THE LOST SELADANG OF NOA ANAK

By CASPAR WHITNEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

NOT in many places on the globe is early morning so entrancing as in upcountry Malay. The coolish, faintly-stirring air, the dark, fragrant forests, the rakishly-topped cocoanut palm, and the gracefully disheveled bamboo silhouetted against a grayish sky, compose a picture of beauty and of inspiration as rare to the tropics as it is fleeting—for with sunup comes sultry heat, enervating everywhere, but on the plains, intolerable. Always there is the eternal green of the hills and the shifting, moisture-laden clouds that pour daily benefaction upon the respondent, luxuriant growth below. And in all Malay nowhere are the mornings so attractive as in Jelebu town, with its natural setting choice as that of an Oriental gem. Jelebu district is jungle and primeval forest running up hill and down dale over to the higher ground, locally called "mountains," which divide the state of Negri Sembilan from Selangor. But town Jelebu is valleys of heavily-laden, brilliantly-colored, padi fields, and isolated hillocks thickly timbered to their very tops, that make the settlement a checker-board of mounts and vales, and blues and greens. On top one of these hills, its foundation hacked out of the enveloping jungle, was the bungalow of Walter Scott overlooking the valleys and the little group of town houses, and the firm reddish road connecting Jelebu with the outside world. Scott was the British Resident, as the local governing official is called, at the time of my visit, and a fine specimen of that clear-eyed, upstanding, intelligent class of young men whose common sense and uncorrupted rule have been the upbuilding of British Malaya. It is worth a journey around the Peninsula, if only to see the type of young men whom England calls out to help her solve Malay problems; and to see the type is to understand why England's colonial government is so eminently successful. Scattered throughout the British protected states of the Peninsula, a few to each state, in residence widely separated, these young Englishmen stand for the best interests of their country and the fair treatment of the natives.

I had met Scott at Seramban, just at the foot of the hill from the range which runs north through the state, after a journey from the coast through coffee and tapioca plantations; and we joined forces for the gharry drive to Jelebu. The gharry is the traveling cart of Malay. It is a nondescript, two-wheeled, uncomfortable kind of vehicle, with scarcely room enough for two, and a seat placed so low as to cramp ones' legs most uncomfortably. The ponies are small but tough, and for the greater part are brought from Java, whence also comes the professional syce, as the driver is called; the best of these syces come from Boyan, an island off Java, where, curiously enough, there are no horses. In action the syce sits on the gharry floor with legs dangling over the shaft, from which point of vantage he maintains a constant drubbing of the pony. For the larger share of the day's hours the pony merits vigorous attention; for the rest, he accepts the driver's devotion to strenuous duty with indifference. Like the cayuse that has become accustomed to the drumming heels of its Mexican rider, the Malay pony views the unflagging lash as a settled habit of his syce, to be humored or ignored according to the quality of the road. Yet it is surprising what loads these little beasts will drag and the miles they will cover in a day, because of their own sturdy legs and, to no inconsiderable extent, on account of the fine, hard, well-kept, terra cotta colored road which winds through the jungle, up hill and down, connecting the chief settlements of the protected states of Malay. The roadways are not numerous, but their quality is unexcelled.

For two days Scott and I traveled over such a road, winding around hills, through vistas of tropical scenery, soft and inde-

scribably beautiful; along avenues of palms (most impressive being the travelers' palm with its eighteen-inch-wide blade); under the full power of the sun, whose blazing glory awoke to iridescence the multitude of varying greens which reached to the horizon on every hand. We were traveling in the open eye of day, and the natural beauty of Malay, so often shrouded in rain, stood revealed to me as never before. It was a scene to enrapture the most blasé traveler. Only occasionally are the wonderful and ravishing mysteries of the jungle exposed by Nature's searchlight, and the human eye must be swift and retentive, for a glimpse of such tropical beauty is rare and evanescent.

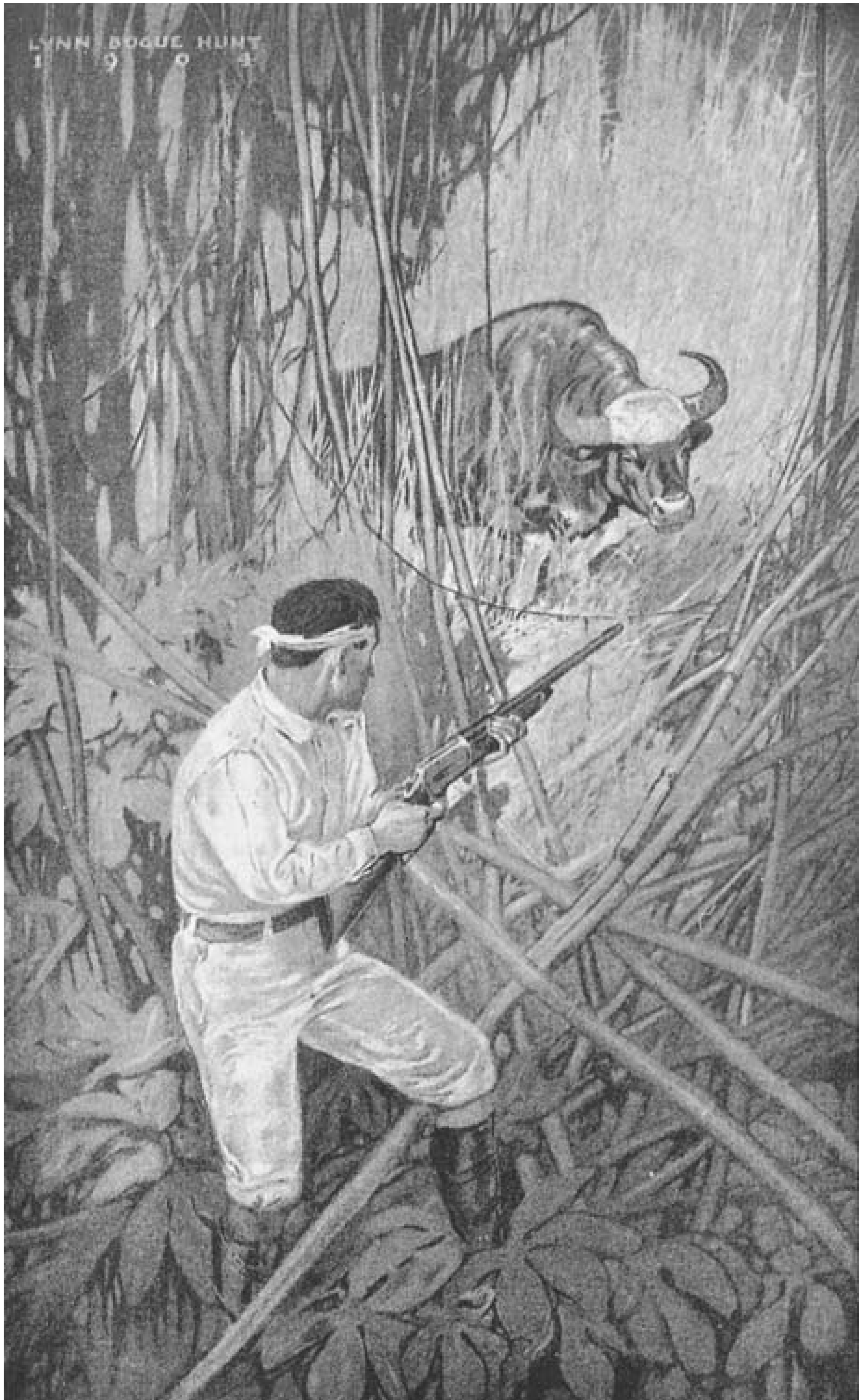
Amid this tropical gorgeousness and with three relays of ponies,—for the grade of the road was severe and our load heavy—we came in the night of the second day to Jelebu—typical of the smaller British residencies. Besides Scott, there were exactly two other white men within a day's journey of his bungalow, yet Jelebu had its club, and its bulletin board on which every, day was posted the most important cable news of the world! Here at the very jungle's edge might one keep pace with the fluctuations of the stock market or learn the most recent rumor concerning Russia's Indian ambitions.

Jelebu is the governmental center for all that part of Negri Sembilan lying above north latitude 3°, where it touches the states of Pahang, and Selangor on the west. In common with all the Peninsular federated or protected states, it has a native sultan, acting under the advice and suggestion of the British Resident, who, in Jelebu, is paid five hundred silver dollars a month; which is a good bit more than the Resident receives. What the Sultan is given by the government and what the Sultan saves for his own personal net income, however, are two different and widely separated amounts.

The dependents of a Malay chieftain are many, and he must maintain himself and his household of women in liberal style as to retinue and entertainment; to do this in accordance with native tradition leaves the Sultan no over-bountiful remainder of his seemingly large honorarium. Were his income, however, twice the really liberal fee now given him by the government for serving as figurehead, the net result would be no greater; the Malay is no economist. The Resident is a kind of paternal chief justice, magistrate and legal adviser combined; he is well taken care of by his government, and thoroughly respected, sometimes even liked, by the natives. Ordinarily his official life runs smoothly day by day along its monotonous course; for Malay is at peace and industrious. But as the durian ripens his days grow strenuous with throbbing life; the padi field is neglected, peace is broken, and the Resident becomes a peripatetic Lord High Chancellor, whose waking hours are filled with civil suits, and whose nights are made sleepless by the howlings of quarreling men. For be it known that the durian is the wondrous fruit that brings great joy or the madness of conflict upon those that taste of its passion-stirring flavor. Had the original apple been a durian, Eve never would have saved a bite for Adam—and man been spared the time-honored and sneering accusation of laying the blame for his fall upon tempting woman.

My introduction to the durian was characteristic. It came early in the morning after my arrival at Jelebu. Strolling contentedly around Scott's hilltop, enjoying the view and the fragrance of foliage under the first sun rays, I was startled by hair raising shrieks, as though the victim were being boiled in oil or undergoing torture equally agonizing. Hastening to the scene of commotion, I came upon an enlivening fight that had been waged all over a padi field but, at the moment of my approach, was being finished at a corner fence, through which the vanquished combatant, uttering his blood-curdling yells, sought to escape the fury of blows that the other rained upon him with a club of male bamboo big enough and stout enough to fell a bullock. Pieces of durian scattered over the battle-ground told the cause of the fight—the clubbed had stolen the fruit from the clubbee and been caught, and, in the terms of local popular approval, been "reprimanded"—so thoroughly reprimanded, in fact, that he was carried home and did not emerge again from his house for several weeks. Meanwhile the victor, who had come out of the affray pretty severely marked also, received the congratulations of his friends and an increased sale for his durians.

It was at the height of the durian season, when all animal kind in Malay, two-



Drawing by Lynn Bogue Hunt.

"Charged full at me from just the other side of a bamboo clump."

The traveling cart of Malay. Scott in our gharry.

legged and four-legged, is animated by an insatiable lust for the fruit itself, and quick to fill with savage anger against whatever stands in the way of satisfying its appetite; for not the least remarkable quality of this remarkable fruit is the amatory effect it has upon those who consume it. All durian eating Malay—man and beast—are aflame with erotic fire. The jungle resounds with the fighting of love-lorn brutes, and the towns awaken to courtship and indulgence.

The durian is about the size of a pineapple, with a similarly rough, outside covering armed with half-inch spikes which are tough and sharp. It grows on trees fully sixty feet in height whose trunks are bare of limbs except at the very top, and when the fruit ripens it drops to the ground. So, as the season approaches, natives erect small huts under the tree or nearby, from which they watch for the falling fruit. Those who are fortunate enough to have such trees growing on their own land, practically live on the income derived from the sale of the durian, for in the Peninsular market it brings the highest price of any Eastern fruit. In the jungle edge, where these trees have no ownership, the race to build the first hut, and thus establish proprietary interest in the falling fruit, is equal in intensity to an Oklahoma land rush; and in the jungle the natives must compete also with the wild beasts that share man's fondness for this extraordinary fruit. Once, in the jungle, as I sat smoking, puzzling out some lost seladang tracks, a falling durian attracted my attention; the nearby trees seemed alive with monkeys racing to first reach the ground. One monkey, that had been left at the post, so to say, deliberately dove from the top of the tree where he sat, fully forty feet into the top of a smaller tree below, whence he swung to the ground; but, though he beat out the others the durian had disappeared. A small leopard-like creature had sneaked off the fruit, and I was too absorbed in watching the aërial flight of the monkey to get more than a glimpse of the thief. The troop of monkeys that instantly foregathered discussed the situation loudly and in very obvious anger.

In order to keep away the birds and the beasts which search out this intoxicating fruit, the natives in the jungle near the durian trees erect large wooden clappers

and other noise-making instruments, which they operate by rope from their watch-houses, sometimes elevated on high poles. This rope is also a jungle product and amazingly strong and durable. Braided into varying sizes, from string to hawser, it is made of a black fibre which grows around the trunk of a certain kind of plentiful palm that blossoms once in a lifetime and then dies. I have seen this fibre rope serving as anchor cables on small Malayan coastwise steamers.

No world fruit is coveted so inordinately, or consumed with such greed as this durian; nor is there any to compare with its extraordinary flavor and odor. A small cart-load of durians will announce themselves long before seen, and, in hand, its odor, at least to white nostrils at first, is peculiarly offensive. I have never heard or read an adequate description of either flavor or odor. Like the rattle of the rattlesnake, it is impossible to find fitting words.

Although the shell is very tough, yet the fruit opens easily from the stem to disclose its centre divided into orange-like sections or pods, each having several seeds about the size of a marble. Around these seeds is the fruit, a cream-colored, cream-like substance, of a flavor which simply baffles description. If the meat of a banana were squashed and mixed with an equal quantity of rich cream, a smaller quantity of chocolate, and enough garlic to strongly stamp the whole, the result would, it seems to me, about the nearest approach the consistency and combination of tastes afforded by the durian. At the same time its flavor is extremely delicate and rich, and its odor powerful. They say the durian is an acquired taste—certainly so for the European; but after overcoming your repugnance to the odor, which is so strong you can literally taste it, you become very fond of the fruit. I survived the odor long enough to eat a portion and tasted it for three days afterwards. Somehow I never tried another.

To me the attraction of Jelebu was not as a center of durian activity, but its reported nearness to seladang and elephant, and particularly to the seladang, that most formidable member of the great *Bos* family. From the nearly extinct American bison to the passing Chillingham half-wild cattle of Europe, on to the buffalo of India and of

The bungalow hacked out of the jungle.

Africa, and the Anoa of Celebes—smallest of buffaloes—the ox family ranges wide and populous. And of this very large family, certainly the Far Eastern members are the most interesting. The gaur, gayal and banting form a group showing common distinctive features of horns more or less flattened, tail reaching only a little below the hock, and a distinct ridge running from shoulders to the middle of the back, where it ends in a sharp drop. In mature males, the color of the short, fine hair is dark brown or blackish, but the young of both sexes, and the female banting of all ages, are reddish brown. The gaur is distinguished by the high arched frontal bone between the horns, which in the gayal is straight and flat; the banting is the smallest, its horns more rounded and the ridge on its back less developed. Of the three, of all Oriental wild cattle in fact, the gaur is the largest and by far the most formidable; is in fact one of the most formidable beasts of the earth which the hunter can stalk, and one that will on occasion supply all the excitement the most intrepid sportsman might desire. They stand higher than any other of the oxen family, and are of heavier bone, though the shoulder blade is small for an animal of such size—another disadvantage for the hunter. The blade goes well up into the shoulder, its top being within about four inches of the highest point of the back ridge. Therefore a shot should be sent home just over the leg, a little forward rather than back, and within six to eight inches from the top of the shoulder ridge.

Called bison (incorrectly) in India, seladang in Malaya, siang in Burma, and gnudang in Siam, the gaur (*Bos gaurus*) is the largest and fiercest of all the wild cattle, with hoofs small in proportion to its height, and of deerlike, rather than oxlike, character. Its sense of smell is as acute as that of the elephant and its vision much keener. When you seek one of these cattle you need all your hunter's skill and your nerve; for, next to the elephant and bracketed with the Cape buffalo of Africa, I believe its natural temperament and the character of country in which it is found make the seladang in the Malay Peninsula the most formidable quarry on earth. In India, where the range of the gaur is the hilly, wooded districts, they are more apt to be found in herds of some size, and, because of the more open sections, less difficult of approach; and less dangerous to the hunter than in the Malay Peninsula, where the jungle is the densest that grows, and almost invariably the quarry has the man at a disadvantage. In Malay it is snap shooting, where the game, on being wounded, turns hunter, and, concealed, awaits the sportsman, who must approach with infinite caution, with senses always alert and hand ever ready, if he would stop or turn aside the vicious charge. You may never in this jungle survey the field of operations from some vantage point; but in the close growing tangle of vines, and canes, and thorn bushes, and heavy coarse weed or grass-like mass—through which you can never get even dim sight for over twenty yards and most of the time can scarcely see that many feet ahead—you must follow the tracks of the seladang you have wounded, never knowing at what instant the maddened beast may burst from the jungle practically right on top of you. One seladang I was fortunate enough to finally get, was only just the other side of a bamboo clump when he started his charge full at me. This is the dangerous and the unavoidable feature of hunting the beast in Malay. Luckily for the hunter, the seladang, if unsuccessful in its charge, passes on to await him at another point. Never have I heard of one turning instantly to a second charge after missing the hunter on the first rush. But, on the other hand, if the seladang charges home, it remains to gore its victim.

So it is, because of the temper of the seladang and of the kind of country he roams, that in Malay the heavy rifle is the only safe one. Seladang have been killed with comparatively small-bore weapons—I was fortunate enough to kill one with a .50 calibre—but it is also true that the late Captain Syres, one of the most experienced sportsmen among English residents of Malay, was killed by the charge of a seladang, after he and his companion had put six .577 balls into its breast. As he lay wounded to the death, Captain Syres cautioned his companion never to go into the Malayan jungle for seladang with any weapon lighter than an 8 bore; and though perhaps that is erring on the safe side, certainly if error is to be made the safe side is the one which

wisdom would choose. In a sense this is true of all shooting in the dense jungles of the Far East, which do not afford the more or less open stretches of India or the plains of Africa.

Dangerous game is apt to come at you from such near points, and the kind of shooting demanded so much of the snap-work variety, that picking your shot, as a rule, is impossible. You must have a gun that will stop, or at least turn aside, the infuriated charging animal; and in the case of seladang it is your life or his. Therefore you must have smashing, sickening power in your cartridge, not merely penetration. And when you are tracking a wounded seladang, look well that you do not become entangled in the vines and the clinging growths of many descriptions that encompass your way. Keep your feet clear, ready for instant movement, and have always a tree in your path and in your eye, for lightning-quick shelter in case there is not the time or the opportunity for a shot when the charge comes.

There is record of a seladang killed that stood six feet seven and a half inches at its shoulders; but the average would be from about five feet ten or eleven inches, to six feet. Of four I personally measured the tallest was five feet eleven inches, the smallest five feet eight inches; and the biggest head of which I found any record had horns with a twenty and three-quarter inch base circumference, with a spread of eighteen and three-quarter inches from tip to tip, and forty-three inches as the outside length of horn, and thirty-five and a half inches as the inside length from base to tip. Yet these are unusual and extreme measurements; and sixteen to eighteen inches is more nearly the average base circumference, with a corresponding fewer number of inches on the other measurements.

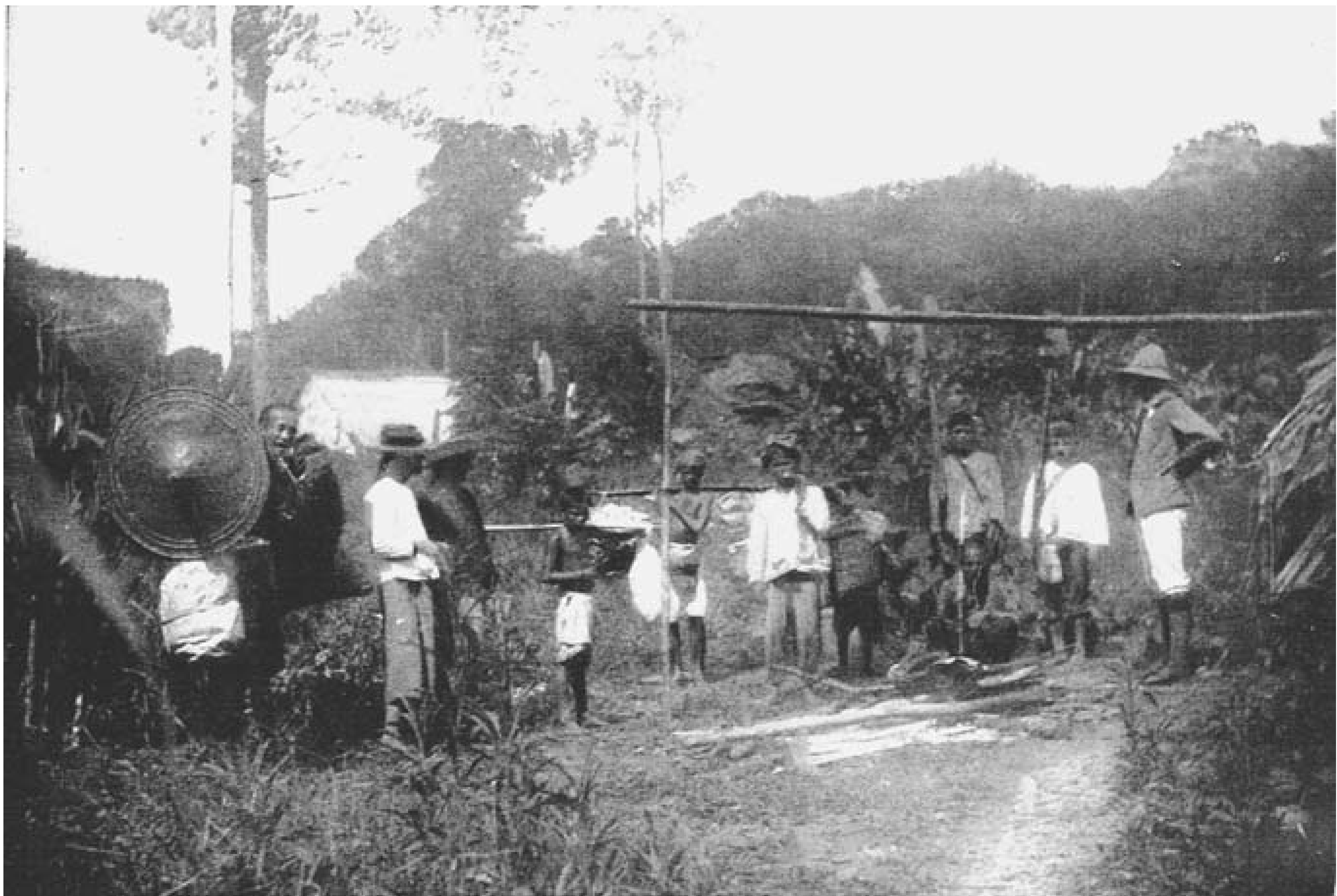
Before we set out from Jelebu for our hunt, we tried very hard to get Prang Doloh, who lived at the edge of the jungle, and was commonly reported to have, for a Malay, unusual hunting qualifications; but we were obliged to content ourselves with Noa Anak, another native of higher social degree but, as we discovered, less jungle craft. None the less, we set off with considerable enthusiasm, because reports of elephants which I did not want, and of seladang which I did desire, were arriving plentifully. Every day one or more natives would come into the official residence with a woeful tale of padi destroyed by mischievous elephants; and Noa declared he knew where a small herd of seladang ranged, which so often he had seen that now, he assured us, he could find them with his eyes shut for the "eminent Resident and his distinguished friend."

One wants the happy unreasoning confidence of childhood to thoroughly enjoy Malay.

When we set out to find Noa's seladang, our outfit of provisions was sent ahead in the picturesque Malay draught cart, with our party of eight under Noa leading the way, and Scott and I following in a comfortless gharry, which we dismissed at the jungle edge in favor of shanks mare.

As to nationalities, our party was something of a mixture, including Malays, Tamils and Chinamen; but as to quality, it was, with a single exception, uniform and useless to an exasperating degree. Indeed it was notable in its very uselessness; to have got together seven men so bootless on a hunting expedition, was in itself an achievement worthy of record. The exception was Lum Yet, a Hokkien Chinaman, who had been engaged as cook, but who in truth was a jack of all useful trades in camp, and a porter on the road, that trudged patiently and good naturedly under a heavy load whenever we moved camp, as we did frequently.

The only thing Lum and I clashed over was the simplicity of his cooking kit. I am myself something of a Spartan as to camp dunnage; my equipment is never luxurious, being always reduced to a strictly practical working basis; yet mine was an elaborate culinary outfit compared to that which served Lum. So far as ever I could see, it consisted of two pots and a fry pan. He would not use separate pots, making the coffee or a curry in the same one with equal facility, and I must honestly add without any apparent tainting of either dish; but I had to draw the line when I found him one day boiling a kind of a pudding concoction in one end of his loin cloth. And he was the most devout individual of any color I ever knew. There was never an undertaking for which he did not bespeak assistance from his gods; and we never made a camp that he did not raise a crude little altar,



Lum Yet, the wise old Chinaman. Noa Anak, who had seladang marked down. Scott

The outfit which Noa Anak led out so gaily to its seladangless fate.

near by in the jungle, as merit making. Lum Yet had a brother whose pig had been carried off by a tiger, and Lum never lost an opportunity, during the entire trip, to supplicate the mysterious one of the jungle that his own pig, in a shanty near his brother's, might not suffer a similar fate. He was always up pottering over his duties when Scott and I turned in at night; and I never opened my eyes in the morning that I did not see Lum already at work, seemingly just where he had been when I closed my eyes the night before. Many and many a morning I lay watching the swift dexterity, the economical use of every trifle, the infinite industry, the mysterious mannerisms and devout supplications.

How little the white man, especially the majority of those of us who go forth as missionaries to "convert the heathen," comprehend the Chinese character! To the student of Chinese institutions and the Chinese themselves, it seems outrageous presumption, for the truth is that the Chinese are without doubt the most religious people on the globe. Their religion is a very part of themselves, accepted without discussion from birth. The veriest pauper, from a worldly point of view, who lives on one of the hundreds of sampans floating before Canton, will deny himself in order that he may perform a particular religious duty. There are no people save the Mohammedans that so completely live up to the faith they profess. China has no divergent churches, no wrangling apostles; there is the one creed, of thousands of years standing, to which all yield allegiance, and to which all pin a faith that continues unto death incontrovertible. Now and again we hear of a "converted" Chinaman; but I never saw one that had really broken from the faith of his fathers who was not the less trustworthy. In a considerable experience with many kinds of natives in the wilderness of their own country, I have invariably found the ones farthest from "civilization" and the "converting" influence of conflicting white-man creeds, to be the most honorable and dependable. I mean this as no unkindly reflection upon the Christian faith or upon the zeal, often, alas, so ignorantly directed, of many good people.

Noa Anak's spirits underwent a decided change so soon as we had penetrated the edge and got into the real jungle. Up to this he had been blithe and gay—the strutting leader of the party and obviously glad of it; now he grew less talkative and appeared depressed. Neither Scott nor I gave him much thought; we presumed he was taking us to the place where so often he had seen the seladang, and meanwhile, I, at least, was greatly interested in the country through which we were passing. It was much more open jungle than any I had yet traveled, with many hills and small valleys or swales in which grew big patches of very coarse lalang as high as our heads, and bearing blades an inch wide. Hence for the first days we were more in the open under the sun, "eye of day"—as the Malays poetically call it—than had been usual in my previous hunting and, though it was oppressively hot, yet I enjoyed the chance of the closer observation it gave of bird and insect life. Neither, however, on more intimate acquaintance, proved a sufficient reward for the discomforts and heat. Bird life in the Peninsula is not brilliant as to plumage nor entertaining as to song; indeed, it is sombre and curiously silent. Flying insect life, also, is entirely without the wonderful colorings seen in some tropical countries—Brazil, for example—but it is plentiful, and though it fails to attract the eye at least it salutes the ear, even if not pleasingly. It is vibrant with noise; there is a continuous hum, somewhat lessened during the rain, but swelling into a roar when the sun bursts forth between shifting clouds. Monkeys almost rivaled the insects in number and variety, and one, the Wa Wa, or singing Gibbon, common to most of the East Indies, made noise even more insistent, his wail of a cry reaching high and doleful above all other jungle sounds. About the only bird note of which I seem to have made record is the familiar one of our old friend the poot-poot bird, heard so often in Sumatra and particularly in Siam. But the most interesting sight in the bird line was a black jungle fowl with red markings, though just how marked I cannot particularize, for it was but a flash of a glimpse I had, and counted myself fortunate indeed for that much, as the jungle fowl are rarely seen.

By and by when we passed through the more open zone with its life, and had come into the dark and dank interior with only leeches visible, I began to take some account

Cape Buffalo, height 4 ft. 10 in. to 5 ft.—Africa.

Indian Buffalo, height from 5 to 6 ft.

The Banting, shoulder height 5 ft. 5 in.—Java.

The Gayal, height 4 ft.—Burma and Assam.

The Gaur, or Seladang, height from 5 ft. 10 in. to 6 ft.—India and Malaya.

European Wild Cattle.

The Congo Buffalo—West Africa.

of Noa. There was no doubt of his depression, but to our inquiries concerning the seladang he always replied confidently that we were making towards them and would see "plenty in a few days." To be sure we did

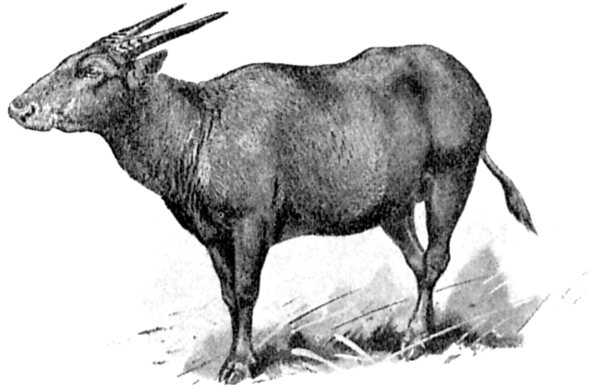
The Mindoro Buffalo, locally called Tamarau, height 3 ft. 6 in.

The Yak of Tibet.

see tracks, not so fresh as to suggest quarry at the next rise, but sufficiently so to at least indicate their presence in the neighborhood. Thus we went on day by day, getting wetter and wetter if possible—for once wet in the jungle interior you stay so—but with no fresher signs of the game we sought. One noon we came unexpectedly upon a little open flat, comparatively dry, where we stopped with mutual congratulations on stumbling over a place to dry our clothes. Here during this process we sat nearby, unclothed amidst the torments of myriads of sand flies. We both remarked upon the unusual experience of sand flies in such an environment; but our remarks would scarcely do for publication. Malay holds many surprises for the wilderness hunter.

Chillingham Bull.

With an occasional camp from which to scour the surrounding country for tracks, we headed for the mountains across the border in Selangor; climbing most of the time, coming every now and then to little flats of Ialang, winding around high hills and across small streams, of which there were a number with excellent water. The jungle was thick, yet without the multiplicity of briars and thorned things I had found elsewhere in the Peninsula. We saw



The Anoa of Celebes, connecting link between ox and antelope. Shoulder height 3 ft. 3 in.

plenty of fresh deer and pig tracks, and one day as we sat on the bank of a stream, eating luncheon, a large sambur buck, carrying a fine head, came out at our very side, and, after looking us over an instant, plunged across stream directly in front of us. Our guns were stacked some feet away—but we did not want the deer; meat we carried, and each of us had long before secured a head.

There were also elephant tracks; but thus far no seladang tracks fresher than the ones first seen, and even these were becoming fewer. As the country itself grew to interest me less I came to take closer note of Noa Anak, and it was not long before I became convinced that not only was he without knowledge of a seladang range, but he was entirely without bearings as to our own precise location-plain lost, in other words. Scott doubted this at first, but finally agreed with me, and we then took Noa aside, so the others might not know and his pride suffer humiliation, and had a heart-to-heart talk with him. He would not acknowledge himself lost, but he did confess that he seemed unable to find the range where he had "heard" of seladang in plenty; thus we learned out in the jungle that he had only heard of the seladang which so definitely and so often he had said in Jelebu that he had "seen." It was a situation to which mere words would not do justice—days of tramping under the direction of a man who did not know where he was going. Only the purest accident would have brought us to seladang, and such accidents do not often happen. Traveling by the sun, to see which we had at times to climb a tall tree standing above the jungle growth, we turned our steps towards Jelebu—always keeping an eye out for the quarry we sought, but losing no time in reaching a place where our conscience would permit us to point Noa for his home. We had scarcely a hope now of seeing seladang—and we were not disappointed, for very soon after we ran out even of their tracks. Diligent searching brought us no results, and we had finally to return to Scott's bungalow after a fruitless, but interesting, search for Noa's lost Seladang.

Skull of American Bison.