



BY CHARLES MAYER, OF SINGAPORE.

The author—a veteran collector of wild animals—went into the interior of the Malay Peninsula to hunt rhinoceros. Unfortunately for Mr. Mayer, a couple of sladang, or wild buffaloes, attacked him, and a very exciting time ensued till the savage beasts were killed.



FOR the past nineteen years I have been engaged in various parts of the world collecting wild animals of different kinds for zoological societies and similar institutions. The beasts, of course, have to be obtained alive and uninjured; if they sustained any damage during their capture or transport they would be instantly refused by the zoological authorities. It will, therefore, be readily understood that the task of securing such animals alive is attended with much greater danger than if they could be killed on the spot, and during my many years' experience of such work I have had numerous exciting escapes from a violent death. Perhaps the most out-of-the-way adventure I have experienced—the danger coming from an unexpected quarter—occurred in the Malay Peninsula some five years ago, during a hunt for a rhinoceros and her calf.

At the time I had been resting for a fortnight after a successful elephant drive at Tringano, the capital of the State of that name, about three hundred miles north of Singapore, on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. The place is almost unknown and unexplored by Europeans, and its dense jungles are rich in big game.

About six o'clock in the evening of August 18th, 1902, my mandor (headman), Mat Salah by name, informed me that a headman from the

Uhi (Jungle) Station, two days' journey by boat from the capital, had important news for me. Knowing how much reliability usually attaches to "important" news or information from Malays, I told Mat Salah, before I saw the caller, to get all the information he could from him. After a lot of preliminary talk the headman informed me that a rhinoceros and calf had been seen in the neighbourhood of his kampong (village). This was good news indeed, and I instructed the headman to start back to his kampong early the next morning, and to put his men to work at once digging pitfalls in different directions. I promised to start for the scene of operations myself as soon as possible.

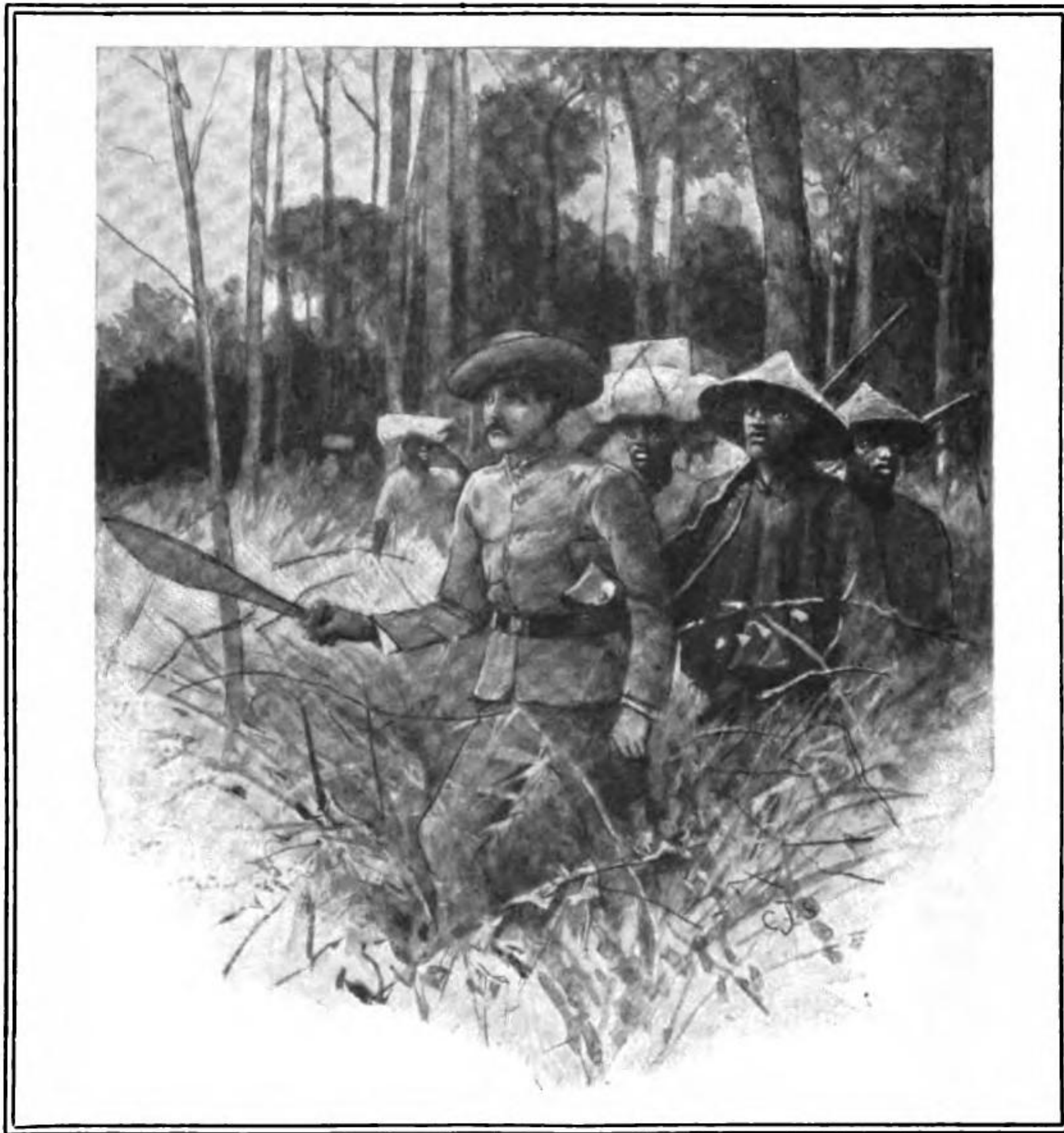
I commenced the journey the following evening, travelling by boat up the River Nerus with five picked men, and arriving at the kampong the second evening after starting. Early the next day, after inspecting and giving further directions regarding the pitfalls, I started for the place where the rhino and calf had been seen. In addition to the five men I had brought with me from Tringano, five more now accompanied me, carrying stores and so on.

We followed the tracks of the animals all the morning, being compelled to make our way through dense jungle the whole time, and about four o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at a small stream, close by which the rhino had slept the night before. We pitched our camp here,

and after a supper of dried fish and rice turned in, to start again at daybreak, after a hasty meal. We startled several wild pigeons and small deer, but did not care to kill any in case the report of the gun should startle the animals we were in quest of, as my object was to come up with them and head off or turn them back towards the kampong around which the pitfalls had been dug. By three o'clock we could see by their tracks that we were within a few hours' march of our quarry. We walked in Indian file, I being in front carrying a heavy parang, a native

from three to four feet high. We had barely traversed two hundred yards of this when, without warning, Mat Salah dropped my rifle and, turning about, ran for his life to the nearest tree, up which he climbed with marvellous rapidity, all the others following suit as quickly as possible, at the same time shouting excitedly, "Twan, larrie! Kribu utang! Kribu utang!" ("Run, sir! Sladang! Sladang!")

Now the sladang, I should explain, is a kind of wild buffalo, and when full grown is a very fierce and dangerous animal. Standing fully



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weapon with a long blade tapering to the handle and very sharp. These are used by all native jungle men, and are very useful for breaking through the undergrowth and cutting down trees. I also carried a heavy revolver in my belt. Mat Salah followed immediately behind me with my Express rifle, carrying explosive bullets; and Ali, another assistant, was behind him with my carbine.

Presently we came to a clearing about six hundred yards in extent, with tall grass growing

five and a half feet high, and sometimes over, with horns from three and a half to four feet from tip to tip, weighing from one to one and a half tons, and with a sense of smell as keen as that of any known animal, the creature is very formidable, and is, so far as my experience goes, the only wild beast the Malay is afraid of. Having once scented danger, the sladang immediately charges, catching on his horns any unfortunate person who may happen to be in his way, tossing him up again and again, and

goring him to death. Very few people, except those who have hunted the sladang, have seen one alive, and up to date not a single full-grown specimen has been captured alive. The only sladang ever brought to Europe was by an Army captain, who, about 1899, was stationed with his regiment at Singapore. While on a visit to the Federated Malay States he had a calf presented to him, and succeeded in bringing it alive to England, where, I believe, it was purchased by a dealer.

When I heard the terrified cries of my men I swung round, just in time to witness an alarming spectacle. Coming straight at me through the tall grass, with head down and tail in air, was a full-grown sladang, murder in his blood-shot eyes. To endeavour to pick up the rifle which Mat Salah had dropped was out of the question, for the animal was almost upon me; I had barely time to jump aside and put three shots from my revolver into his side as he dashed past. He staggered from the effects of the shots, but just then, as ill-luck would have it, my heel caught in a root hidden by the long grass, and I toppled backward, my revolver flying out of my hand.

I fell almost across the rifle which Mat Salah had dropped, but the brute was at me again before I could scramble to my feet and use it. Seeing me fall, my men set up an awful yell, which served the purpose of distracting the sladang's attention for a moment—just time enough for me to realize my seemingly hopeless position. Then, with a furious bellow, he charged me once more.

Owing to their very short necks, it is impossible for a sladang to hook anything lying on the ground, and that fact saved my life. He came at me savagely, and as I felt his hot breath on my face I struck out blindly at his legs with my keen-edged parang. In doing so I almost cut one of them in two. The brute staggered and fell forward, his massive hind-quarters falling across my legs, pinning me helplessly to the ground.

I had my arms free, but could not yet get my rifle from under me on account of the sladang's heavy weight, so I shouted for the men to come and assist me.

Meanwhile the animal struggled hard to get on his feet again, but dropped back heavily, and I realized that I was in danger, not of being gored, but of being crushed to death. I could not move my legs—one of which was badly sprained and crushed, the pain being excruciating—so I kept hacking and cutting away at the animal's back with my parang.

By this time Mat Salah and the other men, hearing my cries, came running up, and, pulling the rifle from under me, soon dispatched the beast with one of the explosive bullets. It was then the work of a moment to drag me from my uncomfortable and dangerous position, the men all crowding round to assist.

On examination I found that one of my legs was so badly sprained and crushed that I could not possibly walk, and therefore four of the men ran back to the jungle to make a litter in which to carry me.

When it had been completed Mat Salah and Ali commenced to carry me back to the shade of the jungle, but we had only proceeded a few yards when once again the cry, "Kribu utang! Kribu utang! Jajai jajai, larrie" ("Sladang! Sladang! Take care and run!"), rang out, and my Malays scattered in wild alarm. I shouted to the men to bring the rifles, but for all the notice they took I might just as well have talked to the wind. Mat Salah and Ali, however, hurried to a tree and soon had me up in its lower branches. Hardly had we settled ourselves than the mate of the dead sladang came bursting into the clearing, charging down upon us and bellowing madly. By this time, you may be sure, every man was in a tree, and the infuriated animal stood in the clearing regarding us wickedly, pawing the ground viciously meanwhile. This was awkward; so long as the brute stopped

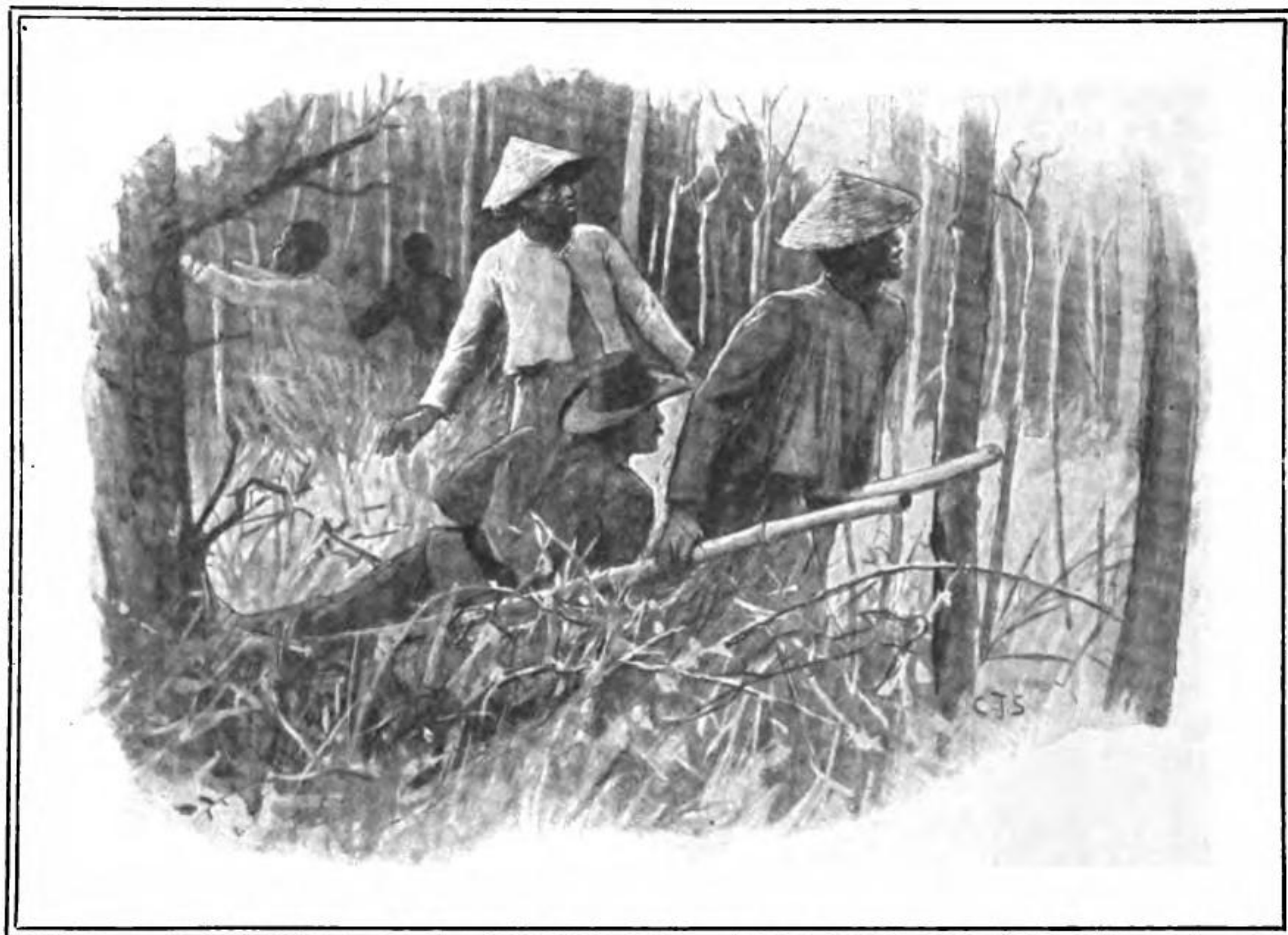


THE AUTHOR, WITH SOME OF HIS MALAY ASSISTANTS.
From a Photo.

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there we should be compelled to remain prisoners in the trees, as my rifles and revolver had been left down in the grass on account of the sudden alarm. The more I thought about the situation the less I liked it, for I knew that if necessary a sladang will besiege a tree for twenty-four hours without leaving it. Cogitating over this awkward fact, I attempted to coax the

within sight, together with my rifle, and my position was therefore very exasperating. At last, as I sat there gloomily surveying our angry jailer, a brilliant idea came to me, and, raising my voice, I asked the men if any of them had a poisoned kris, a weapon which very few natives of the State of Tringano go without, and a scratch from which proves fatal. Fortunately,



"THE CRY, 'SLADANG! SLADANG! TAKE CARE AND RUN!' RANG OUT."

men in the other trees to try to distract the brute's attention while Mat Salah got down and crawled to where the guns lay beside the dead sladang, but all my efforts were of no avail.

By this time Ali had so secured me in the fork of the lower branches, with my back to the tree, that it was impossible for me to fall off. My ankle had, however, now swollen so badly that I had to cut my boot off and bind the limb with one of my puttees. I felt very thirsty and weak on account of the severe shaking up which I had received. My frightened men were perched in different trees round about, all endeavouring to talk at once, till I thought I should go mad.

Meanwhile the sladang kept guard below, now and again darting angry glances up at us. Dusk was coming on, and once again I unsuccessfully tried to induce the natives to get my rifles, as otherwise I knew it would mean our staying in the trees all night and most of the next day. Moreover, the mosquitoes were beginning to become troublesome. Both my hammock and mosquito net lay in the clearing

a man in the tree nearest to us had one, and his companion also had a small parang. Overjoyed, I instructed them to cut a long branch, tie the poisoned weapons to it, and then pass them to Ali. He, after several attempts and a narrow escape from falling on to the horns of the sladang, managed to secure them. I then directed Ali to cut a stout pole about eight to ten feet long from the branches above us and fasten the poisoned kris to the end of it with my other puttee, thus making a kind of spear. When he had finished this I told him to pass the weapon on to Mat Salah and then to take his sarong, fill it with leaves and twigs, tie it up, and drop it at the foot of the tree. My idea was that the sladang would charge the bundle, and Mat Salah could then spear him when he came for it. Ali dropped the bundle with a shout, and it had barely touched the ground before the sladang, with a mad bellow, made a rush at it, trying vainly to hook it with his horns. Meanwhile Mat Salah, lying with his legs round the lowest branch and only about five feet above the sladang, speared it in the neck



"HE SPEARED IT IN THE NECK AT LEAST A DOZEN TIMES."

at least a dozen times, the excited men in the other trees shouting and making a terrible din. When, goaded to fresh fury by the stabbing, the sladang drew off, Mat Salah assured me that it was as good as dead, but that we should have to wait until the morning before the poison had completed its work; it would not be safe to leave the trees in the dark.

Accordingly, we passed the night as best we could in our wearisome positions among the tree-branches, trying all the time to keep off the mosquitoes. Presently the bellowing of the sladang became fainter and fainter; he stumbled about erratically, and finally we heard him groan and fall on his side, although, of course, it was too dark to see anything. With the first signs

of daylight we saw the animal on his side about thirty yards from the tree, stone-dead. The men lost no time in getting down from their uncomfortable position, and were soon at work cutting some poles to form a kind of rude ladder, by means of which they lowered me gently to the ground. After a hasty but hearty meal of steaks cut from the first sladang, we started back to the kampong, and from there travelled on to Tringano, my men being compelled to carry me in a litter all the way.

It may be interesting to add that after my ankle got better we again went in search of the rhinoceros and calf which we had been hunting when attacked by the sladangs, and were finally successful in capturing them.

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An Alligator-Hunt by Night.

BY STEPHEN CHALMERS, OF MONEAGUE, JAMAICA.

A vivid pen-picture of what the author describes as "one of the weirdest, most dangerous, and, consequently, most thrilling games ever devised." This consists in hunting alligators in the West Indian swamps by night, with a canoe, a lamp, and a rifle, and it certainly seems to merit Mr. Chalmers's description.



ARCH to September, the close season for West Indian game, is rather a dull period for sportsmen in the Caribbean colonies. The lack of "something to kill" has been felt particularly this year in Jamaica, where the recent earthquake has provided many a man with more leisure than he has ingenuity to utilize.

Nature, however, although unkind in one respect, has generously provided a playground for lusty Anglo-Saxons in the great swamps, creeks, and salt-ponds to the west of the ruined city of Kingston. During the close season for birds this year hunting the numerous alligators there has provided much lively sport.

Before the earthquake alligator-hunting was not very popular. It was thought that the only time to pursue it was in the day, when the blazing sun brought the reptiles out of the swamps to bask in the fetid warmth of muddy creek banks. The unpopularity of the sport was due mainly to the Anglo-Saxon's natural aversion to shooting at a motionless quarry, whether beast or reptile, although occasional excitement was to be had from an alligator which had been merely wounded by some nervous sportsman.

But necessity for sport has recently revived a game which was fashionable in the days of Nelson and Rodney, when Kingston and Port Royal were full of hot-blooded young naval officers. This sport is hunting alligators in the swamps by night with a canoe, a lamp, and a rifle.

During the night the alligator floats on the surface of the lagoons, with only its snout and

eyebrows showing. To shoot at such doubtful marks in a doubtful light is one of the weirdest, most dangerous, and, consequently, most thrilling games ever devised. And while it is the perfection of sport, it does not entail the discomforts of a blazing sun and much humidity, although the danger of fever from miasma is rather heightened at night.

Some of the hunters carry their lamps fastened to their hats, miner-fashion. This enables them to get a glimpse of their rifle-sights, but the method has this disadvantage, that the light being always in view gives the alligator time to get suspicious and to sink into safety in the muddy depths.

In an exciting 'gator hunt with a lamp in which I joined a short time ago, my companion—Donald M. Perkins, storekeeper of the Naval Dockyard at Port Royal—elected for an older and more satisfactory procedure.

We hired two negroes and a light canoe which had been dug out of the trunk of a caiba tree. One of the negroes, a Port Royal boatman named Williams, was engaged to paddle. Williams was an expert at the game. He had to be, for in the lagoons at night there is no light, and, when dealing with

alligators, a paddle stroke to the left or the right often spells the difference between life and death.

The second negro—we called him John for lack of another name—had an odd duty to perform. He carried a hurricane lamp, which was hidden most of the time in the bow of the canoe, where he concealed himself as much as possible. John's business was to hoist this lamp slowly at intervals in order to locate a



THE AUTHOR, MR. STEPHEN CHALMERS.
From a Photo.