a pet by the natives; when it wants to be fed it will sit up on its hind-legs, flapping its paws and begging like a dog.

It will be understood that in such thick jungle as we encountered progress was slow; and it was, in