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Title: My Friends the Savages

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Release date: February 25, 2009 [eBook #28189]

Language: English

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MY FRIENDS THE SAVAGES \*\*\*

# MY FRIENDS THE SAVAGES

BY

**Captain G. B. CERRUTI**

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

BY I. STONE SANPIETRO

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Notes and observations of a Perak settler (Malay Peninsula). Richly illustrated with original photographs taken by the Author.

COMO (Italy)

TIPOGRAFIA COOPERATIVA COMENSE

1908

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These notes, the fruit of much sacrifice, I  
dedicate to the memory of my dear ones.

The fond embrace of parents and a sister, which  
for me was a sweet augury at my departure,  
greeted me no more at my return!

*Varazze, June 1906.*

Transcriber's Note: This table of contents was originally at the end of the book but  
has been moved here for the convenience of users.

## CONTENTS

Chapter I: Malacca and its contrasts—Devourers of the soul and devourers of the body—The realization of a poet's dream—Temptations—A call from the forest—Auri sacra fames—Baggage—Farewell to civilization	Page <a href="#">5</a>
Chapter II: My escort—By steamer to Telok Anson—The other bank of the Perak—Towards the forest—First news—Blood- letting in the swamp—Robbed and forsaken—Revenge in due time—The Malay's instigation—My little Sam Sam's fidelity—Philosophical reflections under a heavy weight	" <a href="#">11</a>
Chapter III: A fearful nocturnal concert—Fire! Fire!—A clearing in the forest—A general flight—Masters of the camp!—Mortal weariness—A morning greeting without any compliments—A first meeting—In the village— <i>Alà</i> against the Orang-putei	" <a href="#">22</a>
Chapter IV: New friends—Gold—An English official—The purchase of my future treasure—Administrative simplicity —England teaches!—The "sla pui"—Bitter disappointment —The Sam-Sam—The poison of the Savage and the venom of the Civilized	" <a href="#">31</a>
Chapter V: Great Mother Earth—A dangerous meeting—A living statue—Here or there?—An unrelished supper—A	

dreaded immigration—A glance into the past—A rape which was not a rape—A noble task—Towards the mountain—Tiger-shooting—The Sakais in town—Alloyed sweets—Musical tastes—Hurrah for the free forest!	" <a href="#">42</a>
Chapter VI: The great Sorceress—The forest seen from above—A struggle for life—The crimes of plants—Everlasting twilight—Births and deaths—Concerts by forest vocalists—The "durian"—The "ple-lok"—Vastnesses unexplored by science—Treasures intact—Para Rubber—The Samaritans of the jungle—The forest and its history	" <a href="#">59</a>
Chapter VII: The snares of civilized life—Faust's invocation—The dangers of the forest—Serpents—A perilous adventure—Carnivorous and herbivorous animals—The "sladan"—The man of the wood	" <a href="#">75</a>
Chapter VIII: An official appointment—A tour of inspection—Lost in the forest—I find a philosopher—Lycurgus and his laws—A contented mind is a continual feast—A night among the tigers—On the Berumbum—I sleep with a serpent—The last of many—Safe from trap and arrow—The coronation of King Edward VII	" <a href="#">85</a>
Chapter IX: The origin of the Sakais—Hypothesis and legend—Physical character—Thick tresses, gay flowers and troublesome guests—Hereditary antipathy—The five senses reduced to two—Food and drink—Tranquil life—Intolerance of authority—Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law—Logical laziness—A Sakai journalist—The story of a mattress	" <a href="#">107</a>
Chapter X: The Sakai woman—Conjugal fidelity—A life of labour—Betrothals and nuptials—Love among the Sakais—Divorcement—No kissing—Chastity—Bigamy—Maternity and its excesses—Aged before the time—Fashion and coquetry	" <a href="#">125</a>
Chapter XI: A Sakai village—The "elder"—The family—Degrees of relationship—Humorists disoccupied—On the march—Tender hearts—Kindling the fire—A hecatomb of giants—The hut—Household goods and utensils—Work and repose	" <a href="#">141</a>
Chapter XII: Intellectual development—Sakais of the plain and Sakais of the hills—Laziness and intelligence—Falsehood and the Evil Spirit—The Sakai language—When the "Orang Putei" gets angry—Counting time—Novel calendars—Moral gifts	" <a href="#">152</a>
Chapter XIII: First attempts at industry—The story of a hat—Multiplicity—Primitive arts—Sakai music—Songs—Instruments—Dances—Ball dresses—Serpentine gracefulness—An unpublished Sakai song	" <a href="#">172</a>
Chapter XIV: The beliefs and superstitions of the Sakais—Metempsychosis—The Evil Spirit—Superstition among savages and ignorance among civilized people—The two sources of life—The wind—The Alà priest and physician—A scientific vigil—Venerable imposture!— <i>Tenac</i> and <i>Cintok</i> —Therapeutic torture—Contagion—A Sakai's death—The deserted village—Mourning—Births—Fire—Intellectual darkness—The Sakais and Islamism	" <a href="#">183</a>
Chapter XV: Sakai arms—Shooting—Serpent catchers—The	

Sakai and his poisons—*Toalang*, *rengas* and *sagol*—*Slà dol*,  
*slà plek* and *slà clob*—*Akar toka*—Ipok—An antidote—The  
*labar*, *lampat*, *masè* and *loo*—The *legop*—The Mai Bretaks  
—The preparation of *legop*—Curious and superfluous  
ingredients—The effects of *legop*—Strange contradictions  
—Experiments—Poisons and antidotes—The settler and  
science

" 202

Chapter XVI: Past and future geography—Mountains and  
plateaus—An attempt at a census—Temperature—Maladies  
and remedies—*Alà* a quack

" 221



[5]

## AMONG THE SAKAIS

### CHAPTER I.

**Malacca and its contrasts—Devourers of the soul and devourers of the body—The realization of a poet's dream—Temptations—A call from the forest—Auri sacra fames—Baggage—Farewell to civilization.**

From the Bay of Bengal and the Gulf of Siam the Malay Peninsula, once known as the Golden Chersonese, jets out into the Indian Ocean like an arm stretched forth to unite once more within its embrace the innumerable isles that belt its coasts and that have probably been severed from the mainland by the combined force of Time and Sea.

In these surrounding islands, some as large as continents, others as narrow as reefs, over which civilization passes in squalls of cupidity, are concealed the strangest contrasts, for whilst around the shore human wolves disguised as civilized men are devouring souls, or (with due observance of the law) are usurping and stealing their neighbour's property and products, (the cleverest and most respected being he who best dissembles his rapacity or who knows how best to substitute unscrupulous shrewdness for industrial activity) not far off towards the centre of these scattered lands other men, in primitive ignorance of the law, are devouring their neighbours' flesh and skin or stealing their live bodies to serve as slaves.

[6]

But such curious contrasts are not after all so very striking when one considers that to devour souls and to devour flesh are both natural instincts of Man!

Around the coast of the Peninsula are many flourishing towns where every modern and up-to-date accommodation is to be found. These seaside resorts are thronged with a cosmopolitan population composed of tourists, business men, nabobs and adventurers. There life rolls on in the refined corruption of fashionable society amidst sports and amusements, scandals and intrigues, every race and every tongue contributing its share of good and evil. A motley crowd swarms their streets, presenting to the eye of an onlooker the picturesque spectacle that the contrast of costumes always produces. They are people of different colours, dress and education, attracted thither by the loadstone of wealth. The fortunate, the clever, the unscrupulous have already gained the victory in Life's struggles and now ride about in motor-cars of the newest types; the others look at them, most likely envy them, and work all the harder to get rich themselves. Will they succeed? The way, here is a short one but can only be successfully trodden by those who possess sound energy and blind confidence in their own brains and in their own muscles. It must not be thought, however, that the motor-car is a prerogative, in these parts, of opulent Europeans and Chinese for it is also a powerful auxiliary for those who are striving to make their fortunes through agricultural and mining speculations in the wildest regions of the Peninsula.

But whilst near the sea the inhabitants and travellers can enjoy all the luxuries and conveniences of the 20th century, in the interior of the Peninsula, leading a nomadic life in the thick of the jungle, which covers the range of mountains from north to south, a primitive people still exists. All unconscious of the violent passions and turbulent emotions that disturb the tranquillity of their fellow-creatures (civilized in form if not in fact) at some miles distant from them, they live quietly and peaceably in their forest homes preserving intact their original simplicity and ingenuousness.

[7]

The hot breath of our fagging life, that generates every sort of nerve complaint, has not yet reached their mountain haunts. On those wild heights the nerves rest; the affections are not tormented; love is pure and, for this, lasting; ambition neither perverts the mind, nor consumes the conscience; there are no honours or favours to arouse envy; no artificial boundaries to liberty or difficult problems about Capital and Labour; there are no rich and no poor, for in that blessed spot money is an unknown article and what is more—strange triumph of the Savage over the Civilized—every man is a brother to the other!

Up there in the forest there are neither princes nor subjects; Governments nor Police; no Tax-gatherers, public meetings or strikes so that if Stecchetti<sup>[1]</sup> were still living he might have been sent among the Sakais to find the ideal place of which he was always seeking the address.

---

The 15th of June 1891 I landed at Penang (the Prince of Wales's Island) on my return from an exploring tour in the Isle of Nias. I was feeling rather worn out with the fatigues lately undergone so resolved to rest awhile on British territory.

I had brought with me a rich and interesting ethnographical collection I found no difficulty in selling to the Perak Government that destined it to the Museum at Taiping, a small town where is the British Residence. [8]

During my well-earned repose I often heard speak of the Mai Darats, a tribe of Aborigines dwelling in the interior of the Peninsula and who were called by the name of Sakais by the Malays, a scornful appellation which signifies *a people of slaves*, and this insulting term is explained by the fact that formerly their neighbours carried on an extensive slave-trade by making them victims and also took advantage of their simplicity and good faith in many other ways, until the British Protectorate was established and these poor wandering tribes were put upon a par with more civilized races.

I began to gather information concerning these wild men of the bush and learnt that they inhabited the unfrequented parts of the Perak and Pahang States, that they were a nomadic race and that they passed most of their time in the abstraction and preparation of vegetable and animal poisons in which art they were exceptionally expert and that they were equally skilful in shooting poisoned arrows. Some of my informants wanted to make me believe that they were exceedingly ferocious by nature and so superstitious that they would aim their deadly dart at whatever stranger ventured to approach them, believing him to be the messenger of some Evil Spirit and that afterwards they would make of him a dainty meal to comfort their insatiable stomachs.

But knowing something of the previous relations between the Sakais and the people surrounding them I was put on my guard against certain exaggerated and prejudiced reports and felt strongly tempted to try and dissipate the vague mystery—that I somehow guessed was based upon self-interest—in which they wished to envelop the Mai Darats. [9]

The more they told me about them the more I felt attracted towards the Sakais, it seeming to me that a people so foreign to every light of civilization, so bold as they were described to be, so free from every regime or authority, must needs afford an interesting study to one who sought to know them at close quarters. Perhaps, when once I had overcome the, not always surmountable, difficulty of getting into their company, I might find amongst them a tranquil life and settle down in their midst as a planter or agriculturist for I was already convinced that I was unfitted for commercial enterprises in which very often scruples of conscience and uprightness are encumbrances.

My brief sojourn in civilized society made me long for the freedom and peace which, may be, awaited me there; I longed to know intimately these people who, I reasoned to myself, must be exempt from corruption as they were so much hated by those who lived in its midst, and who were surrounded by so much mystery.

There was, I must confess, another reason that helped to draw me towards the Sakai camps. I know not how the germ took root, but in my brain the conviction was always growing that in the heart of the Peninsula, already proved to be rich in metals, a gold vein might be discovered.

The Virgilian *auri sacra fames* took possession of me little by little, solved every remaining doubt, conquered all my hesitations and removed every obstacle.

This impetus united with the longing for new adventures, for profound emotions, for a life far different in every respect to that I was then passing in a sphere of elegant slavery, imposed by ridiculous conventionalisms, decided me, and I packed up my baggage.

Just imagine: a strong piece of tarred canvas to be converted into a camp-bed by means of four wooden pegs; a hat, four shirts and some woollen undervests, a few pairs of trousers and socks, some very light canvas shoes, and one or two khaki jackets as used by the soldiers in Africa. [10]

I did not forget though that it was very possible to catch some sort of illness and as in those parts a malady followed by death may be considered an involuntary suicide but never a homicide because.... there are no doctors to cure you, I also provided myself with a small stock of purgative lozenges, quinine, some antiseptic preparations and a bistoury.

Thus having quickly arranged for my new journey and having supplied myself with such elements as would be useful to me under the circumstances, I added to them a large quantity of tobacco and coloured beads—two things that exercise a great power over savages—and bidding farewell to all the culinary delicacies adapted to weak digestions, and turning my back upon all domestic comfort, I started forth towards the Unknown.



A group of Mai Darats, called "Sakais".

p. 8.

#### Footnotes:

- [1] An Italian poet who wrote many humorous verses.—Translator's Note.



[11]

## CHAPTER II

**My escort—By steamer to Telok Anson—The other bank of the Perak—Towards the forest—First news—Blood-letting in the swamp—Robbed and forsaken—Revenge in due time—The Malay's instigation—My little Sam Sam's fidelity—Philosophical reflections under a heavy weight.**

The kind reader who peruses these poor pages of notes and memories, accustomed to hear speak of expeditions organised for the purpose of penetrating into inhospitable lands or into regions encompassed by all the terrors of the unknown, will perhaps think that I was jesting when I gave the inventory of my luggage in the last chapter and that from sheer vaunt I did not mention the support of some Geographical or Commercial Society and neither the tons of goods which would follow in my wake, nor the numerous wagons and armed battalion that had to escort me.

No, nothing of all this, for to tell the truth I have always found more harm than good done by these etceteras to an explorer's equipment, and for this reason, even in my most arduous travels, I always set out, as it were, alone, confiding only in my own forces. And let me explain why.

[12]

From the very beginning of my wanderings in countries populated by savages, to some of whom is attributed the most sanguinary instincts, I reassured myself by a logical conclusion which experience has shown me to be quite right.

If the fierceness of wild beasts, I reasoned to myself, is nothing else but a paroxysm of fear why should we consider the fierceness of the savages caused by other motives? Man, however wild may be his state, has been endowed with intelligence although in some cases this intellectual faculty is possessed in the smallest possible degree. Let us then make him understand that he has nothing to fear from us and little by little, if our patience does not fail, he will grow more gentle

and become a friend instead of an enemy.

Therefore to-day, as well as in the past, I carefully avoid warlike preparations, brigandish masquerades or any escort of a prepotent or menacing appearance. I go ahead like a simple wayfarer, with a smiling face and friendly gestures, leaving my gun (which is indispensable in defending oneself from the attacks of wild beasts) slung over my shoulder.

The first welcome, I admit, is far from being cordial, and there is always the risk of falling into a trap dexterously laid for big game and strangers or of being ably struck by a poisoned dart, but once a meeting has been obtained without any serious consequences accruing, it is not so difficult as it might be supposed to follow it up with a parley, for the feared (and fearing) individual is dumbfounded at the extraordinary double event of either not having killed you or of not having been killed himself, according to the law of reciprocity which for him is inviolable.

Under the impression of this very strange fact he will not oppose resistance to a peaceable understanding and afterwards in order to ensure his friendship there only needs a quick intuition of the poor creature's superstitions, beliefs and susceptibilities and a spirit of precaution against offending his puerile vanity or of in any way provoking jealousy or mistrust. [13]

When he is persuaded that the presence of his undesired guest brings him no evil he will give you his full confidence and spontaneously accept you as a benevolent and powerful protector.

The perils, I grant, are many and great, but greater still are those that lie in wait for an armed traveller. The savage may be terrified and overpowered by the massacres with which civilization asserts its tyrannical superiority but the venom of hatred has entered his soul and he meditates and prepares an ambush which sooner or later, without fail, will give him his revenge.

The use of brutal force (that for me is a political error) is an enormous damage to the study of the customs, beliefs, and psychological peculiarities of the people with whom we are in contact, for they will back out of every enquiry or investigation, will either refuse to respond or will tell you lies, and this accounts for the contradictory reports that different travellers give about the same tribe or race.

This, kind reader, is my modest conviction as, from their method of proceeding, it is also of the English, who are Masters in everything that concerns colonization.

---

My baggage being ready it only remained for me to find some carriers who would be useful to me, if not as guides to the country of the Sakais, at least as interpreters between me and its inhabitants.

Penang is populated chiefly by Malays but numerous other races are represented there, especially Chinese and Indians. Without much trouble I succeeded in engaging the services of five porters: a Malay, an Indian, a Chinese, a Siamese and a Sam-Sam, quite a lad. Together they formed a little Babel which I congratulated myself would prove of great help in making overtures with the Sakais. [14]

All my followers, with the exception of the Sam-Sam, had faces which would have graced the gallows and I am sure that Lombroso<sup>[2]</sup> would have classified them without hesitation as born-criminals. But their forbidding countenances did not alarm me as it is well known that the basest villain becomes timid and servile when confronted by unexpected danger, and I was well aware that the dread of tigers, snakes, traps and poisoned arrows, the thousand mysteries of Death which the wonderful forest encloses amidst its countless trees, amongst the confusion of its thick interlaced creepers and under its soft moss and long grass would have converted these ugly-faced, crooked-souled individuals into docile lambs. I knew that once they had entered a land, to them not known, they would not forsake me, for the Oriental has faith in the European and will follow whither the latter leads, attributing to him rare qualities of courage and energy as well as a marvellous ability in overcoming obstacles and getting out of difficult positions.

---

We left Penang on a coasting steamer and after going up the River Perak for about 60 miles we reached the little town of Telok Anson where we landed.

It was too early in the morning, when, we arrived for me to present myself to the British Authority and as the local officials did not in the slightest way interfere with my free passage nor subject me to any sort of inquisitorial interrogations (which in other colonies and under other Protectorates I had been obliged to undergo) I gave orders for our immediate departure as I was anxious to commence our march as soon as possible. [15]

Having divided our load of provisions in equal parts we crossed the Perak on a pontoon and with a "*slamat gialat*" (pleasant journey) from the man on board we found ourselves upon the shores where my adventures had to begin.

I was there, then, with my face turned towards a new land, and a thrill of joyous emotion pervaded me. What surprises were reserved for me up on the wooded mountains towards which we were bending our steps? What things, what habits would be revealed to me when I reached

my goal?

I was leaving behind me civilized company. I was isolating myself from educated society but I was not perturbed at the thought of the hardship, the sufferings, the dangers that lay before me. Vague and pleasant hopes smiled upon me from the Future. Of what nature were they? I could not tell.

"Forward!" I said to myself and my carriers. And the march began.

---

The first day passed very well, in spite of the intense heat, and nothing occurred worth mentioning. It was growing dark and we had already done about 20 miles when we came in sight of a hut erected amongst some cocoanut and banana trees. We soon found that it was occupied by a Malay, with his wife and children, who had come there for the cultivation of rice.

My request for hospitality, until the morning, was received with evident distrust, but the hope of coveted gifts in the end, got the better of Islamic superstition in the soul of the Malay, and a covered corner of his humble residence was accorded me and my men. [16]

During the night I tried to make the Malay talk about the Sakais but I could not ask him any direct questions as it would have been a serious affair if my companions came to suspect that our way through the forest was entirely new to me and that I was ignorant of the place where our journey would end.

I managed, however, to find out that quite recently some Sakais had ventured as far as there to exchange *rattan* (Malacca cane) and rubber, for tobacco and rice. They had then departed, but the Malay did not know from whence they had come or whither they had gone. He believed that they could not be very far off as a few days before he had distinctly heard their call-whistles.

For various causes I felt obliged to doubt the truth of what the man related, not the least of which being his ill-disguised desire to rid himself of our company as soon as possible.

---

At day-break we started off again, following an almost untracked path which led us over miasmatic marshes swarming with insects. Our poor legs were attacked by a perfect army of leeches and subjected to a most inopportune and undesirable bleeding. From time to time we were compelled to stop and free ourselves from their tenacious hold. They seemed to prefer European blood to Asiatic and made me suffer more than my escort, perhaps because my skin being more tender they could better succeed in their sanguinary intent, but although my flesh smarted and my strength failed it was necessary to keep cheerful and pretend, every now and then, to recognize our whereabouts just as if I had passed the same way other times. I even assured my five companions that when we reached the Sakais there would be no more difficulties, and so urged them on the faster. [17]

I hoped that the farther we penetrated into the vast wilds around us the more I might depend upon the fidelity of my carriers as they would have to rely upon my supposed knowledge of the country we were entering and so would be less likely to beat a retreat. As we went along, however, I leading the way which. I did not know myself, I could not help noticing that they paid particular attention to every characteristic point we passed, cutting notches in the trees with their *parang*, or knives, after we had waded through a brook or taken a sudden turn in our course, but my mind was too much occupied with the duties of my self-assumed pilotage for me to attach any importance to the fact.

The weather was fine all day so that we were able to go a long way before night fell. Not having come across any sort of refuge we were obliged to improvise one for ourselves and in about an hour we were resting from our fatigues whilst the little Sam-Sam served us with boiled rice, dried fish and certain capsicums which would have made cayenne pepper seem sugar in comparison! There being nothing better to eat I too had to take my share of the frugal repast.

Sleep soon stole over us all, but I was somehow uneasy, for certain strange demands my companions made me had reminded me of the marks I had seen them making on the trees a while before, and my suspicions were aroused without my knowing exactly how to define them; therefore, with the excuse of writing, I determined to keep watch. Until about four o'clock in the morning I was able to resist the somnolence which weighed down my eyelids but at last, exhausted with so many hours' march, with the high tension to which my nerves had been pitched and weakened by the abundant blood-letting in the swamp, my body triumphed over my will and I also slept. [18]

At dawn the little wild bird, the *cep plót*, broke the silent air with its characteristic and shrill *ci ti rià*. To him the smaller and tamer *cep riò* replied with a sweetly modulated solfeggio of extraordinary precision, and I awoke. At the same time I felt myself being roughly shaken and the voice of my little Sam-Sam cried into my ear:

"Tuan lakas bangun samoa Orang suda lari" (Wake up quickly, sir; the men have all run away)!

Ah, then, my misgivings had not been unfounded and it was Slumber that had betrayed me. I

jumped up and looked around. There was nobody to be seen and nothing to be heard. I turned anxiously towards our heap of provisions and discovered instantly that the four rascals had made off with a large booty of my rice, tobacco, and matches, things that were very precious to me at that moment.

What was to be done? Follow them? And if we did not find them? It would be loss of time as well as goods. The only thing to do was to treat the incident with philosophy, comforting myself with the remote hope of some day meeting with the scoundrels and of making them pay dear for their knavish trick. This hope, I may say in parenthesis, was not a vain one, for a year later I met my Chinese culprit at Telok Anson and not long after, his Malay confederate at Penang, on both of which occasions I had the satisfaction—without troubling the legal authority to intercede for or against me—of giving them a lesson in honesty that I dare warrant will have made them lose the gust of treating others as they had treated me.

I was glad to find that the Sam-Sam boy had not deserted me for I had taken a kind of liking to him. He told me that the Malay who had accorded us hospitality had narrated to his countryman most terrible things about the Sakais, describing so many perils, and such ferocious treatment, which awaited those who risked getting into their midst, that even a man of dauntless courage would have shuddered. Nothing was said to me of this, but the man had informed the other three, who understood the Malay language, and between the four it was quickly decided to escape.

[19]

The boy had heard it all but did not give me any hint, never thinking that the wicked project of robbing and abandoning me would have been so speedily carried into effect.

I asked the only companion left me if he was disposed to be faithful to his engagement and to me, no matter where we went, or whom we met with, and he expressed his readiness to accompany me. The answer put me into better spirits and I made arrangements for continuing our journey.

---

We boiled enough rice and broiled enough fish to last us for two meals and then divided both in two parts. We each took our own share and wrapped it up in some leaves ready to eat when we made a brief halt on the banks of the many streams flowing through the forest.

With the remaining provisions we made two bundles, as bulky as seemed possible to carry, but their weight surpassed our strength so we were compelled to sacrifice a large quantity of our victuals which we put into a sack and left in the hut, hoping that there it would not be damaged by the rain, and afterwards, still well-laden, we once more set off.

Under the scorching rays of the sun and the weight of my burden I plodded on, philosophizing to myself—like a Boetius lost in the jungle—in order to draw some comforting conclusion out of this, my first, unpleasant adventure. But my philosophy soon took the form of certain meditations and comparisons that were not all serene. My thoughts flew to the heroes of the Bar-room and the Club to whom Sport means fatigue, boldness, development of the muscles, and sacrifice provided.... that every athletic exercise, however slight, be followed up by a tepid or shower bath, massage, or the rest prescribed by the hygienist or trainer. I thought of those so-called explorers who enlighten the civilized part of the world upon the habits and customs of the uncivilized part; those literary swindlers who travel in a Pullman's car or some other vehicle, equally convenient and comfortable, to a safe place, near the land to be explored, there to make notes of the vague reports and yet more vague "they says" that circulate about the Aborigines in question, and afterwards with the help of their fertile imagination turn these mere voices into startling facts, add a few extraordinary occurrences in the Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver style (in which they themselves always play the principal part) and then present their interesting writings to the public as a scientific and instructive volume. I was inclined to envy them their ability and to admire the ineffable good-nature of Society that pays the expenses for these triumphs of Humbug.

[20]



At our approach the Sakais fled terrified from the hut.

p. 25.

"Ah!" I went on grumbling to myself, and it seemed to relieve me to thus apostrophize them in their absence, "if you were only here now, you gentlemen of sportive tastes and you, illustrious explorers of wonderful lands and mysterious islands, how I should like to see your virtue put to the test: here in the forest from whose black depths a poisoned dart may at any moment fly towards you as a Messenger of Death or from whence a huge wild beast may, unexpectedly, rush furiously forth: here where one's steps may be suddenly arrested by the up-rising of a venomous snake. Who knows what an assistance to your fervid fantasy it would be to hear in the freedom of Nature's own menagerie the sinister hissing of the serpent, the bellowing of the elephant, the lowing of the *sladan*, the roar of the tiger, the grunt of the wild-boar, the squeal of the monkey, and the peevish notes of the cockatoo all blended into a formidable concert, the accompaniment being the rustling of reeds and climbing plants, moved more by animal life than by the air; the fluttering of leaves; the humming and buzzing of myriads of insects: the murmuring of the brooks: voices and sounds that announce to the traveller a continual increase of danger".

[21]

But I must apologize to my readers for this digression. The jungle and its concerts often make one commit the sin of philosophy, and, in thus sinning, I had involuntarily forgotten you.

#### Footnotes:

[2] An Italian celebrated for his psychological studies.—Translator's note.



[22]

### CHAPTER III.

**A fearful nocturnal concert—Fire! Fire!—A clearing in the forest—A general flight—Masters of the camp!—Mortal weariness—A morning greeting without any compliments—A first meeting—In the village—ALÀ against the Orang-putei.**

Not having found even a trace of human habitation either on the second day of our march we were once more compelled to prepare a shelter for the night as best we could. We made two little alcoves of boughs and leaves, and having satisfied the cravings of appetite we lighted a fire on each side of our miniature encampment, piled up enough wood at hand to keep them burning, and settled ourselves down to sleep, or rather one of us had to sleep whilst the other watched, as we had agreed to take turns. In our ignorance we had calculated upon finding ourselves surrounded by a solemn nocturnal stillness in these remote regions; such calm quietness as one

enjoys during the night on the Alpine and Appennine woods. We were soon made aware of our mistake, however, for the monkeys, frightened at the glare of the fires, raised a hubbub of protests, their shrill cries and chattering voices reaching to the most acute notes. Leaping up to the very highest branches of the trees they began to shower down upon us broken twigs, leaves, nuts and other fruits. They seemed to be holding a meeting overhead at which each one—and they were a multitude—tried to gabble out a speech and to make himself heard above all the others.

[23]

Deeper and more ominous notes were not long wanting to complete the infernal chorus. From the dense, dark forest came the blood-curdling roars of tigers, panthers, and bears mingled with the loud bellowing and heavy stampede of elephants; we could distinctly here the cracking of boughs hurled to the ground in their furious course, and the crashing of bamboo, which with them is a favourite food. One might have said that an immense legion of demons had invaded the forest, because in its intense, impenetrable obscurity, only dimly lighted for a yard or two by the blaze of our fires, everything seemed to turn into life. Every creature, every reed, every leaf had a voice of its own; a howl, a rustle, a sigh that filled the night air with diabolical sounds. It was a fearful pandemonium; a mighty strife twixt victim and victor; an insatiable lust for blood; a ferocious manifestation of ferocious love.

"Fire! Fire! let us put on fuel!" and we threw log after log upon the burning piles whilst thousands of sparks flew upwards and the bright flames cast a red glow around.

But the great voice of the forest did not cease; it still spoke on in the roars and the bellows of the strong and in the yells and wails of the weak. It rose up against us, as though pronouncing a malediction upon the intruders, upon the profaners of those mysteries that, in the inmost recesses of the jungle, great Mother Nature celebrates during the night.

For hours we remained there, in a state it is useless for me even to attempt to describe, and then as day-break approached the fearful clamour began gradually to die away. Evidently at the first streak of dawn the wild beasts had returned to their dens. The monkeys were the last to finish as they had been the first to begin, but what was their chattering and gibbering compared to that terrible chorus which, with freezing veins and paralyzed brains, we had been obliged to listen to all night?

[24]

It has never happened to me to greet a friend with such fervour as I did the sun that morning. At its appearance a new concert commenced, but now it was with the pleasant harmony of the buzzing and humming of insects, blended with the gay singing of birds.

It reanimated us and we began to stretch our poor limbs which, besides being stiffened and benumbed by the horrors of the past night, and the thick dew that had fallen upon us, had also been an unconscious prey to leech and mosquito.

Comparisons are odious. Granted. But between a tiger and a leech, a panther and a mosquito, notwithstanding their affinity in the liking of human blood, believe me there is a great difference, and it was perhaps for this reason that we had not previously noticed the onslaught made by these lesser carnivora upon our appalled flesh.

A few hurried mouthfuls and we were on the tramp again. Our sleepless night, and the strong emotions that had kept us awake, made us feel tired and listless, but the bare idea of being exposed to the same torment and fear another time, gave us courage and strength to press on as far as possible in search of some nocturnal refuge, more secure from the four-footed inhabitants of the land, before sunset should have enticed them from their lairs.

Weary, and mechanically, we trudged along, anxiously peering in front of us for some opening in the thick foliage and closely packed trees, or of some other sign of human life.

[25]

It must have been about three o'clock in the afternoon—for my watch had stopped—and it had begun to drizzle, when we saw, at not a great distance from us, the everlasting twilight of the wild forest dispersed by the full light of day.

Our spirits revived at the sight, for in all probability it meant a vast clearing for the erection of huts and, in consequence, the presence of fellow beings, however savage they might be.

We advanced with alacrity and soon came out in a large open space closed in by the felled trunks of enormous trees and planted with Indian corn, yams and sweet potatoes.

In the middle stood two cabins made of the strong branches and gigantic leaves of the plants and trees which had been cut down. We were just able to catch a glimpse of some men lying about on the ground, whilst some women were busily cooking monkey's, serpents, and colossal rats, and several younger men were preparing poisoned arrows.

We took in the whole scene in a rapid glance for in an instant the dogs began to bark and their masters were thrown into a state of alarm. We stopped, and they saw us, saw *me*—a white man—and full of fright they sprang to their feet. Like lightning they gathered up their provisions, the women slung the children on to their shoulders and they all disappeared, over the stout fence they had erected round their dwelling place, with the agility and the speed of a troop of monkeys.

I really think that if the head of the Medusa, instead of turning into stone those who looked at it, had given them wings to escape they could not have flown away faster than did those poor savages at the sight of me.

[26]

I had only time to see that they were quite naked and that their skin was of a light brownish tint, but this for the moment satisfied me as I knew that at last I had come into contact with the May Darats in search of whom I had ventured there.

But I was so thoroughly exhausted in every way that I had even lost the power of thinking about them or anything else.

I, and my faithful follower, entered the abandoned huts where we found some hot potatoes (which were quickly devoured) and a curious stringed instrument that had been left behind in the hasty flight.

Having taken the usual precautions for the night, too tired out to care for the dangers that might be menacing us, dangers that might prove worse than those we had experienced the previous night (for we knew what we had to expect from quadruped enemies, but were ignorant of how our biped foes would treat our presence in their domain) unmindful and heedless of everything, dizzy with the need of rest, I threw myself down on the rude floor and fell heavily asleep.

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Towards two o'clock in the morning (as far as we could judge) my Sam-Sam, who had been keeping watch, awoke me. It was his turn to sleep. Nothing had happened, as yet, to excite suspicion or inquietude and this made me hope that we should not receive any serious hostility from the Aborigines.

By straining my gaze into the darkness of the forest I discerned that some fires were lighted not very far off, a sure sign that the Sakais were still near us. Was this a good or a bad omen? Day would without doubt bring the answer. And day soon came, gladly welcomed by all Creation save by those people and beasts whose deeds are better suited to obscurity.

[27]

I was preparing a nice strong cup of tea to refresh my stomach and cheer up my spirits (for recent events had greatly depressed them) when something lightly whistled above my ear and glided over my head.

I gave a violent start and taking off my hat discovered that it had two little holes in it, one on each side. At a few steps from me lay an arrow, which had just fallen there, after having perforated my head-covering and softly touched my thin locks. It was a hair breadth escape, in a true sense of the saying, for the sharp missile shot at me from the Sakais infallible blow-pipe had first been carefully poisoned.

That unexpected and not very friendly "good morning" called me back to the bitter reality of my position, and warned me not to delay coming to an understanding with them at once.

Prudence forbade my presenting myself in their midst because the colour of my skin, although well sunburnt, would have drawn upon me certain death. I was convinced that in their primitive superstition they would have believed me an evil spirit and as such would have speedily despatched me to another world. The only thing to be done was to send hither my intelligent Sam-Sam who willingly allowed himself to be loaded with tobacco, coloured beads, *sirih* and matches and then sallied forth to make a truce.

He was accorded an audience without any difficulty which fact was perhaps due to the similitude of his race with theirs but more probably to the gifts he carried with him.

My ambassador was interrogated with eagerness and curiosity about the *orang putei* (white man), and he told them that I had come laden with gifts and full of good-will towards them. But the Sakais would not hear of my approaching their new encampment and sent word that they would soon favour me with a visit.

[28]

And they kept their promise without losing any time in making a toilet or getting into a dress suit. They were in three, two stalwart youths and a man of between forty and fifty, all armed with their *sumpitans* (blow-pipes).

By means of the Malay language and the universal one of gestures, I explained to them that I did not mean them any harm, that on the contrary it was my desire to help them in whatever way I could and that I should like to live amongst them if they would let me, as I wanted to initiate some plantations in their part.

They replied by first trying to dissuade me from taking up my abode with them, and then suggested that it would be better for me to go to a small village at a short distance off, whither they offered to accompany me.

I thanked them and accepted the offer, telling them, as a recompense, where we had left our sack of provisions. I afterwards heard that they had succeeded in finding it.

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I felt so contented at having made the first step—which is always the most difficult—that notwithstanding the thoroughly exhausted state in which I knew myself to be, I re-commenced my journey with a light heart, escorted by the three Sakais and my Sam-Sam. But arrived at a certain point it was impossible for me to proceed.

Besides the stiffness of my joints, my flesh was tingling and bleeding with the bites and stings of many insects. In order to prove my sufferings to my companions I showed my livid limbs to them and I saw an expression of pity pass over their countenances. It seemed to me a good augury for one who was joining their tribe.

[29]

We stopped, and the Sakais quickly built up the huts, lighted the fires and afterwards ate some rice with us. We then lay down to repose for the night, but if Sleep closed our eyes I think Mistrust opened them and none of us enjoyed much slumber in the end.

Early the next morning we continued our course and reached the group of cabins dignified by the name of village. Here the same thing took place as on the previous day. In spite of my being in the company of three of their own people, which I thought would have reassured them, at my appearance the huts were rapidly deserted amidst cries of terror.

My three guides, however, managed to get into communication with their brethren and after a while led them to me without their making any resistance.

I got their consent to let me settle down near them on the condition that I did not seek to enter their huts. The reason of this interdiction I learnt later on. It had been a prescription of the Alà, a sort of sorcerer, who believed, or made believe that my presence would have an evil effect upon a sick mother and her new-born babe.

The Sakais, stimulated by my presents, built me a solid and pretty comfortable cabin near a rivulet and not far from them, and I installed myself there forthwith.

The first day of our acquaintance it happened that I accidentally called them Sakais. They changed face and some of them protested angrily:

"You are not good, because you insult us and call us bad names!".

It was a dangerous slip of the tongue and I hastened to make my peace by explaining that I had heard the term used by the other people but that I knew they were really May Darats whose kindness and gentleness had often been abused by their neighbours, and in the future I meant to save them from being cheated and deceived by their former aggressors.

[30]

This declaration calmed their resentment and I was able to begin a quiet, tranquil life amongst those simple, sincere beings, a life so calm and undisturbed that I have never had cause, then or now, to regret the civilized society from which I had voluntarily withdrawn myself, persuaded that if my character and habits incapacitated me for the dubious and not always straightforward transactions of the commercial world, the same moral qualities which impeded me from becoming a business man might find good ground for bringing forth fruit in the pure hearts and minds of a primitive people, who knew neither fraud, nor hypocrisy.



[31]

## CHAPTER IV.

**New friends—Gold—An English official—The purchase of my future treasure—Administrative simplicity—England teaches!—The "sla pui"—Bitter disappointment—The Sam-Sam—The poison of the Savage and the venom of the Civilized.**

My strength and health, which had suffered in consequence of those few days' strain of muscle and nerve, soon returned to their normal state in that peaceful retreat upon the grassy banks of the stream that is an affluent of the Bidor.

My friendship with the Sakais increased every day because little by little their suspicions concerning me were allayed and the curiosity with which they watched my every act was no longer mixed with fear. They did not attempt to run away when I bent my steps towards their rough habitations in spite of the Alà's veto to my passage through their village and it was not a rare thing for my gifts of tobacco and *sirih* to be exchanged with pheasants and other game and sometimes even with a chicken. I found it easy to talk with the men and prized these conversations as a means of studying their characters and of learning their language, which is composed of short, strongly accented words. It was very seldom that I could find any sort of derivation from the Malay tongue in these terse syllables.

[32]

At the same time that I sought to get upon a familiar footing with my new friends I did not forget one of the principal motives that had induced me to wander so far from the haunts of ordinary men, so one day I cracked a cocoanut in half and, cleaning it well out, I dipped the shell into the bed of the stream and drew it out again full of water and sand.

I examined the contents with great care and found a few grains of gold in the alluvion! This was joy indeed, and mentally I bade goodbye to the life of a planter (although I had not yet begun it) and there on the spot decided to dedicate my time and energy to the gathering of gold which would be far the quickest way of making a fortune.

All at once, however, an unpleasant thought crossed my mind and dimmed my bright hopes.

In my chats with the Sakais they had told me that there was another *orang putei* at Tapah. I endeavoured to discover who this person was, and what he was doing, in the little Malay town, but I was unable to obtain any information about him.

Now the idea suggested itself that this white man could be no other than a British Government Officer to whom, from a feeling of delicacy, respect of the law, and as a means of avoiding future trouble, I was bound to explain what I wished to do before setting myself to work, as his permission would be necessary for the execution of my desire.

My unfortunate experience of other colonial authorities inspired me with very little confidence in that of the English and nothing seemed to me more likely than to find myself expelled from the Protected States instead of having my petition granted. [33]

But on the other hand it would be very rash to commence work in earnest without legal authorization, so one day, accompanied by some Sakais to the confines of the forest, I betook myself to Tapah.

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I could not help wondering to myself what sort of a gruff, bureaucratic functionary I should find to deny me my fortune. Who knew how my Italian enterprise would be judged on territory protected by H. B. M.?

But calling up my courage I was introduced into the presence of a young and pleasant-mannered gentleman who received me with much politeness.

He had already been informed that a white man was to be found amongst the Sakais and he had been greatly surprised, not understanding what attractions anyone could find in the midst of a people so ignorant and savage. He congratulated himself upon the opportunity of meeting and knowing me, was pleased to hear that I was an Italian and wound up with the stereotyped demand:

"What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?".

Encouraged by his kindness, but not without a little secret misgiving, I told him frankly what I proposed doing and related all particulars.

Mr. Wise (for this was his name) listened to everything attentively, now and then expressing a word of sympathy or approval and finally, for the sum of a few dollars, made me the owner of the tract of land upon which I had fixed my mind.

Thus it was that in the short space of an hour, without having to surmount any obstacles, and at an almost ridiculous price I became the legitimate possessor of a piece of ground that perhaps concealed a treasure in its bosom. [34]

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As I had never before been at Tapah I took advantage of the time spared in my business affairs to visit it a little and to form an opinion upon the expedients used in a half-desert Eastern country, scorched by the sun, populated by different tribes, infested by poisonous insects and terrible microbes, to say nothing of a host of wild beasts!

Tapah is a modern little town, all villas and gardens. It rises white and coquettishly at the foot of green hills and its smiling panorama, although without the magnificent background of the sea, recalled to my sight the sweet vision of my native Varazze, one of the most beautiful gems that adorn the Riviera Ponente.

It is the chief-town of a district counting 30,000 inhabitants amongst which about a thousand of diverse races and nationalities. It has two large streets lined with shops where Malays, Indians, and Chinese offer a varied and heterogeneous stock of goods for sale.

It is divided in the middle by the big river Batang Padang which afterwards discharges itself into the Bidor, that too.

As capital of the district it possesses a Post Office, a very large room where two Indian clerks perform their duties under the direction of an English Postmaster who has also to overlook the branch offices of the circuit.

My attention was attracted by an unpretending edifice in front of which some Malay and Indian soldiers were seated. I was asking them what building it was when an Englishman came out and courteously told me that it was the Head Police Station of which he was the inspector.

During a subsequent conversation I learnt that the Police Service was everything that could be [35]

desired as also that of all the other Public Offices and that Indigenes and Indians were everywhere employed under the direction of English chiefs. The number of clerks, as in other British colonies, was according to strict necessity; no extra posts were ever created for political or personal interest but when assistance was required there was never any difficulty in selecting local aspirant, as long as they had a sufficient knowledge of the official language.

So I found that Tapah, the chief-town of the district, is under the direction of an Englishman, who is called the District Officer, and who performs all administrative and magisterial functions.

Not much time lost here in the labyrinths of Bureaucracy! And yet I heard that both the District Officer and the Police Inspector who are under the control of the Authority residing in Taiping, capital of Perak but who in reality enjoy almost complete liberty of action, find the time not only to discharge all the various duties of their office but also to take recreation in a little football and cricket. It is said that sometimes the menservants too are called in to take part in these national sports and for an hour freely compete with their masters in the art of kicking and batting, returning serious and respectful to their proper places at the end of the game.

Whilst I was passing the time pleasantly, talking with one and the other I saw a little party approaching that was the object of great respect from the bystanders.

It was Mr. Wise the District Officer who had received me so politely a few hours before.

He was on his return from a survey made in order to define the boundary of some land belonging to two Malays. Without donning any sort of uniform or insignia, this British delegate had known how to preserve all the solemnity and dignity of form due to the occasion, a virtue peculiar to the English who are always and everywhere the most rigorous observers of social and official etiquette.

[36]

Mr. Wise kindly invited me to follow him the Club where he kept me in friendly conversation, answering all the questions I could not refrain from asking him in my desire to become better acquainted with the colony and its method of government.

Now Mr. Wise is no more, but in him his country lost a model functionary for intelligence, solicitude and uprightness.

He died at the very moment his future seemed to smile its brightest; when his fondest hopes were about to be crowned by matrimony with the young lady of his choice.

Let me, through these pages, render to his memory the modest, affectionate homage of admiration and deferential friendship.

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That day, having made my peace with the authorities, I returned with a clear conscience to the quiet nook I had found in the vast forest; to that domestic corner reserved for me in Dame Nature's grand and wondrous saloon: to that rude home so far removed from the generality of mankind, but so close to the kings and princes of the animal kingdom, commonly called—wild beasts.



**A young Sakai with his inseparable blowpipe.**

*p. 40.*

Keeping tight hold of the receipt which had suddenly made me the owner of a possible gold mine, I alternately made castles in the air and meditated upon the simplicity of English administration that in a few short instants had conceded to me an extensive zone of land with which to do what I liked, without any need of setting in motion the intricate machinery of the bureaucracy; without any stamped legal forms, surveys and expensive reports; the presentation of birth certificate and that of British citizenship; without digging into the past and the future, into the state and position of one's family, etc. etc.

[37]

And because everything that happens to one abroad recalls one's fatherland (a natural habit that neither distance nor time can change) I thought of my native country and of the complicated organization of its many bureaucratic departments that only too often clogs the boldest Italian enterprise and raises an insurmountable barrier before creative and inventive genius compelling it to seek elsewhere its fortune.

From my heart I longed that Italy might before long be liberated from these toils which hinder the free expansion of its young and vigorous forces.

One thing had particularly struck me during my intercourse with Mr. Wise. The fact of my being an Italian was no obstacle to my request being favourably received. This surprised me, for under other governments I had seen that foreigners were considered anything but necessary to the colony and after having opposed, more or less openly, the intruder's initiative, the Authority seized the slightest pretext, that offered itself under a decent aspect, to send the new-comer back over the frontier for fear that their digestion might suffer from his presence.

England on the contrary does not search into, nor care for, the origin of those who bring energy or any other useful quality to her colonies. In her dominions she only aims at reaching the highest point of prosperity, she desires only the accumulation of riches, and whoever promises well to further her interests, becomes an appreciated collaborator, be he Italian, German, Portuguese or Turk.

England never repels talent or aptitude from an absurd prejudice of Chauvinism. Considering the length and breadth of her possessions she may well say that the world is her tributary, no wonder then that she avails herself of the hands and brains of every one who knows how to use them well, instead of confining herself exclusively to the merits of those born on British soil.

[38]

In this broad way of seeing and treating things—which proves the tranquil and perfect consciousness the English nation has of its own strength—I believe lies the secret of its colonial success.

The well-known satire according to which it is impossible to find in the world a rock or strip of land, however barren or sterile, without an owner, for the simple reason that an Englishman is always prompt to unfold and hoist the Union Jack there, is in reality the highest and most just

homage that can be paid to the spirit of enterprise that characterizes this people. Where others only see sand and reefs, not worth the trouble of cultivation, the Englishman discovers some productive germ that with his indefatigable energy brings forth a thousand fold. Nor is Colonial work, industrial activity and commercial thrift disturbed by bureaucratic sophistry or immoderate fiscal pretensions, that so frequently suffocate the most promising and audacious undertakings in other places.

Colonial success very often depends upon the ability of its administrative body in directing all available force to this one end: the increase of its wealth. Bureaucracy is a cancer which paralyzes all life and motion that it finds within reach of its tentacles.

Old England has understood this for a long time, ever since, from the island once fruitless and barren, she spread her wings and flew to the conquest of the World's markets.

When will certain other nations comprehend that antiquity and past glory, instead of offering the precious fruit of experience, has brought upon them a palsied decrepitude?

[39]

When wilt thou understand this, my Italy, risen as thou art to the third maturity of thy civilization and glory?

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I set myself at once, with a good will, to the extraction of gold, and engaged the services of a few Malays and Chinese coolies, who were expert enough, to assist me in my work.

The method we followed was a very primitive one. We filled some round wooden bowls with the water and sand, then by gently stirring the mass, particles of tin and gold were separated from the sand and went to the bottom. This deposit carefully gathered up was passed into other bowls full of water, into which we threw a well-pounded leaf of the *sla più*.

The juice of these leaves possesses a chemical property which I cannot explain but it draws up to the surface the sand still sticking to the metals, leaving them quite pure.

But the yellow tempter was not at all profuse in his favours and the golden metal came in very small quantities. I did not lose courage, however, and persevered for a long time without any change of luck. I even tried to trace out the auriferous bed from whence the waters of the stream transported the metals. I made innumerable attempts to find it, but in vain, and the day came when I was constrained to confess to myself that alluvial mining for me was a failure.

After all my hopes and dreams it was a melancholy confession to make but it was evident that I must turn in another direction if I wished for fortune, so I settled my account with the workmen and dismissed them.

At their departure my Sam-Sam who had become in the meantime a robust young man, begged me to let him return to his own part, saying that there was a young Sakai willing to take his place in my service. Although very sorry to lose the faithful companion of that never to be forgotten journey through the forest, I could not refuse his request and let him do as he wished.

[40]

It was with real pleasure that I fell in with him again some years after when I was travelling through the interior of Kedah and he too evinced great joy at the meeting.

He told me that what he had earned from me had been the means of making his fortune, for with it he had bought a piece of ground and some oxen, and now kept himself, his wife and two children, by agricultural work.

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As I have said, the gold was very scarce. After the coolies had left I tried to persuade the Sakais to take their post, which would have saved expense in gathering it, but every effort was useless for these people do not and will not understand what works means, or the pleasure it gives, beyond that of preparing poisons.

Poison is the principal topic of conversation with them and their only boast is the discovery of new or more deadly mixtures. The children listen to these discourses with lively interest and pay anxious attention to the experiments made by their elders in this primitive kind of chemistry, and in this way the passion is propagated from father to son and so it will continue until the breath of civilization reaches that far-off spot and those good, simple men learn that, in the struggle for life, civilized persons no longer use poisons that kill the body, but those which are much more terrible and without an antidote, such as envy, calumny, hatred and luxury, which destroy the mind and soul.

[41]

These are the venomous elements that my forest friends do not yet know, those poor savages who extract their poisons from the *ipok*<sup>[3]</sup> and other, trees to defend themselves against wild beasts and to procure them food in their wild abode.

[3] The *ipok*, known in science by the Javenese name of *upas*, is a tree that affords a very baneful poison as explained in the chapter upon poisons.



[42]

## CHAPTER V.

**Great Mother Earth—A dangerous meeting—A living statue—Here or there?—An unrelished supper—A dreaded immigration—A glance into the past—A rape which was not a rape—A noble task—Towards the mountain—Tiger-shooting—The Sakais in town—Alloyed sweets—Musical tastes—Hurrah for the free forest!**

My gold mania was transient. My spirit was very soon liberated from its thrall and I turned with alacrity to the study of a more practical and satisfactory enterprise.

In that brief period of uncertainty I had somehow felt convinced that fortune (if indeed fortune was reserved for me) would have to come to me through the ground. But in what way?

I often accompanied the Sakais in their visits into the thick of the forest where they were in the habit of going in search of poisons, and sometimes I would even go by myself. During these excursions I tortured my brain with the everlasting question of how to initiate a new line of work and gain.

[43]

One day the forest itself answered my puzzling query!

There were extensive woods of rattan, and other magnificent reeds which are called in England Indian and Malacca cane; there was resin oozing copiously from the trunks of the trees. What more could be desired?

I began gently to make my Sakais comprehend how much I should like to gather these products and transport them to where I might exchange them for other articles that we were without. It was of no use to speak to them of money because they had not the smallest idea of what it meant.

At first they responded roughly that they did not care anything at all about the matter, for, as I before said, the Sakais from habit and an innate spirit of independence will never hear of submitting themselves to any regular, ordinate labour. Knowing, however, with whom I had to deal, and divining what a great amount of patience would be necessary to bring them round to my way of thinking, I began to distribute gifts, especially tobacco, freely and frequently amongst them, only mentioning my wish occasionally, as if by chance. And my prodigality had its reward.

One day I saw them returning from the forest abundantly laden with the products I wanted.

It was a good beginning and was followed up by a constant supply. I stored up the bamboo and gum and when I had accumulated enough I went to the coast to sell my merchandise coming back well provided with tobacco, iron, coloured beads, matches, salt, rice padi and maize. These things I dispensed amongst my friends and they, seeing the good result of their fatigue in the form of articles which excited their cupidity, ended by keeping me plentifully furnished with the goods in question.

The new branch of commerce, which I had started, required a good deal of energy, but I let no grass grow under my feet and went frequently to Tapah in order to open up a sale for my products.

[44]

It was on my return from one of these journeys that something happened to me worth relating.

Only a few hours of daylight remained when I set out from Tapah for my forest habitation. I was carrying with me six nice loaves and a piece of venison that I had bought in town and I thought with keen appreciation of the savoury supper I should have that night.

I hurried along as fast as possible in order to traverse the 2 miles of highroad and the other of woodland track, which lay before me, ere night fell. In spite of the 30 miles already done that day my legs continued to serve me well and I walked rapidly on with a bent head, full of thought.

At a sudden turning of the path I raised my eyes to scrutinize the way. About 50 yards in front of me I saw a dark and confused mass slowly moving. Thinking to meet with a party of coolies from a neighbouring mine, who were perhaps going for provisions, I advanced for another 40 paces, then stopped short and was fixed to the spot. The formless mass had taken the shape of nothing

less than an enormous tiger!

There was no fear that step or gesture of mine would attract its attention for at the sight I had become petrified, like Lot's wife! In that atom of time, which seemed to me a century, I could not even think, but across the deadened faculty of my mind flashed a warning I had recently received from the Sakais: never make a movement in the presence of a tiger, and never look it straight in the face.



**Towards the mountains.**

*p. 52.*

The first part of this injunction was instinctively obeyed for I remained there rooted to the ground, utterly unable to stir even if such an imprudent idea had suggested itself. My senses were so paralyzed by the unexpected encounter that I did not entirely realize my position and had only a vague perception that when those fierce eyes once rested upon me the end of the world would have come, as far as I was concerned.

[45]

Sideways I saw that the huge beast, which had been sniffing the ground, to find out what animal had lately passed by, now raised its head and looked slowly around with an indolent but suspicious air.

After a painful vibration, some of my muscles became rigid. The monster cautiously advanced; it was certainly preparing to pounce upon me! I could hardly resist the impulse of looking towards it. All my nerves were quivering with anguish as if in a supreme protest against the imminent slaughter. Already I felt the terrible creature's hot breath as it opened wide its greedy jaws; already my trembling flesh felt the fatal touch of its death-dealing claws—one instant—two....!

With a quick, irrepressible motion my eyes turned in its direction.

The tiger was leisurely crossing the path and disappeared into the forest without taking even the least notice of me! Why, it was almost a personal offence!

But although the blood began to flow once more through heart and brain, and Life—which had been momentarily suspended—again ran through all my being, filling the veins and relaxing muscles and nerves, I did not then think of the slight offered me by the animal's indifference, for with renewal of life had come an atrocious spasm of horror and of fear.

In those few seconds a drama, full of strange sensations, awful impressions, and maddening effect had been enacted within me!

After the first moment of relief, and whilst I was still stretching and rubbing my limbs, a serious problem presented itself for solution.

[46]

On entering the forest the tiger had gone the very way I had to go myself. What had I better do? It was impossible for me to retrace my steps, for my previous tiredness had increased to a singular degree after my fright. It was equally impossible for me to think of stopping where I was. And to penetrate into the forest following in the creature's wake, would it not be like going to seek the ghastly end from which I had just so narrowly escaped, thanks perhaps to the tiger's defective sense of smell?

And yet, after having carefully pondered which course to take I was obliged to make my decision in favour of the one that seemed the most insensate of the three.

My cabin was not very far off. I should only have to quicken my pace, by making a supreme effort, in order to arrive before it got dark.

And the tiger? But might I not have met a dozen of them on my road from Tapah? And besides,

who could say that the one I had seen was really gone towards my home? It would indeed have proved a curious predilection, especially after the affront just received!

So armed with these subtle reasonings, with which I sought to persuade myself, I left the tragical spot where, according to the brief agony of my feelings and the likelihood of procedure, I had been torn to pieces and eaten by a wild beast, and I continued my homeward journey.

How the faintest sound startled me! A falling leaf; a blade of grass moved by an insect; a snake or a lizard gliding out of my path; the squeal of a monkey; the fluttering of a bird's wings as it flew up to its perch, all subjected me to spasmodic thrills.

I always had in my sight that dreadful beast with gaping mouth, and cruelly glittering eyes. The horrible vision gave new vigour to my body, extraordinary suppleness to my legs and—wings to my feet.

[47]

Kind reader, who knows how many times in your sitting-room or perhaps in somebody else's even dearer to you—*honi soit qui mal y pense!*—you have found yourself in front of a tiger, leopard or panther whose brindled and glossy skin you have admired; who knows how many times you have absently played with its head, still ferocious-looking, in spite of its glass eyes and red cloth tongue; who knows how often you have toyed with its fangs and claws whilst you were persuing a pleasant thought or inebriating your spirit with the soft tones of a certain voice!

Well, have you ever tried to imagine what emotions you would experience if quite unexpectedly those glassy eyes should become animated; if that ugly mouth should open wider; if those white fangs should gleam with life; if those splendid claws should be stretched out in the act of lacerating you: if that magnificent skin should once more be incorporated and rise up to face you?

I confess the truth when I say, that the dainty supper I had brought with me from Tapah, lost its flavour for me that evening.

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A report of my flourishing trade and the news that gold was to be found at the bottom of the little river which flowed past my humble dwelling soon spread outside the Sakai region. The consequence was quite an invasion of our tranquil village.

This immigration greatly alarmed the poor Indigenes who cannot easily forget how they were once treated by those not of their own race.

They still remembered with terror how the strangers had plundered their villages, carrying off everything they could lay their hands upon, even their young men and women to serve as slaves and concubines.

[48]

The majority of these poor victims, torn from the unlimited freedom of the jungle, unused to any sort of work that was not voluntary, and faithful to their traditions and superstitions did not long survive their separation from kin and tribe. The others, who managed to adapt themselves to their new conditions, as a matter of course, had their primitive simplicity corrupted, and little by little learnt the vices and habits of their masters. For this they were considered by their brethren as inferior beings and were looked upon with grave suspicion, when, taking advantage of the first occasion that offered itself, they fled back to the forest. Although by their return to their own people they foreswore their past moral and material bondage they could not help bringing with them some of the depravity they had seen, or endured, in their exile which clashed with the customs and sensibilities of the pure type of May Darats, remarkable for their sincerity and integrity.

In this way, by degrees, the original Sakai race diminished whilst new clans sprang up around them, formed of those who had been, and continued to be, in contact with comparatively civilized people, who knew their languages and their craftiness, notwithstanding which they frequently became their dupes under the show of good-feeling and cordiality.

The British Protectorate came as a blessing to the Sakais because it officially abolished slavery and shortened their neighbours' talons, that had grown a little too long.

But in spite of the vigilance exercised by their white protectors the others still found the means of depredating and imposing upon these good but ignorant creatures. Instead of devastating their rude homes and arbitrarily taking possession of everyone and everything they pleased, they soon established another system for achieving their end.

[49]

They supplied them with goods of the very worst quality, charging them at the highest prices, and as these consisted principally of tobacco, salt, iron, *sirih* and pieces of calico they lasted no time, and had to be frequently replaced. As a matter of course this fraudulent manner of trading made the poor Sakais' debts amount to fabulous proportions and then their swindling creditor dictated the conditions he best liked: the man had to follow and serve him or if there was some woman in the family he preferred, he would carry her off either to keep for himself, or privately sell to another.

To better succeed in their roguery they depicted the white man as an incarnate devil, never tired of doing evil, who had come there for nothing else but to ravage their land and disperse its

inhabitants. The *orang putei* was described to the credulous Sakais as the most terrible and cruel enemy that one could possibly imagine.

Thus the real persecutors of this primitive people were regarded by them as true friends, whilst the relation of imaginary and fantastic perils distracted their minds from the more practical dangers of this false friendship.

By instilling in them fear of the white man there was less chance that the wretched individuals, whose good faith and domestic affections had been abused and outraged, would appeal to a British magistrate for justice, believing him to be a worse enemy than the actual one, and if sometimes a complaint was brought before this functionary through a third party, a most distressing scene ensued.

The victim, under the influence of his injurer's glance and presence, would acknowledge whatever misdeed, debt, and even crime was attributed to him, responding to the demand if what his accuser said was true, with the invariable and laconic words: "What he says is true".

[50]

I may here cite a case in which I took an active part when I was the Superintendent of Sakais under the British Government.

One day a family of these Sakais who have dealings with other races, rushed wildly into my hut, crying desperately. The parents, sobbing, told me that a Chinese, to whom they owed a great deal, had seized and led away their daughter.

I set myself to find the blackguard and after some difficulty succeeded. I rescued the girl and restored her to her relations and then sent in a report of the incident to the Magistrate. A case for abduction was made out, and the English law does not jest on such matters. The Chinese declared that as his debtors could not pay him his due he had agreed, if the girl consented, to take her as his wife or servant, and so cancel their debt towards him.

Whilst he spoke he never took his eyes off his accusers. The father and mother of the young woman were interrogated and although they were in my presence they replied, after a momentary hesitation:

"What he says is true".

The girl was then asked if she had followed the Chinese of her own free will or if violence had been used in taking possession of her and she too repeated like an automaton:

"What he says is true".

Nothing availed to get other words than these out of the poor wretches' mouths, nor the magistrate's clever cross-questioning, nor my entreaties to tell the whole truth. I re-called to their memory the pitiful state they had been in when they ran into my house, crying and invoking justice. It was all in vain; but fortunately for them the legal officer himself was convinced that the Chinese—who stood by with a sarcastic smile upon his lips—was guilty, and closed the process by condemning him to six months' imprisonment.

[51]



A forest shooting-box.

p. 54.

I made up my mind to go to the bottom of the affair if only to discover why the Sakais, by nature so far removed from falsehood, had denied the truth.

My investigations proved that the Chinese had threatened to revenge himself by utterly destroying the whole family if they made any complaint about his way of proceeding, and had

also terrified them by stories of the inhuman tortures to which they would be subjected by the British magistrate if they spoke against him.

The confession came too late because, if they had spoken in time the scoundrel would have had a much heavier sentence.

From this simple episode one can understand what an amount of energy, boldness, and resolution the English Authorities need in order to liberate the poor Sakais from the moral tyranny that still oppresses them. But the British Government is quite equal to the task it has undertaken, and there is no reason to doubt that before long it will have reduced to impotency these dregs of Society who creep in amongst the Sakai tribes, that are far removed from civilization and justice, there to work out their wicked schemes and practise their crafty wiles.

I have written the word "dregs" on purpose, as of course peoples in a collective sense cannot be held responsible for the bad-doings of a small number of their countrymen, and I wish it here to be distinctly understood that when I speak of the villainous acts and thievish propensities of these latter (who being too well-known and despised in their own place, to be able to succeed in their base tricks go elsewhere in search of victims) I do not mean to offend, or cast a slight upon Malays, Chinese, or Indians in general.

On the contrary, I have the highest esteem and respect for all three, especially those who faithfully follow the ways of Progress, and have certain virtues peculiarly theirs.

[52]

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After this rapid glance into the past it is not difficult to understand with what inquietude and uneasiness the Sakais saw their little settlement invaded by those they feared.

The new-comers, though, no longer found such a credulous and frightened people as they had been accustomed to on other occasions. Their calumnious stories of the white man (whose vigilant and not very lenient control troubled them a great deal) made little or no impression. They knew the white man by now, he had been among them for some time and they had even come to look upon him as a good protector.

So by mutual agreement we let our unwelcome visitors choose their sites and erect their huts, allowing them to enjoy the ecstasy of a vigorous abuse of the humble Sakai village and everything they could find within reach; then one fine morning, to their infinite wonder, we left them to their own devices and betook ourselves to the heights from whence flowed down the little river Bidor. This sudden change of locality did not cause me any serious sacrifice as the spot where we had been living was not very healthy owing to the frequently stagnant condition of the stream and, apart from hygienic motives, I was not altogether sorry at being thus compelled to seek new quarters as I was anxious to get well acquainted with the whole district, studying its products and its fitness for colonization, hoping in the end to succeed in inducing the Sakais to abandon their nomadic life for one of honest work, in the field of agriculture. Besides so teaching my good friends the value and the nobleness of labour I should have a useful occasion myself for employing latent energy.

[53]

We selected a beautiful place in the forest for our new encampment, and the men set to with a good will to cutting down the splendid timber and luxuriant climbers within the circle drawn out for the clearing. The thick interlaced boughs and bushy underwood were alive with reptiles, and our advent, with the noisy and destructive blows with which we broke the drowsy stillness of the air, brought an indescribable panic in that little centre of animal life.

Our huts were quickly raised and we were soon able to resume our habitual occupations.

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Some time passed without our camp being disturbed by any sort of incident when one day a tiger was seen to stealthily approach our clearing and snatching up a dog in its mouth, it fled back into the forest, the poor little beast yelping pitifully as it was being carried off.

The fact was a graver one than the mere loss of the dog would have made it seem because if the animal had been constrained to commit such an audacious act by the pangs of hunger, it would most probably return again, and who could say that there would always be a dog ready for its meal? It is however well known, that this dreadful feline creature does not devour its prey all at once but invariably leaves a part of the flesh sticking to the carcass, reserving the picking of its bones for the following night. Therefore there was a good chance of speedily liberating ourselves from our ferocious enemy, if the Sakais had not regarded the tiger with superstitious respect, for a reason which I will explain later on, a vague belief in metempsychosis that also has the effect of making them fond of their domestic animals.

I had the greatest difficulty in convincing my ignorant companions that the tiger must be killed if we wished to remain in peace and safety. It was a long time before I could overcome their reluctance and terror at my proposal.

[54]

At last they consented to let me rid them of their dangerous friend and built me a small house up one of the trees we considered to be in the best position. Armed with a first class *Martini* I took my place there with two or three Sakais.

What I had expected came to pass: at dead of night the beast returned. We could see it crawling cautiously through the high grass. I took careful aim and fired. The sharp report was instantly answered by a fearful roar, and the formidable creature, after giving a tremendous jump into the air, once more disappeared into the darkness of the forest.

The Sakais were awed and dismayed by the thunder and lightning of my gun.

We could still hear the furious laments of the wounded animal so we thought it advisable not to stir from our posts until morning.

At the first streak of day, as the groans of the evidently fallen tiger had not ceased, some of the men went to ascertain its refuge whilst I, with my loaded rifle, kept myself prompt to defend them in case of an unlikely attack.

The beast was soon found, stretched out on the turf. In spite of its fury it was unable to move as one or two of its legs had been shattered by my lead.

I finished it with another shot. Its skull now displays its beauties at the Ethnographic Museum at Rome.

Not much later on I was obliged to repeat the same sport.

Another tiger had stolen a dog, and we had found its half-eaten body. Knowing that the rest would be devoured within a few hours by the same beast of prey we made a little shelter of leaves and branches up a tree close by and remained there to await his majesty. [55]

At nightfall he punctually arrived and was received, according to his merit, by my rifle. My shot did not miss its mark and he rushed off howling with pain and rage. All night long the forest echoes were awakened by his horrible cries but towards morning we managed to trace him out and he too was finished by a second shot.

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In the year 1898 the ever increasing solicitude of the Sakays had enabled me to accumulate a considerable quantity of Malacca cane, rattan, resin and orchids which I had made up my mind to take to Penang for sale.

But I wanted to indulge myself in the pleasure of conducting with me some of my friends, the savages, that they might for the first time see a modern town.

It was no easy matter to prevail upon them to follow up my desire but finally I persuaded five of them to come with me as carriers.

Keeping always along the banks of the Bidor we descended as far as the Perak which we crossed in order to do a part of the journey in train and then board one of the steamers that ply between Telok Anson and the island of Penang.

During the voyage I noticed nothing particular in my companions beyond a great wonder, not unmixed with fear, when they felt themselves travelling upon water.

They observed everything with grand curiosity, and were immensely interested in the noisy movement of the ship's engines and its steam sirens.

Arrived at Penang, where I met with numerous friends, they soon became the centre of attraction.

Dainties of every kind were pressed upon them, and they were offered loads of the finest sweetmeats and white sugar. They accepted it all without enthusiasm but threw away the sweetmeats as soon as they had tasted them. When I asked them why they did so they replied that there was something not perfectly sweet in their flavour and they feared that whatever it was would do them harm. [56]

The gifts which they seemed to appreciate the most were cigars, tobacco and white sugar.

My five Sakais divided their presents with each other, putting away some for the dear ones at home, and I often noticed that in the midst of the bewilderment which those simple souls must have experienced at being surrounded by people and things so totally new to them, they never seemed to forget for a moment the beloved persons they had left behind in the jungle.

The Town-Band gave a concert and I accompanied my protégés to hear it. The bass instruments with their deep notes jarred upon the acoustic sense of the poor fellows and visibly inspired them with terror. They stopped their ears with their fingers and gave clear signs of the unpleasant feelings they were suffering from. But it was quite different when they heard the higher-toned instruments, especially those of wood, as the flute, the clarinet and the oboe. The pure, vibrating notes gave them intense enjoyment judging from the pleased expression of their countenances and their singularly brilliant eyes.

I also took them to a Chinese theatre, but the skill of the yellow artistes did not find its way to the Sakai heart and after having witnessed the spectacle for a few minutes they frankly declared that they were not at all amused.

Their artless natures and simple affections remained unpolluted by the seductions of civilization. Nothing was wanting to content them: they were caressed by the English, received heaps of gifts and lived without the slightest fatigue, yet they were not happy. I saw them change humour and become more melancholy hour by hour. The distractions with which I tried to cure their homesickness tended only to increase it.

[57]

The third day of our sojourn at Penang they implored me so earnestly to let them return to their families that, impressed by their sickly looks and disconsolate air, I promised at once to grant their desire.

This promise put them into better spirits and their good humour was quite restored when the steamer left the harbour at Penang and bore us towards the river Perak. No one would imagine the transformation that had taken place in my five fellow-travellers.

Four days of town-life had told upon them physically and morally. They were tired and disgusted with everything. Accustomed, on an average, to walk twenty miles a day, at Penang, after strolling through a few streets, they had been weary. Exposed to privations and hardships in the Jungle (often owing to their own improvidence) they were soon nauseated with the ease and abundance offered them in the city.

Where the climate, the charms of the place and the security from wild beasts were all calculated to captivate their fancy and render them contented, the poor Sakais drooped and pined for the vicissitudes of their wild life in the woods where comfort was unknown and food was sometimes scarce. Their thoughts, their very souls were always back in the remote forest, in that enchanting wilderness whose magic spell blinded them to its mortal perils and inconveniences. Up yonder there was perfect liberty of action; up yonder there were their families!

That sudden transition from a primitive existence to the progress of many centuries had been a severe shock to them. In the same way that an abrupt change from profound darkness to the most dazzling light, or from the temperature of the pole to that of the equator, inevitably produces grave disorders in the organism if it does not actually prove fatal, so the turning of a savage into a citizen at a day's notice incurs a dangerous risk.

[58]

The popular idea amongst us that anyone can quickly habituate himself to the luxuries and commodities of modern life finds a check when applied to primeval people like the Sakais. They may observe, enquire, and seek to understand—as far as their intelligence permits—everything they see around them; they remember well all they have heard and seen, and will mimic and describe it in their poor, strange language to their relations and friends; they carry with them presents which are a tangible record of their travels; they explain to the others how the houses were protected from wind, sun and rain; they will teach how to imitate the engine whistles, the roar of the steam flowing out of the open valves, and the hollow sound of that mysterious monster, the motor-car, but their enthusiasm and affections are firmly fixed upon their native forest, wondrous in its riches and allurements.

Though it may bring to its lovers death and suffering it is always the best beloved of the savage and only a very slow, patient and—to them—imperceptible introduction of civilizing elements in their midst will be able to weaken this attachment for savage surroundings and turn those treasures of affection and fidelity to a more useful and logical end.



[59]

## CHAPTER VI.

**The great Sorceress—The forest seen from above—A struggle for life—The crimes of plants—Everlasting twilight—Births and deaths—Concerts by forest vocalists—The "durian"—The "ple-lok"—Vastnesses unexplored by science—Treasures intact—Para Rubber—The Samaritans of the jungle—The forest and its history.**

To speak of the forest without having seen it, and after having seen it, to describe its marvellous beauties, are equally impossible tasks.

When Art shall have re-produced faithfully the magnificent harmonies of colour, voice and outline peculiar to the jungle, it may be said that there are no more secrets of beauty for it to penetrate, because nowhere else has Nature been so profuse in bestowing her multifarious tints or has manifested Life with such triumphal glory of fecundity; nowhere else can be found such a prodigious variety of forms and attitudes or such ineffable multiplicity of sounds.

Like a paean of love the forest breaks forth from the bosom of its great Mother and rises eagerly,

[60]

passionately towards the sun, its Benefactor.

Were it possible to soar on high and look down upon that wide verdant sea, its infinite gradations of green, enlivened here and there by the audacious brightness of a thousand wondrous flowers, we should have under our eyes the most complete, artistic and suggestive representation of life and its struggles.

The gigantic trees shoot up straight towards the sun, each one seeming to strive to outstrip the other; but a thick and even more ambitious undergrowth of plants twine round their trunks and enclose them in a tenacious embrace, then twisting, and creeping, amongst the spreading boughs, reach and cover the highest tops where they at last unfold their several leaves and flowers under the sun's most ardent gaze.

The tree, thus encircled and suffocated by the baneful hold of the climbers, lacks light and breath; the sap flows in scarce quantities throughout its organism and it languishes under the shade of the close tendrils; swarms of insects increase its agony by making their food and their nests of its bark; reptiles make love within the hollows of its trunk and at last the day comes when the lifeless giant falls with a frightful crash bearing with it the murderous parasite that is the victim of its own tenacity, which first raised it to bask in the sunshine and then caused it to be crushed under the rotten weight of its former supporter.

These are furious embraces of envy and jealousy; phrenzies of egotism in the vegetable kingdom: strange expressions of formidable hate and love, of oppression and vengeance.

All these myriads of plants are invaded by the irrepressible mania to ascend as high as possible and to receive the first, the most burning, perhaps the most pernicious, but the most liberal kiss of the sun. And they all hasten to arrive as though fearing to be superseded in the ascent as much by the colossal tree destined to brave centuries—if its massive roots are not ruined by its minute foes—as by those slender growths of a month or a day.

[61]

"Higher still! Always higher!" the green-leafed multitude seem to cry, "Excelsior!"

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The sun never penetrates under this tangled mass of vegetation except where an opening has been made by the hands of the savages or by the work of lightning and hurricane.

In the dim light of its damp atmosphere the interminable rows of tall straight trunks, some stout and some slight, assume the oddest shapes which can appeal to the observer's phantasy. Now they are colonnades, adorned with pendant festoons stretching away into the distance; now they are mysterious aisles of monster temples; now they are the unfinished design of some giant architect whose undertaking was arrested by a sudden, mystic command. However fruitful may be the imagination of the artist he would here always find fresh and superb inspiration from the enthralling sight of Nature's virginal beauties.

The stagnant waters of the ponds, round which the frogs croak and the leeches crawl, are plentifully strewn with water-lilies, reeds and other aquatic plants.

On the hoary trunks of ancient trees whole families of orchids have insinuated themselves into little clefts in the bark, and flower there in the brightest of colours: red, purple, blue and also white.

Everywhere there is a joyous exuberance of life and vigour. Each day begins or ends the cycle of time destined to the vegetable inhabitants of the jungle, because as there is no regular round of seasons the plants and flowers finish their course according to the short or long existence prescribed them by natural laws, and one continually sees dried and withered leaves and flowers falling to the ground whilst others open and blossom in their stead. Those that die to-day afford nourishment to the new-born generation and in this manner there is a ceaseless renovation of the various species without any need of a gardener to prepare the soil.

[62]

The exuberance of animal life is in equal proportion, as there is abundance of food for all.

A deep and uninterrupted buzz fills the air; it comes from the cicadas whose monotonous note wearies the ear, and from hornets and bees of every description that keep up an incessant hum as they suck juices from the plants or dive their antennæ into the ripe fruit or perhaps into some carrion lying near. The bassoon-like sound never ceases a single instant and tells the listener how innumerable are the populations of insects which live and generate their sort under the shade of their jungle retreat. Other inexplicable noises—far off crashes, mysterious sounds that chill one's veins, howls that make one shiver—for a sole moment break the noon-day silence. What is their origin? Nobody can say.

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The different animal sounds to be heard in the forest follow a rule which knows no exception.

The day is hailed by a full concert warbled from the throats of feathered songsters. This morning hymn rises in all its innocent purity to the skies whilst the fierce protagonists of the past night's bloody tragedies slink off to their dens and leave the field free to the more gentle herbivorous

animals.



The durian tree.

p. 64.

But at noon, when the sun is casting down its hottest rays upon that vast emerald palace of life, gay voices are hushed and the forest echoes only with the drowsy buzzing of insects.

[63]

As evening draws near the birds once more begin to chirp and trill, they salute the setting sun and fly away to rest. Then the monkeys commence their screeching and chattering and soon after the owls and other night birds take their turn, making the now dense darkness more terrible with their harsh, sinister cries. Little by little as the night deepens, bellows, roars and howls resound upon every part in a slow crescendo until they are fused into a general and appalling uproar which could not be more awful if the gates of Hell were to be opened on Earth.

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I am not an artist and still less a scientist but as a simple observer I like to take note of all that is worthy of notice and that is possible for me to transmit in an intelligible form.

Having depicted, to the best of my ability, the characteristics of forest life, I think it will be well—setting aside its magic charms and manifold wonders which would make a poet even of one who has no tendency for poetry—to describe, in a more practical way, some of its products.

I will begin with the durian, or *sumpà*, the fruit of which is unknown in our country.

It is a very large tree, growing to the height of 40 or 50 metres and distends around it a huge pavilion of rich branches, covered with little leaves.

It is to be found sometimes singly and sometimes in clumps and is the only tree that the Sakais show any interest in multiplying, and this cultivation, if we may so call it, is done by them almost unconsciously, not from any sentimental feeling but rather from the effect of a sentiment and a superstition. [4] It produces a most extraordinary quantity of fruit, the exquisite flavour of which it is difficult to match. It has been calculated that every tree bears, on an average, about 600 durians but some have even reached the enormous figure of 1000.

[64]

If one were treating of berries or nuts this would not be so remarkable but each fruit of the durian weighs about two kilograms and is as large as a child's head. For this reason it is a dangerous thing to stand or pass under one of these trees when the fruit is quite ripe as so heavy a ball falling from a height of forty or more metres would suffice to split open one's head even if the long prickles with which it is covered did not make it more to be feared.

The Sakais are quite greedy over durians and Mr Wallace writes that its delicate flavour is so exquisite it would well repay the expense and disturbance of a journey Eastward on purpose to

taste it.

This assertion of the English writer may be somewhat exaggerated but for my own part, I must say that I have never tasted anything more delicious. But not everyone can enjoy or appreciate this strange fruit for the disgusting smell that distinguishes it and that is apt to cause nausea to a weak stomach.

Imagine to have under your nose a heap of rotten onions and you will still have but a faint idea of the insupportable odour which emanates from these trees and when its fruit is opened the offensive smell becomes even stronger. [65]

When mature, that is to say in the months of August and September, the durians fall to the ground and are eagerly gathered up by the natives, who at the period of their ripening, leave the women and children, the old and the sick in their villages and encamp themselves in the forest around these precious trees.

The outside of the durian is ligneous and is covered with strong prickles of nearly an inch long. The interior consists of a great many small eggs each one being wrapped in a fine film which, when broken, reveals a pulp of the consistency and colour of thick custard. A big seed is embedded in the centre of each egg, almond-like in size and form, although not so flat.

I cannot describe in any way the flavour of this fruit which the real Sakai calls *sumpà*. I can but repeat that it is exquisite and far superior to any sweet dainty prepared by cook or confectioner. There is nothing to equal it, and in eating one does not discern the least smell as the disagreeable stench comes from the husk alone and the worse it is, the more delicate is the taste of the pulp.

This fruit is too perishable for it to be exported to far countries even if there was any chance of its finding favour in European markets, in consequence of its horrible smell, which does not however protect it from the voracity of the monkeys and their rodent companions—especially the squirrels—that manage, in spite of its formidable prickles, to make a hole in the husk and nibble out some of its contents leaving the rest to rot inside.

To my knowledge the durian is not subject to any malady which might effect the annual quantity of fruit to be gathered, this depending entirely upon whether the wind has blown violently, or not, during the time it was in flower. [66]

This King of Trees, as it is called by the Sakai, will grow and prosper nearly to the height of a thousand metres, and its fruit is preserved by pressing it into large tubes of bamboo after the seeds have been picked out.

The Sakais frequently exchange these original pots of jam for other articles equally prized by them, such as tobacco and beads.

Another fruit, so delicious that it may almost be said to rival the durian, is the *plè lòk*.

The tree on which it grows cannot be ranked amongst the giants of the forest. It has big and long leaves something like those of the orange but whilst on the top they are a glossy black in under they are of a still glossier green.

The fruit, that ripens between September and November, is the size of a peach but it is covered with a very thick husk (nearly black outside, and a rusty red inside) after the sort of our walnuts. The pulp is divided into a lot of quarters each one enclosed in a very thin skin. It looks like snow-white Jelly and in fact melts in the mouth at once, leaving only a little kernel. The flavour is sweet and exceedingly pleasant.

The husk is utilized by the Sakais for producing a dye with which to paint their faces and also for making a decoction as a remedy against diarrhæa and pains in the stomach.

The Sakais are immensely fond of this fruit as indeed any European, accustomed to the finest sweets, might be, the more so as it never does any harm or brings about an indigestion, even when eaten in large quantities.

Besides these two grand lords of the forest I will also mention the *ple pra*, a colossus that, modestly, but without avarice, supplies the Sakai with excellent chestnuts.

It is impossible, notwithstanding my desire, to describe the many other trees and fruits which form the richness of the forest, as it would take too long. Further on, in a chapter dedicated to poisons, I have named some of the most dangerous in this respect, but between those that are the ministers of Death and those that are the means of Life to the simple jungle-dweller, there are countless species to which it would be difficult to assign a particular class. [67]

Many of these latter are regarded by the natives with distrust, perhaps without any reason, but from who knows what strange belief transmitted from father to son? And in the heart of the forest who is there to study and make experiments upon such leaves and fruits in order to ascertain if they are perfectly edible?

I, for instance, am of opinion that the fruit of the *giù ù ba a* could be safely used and to a great extent.

It is like a little pumpkin, green outside and yellowish-white inside. A kind of oil is extracted from its pulp which, when cooked, is not of a disagreeable taste and does one no harm. But the *giù ù*

*ba a* is a creeper and it is among these parasites that poisons abound and this is why the fruits obtained from them are used with reluctance and if possible, avoided altogether.

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Treasures not to be imagined are still hidden in the profound recesses of the Malay forest; priceless treasures for medical science and for industry.

Could the former but discover the exact therapeutic and venomous virtues of some of those plants, many of which are quite unknown to botanists, what innumerable new and potent remedies might be found to enrich the pharmacopœia of civilized people!

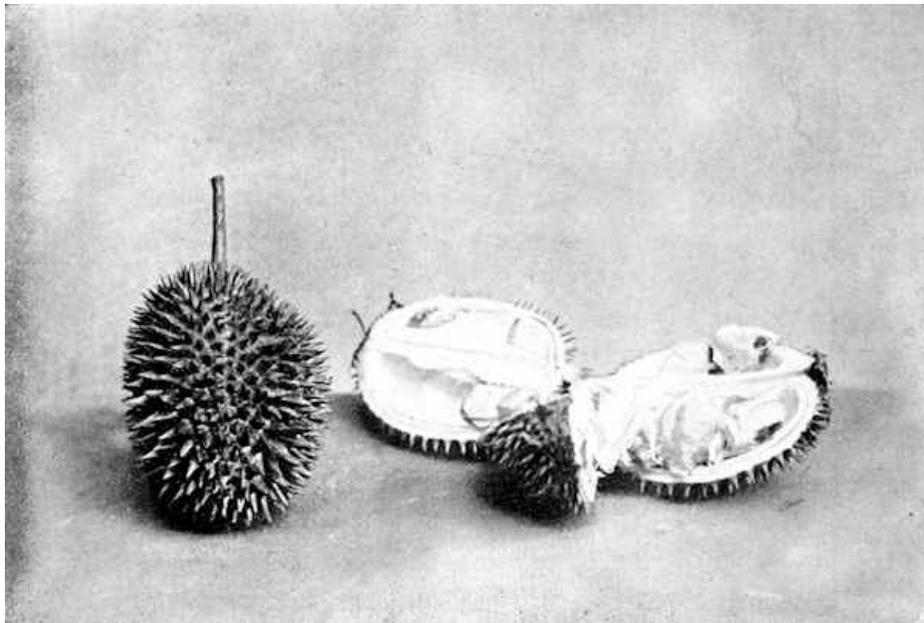
Agriculture, in all its varied branches, could here find incalculable treasures of fertility!

[68]

Without counting the rice that gives a wonderful annual product, the Indian-corn that gives two harvests a year and the sweet potatoes that give three, there is the yam, the *sikoi*, [5] the sugar-cane, coffee, pepper, tea, the banana, the ananas, indigo, sago, tapioca, gambier, various sorts of rubber, gigantic trees for shipbuilding, and so on.

The Para Rubber, from which is extracted our gutta percha grows marvellously well in the Malay soil and requires very little attention or expense.

There is the *ramiè* whose fibres will by degrees supplant the silk we get from cocoons, or mixed together will form an excellent quality of stuff. It is a herb with long, fibrous stems which when well beaten out and bleached become like a soft mass of wool. After being carded it can be spun into the finest threads as shiny and pliant as silk itself.



**The Durian.**

p. 65.

This plant flourishes to a great extent in Perak and its stems may be cut off twice a year. It only needs to be cultivated, for industry to be provided with a new and precious element. In fact there are few who do not know that the greater part of Chinese silk stuffs are woven with the *ramiè* fibres, but its utility might have a much larger extension if it were made an object of study by those capable of drawing from it profitable results.

[69]

Very few lands, I think, have been so favoured by capricious Nature as the Malay Peninsula where she seems to have taken delight in bestowing her treasures of flora and fauna as well as underground ones, for several gold and tin mines are being worked, whilst lead, copper, zinc, antimony, arsenic and many other metals are constantly being found, besides some rich veins of wolfram, although a real bed of the latter ore has not yet been discovered.

If once the still lazy but honest forces of the Sakais could be utilized by turning them towards agriculture, all this natural wealth might be sent to the World's markets and a sparse but good people, susceptible of great progress, would be gradually civilized.

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The Para Rubber, referred to above, constitutes one of the greatest riches of the Malay agricultural industry.

Both soil and climate are very favourable for its cultivation in the Peninsula, so much so that a tree attains the maturity necessary for the production of this valuable article in four years, if special care and attention is given it, or in five or six if left to its natural growth (as in Ceylon),

whilst in other places it takes eight and even ten years.

Not many years ago the British Government had a limited space of ground planted, with seeds brought from Brazil, as a simple experiment. The result was encouraging enough to induce the Institute of Tropical Researches—initiated under the auspices of the Liverpool University, with the object of developing Colonial commerce—to make plantations which in one season yielded no less than 150,000 pounds of gum. [70]

About three years ago 60,000 acres of land were planted with Para Rubber, the Government providing the seed at a very low rate.

It is calculated that each acre contains from 125 to 250 trees according to the quality of the ground and its position.

These plantations continue to increase with surprising rapidity and it may be said, at the present day, that four million trees are to be found in an area of 200,000 acres.

When one considers that each tree renders, on an average, from 5 to 6 pounds of gum, and that that of Perak—chemically proved to be pure—is quoted on the market at 6/10 per pound—whilst the best produced by other countries does not exceed 5/7—one can form a pretty correct estimate of the enormous sum derived from the Para rubber of Perak.

It was generally supposed that this valuable tree would suffer if it surpassed a thousand metres in height but in the Malay Peninsula it grows and nourishes even higher than 1,600 metres, especially the so-called *ficus elasticus* and India-rubber.

The British Government is doing its best to increase this cultivation, and "its best" in this case really means "the very best" because besides concession of land, and the providing of seed at a low rate, the Government aids this industry, in which so many millions are invested, by the making of fine, wide high-roads as well as by maintaining railways for the conveyance of goods, fixing a minimum tariff for the transport.

Perhaps some one will accuse me of being too partial in my remarks upon the work done by the British Government in this its remote Eastern Protectorate, but having assisted for many years in the ever increasing agricultural and commercial development of the peninsula, and having seen the steady conquest civilization has made by means of the most practical and surest methods—such as the patient training of the natives to the love of work, and the prompt and conscientious administration of justice—I cannot but admire the enlightened and beneficent activity displayed by the English in those parts. [71]

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Closed this parenthesis about the plantations, which are now spreading far and wide over the forest (the wood-cutter's hatchet continually clearing new tracts of land for agricultural enterprises), I want you to return with me to the jungle which is still almost untrodden and where Nature reigns supreme over the thick tropical vegetation.

Having already spoken briefly and in a disorderly way of the riches which are here gratuitously offered—not the riches of Midas and Pymalion, because mother Nature does not refuse food to her children even if they are profaners of that wonderful temple of her fecundity—it is right that I should now draw your attention to two great friends of travellers in the forest. One is the bamboo and the other a creeper called the "water vine".

The bamboo, known to us only as one of the plants least considered in a large, well-kept garden, or as a polished walking stick, as the legs of a fancy table of uncertain equilibrium or as a tobacco box ably worked by Chinese or Japanese fingers, in the free forest becomes a colossal inhabitant. Its canes, at first tender and supple, grow to such a size, and so strong as to be used for water conduits. It is a vigorous and invasive plant that covers the surrounding ground with new shoots whilst in under its long roots spread out and suck up all the vital nutriment to be found in the earth around. [72]

To one who lives in the forest, the bamboo is as necessary as food itself. It provides light, solid huts; it makes the blowpipe, arrow and quiver; it serves for carrying water and preserving fruit; it forms a safe recipient for poisonous juices; it is bottle and glass, and finally supplies the native cooks with a saucepan that only they can use because they have the knack of cooking their food without burning the bamboo. I have often tried to do the same but the result has always been that pot and pottage have been burnt together.

The bamboo has also a secret virtue of incalculable value to the thirsty wayfarer, overcome by the heat of a tropical sun: it is a perfect reservoir of water.

By boring a hole just under the joints of each cane more than half a litre of clear water, not very fresh, but wholesome and good, gushes out. It is rather bitter to the taste and serves to restore one's forces as well as to quench one's thirst.

The water-vine also acts as a Samaritan in the jungle. Like all the others of its sort this climbing plant closes some giant king of the forest in its cruel embrace (thus depriving it of its strength) and then falls in rich festoons from its boughs, swaying and rustling with every breath of air.

By making a cut at the extremity of one of the sprays that hang down towards the ground, a

fresh, drinkable water flows out.

It is superfluous, perhaps, to add that this grand necessity for the traveller on foot may be obtained from other sources: the streams that are to be found trickling along here and there, and the huge leaves that upon drying up secrete a certain quantity of rain water within them.

So the jungle gives to eat and to drink, with wonderful abundance and variety, but woe to him who does not know her well, for she also proffers Death in a thousand unsuspected and seductive forms!

[73]

How many times in the solemn, languid hour of noontide, when bird and beast were drowsing from the heat, I have stood in the shade and interrogated the forest upon its first violators and their descendants! But my demands remained unanswered; in its superb grandeur it does not interest itself in the tragic vicissitudes of animal or vegetable lives, it makes no records, on the contrary, it quickly cancels all traces of past events.

I have vainly asked: from whence came those who have found shelter and solitude in the obscure depths of its wooded hills? How many centuries have they dwelt in those lone, wild parts? I have asked if that shy and dispersed tribe was not the remains of a once great and strong people eclipsed by a younger, stronger, and more savage race? Sometimes watching, with admiring eyes, the strange architectural forms taken by the massive trunks and graceful vines, fantastic but always majestic, I have asked the forest if it had not arisen upon the ruins of some long ago and lost civilization and if those same forms were not an inexplicable evocation of the gigantic creations of vanished genii of which I seemed in imagination to catch faint glimpses?

But the forest remained mute and kept its impenetrable secret.

Only here and there, groups of trees, lower than the surrounding ones, and between them spaces of ground, which had evidently once been clearings and were not yet totally re-covered by jungle growth, gave proof of Sakai nomadism even in other ages. No other sign of the past, and my query, perhaps absurd, repeats itself. Am I before the savage infancy of a people, or the spent senility of a race, lost sight of in the course of centuries? If the latter, would there not be some relic left of its existence; a fragment of stone or concrete substance inscribed with the figures of its period? Is it possible that everything has been buried from the sight of modern man, under the rank luxuriance of grass and bush? Or is it not I who vainly dream under the impression of the forest's mute grandeur and the thousands of voices that to-day awake its echoes and to-morrow leave none behind?

[74]

#### Footnotes:

[4] In another chapter, wherein I describe the superstitions and beliefs of the Sakais, I have spoken of the custom they have of depositing food, tobacco, etc., on the tombs of their dead for a week after they have been buried. Naturally everything, not devoured by beast or insect, rots upon the spot and the seeds of the fruit find their way into the ground. For this reason many new trees spring up in groups, obtaining their first alimentation from the dissolution of the corpse.

[5] The *sikoi* grows on high mountains and the women have to take great pains in cleaning it before it is cooked. It is a grain something like our millet and has good nutritive qualities.

The Sakays mix it with water and make a sort of "polenta" cooking it, as usual, in their bamboo saucepans. It is a favourite dish with them when eaten with monkey flesh, rats, pieces of snake, lizards, beetles and various other insects which would be of rare entomological value to any museum that possessed them.

Ignorant of the repugnant compound, that gave such a savoury taste to the *sikoi*, at the beginning of my sojourn with the Sakays, I ate it with relish after seasoning it with a little salt, an article not much used amongst my mountain friends. But when I came to know what ingredients gave it flavour I refused it, as kindly as I could not to offend their susceptibilities, because my stomach rebelled against the mess.



[75]

## CHAPTER VII.

**The snares of civilized life—Faust's invocation—The dangers of the forest—Serpents—A perilous adventure—Carnivorous and herbivorous animals—The "sladan"—The man of the wood.**

The young man who incautiously ventures into the mysterious parts of Drury Lane—where vice and crime have a classical reputation—or strolls through the old Latin Quarter of Paris (where some of the streets are anything but safe to pass through), or who finds himself, for whatsoever reason you will, in one of those questionable labyrinths still existing in the most civilized Italian cities, would certainly not run less risk than in facing the dangers of the forest. The dart, the trap, the attack of beast and reptile may be, with courage and calmness, averted or parried, but the evils which menace man, under the hypocritical euphemisms of Society (ever ready to vaunt its impeachableness) injure not only the body but, what is worse, the spirit.

Those who succumb to the latter are oftentimes induced to lament that death does not come swift enough to kill their flesh, after their souls and intellects have been long since slain and consumed.

[76]

In the thick of the jungle the spirit rises and wanders free; there are no restraints or limits to its flight. It is inebriated by the simple and serene joys of living; it is pervaded by a current of new, potent energy that makes one feel—alone, in Nature's realm—either immensely great or infinitely small; exquisitely good or miserably wicked.

It is not prudent, when travelling in the forest, to let philosophy make us linger long on the way, but there are some moments in which one's inner life is so intense, in which thought and sentiment are so impetuous that that fleeting atom of time is in itself sufficient to mark an indelible epoch in the existence of men. Who knows but what if Mephistopheles had lead Faust into the virgin forest, and there left him free to his speculations, if the famous invocation would ever have escaped from the fevered lips of the doctor?

But... what is this hissing? It is not the spirit that denies; it is a snake I have disturbed along my path and that has not found my philosophizing over pleasant (like you, perhaps, kind reader) and so I will cut short my digression.

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The forest abounds in reptiles. There are innumerable varieties of serpents, big and small, venomous and harmless. It may almost be said (especially towards the plain) that every bush and every tree has one of these inhabitants.

The commonest species are the *tigi riló*, the *tigi paà* and the *tigi dolò* but the most feared are the *sendok* and the *bimaà*.



As a rule none of these snakes will assail a person unless they have been molested. They remain either rolled up close to a tree or lazily swinging from one of its branches, keeping hold of it with its powerful tail and so it is necessary to proceed very carefully and to look attentively both up and down in order not to disturb them. [77]

The serpent, when stumbled against, hurls itself as quick as lightning upon the unhappy offender, encircling and suffocating him with its coils and biting him with its sharp fangs even when they are not poisoned. Like all other animals it becomes ferocious and seeks to kill from fear. He who disturbs it is a foe to be vanquished.

But if you pass him without being afraid and without hurrying, with a slow gliding step, taking care not to move your hands or arms, it will let you go on your way and take no notice of you.

And this I can affirm from experiments I have myself made upon the terrible *sendok*.

One day I was able, in this way, to pass quite close, almost touching one of these most venomous reptiles. He never moved as I crept by but he did not lose sight of me for a single instant. I am quite sure that if my inward fear had betrayed itself by the slightest gesture, I should have been a dead man.

Sometimes I have succeeded, very, very gently, in placing upon it a stick about two metres long. Well, the horrid serpent just lazily unfolded its coils and softly slipped from under it. Very different would have been the result if I had put the stick upon its head roughly!

From this you will see that danger from snakes is much less than one might believe from the thrilling adventures narrated by friends (between a roast chestnut and a sip of wine), as they are snugly gathered round a cosy fireside, adventures which they have read in the fabulous pages written by one of those story-tellers who gull the respectable public with the loveliest or the most terrifying descriptions of places, men and beasts of which they scarcely know the name. [78]

Serpents are always attacked and beaten down with sticks, except the very large ones, that are taken by lassoes as I will explain in another chapter. It is a quick and simple means of getting free, in a few minutes, of a venomous enemy which it never fails to do when fear does not make the eye and the hand miss its aim, precision in the blow being all that is needed.

Not very long since I had an adventure with one of these reptiles which threatened to be my last. I was quietly strolling in the forest and had with me neither weapon nor stick. My thoughts were far away but a rustling sound and a loud hiss brought them quickly back and arrested my steps. A large, venomous snake was right in front of me! Erect, with open mouth and protruding tongue, the embodiment of hatred, it was there, prompt for an assault. My case was desperate and only a miracle of *sang-froid* could save me. Fixing my eyes steadily upon those of the serpent, very gradually and with the slowest possible movement I bent my knees and crouched down towards the ground, where, in an equally slow and methodical way I groped for some sort of stick with which to strike my adversary. Having found what I wanted, I drew myself up in the same cautious manner and with a sudden, rapid gesture I hit the beast with all my might. Fortunately for me, my blow told and I had an addition to my collection of jungle foes.

The traveller in Malay who is not a thorough alien to timorous feelings would do well to never leave his comfortable post in the railway carriage between one place and another or at least to keep within a safe distance of the forest, for although its perils have been greatly exaggerated there are some, all the same, that require a stout heart and firm nerves.

When there is no big game to put your courage and your pulse to the test there is always a troop of smaller animals that make game of you and prove your force of resistance. A rat bites your heel whilst you are asleep; the leeches suck your blood; all sorts of insects sting you. These little annoying incidents irritate flesh and spirit and may be the cause of feverishness, but a dose of quinine and a compress over the wound soon have a good effect. [79]

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But it is not sufficient to bravely face bodily danger, support physical pain and endure with grace the mortifications inflicted upon one's flesh by the more minute inhabitants of those regions, for the jungle also exacts certain moral virtues which civilization does not always appreciate or admire, nay, on the contrary, that it often laughs at.

The great Sorceress, for whom one feels a strange nostalgia after having once known her magnificence and her horrors, kills the man who is not temperate in his habits.

Moderation in eating is the first consideration for prolonging life in the forest. The stomach must never be overladen and no strong drinks must be used.

By following this method of living and allowing myself very rarely even a glass of wine I managed to keep in excellent health in 1889 when an epidemic raged violently in the island of Nias and made sad havoc amongst the natives.

The human organism, especially that of a European, is beset by numerous inconveniences which

may generate illness; the burning sun, that seems to cook one's brain; the cold nights and heavy dews; the violent storms that quite suddenly break over your head, and the food that must be put up with even when it is not actually hygienic.

[80]

For all this a strict regime, based upon moderation, is indispensable.

It is true that in my forest cabin I have an assortment of the best wines and whiskies, notwithstanding the improbability of being able to offer a glass to my friends, but those bottles remain well corked, waiting for their legitimate owner to feel indisposed, when a draught of their contents will restore his lost strength without resorting to medicine.

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The greatest dangers in the jungle are those which cannot be met with impunity; those that render every defence inefficacious when a man is taken unawares.

I speak of the tigers and panthers that are very numerous and audacious; of the bears, that do not act so jocosely here as in our streets and menageries but vie with other wild beasts in blood-thirstiness; of the rhinoceros, the elephant, the terrible *sladan*, the wild dogs that, fierce as wolves, wander about in large packs.

A dissertation upon the tiger and its like does not seem to me a sufficiently interesting subject for my readers who will have seen, who knows how many, at the fairs and museums and will have learnt their character and habits from Natural History books or from the description (not always correct) of someone who has only set foot on the land where they live. I must, however, make special mention of the *sladan*, the only survivor of an almost extinct fauna.

This animal belongs to the herbivorous class but is more ferocious than any of the carnivorous species. It does not kill from hunger or for self-defence, but for the mere sake of killing.

It is a sort of buffalo or bison with two very solid, strongly planted horns on its thick-set head. This animal possesses such vigour and agility as to enable it to attack victoriously all other wild beasts. Only the elephant sometimes succeeds, with difficulty, in mastering it.

[81]

Its den is in the most remote and inaccessible parts of the forest and by day and by night it scours the neighbourhood, rending the air with its awful roars. One is never sure of not meeting it, and to meet it either means to kill it or to be killed.

It is very fond of the tender shoots of sweet potatoes and for this will often visit the crops cultivated by the Sakais who, for fear of this dreaded enemy, do not plant very much. Generally, though, the *sladan* devastates the potato fields during the night.

The ferocity of this beast surpasses that of all others, for whilst the lion, the bear and even the tiger and panther have been known to show some feeling of respect, gratitude or fear, the *sladan* never exhibits one or the other. It would almost seem that in him is concentrated all the hatred of a race of animals, fast dying out, against every living creature whose species is still destined to remain in the world.

And yet quite close to the haunts of these champions in savagery, always on the look out for blood and carnage, live other quiet and harmless animals. I will say nothing of the wild boar (that in comparison with the *sladan*, might pass for a lamb) of the wild goat or of the deer which are in great numbers, but there are little rodent quadrupeds of every sort, size, and fur, besides perfect crowds of monkeys of different kinds. They belong to the herbivorous order and go about by day in search of food, hiding themselves when the first shades of night call forth from their dens the heroes of nocturnal tragedies.

A garrulous population of birds enliven the forest; they are insectivorous, granivorous, and omnivorous but all are beautiful in their rich and wonderful variety of colour. Amongst these the pheasant for its oriental plumage and the cockatoo for its querulous voice are remarkable as the largest.

[82]

A gay concert is given in honour of the dawning and the dying day but long before the birds of prey have unfolded their wings and soar, like phantoms, through the darkness, the pretty carol-singers hush their warblings and hide themselves from the horrors of the night.

A collector of butterflies would go into ecstasies over the splendid varieties that flutter and flit in the air, and the countless multitude of different insects would be well worth special study; amongst the latter are verified the most curious mimetic facts that ever the unprejudiced mind of a man of politics could imagine!

And yet, in the midst of so many contrasts, in the midst of so many dangers which exact exceptional presence of mind and strong nerves, life in the forest is full of charm and allurements.

The spirit is strengthened and elevated by this continuous warfare, open and pronounced, so unlike those depressing struggles against narrow minds, and tiger-hearts, which distinguish town-life.

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It is very rare that one meets a man in the Malay forest. You may walk on for weeks without encountering a soul. I happened once, though, to fall in with one who was a primitive being in the strictest sense of the term.



Trap for reptiles and rats.

p. 86.

I was trudging along one day with my Sakai servant, when at the foot of the hill (Chentok) I saw a little cot and wished to visit it. Inside I found a man. At seeing me he caught up his blow-pipe—a miserable-looking instrument—and his poisoned darts, and was about to run away. I hastily made my companion offer him a few cooked potatoes and a little maize which he accepted without saying a word and began to devour ravenously.

[83]

In those brief moments I took stock of the poor creature. He was painfully thin; his skeleton could be clearly seen under the unadorned skin; his sunken eyes gleamed with mistrust and inquietude from out of his fleshless face, and his long black hair lay in tangled masses round his neck.

I had before me the true type of a wild man of the wood, less vivacious and less loquacious than his brother, the ape.

I gave him some tobacco, that he eagerly crammed into his mouth and then, keeping fast hold of his weapon he hurried off, without uttering a single syllable, although I asked him many things in his own tongue.

Neither did he in any way express satisfaction, or gratitude for what he had received but vanished mute, contemptuous and silently into the thickest part of the jungle.

My little Sakai was not so surprised as I at this strange person and his way of proceeding, because he had seen him before and could tell me something about him.

He was known by the name of *Alà Lag*, or the sorcerer. He had no wife, no children, no friends, and lived quite alone, far from everyone, wandering about the forest, feeding upon wild-honey and the fruit he found upon the ground. If he happened to catch some game he would light up a bit of fire and seem to cook it but in reality he ate it raw. Sometimes he came across a settlement when he would enter the first hut which lay in his way, and by gesture more than by word, would ask for food and after having obtained it, started off again.

[84]

The good Sakais pitied the poor vagabond and had often tried to make him stop with them as a brother or a guest but he always resolutely refused whatever proposal they made him and they were of opinion that not even old age would have any effect upon the misanthropy of this poor inoffensive being who isolated himself so obstinately from all his kind.

I thought to myself, is the poor fellow wise or mad in thus seeking to live alone as Nature produced him, in the unlimited liberty of his native jungle where he is secure from delusions and

sorrows?

Men, little less savage than he, feel compassion for him as he passes by. Nobody would dare to laugh at or injure such a harmless soul and so he is allowed to ramble from hut to hut undisturbed, his eccentricities and his odd behaviour being his safeguard.

It is not always so amongst people more advanced in civilization!



[85]

## CHAPTER VIII.

**An official appointment—A tour of inspection—Lost in the forest—I find a philosopher—Lycurgus and his laws—A contented mind is a continual feast—A night among the tigers—On the Berumbum—I sleep with a serpent—The last of many—Safe from trap and arrow—The coronation of King Edward VII.**

Having established a regular trade in forest products and attempted something in the way of plantations, I felt a strong desire to explore the whole country inhabited by the Sakai tribes to better estimate its riches and at the same time to know more thoroughly the character of this people of whom I knew only a limited number.

From the Bidor I passed into Sunkei Selin and Pahang, and when, in 1901, I happened to be at Tapah I was offered the Government post of Superintendent of the Perak Sakais.

The proposal was such as to gratify a little ambition of which I had not really been conscious before. I therefore accepted it with great pleasure, the more so as I felt flattered that the British Government should repose so much confidence in an Italian.

[86]

My first official act was to make enquiries about a serious quarrel that had taken place amongst the Sakais living in the plain, and that had resulted in several deaths.

The fact was so uncommon and extraordinary considering the good nature of the people, that it was quite worth the while of an investigation.

Two Bretak Sakais descended from the heights which bound Perak and Pahang, and found hospitality in a family of those Sakais who are in constant contact with strangers. Seeing them take some salt out of a bamboo tube and eat it, the two guests asked to be allowed to taste it in their turn. In whatever hut of the jungle savages, this desire would have been anticipated but these others had learnt selfishness, as well as other defects, in their intercourse with their neighbours, and simply answered that salt did harm to anybody not accustomed to it.

This prevarication, which was equal to a refusal, offended the Bretaks, as it was an infringement of the Sakai custom of sharing like brothers all they possessed. They insisted upon their right and at last obtained a handful of salt, given them grudgingly.

After the Bretaks had departed, the other men went to their traps and brought back with them four big rats that were at once cooked and abundantly salted.

It so happened, that one of the women,—who had been ill for some time—ate two of them, thereby causing herself such a serious indigestion that in a couple of days she was no more.



In quest of fruit and bulbs.

p. 91.

The Sakais thought directly that her sudden decease must be owing to an evil spell of the Bretaks who wished for a revenge for the reluctance shown in giving them the salt. They quickly decided that the crime should be punished by death and started off in pursuit of the supposed culprits. As soon as they were within reach they attacked them with a volley of poisoned darts. The others naturally defended themselves and the conflict ended with three dead.

[87]

In the course of time the Government came to hear of the question and bade the *pengulu* (Malay chief) to make enquiries in order to establish the responsibility. But he refused to interfere.

No sooner was I appointed Superintendent than I received orders to interest myself in the matter, and an escort of armed soldiers was put at my disposition for the arrest of those found guilty. But this way of proceeding was not to my opinion, as I explained in my report. The fact was quite an exceptional one and was the consequence of a deplorable superstition. By imprisoning someone we should not have cured the great evil of ignorance, but only have sown the seed of hatred against the White Man, for the men who were taken prisoners could not live long in seclusion and their untimely death would never be pardoned.

The British Authority being favourable to this my way of thinking I was able to go alone and find out the rights of the case after which I managed to obtain a complete pacification of all concerned.

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I had been but a short time in my new office when I decided to make a tour of inspection through the territory entrusted to my care and I really do not remember any other of my travels so full of incidents and emotional adventures. Two, in particular, will never be erased from my memory.

I was journeying quite by myself, confiding perhaps too much in the knowledge I had gained of the jungle, and the possibility of being lost in the forest never entered my head.

[88]

And yet this is one of the greatest perils that can befall anybody, for it may be a compendium of all the others.

He who is born and who grows up in the forest does not run this risk for certain, because from a slight cut in a tree, a broken reed, a pendant bough, the smallest sign that would escape the keenest of European eyes, the native knows how to draw precise indications of the direction to be followed. Wherever he goes, he never forgets to leave some trace of his passage in order to find his way back without uncertainty and loss of time. In this way the Sakais wander about the jungle with astounding security just as if they were walking along a well-traced out path.

The same prodigious variety of woodland scenery that the forest offers to the gaze gives it a

certain uniformity in the mind of a white man. The colossal trees that stretch away one after the other as far as can be seen; the twining vines and creepers which cluster everywhere; the huge bushes and flowering thickets; the dips and hollows in the ground, and the little ponds over which the green of reed and rush triumphs equally with bright floral colours. The European embraces all this in a sole glance, in its entirety, but cannot discern, like the Sakai, the difference that exists between this tree and that, this glen and the other. And if the poor man be alone he will surely be lost; and if he is lost there is very little chance of his ever getting out again.

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Evening was fast approaching; the birds were singing their last songs for the day, and in the first hour of a brief twilight breathed that solemn calm which especially belongs to the forest when its more innocent inhabitants are beginning to conceal themselves for the night, and the ferocious beasts of darkness are not yet abroad in search of prey.

[89]

It was getting late and I hastened to reach my cabin, but hurry as I would it never came in sight. I could not understand this at all until suddenly (with what dismay I will leave my reader to imagine) I perceived that I had been following the tracks of a bear, believing them to have been a man's.

Alarmed, I looked about me on every side, scrutinizing every part; I advanced a little this way and that, then retraced my steps, anxiously endeavouring to find out a clue to the right direction.

Alas! there was no mistaking the truth; I was lost in the depth of the forest, and what was worse, at nightfall!

Little by little anguish parched my throat and drops of cold sweat stood on my brow. What could I do? If I remained on the ground I should be exposed to the fatal caresses of some wild beast, on the other hand if I climbed up a tree (no very easy matter as I should have to find a creeper strong enough to bear my weight) should I not be equally exposed to the deadly clasp of a snake?

The darker it grew, the more my bewilderment and anxiety increased. I began to holler desperately, calling frantically for help with such a piercing voice as I had never dreamt of possessing before. It was my only and last hope.

Tired, hungry, thirsty and disheartened I continued to shout as loudly as I could and at last it seemed to me that a human voice answered my wild cries from a distance. Once more I bawled with all my might and then listened. Yes, there was no doubt; someone had heard me, and with the auricular acuteness of despair I turned towards the direction of the sound and hurried forward.

[90]

It was not long before I came across a solitary hut that I found to be inhabited by a family of six persons.

I narrated my perilous adventure and they gave me food (which was certainly not intended for delicate stomachs) and water, and I, in return, handed round some tobacco, then, tranquil as regarded the night, with a sigh of relief I lighted my pipe, the ever faithful companion of my travels, and began to chat with the old man, the head of the family.

I intentionally introduced the Sakais' dislike for work and asked him the reason why.

Very quietly, and without the least hesitation, he replied:

"Why should we give ourselves the pain and fatigue of working like slaves? Does not the earth give us, spontaneously, more than enough for our need without tormenting it with implements?"

The argument was logical, but I smiled and remarked:

"It does not seem to me that the earth provides everything without working it. When you want rice or tobacco you have to ask it from those who cultivate it".

The old man quickly retorted:

"And what does that matter? We have the right of demand because both are grown upon our soil. By cutting down our beautiful forest for plantations we are deprived of game and fruit; by drying up our ponds we have no fish to eat; by cultivating our land we are being continually driven farther towards the mountains, in search of that food which satisfied our fathers, but the stranger who comes amongst us beats the path that we have traced with our feet. Is it not just then that we should have some recompense, that certain of our needs should be considered?"



**In quest of animal food.**

[p. 91.](#)

"Povera e nuda vai, filosofia", [6] I muttered to myself, admiring that old man, ignorant and bare, who in the rough, broken phrases of his poor language solved with the greatest simplicity questions of civil rights which a University professor would have found complicated and even difficult. I continued however:

[91]

"But then if nobody came to you, treading your paths; if nobody cultivated some strips of your forest, how would you obtain calico, and tobacco and rice?"

With a shake of his head my humble host hastened to answer:

"Cannot man live without these trifles? Does not the forest supply us with flesh, fish, and fowl? Does it not produce, for our use, roots, bulbs, truffles, mushrooms, edible leaves and exquisite fruit? Do not its trees provide us with shelter and their bark with a covering for our bodies, when it is necessary? What more could one desire?"

I was nonplused! But noticing that my new friend was in the vein to chat, a fact which I inwardly attributed to the effects of that same tobacco, whose necessity he had just denied, but which he was smoking with evident pleasure, I turned the conversation by asking why his people were not be found in other parts of the Peninsula?

"We love our forest and our liberty too well ever to leave these confines of our own accord" he replied placidly and in tones of conviction, "and when, as sometimes happened in the past, our people were forced to follow and serve their conquerors they brought little or no profit to their masters because if they found a chance of escaping back to their kindred they did so, and if not, in a short time they died of broken hearts. As for our children, we would rather kill them ourselves than let them go into the hands of our neighbours. Now that we are protected by the *orang putei*" (he meant the British Government) "we and our families live in more peace than before".

[92]

As though overcome by painful memories, he became silent and sad. After a minute he went on in a dull voice, seeming to speak to himself: "Once upon a time these parts were not so deserted, and populous, prosperous villages were scattered over the forest. But our tranquillity and well-being excited the envy of other tribes who wanted to subject us to them and to make us work like slaves, so they came against us armed, and pillaged, burnt and destroyed everything belonging to us. We were dispersed and compelled to live in isolated huts erected in the most inaccessible places in order not to attract the attention of other men".

He paused again and then added:

"We have nothing to lose now except our freedom which is more precious to us than life itself, and for this we are ready to fight to the very last even if our bodies are left on the ground for beasts and birds to feed upon".

A fierce light kindled the old Sakai's eyes, which boded evil for anyone who attempted to disturb the quietude of their present rambling life. And I understood how much stronger these inoffensive people were in their dispersion than when they were banded together in villages. If aggressors should attack these solitary huts they would find their owners prompt to meet the attack with all the ferocity of wild beasts and even if nobody was saved from the massacre to report the terrible news in other encampments, alarm would have been given by the sound of fire-arms and cries. In consequence the other Sakais would immediately destroy all signs of their habitation, and penetrate farther into the forest which, for them, has no secret concealed. Towards night they would creep among the tall grasses until they found the enemy that would serve us a target for their poisoned arrows. However well their foes might know the use of gun and revolver, they would be at a disadvantage, for these weapons reveal the position occupied by those who shoot but the fatal dart flies out of the darkness leaving the spot from whence it comes uncertain.

[93]

Nothing could be more disastrous in the way of warfare than an attack with poisoned arrows, in the midst of the forest, during the night. Your men would fall right and left without having been able to defend themselves in any way.

I afterwards got the old man to tell me something about their customs regarding marriage and family organization.

"By thus living separate", he said "each family by itself, without being subject to any chief or authority, save only that of the Elder (be he father or grandfather), our peace is guaranteed. There are no quarrels, there is no jealousy or bad-feeling, for all are equal, all live in the same way and each one divides what he may possess amongst the others, so that there is also no injustice".

I raised the objection that this perfect equality could not possibly exist because the identical rights and duties in domestic economy could not be applied in the same way to the hale and strong members of the family as to the weak and sickly. But I had to repeat my idea in various ways before the Sakai caught the meaning, then he exclaimed:

"Ah, I suppose you are speaking of some sort of deformity, or defect. Amongst us it is so rare to find either one or the other that it would be difficult for a Sakai to understand when you talk of men different to him in form or robustness. If however, the Evil Spirit makes one of our children be born deformed, or with a defect, he is treated with the care necessary to his state but he cannot transmit his infirmity to others because, first of all our customs compel him to lead a life of chastity, and secondly, no woman of our tribe would consent to a union with him".

[94]

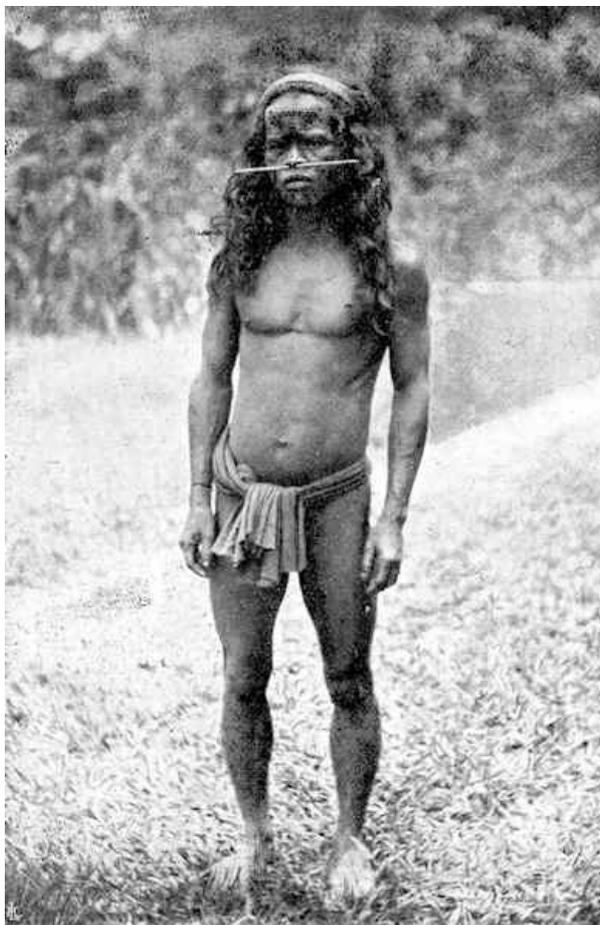
Oh, Lycurgus, I thought, thy wise laws have here, among savages, a less brutal application. For one who dies loveless (and as the Sakais are not given to strong passions, and are chaste by nature, this is not a very great sacrifice) many are saved from unhappiness and a whole race preserved from degeneration.

The old man having spoken of the Evil Spirit, I abruptly demanded who this much feared being might be.

"He possesses all things", he answered, lowering his voice as if afraid of being heard. "He is in the wind, the lightning, the earthquake, he is in the trees and the water. Sometimes he enters our huts and makes someone die; then we bury our dead very deep under the ground, leaving to them food and their own property, and we fly from the spot, for it is a dangerous thing to remain under the Spirit's gaze".

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Finished our conversation, of which I have sought to give you a faithful translation, although the Sakai had expressed himself in the short, monotonous phrases peculiar to his tongue, that is scarce of words and verbs, we prepared to follow the example of the other members of my host's family who had gone to sleep during our quiet chat. But before closing my eyes I repassed in mind the theories expounded by the old forester, and I found in them such a just expression of rectitude, of simple but strong logic, of spirit and intelligence that I could not but admire and agree.



**A half-breed Sakai.**

*p.* [103](#).

I asked myself if the philosophy of the learned was not inferior to that of this savage, who considered existence as limited to the satisfaction of material wants, without torturing himself about imaginary need, and without consuming nerves, muscles, heart and brain in a daily struggle for what he could dispense with? And I asked myself if in that perfect inertness, in that immunity from all feelings of sensuality, hatred, ambition or rivalry must he not be a thousand times happier than we in civilized society who seek fortune and satisfy our caprices, our follies, in the midst of excitement and strong emotions, living in a continual fever of suspicion, jealousy and envy, accumulating perhaps riches but withering up the soul which cannot enjoy even for a day the supreme blessing of serenity?

[95]

Which is nearer the truth (I argued to myself), he who places himself in report with Nature as one of her offspring receiving all the necessities of life straight from her never-failing stores and thereby lowering himself to the state of the humblest of her creatures, or we who worry ourselves in building up a model of perfection, a mannikin, that every one wants to dress up in his own way—with his own virtues or his own defects?

"A contented mind is a continual feast". This adage was verified in the person of the old Sakai. An enemy to progress of any kind he logically conformed himself to his surroundings, and limited his desires to what he was sure of obtaining.

But we who in our civilization hunger and thirst after progress, why do we continually preach this proverb to our young, and illustrate it to them on every possible occasion?

It is, perhaps, because on every hand we come across harsh contradictions presented by those who, with all their study, try to reconcile the true with the absurd in order to get the latter accepted in homage to the former, and they make use of this maxim for their own ends and to take advantage of others, whereas this savage, reared in the maternal arms of Nature (that gives and takes, produces and causes without either deceit or change) was in himself so satisfied with what she provided and ordered that there would have been no need to make him learn with his lips a precept that sprang spontaneously from his heart.

[96]

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My kind reader will perhaps give a shrug of the shoulders at the mere idea of my having the will to philosophize so soon after such a terrible adventure. Well, I confess I did not feel inclined to do so after another which was even more frightful still.

I had left my cabin in the afternoon to go and inspect the works of a road which I was having made near a little Sakai village, situated at the foot of a mountain. When I reached the spot I called out loudly, as was my habit, to give the necessary orders; but nobody answered.

Wondering what it meant I descended to the group of huts which I found empty and half destroyed. I supposed that Death had stricken one of the inhabitants and that the others, according to their custom, had abandoned their dwellings here to erect new ones far from the place visited by the Evil Spirit.

The discovery vexed me and made me feel rather uneasy, for the sun would soon be setting and no good could be expected of a several miles march through the forest, alone, and without a light.



**A meeting in celebration of king Edward VII's Coronation.**

*p.* [104](#).

I ascended with all haste to my previous position in order to find the path I had come by. The sky was rapidly darkening with the frenzied dance of heavy black clouds and it was not long before they opened their flood gates and the rain fell in perfect torrents, accompanied by dazzling flashes of lightning.

[97]

I pushed on as best I was able but under my feet rivers of water were quickly formed, which cancelled all traces and made me lose my bearings, whilst the fear of being again lost began to trouble me.

Only too soon I became aware that my inquietude was justified because, in the meantime, night had fallen and neither the lightning nor my matches were of any avail in showing me the way I ought to follow.

Then I was seized with that awful anguish I had experienced on the other occasion and which has so direful an effect upon the spirit as to render one incapable of even thinking.

I turned this way and that without any notion hardly of what I was seeking.

I stumbled over the long grasses and more than once rolled down a hollow full of nettles and thorns, which stung and scratched my face and hands horribly. I scrambled out, however, almost directly, animated by a fiery instinct of self preservation, and pulling out from my flesh the thorns that hurt me most, I recommenced, blood-stained and unnerved, to grope my way in the dark.

In one of my tumbles I felt a huge beast gallop over my body. What was it? I thought it must be a wild-boar.

I remained there some time on the ground smarting and exhausted. My strength and energy seemed to diminish every minute and the mad, desperate thought flashed across my mind to not move any more but just lie there under the rain to wait for death or daylight.

From the tall trees came pelting down upon me shells, husks and fruit, the remains of a feast the monkeys were having upon the thick boughs that sheltered them from the bad weather, and from afar came a low, dull sound like the deep rumbling noise that often precedes Nature's tragedies.

Life in the jungle had taught me what that fearful roar meant. It was caused by the clamouring cries of thousands of wild beasts, rushing forth from their dens and hastening towards the bloody convention which every night they hold.

[98]

It gave me the force to make a supreme effort. I got up and staggered forward, not knowing where I was going and trusting purely to chance.

But in the end I was obliged to give myself up for lost and every hope of escaping my horrible fate forsook me. I could no longer shout but it would have been useless, for the ever-increasing din would have prevented others, and me, from hearing anything else. I managed to prop myself

up against a rock and with all the strength that was left me, I clung to it with one hand whilst with the other I turned up the collar of my thin, linen jacket and tried to cover my face.

Did I do this not to see the approaching danger and inevitable fate which was fast overtaking me? I do not know; I only remember the act, but not the thought that prompted it.

Anyway willing or not willing, I saw everything.

Close by, some big phosphorescent mushrooms illuminated the darkness with their faint, ghastly gleams of light.

The tumult, the row, the trampling always seemed to get louder and nearer. It was like the advance of an endless host of demons and evil spirits.

Terrible crashes, furious roars, wild howls, and formidable feline cries began to reach my ear distinctly. I could have sworn that all the fiercest inhabitants of the forest had agreed to meet near me. Was this conviction the effect of the terror which had taken possession of me or was it a horrible fact?

Two burning orbs flashed through the night and an unearthly yell made my poor body start once more, though stiffened as it was by horror.

A tiger was here, perhaps 50, perhaps 20 yards from me!

[99]

I feebly endeavoured again to hide my face; it would be preferable for death to come upon me suddenly than to count the instants of its coming.

I backed myself closer under the rock, clinging to it with my left hand, whose nerves, muscles and nails had turned into steel under the supremacy of terror.

A few minutes of cruel, breathless suspense....

I felt dimly amazed at finding myself still alive: there were two tigers and they were diabolically squalling out a love-duet. Who has not felt a shiver run down his back when, snug in a warm bed, the mid-night stillness has been broken by two amorous cats on the roof or in the court that are putting their vocal powers and their hearer's patience to the test? Imagine then to be frozen against a wet stone whilst a couple of tigers express their sentiments of love in much the same language, but in tones proportionate to their size!

In the fervour of their passion would they notice the dainty meal prepared for them in my person?

Not far off the implacable *sladan* was savagely bellowing. Was he too bound for my place of martyrdom?

My slow torture, under the pale glimmer of the phosphorescent mushrooms must have lasted for hours, but I no longer had the perception of time or peril. Only the appalling fear of the flesh kept me grasping tightly to the rock without making the slightest movement.

I did not know when the tigers went away or when the enormous multitude of beasts of prey beat a retreat.

The first sensation I had of being alive was when the two heralds of the morn, the *cep plôt* and the *cep riò* announced with their musical notes the dawn of another day.

Then I stirred. My limbs were benumbed by that long immobility, and with the cold which was all the more intense from the rain first and the dew afterwards, both of which had drenched me to the skin.

[100]

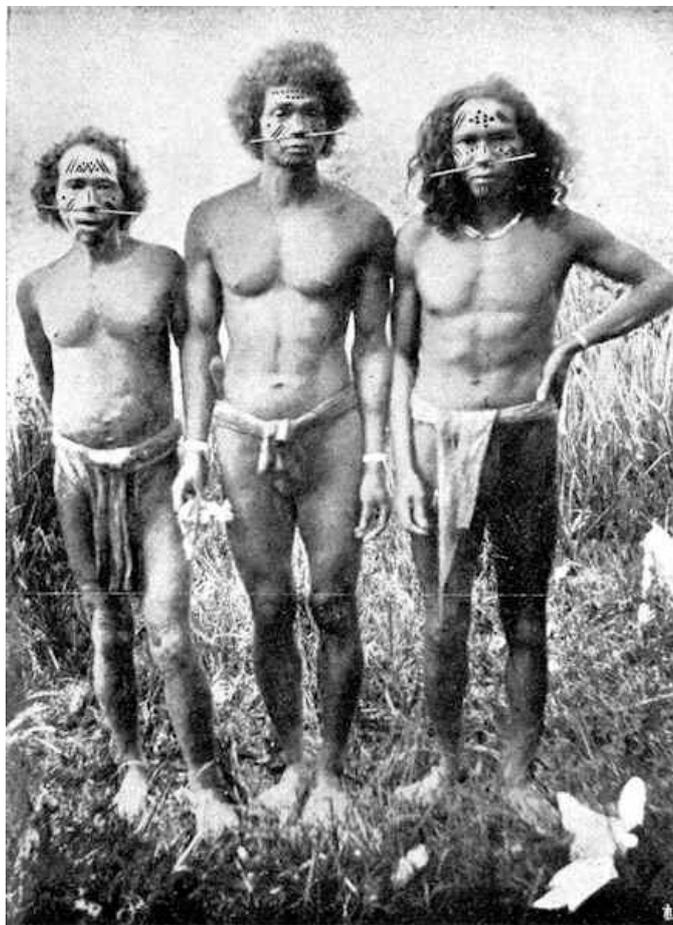
I was shaking with ague and, weak from my long fast and the frights I had passed through, I scarcely knew how to get away from that spot where I had endured so many hours of agony, and yet it was necessary for me to move as soon as possible.

The jungle was alive with gay voices; all the harmless, innocent creatures, that populated its hospitable region, hailed the new day with noisy acclamation, and their joy found an echo in me, for its thousand-fold blessed light would show me my road to safety.

I afterwards learnt that my bad luck had guided me to a rock, close to a spring of hot water, where the kings, queens, princes and princesses of the forest were accustomed to hold their soirees!

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I had to repose for some days before recovering from the physical and moral shocks of that awful night and for some time afterwards I made my faithful little Sakai accompany me on my tours of inspection round Perak, as with him there was no fear of being lost.



Three types of tatoed Bretak Sakais.

p. [110](#).

One day we got as far as the summit of the Berumbum where we passed the night among some families that had taken refuge up there. I was enchanted with the starry sky, the quiet air and mild temperature I found upon that height and which made my thoughts fly across oceans and continents to the sea which reflects my Liguria. Up there the nocturnal silence is not rent by the blood-thirsty cries of wild animals, and after having been lulled to sleep for so long by their distant clamour, and especially after the strong emotions I had quite recently experienced, that profound calmness was to me so full of sentimental suggestion that instead of sleeping my spirit wandered into the past, recalling with pleasure and sadness those evenings of sweet intimacy once enjoyed in the bosom of my family, then a numerous one but now reduced by death and other events.

[101]

When at last I fell asleep I did not awake till morning.

As soon as I had got up my young Sakai servant took the pillow I always carried with me, and began to shake it, but he shrank back with a frightened cry as a little snake of about a yard long, belonging to a very poisonous class, fell from under it.

The dear little beast had slept upon the same pillow as I, perhaps to prove to me that his sort is very much maligned and that if you leave them alone to do what they like, without giving them any disturbance, they will never think of biting you.

Ten Sakai families were encamped up there and I exhorted them all to come down from that height of 5000 feet and occupy themselves in agriculture, for the cold during the night is sometimes severe and the poor things must suffer from it, as they have no clothes to keep them warm.

But all my persuasions were fruitless.

I resumed my journey and it must have been about ten o'clock in the morning when in the distance an old man who, as far as I could understand from the half twilight of the forest, made me signs of friendship.

I went towards him and saw that where he stood there had once been a village but its now miserable aspect made it a strange contrast to the riches of Nature with which it was surrounded.

The solitary inhabitant of that forsaken and dilapidated place offered us some fruit and I asked him the reason of the battered huts and general desolation. He told me with grief in his tones that the village had been devastated by armed enemies. "Many of my brethren were killed and many others were taken away as slaves and the rest have fled to safer and more inaccessible parts, but I could not find it in my heart to abandon this spot where I was born; where I grew up....".

[102]

This was indeed a strange sentiment for one whose people for the most lead a roving life either from habit or from superstition!

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Armed enemies! and who were they? For certain they appertained to the scum of neighbouring peoples of which I have already spoken. Men who, though encompassed on all sides by civilization, still remain uncivilized; men who, shunned by their honest and laborious countrymen, make the free forest a field for their vile passions, and now that they can no longer give vent to their evil desires in depredation and bloodshed, because of the severe measures taken by the Government, continue to damage the poor Sakais in many odious and insidious ways without always drawing down upon their heads the punishment they deserve.

Who were they? Who are they? Delinquents by nature, such as are to be found in most of our large cities; people born with savage instincts; men who would rather pass their days in the midst of vice and open corruption than live a life of honour and opulence.

None of these delinquents are to be found in thorough-bred Sakai tribes, they may however be met with amongst the inhabitants of the plain where there is a mixture of race, the result of those forced unions which were the desperation of Sakai women when taken prisoners. In the children born of these unions one can often trace the natural impulse towards violence and robbery that they have inherited from their fathers.

I myself had a proof of this.

As Inspector I often used to pass from one encampment to another, sometimes on the plain and sometimes on the mountain and I frequently took these brief journeys alone as the paths were well trodden.

[103]

It so happened that one day I had stopped in the hut of one of these half-breeds—where there were several real Sakais who had come from their jungle home to exchange products—and on my return I was overtaken by one of my good friends that offered to accompany me for a little way.

As we walked along together I noticed he proceeded with great caution and kept looking about with suspicion. All at once he caught me by the arm and pointed to a stick stuck into the ground just in front, from which some leaves were dangling. As I did not understand his act he advanced a step or two and showed me a well concealed trap, set with a poisoned dart.

It had been fixed across the path and I should have assuredly fallen over it, if my companion had not prevented me. He simply said that it must have been prepared for game and soon after left me.

But later on I heard that he had not told me the truth in saying this for the trap had been put there, on purpose for me, by the villanous bastard in whose hut I had halted, and whose photograph I was afterwards able to take and here present to my readers.

This man had not the least reason for resentment against me but he was actuated by that spirit of hatred which induces all evil-doers to try and get rid of those who may be an obstacle to their bad living and knowing that I had the intention of passing his way again in a few days he had placed the trap there in order to kill me. He was so contented, however, with what he had done that he could not keep the secret to himself, and his wife (a pure Sakai) upon hearing it, despatched my friend to the ambush and so saved me.

If this had been discovered at the moment the wretch would most likely have paid for his sin with his life.

[104]

From this episode it is easy to see the difference between a thorough-bred and a half-bred Sakai; the former will risk life itself to impede a crime that has been coolly premeditated by the latter.

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Something of the same kind befell me on another occasion when I was returning to my cabin by myself.

At Tapah preparations were being made for celebrating the coronation of King Edward VII and I, as one of His Majesty's colonial officers, of course felt interested in the proceedings and it seemed to me a right thing that a representation of my friends the savages, who were under my administration, should accompany me to town for the occasion. I had therefore been round to as many as I could to tell them to be ready to follow me whenever I gave them notice.

Towards evening I was going quietly along, rather tired with my long march, and listening to the pretty good-night songs of the birds, when I was suddenly hit in the abdomen by a poisoned arrow, shot by an unknown hand. Aware of the terrible power of the forest venoms I gave myself up for lost and so without doubt I should have been if fortune had not sent me assistance. I was energetically squeezing the wound when one of my faithful Sakais came up. Upon hearing what had happened, he exclaimed:

"This is the work of a *Mai-Gop*, because one of our darts would have passed right through you, and besides none of us would harm you because you are good to us".

The kind fellow sucked out my wound and knew by its reddish-black colour that the poison used was a mixture of *legop* and *ipok* juices, most deadly in its effect.

Hurrying me towards the village, in a few instants he had prepared an antidote by mixing a pinch of lime and powdered charcoal together and then wetting it with the urine of his little boy. [105]

He washed the wound carefully with this strange lotion, making it penetrate well in, and recommended me not to touch it.

I let him do as he would, as there was no better remedy to my knowledge, although I had little or no faith in the mixture.

I suffered a great deal for some days, but at last the wound (which had all the requisites for a fatal one) healed. Was this fact due to the merits of lime, charcoal, or urine?

Let the disciples of Esculapius decide!

It got to be known not long after that I had been made the victim of one of those ill-disposed individuals who come into the world with criminality written on their brow.

But for one who has the compensation of devotion and affection from the humble and good, is not the hatred of malefactors a thing to be proud of?

---

So in the year 1901, I was invited by the British Resident (in my quality of Superintendent of the Sakais) to take part in the festivities in honour of King Edward the Seventh's ascension to the throne.

As I before said I had thought it would be nice to take with me a small band of my forest friends and my desire was so well realized that when the time came I gathered around me about 500 men, women and children, belonging to different tribes, and with this troop of followers I descended to Tapah.

Here the reception given to those poor inhabitants of the Jungle was exceptionally kind, and they in their turn gladly did their utmost to satisfy the curiosity they excited and were highly pleased at showing the effect of their powerful poisons upon birds which they hit, with remarkable dexterity, whilst on the wing. [106]

The men displayed their skill in striking the bull's eye with their darts, and in successfully climbing the greasy pole, and the women gave proof of their musical talents by playing their *ciniloi*.

In this way they got a great many dollars and were overwhelmed with presents and attentions by the English ladies and gentlemen, residing at Tapah.

The women were invited to go to the stand reserved for the Authority and came back with necklaces and strings of coloured beads, that they admired with childish delight.

Not much less contented was I at the good impression my simple friends made by their nice behaviour and modest manners.

**Footnotes:**

- [6] "Philosophy, poor and naked thou goest". This is a quotation from the Italian poet Petrarch. *Translator's Note*.



**CHAPTER IX.**

**The origin of the Sakais—Hypothesis and legend—Physical character—Thick tresses, gay flowers and troublesome guests—Hereditary antipathy—The five senses reduced to two—Food and drink—Tranquil life—Intolerance of authority—Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law—Logical laziness—A Sakai journalist—The story of a mattress.**

[105]

[106]

[107]

Paolo Mantegazza, the scientific poet writes:

"Man is eternally tormenting himself with unanswered questions: Where did our species first come from? When did this life first begin?"

"This is his real original sin, as it is also the source of his true greatness. He is but a single link in an endless chain; he is but one imperceptible moment enclosed by a Past which he does not know and a Future which he will never see. But he feels the need of looking back and asking: where did we begin? And of looking forward, asking: where shall we finish?"

I, too, have often made much the same demands, not about myself, for I have no inclination for metaphysical reflections, but about the Sakais who have unconsciously given me a difficult problem to solve: who are they? From whence did they come? [108]

There is absolutely nothing that speaks of them, and in the absence of positive fact we can only fall back upon mere hypothesis, more or less probable, until an accurate investigation with regard to the origin of this primitive people may present us with a convincing theory.

But in order to make these studies it would be necessary to live in their midst (and not many could adapt themselves to the various inconveniences of such a life) because the live Sakai never abandons his native forest and to have a dead one for the purpose would be next to impossible, as he who attempted to carry away a corpse would expose himself to serious danger, there being no greater sacrilege, according to the idea of these bushmen, than that of touching a dead body or of digging up the ground where a skeleton lies.

Therefore there does not seem to be any near chance of arriving at a definite conclusion upon the subject.

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It is generally believed that anciently a people, called Benuas, not willing to submit themselves to the laws imposed upon them by the then flourishing and civilized India and fearing to fall into slavery, advanced through Indo-China till they reached the Malay Peninsula. Here also they found themselves pursued and surrounded by civilization, so, instead of settling round the rich and smiling shores, they turned towards the forest and encamped there. This version of their immigration would account for the Sakais not having the least idea of the sea which they never mention, not even in their legends or superstitions.

Shunning all contact with the other inhabitants of the country they had chosen as a refuge, they concealed themselves in the jungle, thus preserving their independence and the purity of their race. [109]

Some centuries later, in an era of fanaticism, invasions were made upon them with the object of converting them to Mohammedism but the only result was fire and bloodshed and after each conflict the surviving Sakais fled further into the forest (into those parts which had never been before explored) or to the natural strongholds of the far off mountains.

If this hypothesis holds good then the Sakais must be a very ancient people. It is an accepted fact that as far back as the 8th century Arabian merchants traded with the inhabitants of the Peninsula and that a very remote intercourse existed between these and Hindostan, and although there is no substantial proof, no analogies of language, customs or creed upon which to base such a conjecture, neither, as yet, has anything been proved to the contrary whilst many primeval superstitions prevalent amongst the Sakais are still to be found in other tribes living in proximity with believers in Buddha and Brahma.

Another legend, sustained by the Kurumbus themselves, would make one suppose that the Sakais belong to that people, once grand, but now broken up and dispersed. In fact, even at the present time, there are many popular songs amongst the Malays in which the Kurumbus and Sakais are mixed up together.

Dr. Short, in his ethnological studies of India, describes certain characteristics and habits of the Kurumbus, inhabiting the forest, which perfectly coincide with those to be met with amongst the Sakais.

I refer to those regarding physiognomy, structure, and stature, the primitive mode of cultivating corn, the choice of food, and the improvidence shown in eating, with the consequence that deficiency follows upon excess.

Naturally these points of similarity are no proof that the two peoples are of the same origin but they give to the question a certain argumentative value. [110]

What seems to me sure is that the Sakais have nothing in common with the Malays or with the various other races that surround them. This may perhaps be owing to the contact the latter have with each other, the result being a modification of customs, traditions and purity of blood. I find, however, many traits which connect them with the Mongolian and Caucasian races (Indians and Semitics) and there is much in them which resembles other peoples living in Indo-China and India.

It must be understood, though, that I speak only of the Sakais of the hills and not those of the plains who have in a great measure lost the characteristics which should distinguish them

through their mixing with Kampongs, Malays and Chinese Ghedes.

But let us now leave aside all the vague suppositions that for several reasons I have felt bound to mention (not the least of which being perhaps the need we all feel of investigating our neighbour's past), and let us rather examine the Sakai as he is in the 20th century.

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Evidently he has not perceived the passing away of nineteen or more centuries because they have left no inheritance for him.

The Sakai, then, is somewhat short in stature but sufficiently hardy and well-formed, except in the lower limbs which render him slightly bow-legged.

The cause of this trifling deformity is to be found in the habit they have, from their earliest childhood, of sitting upon their heels, as it were, thus leaving the knees wide apart.

This posture, however, is not a particularity of the jungle inhabitants as I have frequently seen Italians in the same position, but the latter lean their shoulders against a tree or wall for support so that there is less strain upon the legs. [111]

When they are eating or listening to something that interests them the Sakai men and women will remain for whole hours in this attitude without showing any fatigue whatever.

Their feet are rather large and properly arched. The big toe is well separated from the others and is very strong.

The muscles of their arms are not much developed and sometimes these members are too long in proportion to the rest of the body. Their hands are also very long and slender. The chest muscles, on the contrary, are very well developed owing probably to the continual habit of climbing trees, rocks, rifts and the like in search of food or for any other motive that their nomadic life may make necessary.

Altogether the figure of the Sakai does not reveal any large amount of vigour perhaps because he is usually thin and is what might be termed pot-bellied, owing to the sort of food he eats and the cold he suffers during the night, but he is much more robust and taller (the average height of an adult is a little past one metre and a half [7] than the other tribes and races around him who are in close reports with civilization. This fact would almost make one believe that civilization is detrimental to the physical development of an individual.

These Aborigines are endowed with wonderful agility, as may be seen when they clamber up certain clefts that we should judge impossible of ascent and also when they spring from one part to another with a nimbleness that might excite the envy of our best gymnasts.

They have not much muscular force, as I have said, but they are second to none in enduring fatigue, especially in the case of long marches, to which they are well accustomed as every day they walk about 20 miles, carrying upon their shoulders the by no means light product of the chase, together with the various roots and bulbs they find in the forest, as well as their inseparable blow-pipes and well-filled quivers. [112]

They also resist very well the privations to which they are sometimes subjected by their own improvidence. All that they bring back with them they will eat at once, be it animal or vegetable food, and when they cannot finish it up by themselves they invite people from another village or tribe to come and help them devour it, laughing at every idea of domestic economy that I have vainly tried to impress upon their minds.

But are they wrong, after all? They know for certain that the forest will not leave them to starve and when there is no more rice, durian, mangosteen etc., it is never difficult to catch a pheasant, monkey, rat, serpent or even a wild boar.

Were they acquainted with Italian operas their favourite lines would certainly be:

Non curiamo l'incerto domani  
Se quest' oggi n'è dato godere. [8]

and their choice would be appropriate, for where else could the Borgias be so well remembered as in a land famous for its poisons?

The Sakais' skin is of a colour between light and burnt ochre, the tint getting darker as they grow older (in consequence of their long exposure to the sun), at which period the whole body becomes rough and wrinkled. The children are of a much lighter colour until they begin their life in the open air. [113]



Another.

p. 113.

The woman, as a type, differs very little from the man. She is rather shorter as is the case with all the pure and mixed Mongolian races.

As a girl she has a rounded form and is not without grace. As long as she is healthy and blooming she may be considered a beauty.... in the forest, but she soon gets faded because of the fatiguing life she leads and also because of her early marriage, for she is already a wife when our girls are at the beginning of their teens.

The boys are generally healthy, sturdy little fellows.

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The Sakai's head is regular in form and size like that of the Mongolian race; the cheek-bones, however, are less prominent than those of the Tartars and the eyes are wider open and less oblique.

The forehead neither retreats nor protrudes and is high and spacious enough. The nose is large and slightly flattened at the root. The facial angle measures pretty much the same as that of the Chinese.

The mouth, well-cut and not too large, with rather thick lips, would be beautified by two rows of sound regular teeth if the latter were not so blackened by the constant chewing of tobacco, betel-nut and sirih.

The chin is sharp.

All the features, in fact, are very marked and the jaws are a little projecting but the countenance is not an unpleasant one and wears an expression of frankness and goodness that soon wins sympathy.

The head is covered with a rich, crisp growth of very black hair but few hairs are to be seen on the face or body. Those rare ones, whose appearance would be rapturously hailed by our youths as the forerunners of a possible mustache or beard, are plucked out by the Sakais in their spare time!

[114]

A great many ladies would be highly contented to possess the beautiful tresses that the Sakai woman generally has, but whilst amongst us an artistic arrangement of the hair is an attraction which often makes us forget the lesser charms of the face, the raven locks of these women sometimes cause a feeling of disgust.

They do not take the least care of this splendid ornament bestowed upon them by Nature; when they do not let their hair hang dirty and dishevelled upon their shoulders they just tie it up badly with a strip of many-coloured upas bark (a remedy against migraine) stick in some roughly carved combs and hair-pins (amulets against the malignant spirit of the wind) and adorn it with fresh flowers.

But alas! under that bow of natural ribbon, under those combs and flowers there is a tiny world of restless inhabitants and the poor primitive Eve is obliged to scratch her head furiously now and then.

And not less furiously does the man also scratch his though he takes much more pains over his

hair, combing and smoothing it in order to divide it well in front and display the tattoo which distinguishes the parting.

Frequently both the men and the women rub into their heads the finely pounded root of a plant to which they attribute the virtue of softening their rough, luxuriant locks and of destroying the inmates.

Even the men sometimes wear combs and hair-pins.

Cleanliness as the reader will have understood from the example given above is not the highest quality of the Sakai any more than it is of other primitive peoples. Hygienic practices march alongside civil progress. The bath, as a pleasure or a necessity, is quite unknown to them, and those who dwell amongst the mountains have the greatest fear of water. The foaming torrents and noisy cascades that dash down the ravines have inspired them with terror and as they have no notion whatever of being able to keep afloat, they are afraid to venture near a stream, however quietly it may flow, unless it is shallow enough for them to see the bottom.

[115]



A Sakai beauty.

p. 119.

Not only have they no idea of swimming but they are equally ignorant of any other means, of remaining on the water's surface. They have no canoes of any kind and when they want to cross from one shore to the other they either throw a huge tree into the river to serve as a bridge or they walk on round the bank until they find a fordable point and can reach the opposite side by jumping from stone to stone.

I am glad to say that my lectures upon cleanliness have not been completely fruitless for many of the young people make their ablutions now from time to time, especially the females, and come to me asking for soap. Though not a great step towards progress this is always better than nothing. The old people, of course, do not regard the bathing innovation with kindly eyes. They are always filthy to a repugnant degree, begrimed with ashes and earth from lying about round the fire, day, and night; the smell that emanates from them certainly does not invite one to approach them.

But their fathers and their grandfathers never washed themselves and so it is their duty to follow their questionable example.

The five senses with the Sakais are practically reduced to two for whilst they are very quick in hearing and seeing, the same cannot be said of smelling, feeling and tasting.

[116]

The acuteness of the two first is due to the continual need they have, in the forest, of keeping the ear and the eye open. To be on their guard against enemies they must either hear or see them.

The weakness of the smelling faculty may be explained by the bad way the Sakai men and women treat their noses, boring holes through them large enough to pass a little bamboo stick, which they wear, partly for ornament, and partly as a charm, against I do not exactly know what danger. And not only this, but they are in the habit of playing a sort of flute with their nose,

stopping up the right nostril with leaves, so it is easy to comprehend what little sensibility this unfortunate appendix of the face can have.

Owing to their almost complete nudity their skin is not very susceptible to touch for it is hardened and toughened by the effects of sun, rain, cold and dew which makes it as weather-beaten as that of any old salt's; besides this they are accustomed from childhood to be stung by insects and nettles, to be pricked and scratched by thorns and brambles, and to be cut by the dry stiff blades of the long grasses of their native place. Habit is second nature.

Their deficient sense of taste results from the practices mentioned further on.



Another Sakai beauty.

p. [119](#).

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Sakai cookery does not require much study or experience.

The vegetable food they have at their disposition consists of: sweet potatoes, yams, maize, sikoi, different bulbs and tubers that they find in the forest like we do truffles, many edible leaves and all sorts of fruit, mushrooms, *nanka*, *guaccicous*, *guà pra*,<sup>[9]</sup> etc. Rice is an imported luxury which they use when they can get it.

[117]

Here are the necessaries for a variety of dishes, but the Sakais know no variety in the culinary art and with the exception of the fruit, the yams and potatoes that are cooked under the hot ashes, the whole lot is put, with a little water, into cooking-pots made out of large bamboo canes, and boiled up together into a kind of paste with pieces of serpents, rats, toads, lizards, beetles and other similar delicacies to give it flavour.

The monkey, deer, wild-boar, wild-sheep and any other big game caught in traps they just burn at the fire without taking the trouble to skin the animal, and then they eat it nearly raw.

They season the meat with salt, when they have any, which is not often, and with a capsicum that sets your mouth on fire. The use of this capsicum, and the continual chewing of tobacco, and betel has ruined the palate of the Sakais, and left them with little power of relishing.

Fish is rarely seen at the board (I use the word in a figurative sense as the thing it signifies does not exist for them) of the mountain tribes for the double motive that they have no fishing tackle and their fear of the water makes them avoid it as much as possible. Nevertheless when there is a dearth of other food they will throw in some beaten *ple-pra* and the fish, of a fair size, that rise to the surface to bite it are deftly hit by a knife, the Sakai seldom failing in his mark.

To the simplicity of their cooking corresponds the still greater simplicity of their drinks which are —of the singular number.

The inhabitants of the forest drink nothing but water but this they require clear and fresh. Should it not be perfectly pure in colour and taste they will not drink it. They always seek a spring to satisfy their thirst and supply their families with the necessary liquid.

[118]

Sometimes, when I was first living amongst them, I happened to stoop over a torrent or stream to drink some water but my companions protested vehemently declaring that it might do me a great deal of harm.

They are afraid of poisons in every shape and form as they are also of contagion and would even

be frightened if in drinking they were to touch their bamboo bottles and glasses with their lips. They are very clever in pouring the contents down their throats without letting the receptacle come in contact with their mouths, an accomplishment which we should not be able to achieve until after many damp trials.

It might almost be desired that our civilization would imitate this hygienic custom of the savages. How many infections the less! How much fewer the microbes that poison the blood of our poor people!

The Sakais do not drink milk, not only from the difficulty in obtaining it but also from a strange prejudice which I have never succeeded well in understanding.

Once they are weaned they never swallow a single drop of milk.

Neither do they drink alcoholic beverages for the simple reason that they have not got them and do not know what they are.

If they should ever come to taste them and procure them easily will they not crave for them like all other savages?

As soon as the Sakai's frugal meal is finished he fills his mouth with tobacco, or if he has none, with sirih.



Resting from work.

*p.* [123](#).

This is composed of a leaf or two of betel—a plant that possesses a certain narcotic virtue—smeared with lime and rolled up round a little tobacco and a piece of areca nut. Both men and women chew these quids with great relish, spitting out the juice from time to time.

[119]

The old people, whose want of teeth makes mastication next to impossible, put the ingredients into a bamboo and pound them until they are reduced to, what they consider, a delicious paste.

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The young Sakai reaches the height of his vigour at about eighteen years old, after which he has a brief stationary period, followed by a rapid falling off that I think must be caused by his being continually exposed to the inclemency of the weather.

The woman begins to decline soon after her first confinement. From the age of 13 to 15 she becomes a wife and in two years from that date she is but the ghost of her former self. Thin, and with a wrinkled skin, not even a shadow remains of her youthful freshness and the attractive points she had as a girl.

But what does this matter to her? Her husband is faithful to her, with a fidelity that knows no hypocrisy; she is happy and is proud of her maternity; she can still dance and strike chords upon her *krob*, modulate a plaintive ditty on her *ciniloi* and sing whilst she beats on her bamboo sticks an accompaniment that tortures well-tuned ears. For the rest, if her beauty soon fades, her ugliness does not create the least feeling of disgust amongst the Sakais of the masculine gender, who have aesthetic ideas peculiarly their own.

It is enough to say that the ugliest of the female sex are the prettiest and the most admired.

I am speaking in earnest.

They, as well as the men, are in the habit of painting themselves in grotesque stripes and hieroglyphics, in imitation of medicinal plants, the principal colours used being red and black. Sometimes they add a little white but very rarely yellow.

[120]

When I tell you that these strange designs are not only the manifestation of coquetry or vanity but that they are also made to frighten away the Evil Spirit you may well imagine how they each try to arabesque their skin in a more horrible way than the other, in order to look uglier and be more admired.

How many, even in civilized places, would like to adopt such a mode of winning the admiration which their forbidding features cannot command!

One of these artistic creations cannot last more than a day. It is carefully scraped off and replaced.

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The Sakai's life is tranquil and serene. He does not pass much of his time in the hut because every morning he goes off into the forest in search of game and vegetable food. He is accompanied by his boys who either practise with their blow-pipe or with a pointed stick dig in the ground for roots and bulbs, or they catch insects and reptiles to fill the baskets they carry on their backs.

When the Sakai is not out hunting, or visiting friends and relations in other villages, he remains quietly in his hut sleeping, smoking, chewing a nice quid or in preparing poisons and poisoned arrows.

He is good-tempered and good-hearted, and never quarrels with his wife. I have never heard of one of these savages beating his wife or children, or of ill-treating them in any way and neither of using violence with any one else unless with a declared foe or one who has offended his sentiments and superstitions.

One day I ordered a child to do something, I don't remember what, and he answered me impertinently with a curt *neay* (no). I turned to his mother who was present and told her that the boy ought to have his ears boxed.

[121]

The woman gave me a look of mingled wonder and irritation, then said: "You are a bad man if you would hurt my son when he did not mean any harm!"

Yet in spite of this kind of reasoning and the clemency shown towards children (which would make a pedagogue of the educational rod system commit suicide) the Sakais are honest and respectful to their parents and the old; they are affectionate in their family and, poor savages! are still a long way off from such a degree of civilization as to cut up a cross wife or a troublesome lover into pieces and send them in a mysterious valise to take a sea-bath or in a butcher's sack to take a fresh water one in a convenient river.

But the answer given me by the boy and his mother's implicit approval were only the decisive affirmation of that indomitable spirit of freedom that animates the Sakai and makes him do what he likes but never what others command.

In fact, even taking him as a guide or travelling companion it is always wise to let him have his own way without interfering at all. He will rest, eat, smoke, and walk on just as he chooses and if you contradict him in his desire he will turn his back upon you and abandon you in the midst of the forest.

Every act of his life reveals and marks this mania of independence. I will quote a rare case. Should a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law not be able to agree in consequence of the difference in their characters no tragic scenes or petty quarrels occur; the young couple merely take up their scanty belongings, destroy their own hut and march off to build another at a sufficient distance to avoid troublesome contact or the possibility of further misunderstandings and discord.

It is so: nobody will submit to the will of another and even when settling some particular question unless they are all of the same identical opinion the matter has to be abandoned.

[122]

Sons-in-law and daughters-in-law love their fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law well enough and *viceversa*, and they all respect each other and can live peaceably together, but no one can impose his own will without determining a strike.

They put into practice the same simple remedy when there is not very good harmony in the conjugal state. A man and woman cannot exactly agree as husband and wife? They cheerfully divorce themselves instead of poisoning their existence by continual altercations and the reluctance they both feel at doing what the other wishes.

How much regarding the human spirit civilized people have yet to learn from savages! Do you not think so, kind reader?

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The Sakai is commonly believed to be lazy by nature. This is an error, for their so-called laziness is nothing but the result of the circumstances amidst which they live.

Once their daily food is provided and they have prepared a good supply of poisons and darts what remains for them to do in the depth of the forest, where there is no thirst for riches (because unknown to them), for honours (of which they have no idea at all), or for power (which their individual independence repudiates)?



**Manufacturing poisoned arrows.**

p. 123.

There is no race for wealth, position or fame in their parts, no struggle for life which amongst us is the inexhaustible source of progress as well as the incentive to crime and corruption.

The desire expressed by Henry IV that each one of his subjects might boil his own fowl in his own pot is more than realized amongst the Sakais. [123]

They do not cook their fowls because they are only reared as a means of barter, but it seldom happens that they cannot enjoy a choice bit of monkey, snake, deer or wild boar, which they like much better. If (a very strange case) somebody should be without, he goes to the nearest hut, enters without speaking, and sits down without being greeted. Some food is placed before him that he devours without being invited to do so and then departs as he came without any one saying a word beyond perhaps (in an excess of courtesy) a muttered "*abor*" (meaning "very good" and used as "good-bye" by the Sakais), from the visitor as he leaves.

The Sakai does not understand the reason of working when there seems to be no need, but what he finds strictly necessary he does with alacrity and good will. Whatever they have to do they all work together, the head of the family, the elder, the young men, the boys, everyone gives a hand to the best of his capacity. When they have finished, the oldest of the company lie down to doze and chew tobacco or sirih, the other men squat themselves about to chat and prepare poisons or make blow-pipes and arrows, whilst the children play and the women busy themselves over the cooking.

The terms of indolent and lazy as erroneously applied to these savages might be used with the same force in speaking of many who live in the vortex of civilized society.

We frequently see, amongst us, inexhaustible treasures of energy displayed when ambition or pure need demands it but when one or the other has been satisfied, or the necessity for such continual effort no longer seems imperative, or either the desired point has been attained or the future has been fully assured, then little by little energy gives place to a longing for repose. [124]

As I have before said, the Sakai never provides for the morrow. His work begins and finishes with the day. Give him some tobacco and in his happiness he will stay awake all the night to smoke or chew it.

He works only in proportion to the urgency of the moment and then throws himself down to rest upon the ground, because beds and chairs are unknown to him, and it is not always that dried leaves and grasses are used as a substitute for the former.

The evolution of our society has brought us on the contrary to this curious condition: he who does not work at all and consequently has no honest fatigue to rest from, lies upon a soft feather bed, there to restore his strength wasted in fast living and dissipation, whilst.... But I had better stop or I may be mistaken for a dangerous class agitator!

I will only say this: that could the Sakai look into some of our houses and palaces he would make haste to return to his own forest and if he were obliged or knew how to write his impressions he would certainly commence: "The men of the West are effeminate, lazy and indolent".

But he would do wrong to generalize for they are Western men who have conquered his forest.

I will conclude this chapter by confessing a remorse. Out of pity for these poor creatures sleeping on the cold ground, huddled together to keep each other warm, I, one day, gave a hair mattress to a Sakai family.

All of them took their places on it and slept soundly, but in the morning their bones ached so much that they gave me back my mattress in a hurry and without a single word of thanks.

And I could not blame them for this.



**Boys practising shooting.**

*p. 127.*

**Footnotes:**

[7] A little more than five feet. Translator's Note.

[8] Let to-morrow take care of itself  
If to-day is ours to enjoy.

[9] The latter is a sort of acorn which keeps good for a long time. When pounded into an oily paste it is not altogether disagreeable to the taste.



## CHAPTER X.

**The Sakai woman—Conjugal fidelity—A life of labour—Betrothals and nuptials—Love among the Sakais—Divorcement—No kissing—Chastity—Bigamy—Maternity and its excesses—Aged before the time—Fashion and coquetry.**

Woman, who has been compared to nearly every sort of animal that flies, creeps, swims or runs by poets and others of chivalrous sentiments, amongst the Sakais is simply a woman. In speaking of her those good sons of the East neither calumniate the dove nor the gazelle, and they do not slander the tiger and the snake but when they are inclined to praise her charms they do so with affection and brevity And this is not to be wondered at when one considers that the female sex in the jungle, although not beautiful to our taste (but very much so according to the Sakay criterion) is good, laborious and incorruptible. These three virtues, if they were better known in our parts would spare poor, suffering humanity a great deal of prose, as well as poetry, without the least damage to Art.

It is for this reason that the savages in the Malay States have always considered, and still consider, the Woman as the faithful companion of their life and as the mother of their children. They have never imputed to her the sin committed by Eve, which in other countries, where ever so little of Sacred History is known, has made her the butt of every insulting, sarcastic and opprobrious term. They have never discussed, as at the Macon council, the probability of a woman having a soul or not; what little is necessary to harmonize with their own they have recognized without any argument and they have found it in the care and affection shown towards her dear ones and in her unswerving faithfulness.

[126]

Amongst these uncivilized people there are no chivalrous traditions, it is true, but neither have their women been driven to seek emancipation, because, sharing with perfect equality the rights of the men, none remain for them to claim, and they have no wrongs to revenge!



**Boys practising shooting.**

*p. 127.*

The men, for their part, never dream of what Demosthenes said of the corrupt Athenians of his time, words which are repeated and acted upon by some of our leading men in this the twentieth century: "We marry a woman to have legitimate children and to possess a faithful housekeeper; we keep concubines and pay harlots for our convenience and for the enjoyments of love".

As I say, among the Sakais the one sex is not the slave of the other. They live in perfect harmony. The male is considered the head of the family, although there is nothing to be administered or directed and the female shows herself sufficiently deferential towards him, but the custom does not exist among them that one should passively submit to a will with which his, or her own does

[127]

not agree.

The man provides food by hunting in the forest, fishing, gathering fruit and cultivating a little land around; the woman helps him in the work of agriculture, sometimes follows him into the jungle, prepares his meals and attends to other domestic duties. She looks well after her children and is very jealous of them. When they are too little to walk she straps them to her back with long strips of bark, resting their legs upon her hips.

This burden does not prevent her from moving about and working. If they go for a long march the parents take turns in carrying the child.

As soon as a boy reaches the age of six seasons (6 years) he passes from his mother's to his father's guardianship and under the latter's guidance begins to make trips into the forest where he catches insects, picks up fruit and bulbs, learns, little by little, to handle the blow-pipe and to take part in the hunting and fishing as well as to distinguish poisons and assist in their extraction.

This is the educational period of the little Sakai.

The girl, on the contrary, remains with her mother and is taught to help in household (?) work, doing her part with a good will and cheerful temper.

She goes with her mother to plant and pull up potatoes and yams, to gather fire-wood, and fill the bamboo buckets with water; she learns to cook and take care of the little ones.

Quite early she begins a life of great activity. Her arms are still weak and she can scarcely lift some of the weights allotted her, but they gradually become nerved for heavier ones.

Her fatiguing duties always increase, and yet as a little girl, a maiden, and also a woman she accepts it all with a light heart and is so contented with her hard life that I have often heard one of these good, laborious creatures declare that she was completely happy. How many ladies in civilized Europe and America would be prepared to make a similar avowal?

[128]

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At about 15 years of age, when our girls are still in short dresses and are not always dignified by the term "young lady", the female Sakai is generally a wife.

From her infancy a baby-girl may be betrothed by her parents to some boy of another tribe. But if when the time comes to unite in matrimony the two young people engaged from babyhood, one no longer likes the other in the quality of a life-partner, they exchange a quiet *gne* (no) and the engagement is at a complete end. [10]

Neither one nor the other is offended at this refusal for they are of full accord that it is better not to be bound together unless the desire is mutual, as heartache and suffering would be the sure result.

Wonderful philosophy, in all its simplicity, that liberates the little Sakai world from an enormous number of martyrs, and sensational crimes.

The girl is left free in the choice of a husband. Of course advice is readily given her, favourable or otherwise to the suitor, but nobody can compel her to wed a man she is not inclined to.

This total absence of coercion is no marvel, however, for in the forest there are no fortune-hunters, dowries being unknown, and there are no Dianas to join in the chase after a rent-roll. There is no ambition with regard to title, position or lineage because all are equal. They are human creatures, made in the same form and invested with the same right of living. There is no difference of blood amongst them for it is always red.

[129]

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The young Sakai that wishes to form a family, accompanied by some near relations (grandfather, father or brothers) leaves his own village and goes to a more distant encampment.

It often happens that hunger, dusk, or some other circumstance determines this Pilgrim of Love and his companions, to stop at one hut rather than another.

They enter, as is their custom, without saying a word; they sit down on their heels and eat what is offered them.

In the meantime the young man looks about him and carefully eyes the girls, should there be any and if there is one that pleases him he points her out to one of his companions who immediately rises and tells the fortunate damsel what his relative desires.

The young woman, when she does not utter a curt *gne*, murmurs, "*Eh! eh! ngo!*" (Yes, I am willing), a phrase which seems a hiccough but is not.

Then the gallant youth draws near the girl and offers her a necklace of glass beads, and, if he has any, some brass wire to make bracelets, receiving in exchange from his future bride a quid or two of betel.

Without any delay the father of the girl and that of the young man, or some one who represents them, commence the more prosaic part of the business, that is: they decide upon the sort of presents that the bridegroom must give the parents and sisters of his spouse on the wedding-day, to compensate them for the girl he is taking away.

They discuss if the gifts must consist of only one earthen-ware cooking-pot (an article of luxury in the jungle where bamboo utensils are in common use) instead of two, and if a pair of *parangs* (woodcutter's knives) should be added; then there must be some coloured beads, brass wire and perhaps even a piece of bright coloured calico. [130]

These very important matters being settled, the wedding-day is fixed, after which the affianced couple part without either tears or sighs, the young man returning with his relations to their own habitation.

The great day comes.

The bridegroom accompanied by all the men of his family and by some of the women, betakes himself to the far-off hut of the bride, carrying with him the promised gifts.

There is a large gathering of Sakais from every part, because joys and pains, plenty and famine are equally and fraternally shared by them.

The Elder gets up and says in a loud voice:

"Hearken! hearken, all you who are here assembled: they who were at a distance are now together; they who were separate are now united".

The bridal couple then take each other tenderly by the hand, and some rice is presented to them upon a leaf. The woman takes up a few grains and puts them into the mouth of her husband and then they both partake of that light, symbolical repast from the same leaf. The nuptial ceremony finishes here, without the intervention of *Alà* or any sort of ecclesiastical or civil authority. How they are to be envied!

A banquet immediately follows and the company cram down everything that they find eatable. The *menu* consists of every sort of edible article known in the Sakai cuisine, and when they have stuffed themselves to their utmost, they dance, sing and draw from their instruments the sharpest notes that ever rent the human ear whilst the furious beating of bamboos give out the sound of wooden bells. Terminated in this way the wedding festival, the newly-made husband and wife return, with the relations of the former, to their own group of huts, where a new one, a nest of love, has been prepared for them. [131]

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Love among the Sakais never becomes a passion or a delirium. It is a quiet calm sentiment, a physiological necessity such as the good soul of Schopenhauer interpreted it, to the great scandal of a certain class of lovers.

Men and women are united from a feeling of cordial sympathy, by a spontaneous act of their own wills which would never suffer the least restraint.

No personal or family interest suggests or determines the important step. The only thing that may be said to inspire love (and bring about a marriage) in the jungle is that supreme and inviolable law of nature for the conservation of the species.

But what is to be admired in the unions of these good, simple people is the fidelity which follows them throughout life.

The Sakais are not, I repeat, very ardent spirits, nor are they excessive in sacrificing to Venus perhaps because sensual satisfaction arrives when physiological development imposes it, instead—as too often happens in civilized society, with great damage to morality and race—of after a long and wearisome vigil, always waiting for financial conditions to permit the formation of a family.

It is a fact to be noted that neither the men nor the women feel drawn toward other than their rightful partner, which naturally contributes a great deal in maintaining faithfulness between the two.

Sometimes, but very rarely, one may find a couple whose difference of character renders cohabitation impossible. [132]

There are no scenes of fury, no violent quarrels and, still less, no reciprocal blows.

The two interested parties merely declare that his or her heart suffers too much from a life of such perpetual misunderstandings and they decide to part good friends, hoping to find better luck next time.

They will then separate with the best and most sincere wishes for each other's future happiness.

The woman only takes away with her the youngest of her children who have most need of her care, leaving those over six years of age to the father, and she returns to her own place where she is affectionately received.

She often finds another husband, even in the first days of her separation; her new companion adopts her little ones and considers them as his, after which the relationship with their real father is annulled.

Divorce, as is here seen, is performed without the intervention of others. The Sakais are as free to marry as they are to part when they find that they cannot live in peace and quietness. They attribute to the heart the same impulse of union as of separation. It is then Sentiment that takes the form of Law amongst them and regulates their acts. How much it is to be deplored that a similar law is not recognized in civilized countries, where that imposed by legislature creates so many unhappy beings and provokes so many tragedies and so much infamy.



**Sleeping children.**

*p.* [135](#).

And yet, in spite of this facility in obtaining a divorce, there are very few who recur to it, a circumstance that ought to have weight with those persons who fight furiously against a measure so conducive to the real defence of the family, defence in the sense that its condition and functions would be improved without the crushing and suppression of those rights (by a prejudice that is made to pass as a religious precept) which the soul itself asserts.

[133]

Nowadays the holy state of matrimony is viewed by the majority with sceptical diffidence, almost as an abyss that swallows up freedom, energy, scruples of honour, morality, will and every kindness of sentiment that has survived the shipwreck of many hopes and illusions.

Among the Sakais no such feeling prevails. The men voluntarily bind their own existence to that of a woman and sanctify their new state with the sincere virtues of fidelity and chastity.

But—these virtues belong to savages and I am a savage to speak of them!

Let me then, briefly finish up the argument. Divorce cases are rare because they are almost exclusively based upon incompatibility of temper or persistent sterility.

Neither the man nor the woman can reconcile themselves to stay without children; if their union is without fruit there is no longer need for them to live together.

In an exceptional case it sometimes happens that the two parties do not agree over a divorce, in which circumstance the decision is left to the Elder who pronounces a sentence without the possibility of appeal.

The immediate consequence of an annulled matrimony is the return of the presents given by the husband to the family of the wife. The latter at once abandons the tribe to which she belonged after her marriage and becomes a stranger to those who, a short time before, were her closest

relations.

This is not the end of a love-dream but the calm and reasonable decision of two beings who, finding that their characters do not agree and that they no longer feel pleasure in each other's company, are not sufficiently cruel towards themselves and their better or worse halves (as the case may be) as to simulate and continue a union which renders them unhappy.

[134]

In our parts the question of divorced people's children serves as a weighty argument to the opposers of divorce and gives to its partisans a difficult problem to study. To the Sakais the solution is easy enough. The age of the children decides with whom they have to remain, and those left to the father's charge are taken care of by the womenfolk around, who from a pure impulse of maternity and without any hope of reward, treat them with motherly tenderness. It is as though their mother was dead and their natural female guardians become the sisters or mother of the father. In default of these close relations the man is free to contract a second marriage at once, his term of mourning being condoned.

Any way, the little ones always become the object of affectionate interest to all the women of the village.

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The Sakai people do not kiss each other. They know neither the kiss of Judas nor that of Romeo. They express their sympathy and love by some rough fondling or the scratching of each other's nose, neck or chin.

Yonder, in the jungle, there are no poets, novelists, dramatists or painters; a new (and original) field would here be opened to the excellence of their arts. Can you not imagine, kind reader, how irresistible the effect would be if, at the most passionate point of their love scenes, instead of "their trembling lips meeting in a thrilling kiss" the hero and heroine were to furiously scratch each other's noses?

Although, now and then, in the interest of true Art, it might be a good thing for some of our pseudo artists to go to that distant land in search of strong inspirations that would, at least, increase the glory of common sense in civilized places, I would certainly not advise them to emigrate into the Malay forest for it would be like condemning them to death by starvation as there they would find no sort of tool or material with which to do their work. There are no suicides, murders, robberies, adultery, coveted legacies and suppressed wills, forgeries, lost women and illegitimate children, there are no alcohol drinkers, opium eaters etc.

[135]

It would be utterly impossible for even a "Sherlock Holmes" to satisfy the cravings of appetite if he had been created in those parts.

But let us return to my good friends the savages after this involuntary ramble.

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The Sakais manifest their love and gallantry by scratching nose, chin or neck but when they want to express a milder sentiment, such as sincere affection or friendship, they do so by a smile, at the same time embracing each other.

I have sometimes noticed both men and women, when far from their other halves, indulge in a few caresses and a little nose-scratching, as also young men not engaged, but I can affirm with the fullest certainty that these demonstrations of tenderness go no further; they finish where they begin.

It may seem strange, but it is true. Both sexes are in continual contact. In the cold nights they will all sleep close together to keep themselves warm and yet nothing wrong results from this promiscuous proximity.

As I have already said, chastity is a natural virtue among the Sakais, and even that which relates to legitimate love is veiled in a coy mystery. Neither the male or the female are given to sexual caprices.

[136]

If a young man should happen to be in love with a girl before he can handle his blowpipe with dexterity and profit, or is able to procure the wedding presents prescribed by habit, he will perhaps persuade his sweetheart to meet him in the forest.

It is extremely seldom that any harm comes to the girl through such an appointment, because it is not in their character to give way to lust, but should this occur, and the fact become known, a marriage is arranged without any loss of time. The woman who will not consent to a matrimony with her lover or who is known to have been on intimate terms with more than one young man is held in great disdain by the rest of her people.

There are very few spinsters to be found in these tribes but those who do remain in the single state owe it to some moral or physical defect. Such persons live with their nearest relations.

Polygamy is never thought of by the Sakais but bigamy is not an absolute exclusion although it very rarely takes place because as soon as a woman sees that her husband is enamoured of another she is the first to propose a divorce and no recriminations follow her suggestion.

"Your heart" she says "suffers with me, when with her it would be glad. Well, then, let us separate for I feel that I could not live happily with another wife of yours".

Should a woman, however, be contented to share the nuptial bed with a rival you may be quite sure that the very best harmony would reign in that *menage à trois*.

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The Sakai women are born with the instinct of maternity and will never renounce nursing their own babes unless scarcity of milk or a weak constitution compels them to do so. These exceptions are, however extraordinarily rare and they are at the height of their pride when their little ones are drawing life and strength from their breasts. [11]

[137]

There are very few cases of complete sterility or excessive fecundity amongst them. Hardly ever does a woman have more than four or five children.

She nurses and takes care of them with great tenderness, delighted at seeing them grow strong and healthy.

Children are weaned at from seven months (reckoned roughly by the moon) to two years of age (two seasons of fruit) but generally when they are about a year old (one season).

The first food given to the baby is a well-cooked pap made with a certain bulb and the tender leaves of a little plant whose names I do not remember.

When the little fellow has become accustomed to his new food (whether he likes it or not) or begins to babble a word or two, he is given a name that usually recalls the place where he was born, some particular event of the moment or the way he may have of making use of a word often, or of pronouncing it badly.

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The good-heartedness and maternal kindness of the Sakai woman is extended even to young animals that have been deprived of their mother. They will adopt them and bring them up with the same care they bestow upon their own children or human orphans.

[138]

One day a she-boar was caught in a trap, and, as a matter of course, was cooked and eaten, but soon after a litter, belonging to the victim, was found and the tiny beasts, only just born, were taken and nursed by the women of the village.

I once saw a big boar that followed a Sakai tribe with wonderful docility even allowing the children to play tricks upon it; it had been brought up by the women.

I have also seen rats, that have been reared by these foster-mothers, go backwards and forwards from the hut at their will, and I remember that one night when I had taken shelter in one of these cabins and had selected a particular corner for my night's rest, the dark lady of the house, without raising any objection to my choice, warned me that during the night a rat would return to repose in the same spot and begged me not to do any harm to the poor thing, as he was one of the family, but to call her if it gave me any disturbance.

In fact I was fast asleep when some warm fur softly caressed me, and waking up I understood that the dissolute rodent—almost bigger than a cat—had returned home in the small hours, just as if he had been provided with a latch-key.

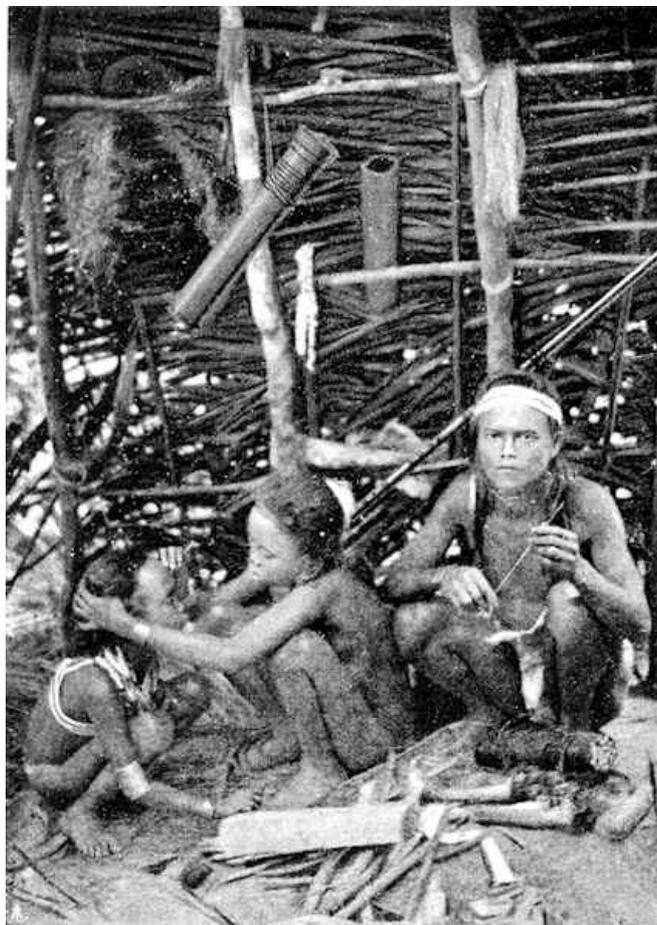
I hastily called the woman who tenderly took it up and carried it away to sleep with her.

It was an adopted child!

Is not this the acme of maternal feeling? And does it not approach foolishness?

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The birth, and subsequent suckling, of her first child put an end to the grace and bloom of a Sakai woman.



A child being tattooed.

p. 140.

She fulfils with incomparable zeal the functions confided to her by Nature, but as she has, at the same time, to attend to the heavy duties allotted her by man she becomes over-worked and worn-out with excessive fatigue.

[139]

When thirty years old she looks almost as old and withered as one of our hard-worked countrywomen does at fifty, and the poor creature cannot in any way conceal this premature falling off because of—the extreme lightness of her attire.

"The tailor tree of our great father Adam" has no leaves for the inhabitants of the jungle, for both male and female only wear a strip of bark (well beaten to render it flexible) wound round the body and fastened on the hips.

That worn by the men never exceeds four inches in breadth, but the women use lists of from six to eight inches wide. Another piece of bark-cloth is passed between the legs and tied, in front and behind, to this belt.

The women, although daughters of the forest, are not without a certain amount of coquetry and will often decorate their girdles with flowers or medicinal and sweet-smelling herbs, but they never think of making a chaste veil of large leaves with which to cover those parts of their persons that ought to be kept secret from the public gaze.

The costume that they are wearing in the photographs was prepared by me in order to present these ochre-coloured Eves to my readers in a more decent state, or rather, a little more in accordance with what civilized society requires, because "to the pure all things are pure" and in my opinion the perfect innocence in which these women go about naked is preferable to that consciousness of their natural form which leads so many of our society ladies and other females, to resort to artificial means that they may deceive their admirers, and gain a name for beauty.

The men, too, are even to be envied, for in the total absence of nether-garments their better-halves can never claim "to wear the trousers" as sometimes happens amongst us.

[140]

Necklaces are very much worn by Sakai girls and women. They are made of beads (which are considered the most elegant) serpents' teeth, animals' claws, shells, berries or seeds.

The men, instead, finish off their toilet by loading their wrists with bracelets. These are of brass-wire, bamboo or *akar batu* which it is believed preserves them from the fever.

Their faces are always disfigured by coloured stripes or hieroglyphics.

They have not the custom of wearing rings through their noses but only a little bamboo stick that is supposed to have the virtue of keeping off I don't exactly know what sort of malady or spirit.

The mother bores a hole through the nose cartilage of her child with a porcupine quill and then

takes care that the wound heals quickly, without closing. Afterwards she passes through a light piece of this reed.

The same operation is made upon the ears, which from being generally well-shaped, become deformed, as the hole through the lobe has to be very large. It is not sufficient to pierce the tissue with a quill; a little bamboo cane has to be at once inserted; the day after a larger one is substituted and so on until it is possible to hang from the ears pendants made of bamboo and ornamented with flowers, leaves and perhaps even cigarettes.

A strip of *upas* bark twisted round the head bestows the finishing touch to the Sakais' toilet. Happy people! They have no tailor's, dressmaker's or milliner's bills to pay!

#### Footnotes:

[10] *Gne* would be pronounced in English as *neay*. *Translator's Note*.

[11] In [chapter XIV](#) speaking of the superstitions of this people I have mentioned those which refer to the birth of a child and the strange ideas they have concerning this event.



[141]

## CHAPTER XI.

**A Sakai village—The "elder"—The family—Degrees of relationship—Humorists disoccupied—On the march—Tender hearts—Kindling the fire—A hecatomb of giants—The hut—Household goods and utensils—Work and repose.**

A real village, such as we understand it to be, does not exist among the Sakais, but I have been obliged to make use of the word for want of a better one to explain the meaning. Each hut is some hundreds of yards distant from the other so that altogether a village covers an area of from twenty to forty miles. Nearly always the boundaries of village territory are marked by secondary water-courses (the true Sakais never encamp near a navigable river) which give their names to the people living round the shores.

Only the width of a brook or torrent divides two of these settlements that I have called villages, therefore the distance is much less than that lying between the two extremities of a single village.

And yet, beyond being on neighbourly and friendly terms, they have nothing to do with each other, for one Sakai tribe does not like mixing with another and will not recognize any tone of authority, or receive any word of advice unless proceeding from a close relation, and even then it must be given in the form of fatherly counsel or affectionate exhortation otherwise the person to whom it is addressed would probably leave his own people, not to have further annoyance from them, and go to live among his wife's kinsfolk.

[142]

The inhabitants of a village are all one family, belonging to the first, second, third and even fourth generation for they are all descended from the same old man, who is called the "Elder" and who is regarded with esteem and consideration by everybody.

It is he who acts as magistrate or arbitrator in any dispute or quarrel (that very rarely takes place) amongst his offspring and the sentence pronounced by him is rigorously respected. It is he, too, who selects the spot for a clearing when, as often happens, the Sakais change their place of encampment, forming their village in quite another part of the forest.

Besides this he has nothing else to do, unless he is still able to work.

The Elders of the various villages are upon a perfect footing of cordiality and never incite to or permit the shedding of blood, or even a conflict between their tribes.

If upon the death of an Elder there happens to be two or more brothers still living the oldest one succeeds him, and should any misunderstanding eventually arise between them, or should the number of those composing the village become too great, the other emigrates to a far off corner of the forest, followed by all the families which are, in a direct line, closely related to him, thus forming the nucleus of a new Sakai village which never exceeds a few hundreds of inhabitants.

In the plains, however, a great many families may be found living together in the same village,

[143]

sometimes even to three thousand persons.

But it is not here that one is able to study and observe the habits and customs of the genuine Sakais.

Notwithstanding the practice of living in groups, one family isolated from the other, fraternity of race is very profoundly felt and if to-morrow a common danger should be menaced they would all unite like one man to resist and overcome it, besides being always ready to help each other in time of need.

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Not many degrees of relationship are recognized by the Sakai.

The male and female children of the same father and mother are considered, as with us, brothers and sisters, but also the sons and daughters of brothers (who among us would only be cousins) are classed the same and call all their uncles "father".

That established for the descendants of females is quite different, and this is natural because the girls of one village marry into another.

The children of a woman are supposed to bear no relationship to those of their mother's brothers and very little attention is paid to that which exists between them and their uncles.

Sisters' children are considered brothers instead of cousins, and the aunts are all called mothers, even when they live in other villages.

The wives of brothers call themselves sisters and are known by the name of "mother" by their nephews and nieces but sisters' husbands have no claim to relationship, other than that of cordial friendship.

Grandchildren give the title of "father" also to their grandfather and great-grandfather and that of "mother" to their grandmother so that these two words which have such a sacred significance to us, to the Sakais are but common appellations.

[144]

No tie whatever exists between the parents of the husband and those of the wife and neither between the latter (the father and mother of the wife) and their sons-in-law. They are only upon simple friendly terms.

Humourists who are fond of exercising their wit upon the eternal mother-in-law question would find no ground for their jokes among this people.

The daughter-in-law, on the contrary, recognizes her husband's parents as her own father and mother.

This does not, however, prevent her from still feeling and cherishing a fond affection for those who are nearest to her in blood and who were the authors of her being.

She goes very often to see them and is welcomed with great joy. At parting they give her good wishes and advice.

"Go, follow thy husband!".

"Take care not to fall by the way!".

"Abor!".

"Abor!".

As far as I know there are no other relations acknowledged by the Sakais who dwell on the forest heights, beyond these I have mentioned and even these are reduced to four names: father, mother, sister and brother. It is very difficult, though, to get information about the bonds of kinship.

Judging from the youthful age at which they marry and have children and assuming that the greatest age which they reach is that of 60 years old (a calculation purely by guess as it is impossible to ascertain precisely) it may be said that every village is populated by the second, third, fourth and even fifth generation of the same people.



**A primitive method of lighting a fire.**

p. 147.

In fact, establishing the date of his first paternity at 16 years old, it is evident that at 32 a Sakai may be a grandfather, at 48 a great-grandfather and at 64 a great-great-grandfather.

[145]

The closer and more direct the relationship the stronger is their affection.

The tenderest love that a Sakai can bestow is poured out upon his son, especially when the child is little, but gradually, with the passing of years, and the formation of new families around, the warmth of this attachment somewhat cools down, perhaps because there is no longer any need of his care.

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Kind reader, I have introduced you (as best I could) to my good friends of the Malay forest; I have made you know their virtues and their defects, their habits and their family ties and now I should like you to follow with me the little tribe marching from one end of their territory to the other in order to fix upon a new dwelling-place.

The long procession moves along without any order whatever. Everybody carries something that they did not want to leave behind in the abandoned village. The very little children are fastened to their mother's backs, the others caper merrily round the women, and the old people walk slowly on, sometimes leaning on their sticks.

All the men and the youths are armed with their deadly cane and poisoned arrows.

Several dogs—not unlike little setters—escort the company and give the alarm when danger threatens. With them, in friendly intimacy, are monkeys, squirrels and tame wild-boars, while fowls cackle in the dossers where they have been put for fear of being lost in the jungle.

This is an emigrating tribe. Are they then taking a long journey that they are so well provided with food?

[146]

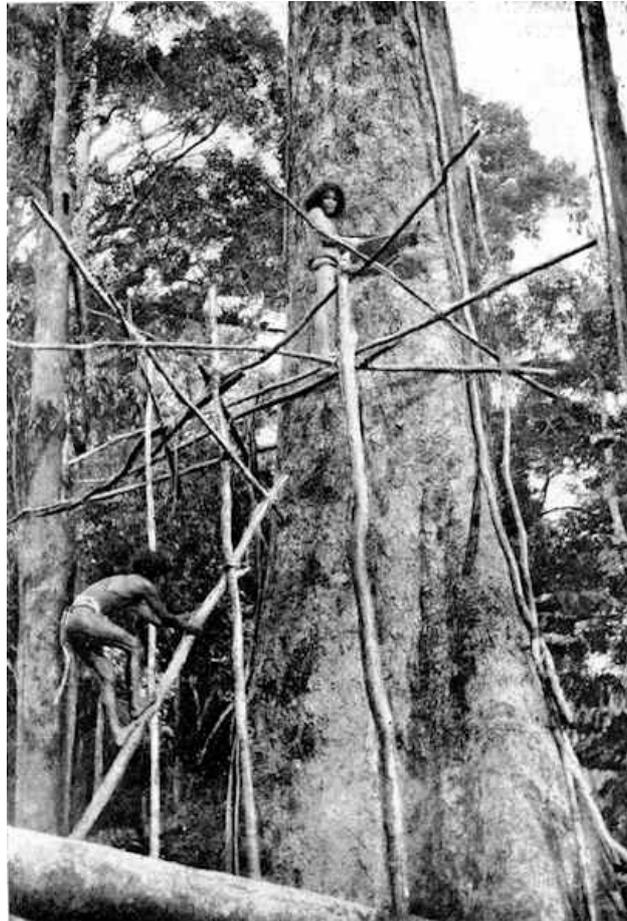
Such a supposition would be erroneous. Those fowls, boars, squirrels and monkeys are not a reserve stock of provisions for the travelling Sakais but are their friends and companions, brought up by them with kind care and which are considered as a part of the family.

A Sakai never eats an animal that he has reared; it would seem to him to commit a crime. He uses the fowls, however (which are a trifle smaller than those in Europe) as a means of exchange for tobacco, rice and other articles but he would never eat one himself unless reduced to the verge of starvation.

How different to civilized persons who breed animals and poultry on purpose to devour them, who fatten fowls in coops, cruelly convert cockrels into appetizing capons, peg geese to the ground that their liver may supply an extra dainty for the table and protect the poetic love of pigeons in order to cook their little ones!

Oh, yes! we protect animals, even the birds that fly wild in the woods, we surround them with attention, we make laws in their favour, why? for what? That we may have the pleasure of eating them!

A halt is called. The Elder, assisted by some of the men inspect the site to see if in its vicinity there are any sort of flowers or birds of ill-omen. If any such are discovered the journey is continued but if there are none they begin at once to kindle a fire.



**Felling a tree.**

p. [147](#).

A little bamboo reed is taken and a hole made in it through which is passed a towy substance found upon palm-trees and known by the name of *lulup* among the Malays. Round this reed is wound two or three times a long piece of very flexible Indian cane and he who has undertaken to light the fire now holds the two ends of the latter, and pressing the bamboo hard with his foot, pulls first one and then the other, sharply and rapidly.

[147]

The violent friction soon brings about combustion for the larger reed is heated to such a point that the tow ignites. Leaves and dry grasses are thrown on and the Elder watches the smoke.

If this goes up in a straight column the position is good, otherwise it is not a suitable one.

The decision having been made in this manner, work commences in right earnest and a febrile activity pervades the spot.

The men carefully observe in what direction the trees are inclined, and with a small axe (that cuts into the wood wonderfully well) they begin to chop round the roots of the smaller ones.

This done they attack one of the superb giants of the forest. With primitive, but not for that less practical, ladders made of bamboo, they ascend the tree they mean to fell, and after having planted some stout poles around it they construct an ingenious platform some yards from the ground.

Up there they again make use of their little, but terrible hatchet, which is pointed in shape and marvellously resistant. It is of a moderate size, scarcely measuring 8 inches in length, 4 in breadth and 2 in thickness. Firmly fixed on a pliant bamboo cane the blows given by it have marvellous force.

The Sakais of the mountain obtain this instrument (which is never used by them as a weapon of offence or defence) from their brethren of the plain who, in their turn, get it from the Malays by bartering.

When the preliminary work has been finished the huge tree is attacked (upon one side only) and its wood is soon reduced to chips under the terrific strokes which are repeated in rapid succession.

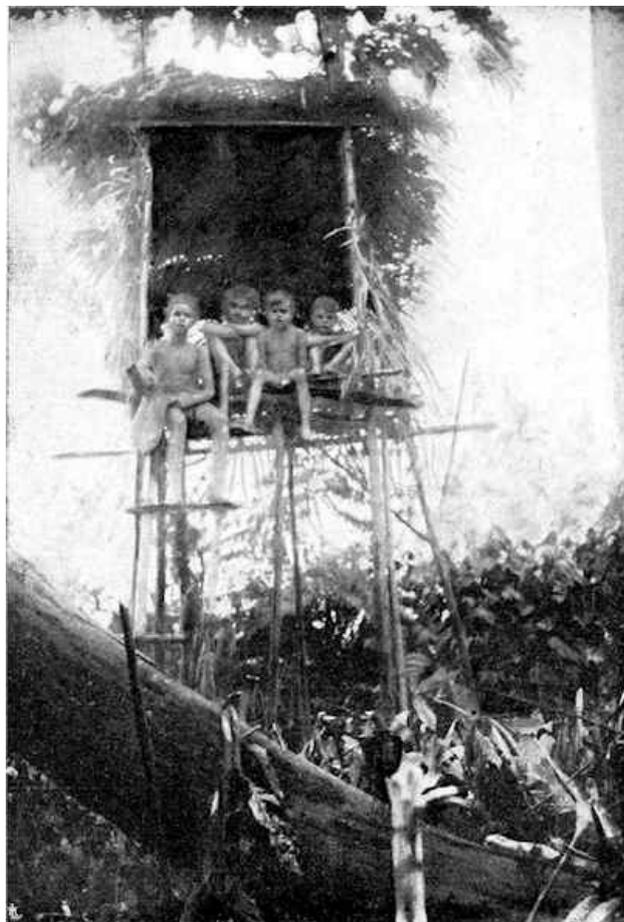
In the meantime nimble youths climb up the trunk and near the top tie two stout and very long Indian canes, letting the ends dangle to the ground. As soon as the tree gives the slightest sign of vacillation the men hurry down, grasp a rattan upon each side and with all their might, rhythmically and simultaneously, pull the vanquished colossus towards the other trees whose roots have been already recised. [148]

The enormous tree, for a while, seems to withstand all their efforts, then begins to bend and sway, shaking as though seized by a fit of trembling; it totters for a minute or two and at last crashes down with awful violence, in its fall hurling to the ground the nearest ones that have been prepared on purpose, and these in their turn knock down those which are behind.

Everybody has fled to a safe place but are deafened for a time by the loud noise of falling trunks, broken boughs, the crackling of leaves and the snapping asunder of the thick masses of foliage that the creepers have woven amongst the branches. The turmoil is indescribable. Reptiles, birds, squirrels, insects frightened at the unexpected disaster are moving wildly about in search of shelter, filling the air with their cries and buzz.

Through the gap made in the green roof of the forest the sun enters triumphantly and illuminates the prostrate forms of the gigantic victims (lying about like Cyclopes fulminated by the ire of Jupiter) that ever and anon still give convulsive starts at the breaking of some huge bough in under that can no longer bear their tremendous weight.

The opening has been made; it must now be cleared out. The work continues with feverish haste; all take part in it.



**An elevated residence.**

*p. 149.*

One after the other trees are stripped and maimed and, with miracles of strength and ingenuity, are pushed away as far as possible in order to make with them a solid and reliable enclosure all round. [149]

Before night comes, in the space thus prepared, rise groups of temporary huts, and large bon-fires burn.

Following the method here described, the Sakais in a few hours succeed in clearing the forest for several miles round.

The next day they begin afresh and go on until the clearing is big enough to contain the number of huts necessary, separated, as is the use, two or three hundred yards each one from the other.

These are immense breaches which are opened in the forest but the latter also is immense and does not suffer from this raid upon its land, the less so because with its amazing power of fecundity it will soon have covered anew with vegetable life the abandoned village of the wandering tribe.

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The hut (*dop*) of the Elder is the centre around which all the others are erected.

To defend themselves against wild beasts and other animals, as well as against the humidity of marshy ground, the Sakais of the plain often build their huts either up a tree or suspended between stout poles.

But on the hills there is no necessity to do this and the rude habitation is constructed on the ground with green branches and leaves, the roof and walls being of such poor consistency that they do not afford the very least protection. Wild beasts, as a rule, never venture into open spaces and besides are kept afar by the glare of the fires but the inclemency of the climate on those heights would render a more substantial residence desirable for comfort.

There is no furniture or other sort of household goods in the Sakai's *dop*. His bed consists of dry leaves and the same bark they use for their waist-cloths, strewn upon the ground. Some of them possess a coverlet, worth only a few pence, but for which the poor creatures have paid its weight in gold by means of articles given in exchange. The majority have not even this.

[150]

The hearth is placed in the middle of the hut and is made of four pieces of wood surrounding and closing in a heap of earth.

Three stones placed upon this serve to sustain the cooking-pot.

As I have said, they have no tables, chairs, stools or cupboards, and also the inventory of their kitchen utensils is very short: one or two earthen-ware pots (when they have not these they use bamboo canes for cooking), a couple of roughly-made knives, a few basins composed of cocoanut shells, and some bamboo receptacles which officiate as bucket, bottle and glass. The ladle with which they distribute their food is also of cocoanut shell.

Their plates are... banana or other leaves, adapted for the purpose, that are thrown away after they have finished eating.

At the top of the hut are hung the blow-pipes, and well-filled quivers. They are kept there for a little heat to reach them, this being considered essential to the efficacy of the poisons.

Above these, twined amongst the green, are preserved strips of bark for a change of... dress when required, together with the Sakais' musical instruments which are never forgotten.



A tree-hut.

Such total poverty of shelter and chattels I think must be explained *p.* 149. as cause and effect of the nomadic life these people live (although I should not know how to define the former from the latter) as well as the result of their indolence and the excessive simplicity of their wants.

If once the continual migrations, from one point of the forest to the other, could be prevented the huts would certainly be improved both in construction and adornment.

[151]

Round the hut a piece of ground is prepared for the cultivation of potatoes, yams and maize, but the harvest is very scanty, and the whole is frequently destroyed by the visit of a *sladan*. Here, too, the good-wife devotes a part of her time to fowl-breeding.

She, like all the Sakais, sleeps at her pleasure in the morning. As soon as she gets up, with the help of her daughters she prepares the morning meal and serves it out as she thinks proper without the slightest remark being heard as to the quality or quantity of the food given to each.

After breakfast every one goes about their own business; the men shooting, searching for poisons, or setting traps; the women and girls gathering tubers, bulbs and mushrooms, or catching insects, lizards and frogs, whilst the old people no longer able to go to the forest remain behind chewing tobacco or *sirih* and looking after the children.

Sunrise and sunset keep each other company!

Towards noon all who can, return to the village, those who cannot, after having eaten in the forest, squat themselves on the ground to rest. It is the solemn hour of silence and repose, observed by man and beast.

Only when the sun, from being right overhead, has begun to decline westward is the interrupted work or march resumed. At the first sign of twilight, which is very brief, the Sakais may be seen hastening back to their huts, on their return from labour or from other villages, where an abundant meal and ineffable peace awaits them.



[152]

## CHAPTER XII.

**Intellectual development—Sakais of the plain and Sakais of the hills—Laziness and intelligence—Falsehood and the Evil Spirit—The Sakai language—When the "Orang Putei" gets angry—Counting time—Novel calendars—Moral gifts.**

Intellectual development amongst the Sakais of the hills is very limited and as a consequence requires little or no study but much more is to be met with amongst those of the plain for two reasons which I have already explained: one their traffic and consequent intercourse with more civilized races; and the other the mixture of blood from their parents' concubinage with strangers, thus destroying the purity of their own. After the establishment of the British Protectorate and the abolition of slavery in the Federated Malay States the Sakai men and women returned to their native places, the latter taking with them the children born of their masters and the former entered into business relations with their quondam owners by the exchange of forest products for trifles of little or no value.

This explains why in the tribes dwelling on the plains we meet with certain cunning and malicious intents which are in strange contrast with their primitive ingenuity and sincerity. But although in comparison to their brethren of the mountains they might and do pass for artful, they themselves are continually cheated and deceived by their more skilful neighbours who barter inferior qualities of tobacco, iron, calico and other trash, worth nothing, for real treasures in rattan, cane, rubber, poisons, fruit and fishing gear which the Sakai of the plain is very clever in making.

[153]

Notwithstanding this sharpening of their intellect due to sojourn amongst their more astute neighbours or to the inheritance of insincerity, theirs by birth when born in exile, they are not yet capable of understanding what profit they might make by exciting competition between their covetous barterers, and the latter, each one for self-interest, are very careful not to open the eyes of those who are so ready to let themselves be cheated. Moreover, the ill-treatment to which they were once subjected, and the imperfect knowledge they still have of what the British Protectorate means, renders them timid and too much afraid of these rapacious merchants to dare resent, in any way, the prepotence which damages them.

In spite of the corruption which has infected them from their companionship or relationship with corrupted people the Sakai of the plain still preserves some of his original goodness and uprightness. Only too well it may be said that once he has rid himself of these moral encumbrances which leave him defenceless in the hands of the unscrupulous he will have taken a new step towards civilization but there will be two virtues the less in his spiritual patrimony.

The Sakai who has taken refuge in the hilly part of the forest in order to escape from the influences of Civilization which may now be said to beset him on all sides, still preserves and defends the original purity of his race.

[154]

His intellectual development is inferior to that of his brother living in the plain because he keeps himself alien to everything that might effect his physical laziness and the utter inertia of his brain.

He lives because the forest gives him abundant food, and he lives idly, immersed in innumerable superstitions that *Alâ* (the sorcerer) enjoins him to always preserve intact.

If, quite suddenly, a change should come in the life and conditions of these Sakais they would never be able to adapt themselves to a different regime until after extreme suffering and sacrifice had strewn the new path with many victims.

And yet, in spite of all, I believe him to be endowed with a fair amount of intelligence, dormant for the present, but susceptible of development when once awakened and with great patience he has, by slow degrees (almost imperceptibly) been taught to overcome his strange fears and to lose those curious ideas concerning life which the old forest philosopher revealed to me.

I say "almost imperceptibly"—as for some years I have been doing myself—that no suspicions may be raised and that *Alâ* may have no cause to rebel against the introduction of modern sentiments by outsiders who insinuate themselves into the tribe, persons whom he does not view with benevolent eyes, especially if they are white. This sort of priest obstinately opposes every element of progress and obliges his people to do the same.



Preparing the supper.

p. 151.

I have my reasons for believing in the latent intelligence of the mountain Sakai as I have noticed in him a great facility in imitating sounds, movements and even the way of doing things and also of learning and remembering what he has been taught or has seen. I have perceived in him, too, a pronounced rectitude of judgment and a remarkable sharpness of observation when his superstitious terrors do not throw a veil over his mind.

[155]

But he is incorrigibly lazy and will not engage in any kind of work that requires fatigue unless it be by his own spontaneous will. The spirit of independence within him is so profound and indomitable as to induce him perhaps to renounce a benefit to himself for fear of obtaining it through satisfying the desire of another.

He is also very touchy; a harsh word or an impatient gesture is enough to offend him.

In compensation he is hospitable, generous, sincere and averse to falseness and intrigue. If sometimes he tells a lie he does so from the dread of an imaginary or possible evil which might otherwise befall him or his, as for instance when somebody he does not know asks his name or seeks information about his place of abode. In such a case the Sakai, with something like childish impudence, will give a fictitious name or information quite contrary to the truth because he is convinced that every stranger brings with him an evil spirit to let loose upon the person or place he seeks, and that by not saying the truth he tricks both the man and the spirit that cannot injure him as he is not the person declared.

As can be seen, this their way of reasoning does not lack a certain ingenuity which leads one to think that the poor things' brains might be educated to more agility in thinking and understanding.

Unfortunately the means are very scarce for making new impressions upon the grey matter enclosed in the bony case of their thoughtless pates. The first difficulty to be met with is the incredible poverty of their language which impedes the communication and development of an idea.

[156]

I endeavour to remedy this deficiency by employing English words and phrases because this is the official language in the Protected Malay States, and the British Government wishes to make it popular.

The Sakais catch the meaning and make use of the terms the same as they often learn a word in Italian or Genoese that I sometimes utter when speaking to myself.

I remember well, one day, that in a moment of irritation about something that did not go right, I exclaimed "*Sacramento*" (I apologize to those who know what a naughty word it is).

My little servant boy who was present looked at me frightened, then began to cry and darted away as if mad, although he had nothing to do with my bad temper.

Well, what do you think? Now it has passed amongst the Sakai boys that when the *Orang Putei* gets angry he says "*Sacramento!*". And they repeat the oath with all the emphasis and air of a trooper, yet I had not taught them it nor should I have wished them to learn the exclamation.

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The Sakai language is, as I have said, very poor indeed, so much so that it is impossible to form a long phrase or keep up the most simple conversation because there are no means of connecting the various words one with the other.

An idea is expressed by a single word or perhaps by three or four together so that it requires a great deal of practice, attention and also a special study of the mimicry which accompanies and explains these terse vocal sounds, to enable one to follow out the thought.



A group of Bretak boys.

p. 156.

Their vocabulary is soon exhausted for it is composed only of those words which are strictly necessary to make known their daily wants, the necessity of defence and their superstitious feelings. They refuse to adopt any of those expressions that their brethren of the plain have learnt from other races, considering them as impure and perilous as the people themselves. This is an implacable application of the maxim "*timeo danaos et dona ferentes*" by folks who do not understand Latin and who ignore the existence of the Greeks but who know thoroughly well their stranger neighbours.

[157]

It is therefore vain to seek among the Sakais those poetical metaphors and that flowery, figurative style of speech which is attributed by us to all Orientals without distinction.

I am not a student or professor of glottology, contenting myself with being able to speak one or two languages without troubling my head over their origin, so I dare not judge upon the affinity more or less remote of the not too sweet Sakai idioms with others, but there seemed to me such a marked difference between the Malay and Sakai phraseologies that I should have declared them to be absolutely distinct one from the other.

However, the recent studies of the German, W. Schmidt, and the more profound ones of the Italian, A. Trombetti, have proved that all the tongues spoken by the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula as well as those to be heard in the neighbouring isles are in connection with each other.

The most part of the words used by the Sakais are of only one syllable, polysyllables being very rare, and the way in which these accents are shot out from the lips would make a foreigner decide at once that the best method of translating their talk would be by a volley of shots.

For the curious and the studious I have here added a short list of the words commonly used amongst the Sakais but as their language is totally exempt from every rule of orthography I have tried as well as I can to give a phonetic interpretation of the same.

[158]

Arm	— <i>glahk</i>
Arrow	— <i>grog</i>
" (poisoned)	— <i>grog mahng tshegrah'</i>
" (not poisoned)	— <i>grog pe' m tshegrah</i>
Bamboo	— <i>annahd'</i>
Banana	— <i>tellah'e</i>
Betelnut	— <i>blook</i>

Bird	— <i>chep</i>
Body	— <i>brock</i>
Born	— <i>egoy</i> (alphabetical sound of e)
Blow-pipe	— <i>blahoo'</i>
Brother	— <i>tennah'</i>
" (elder)	— <i>tennah' bop</i>
" (younger)	— <i>manang se ne</i> (e sounded as in met, men)
Child	— <i>kennon</i>
Cigarette	— <i>rockò</i>
Come	— <i>hawl aghit</i> (a as in father)
Cover	— <i>tshenkop</i>
Day	— <i>e eah top</i>
Dead	— <i>daht</i>
Death	— <i>daht</i>
Dog	— <i>chaw</i>
Ear	— <i>garetook</i>
Earth	— <i>in noos</i>
Evening	— <i>danwee</i>
Evil	— <i>ne' ghne' e'</i> (alphabetical sound of e)
Eye	— <i>maht</i>
Father	— <i>abbay', abboo', appah'</i>
" (in-law)	— <i>tennah' amay</i>
Fear	— <i>sayoo neot</i>
Female	— <i>knah</i>
Fish	— <i>kah</i>
Flute	— <i>tshinelloi</i>
Foe	— <i>pay kabaad</i>
Foot	— <i>jehoo</i>
Forest	— <i>dahraht</i>
Fowl	— <i>poo</i>
Fruit	— <i>pla'</i>
Good	— <i>bawr</i>
Good	— <i>abbawr</i>
Hail	— <i>tayho oontoy</i>
Hand	— <i>tahk</i>
Harm	— <i>ne', ghne' e'</i> (like evil)
Head	— <i>kovey</i>
Heart	— <i>noos</i>
Hen	— <i>poo</i>
Hill	— <i>loop</i>
Hot	— <i>baykahk</i>
Hunger	— <i>chewahr</i>
Husband	— <i>care lore</i>
Hut	— <i>dop</i>
Illness	— <i>nigh</i>
Leaf	— <i>slah</i>
Leg	— <i>kaymung</i>
Lightning	— <i>bled</i>
Malay	— <i>my gope</i>
Male	— <i>crahl</i>
Man	— <i>sing no</i>
Mandoline	— <i>krob</i>
Mangosteen	— <i>play semmetah</i>
Many	— <i>jeho e</i>
Medicine	— <i>penglie</i> (ie as in lie)
Moon	— <i>ghecheck</i>
Monkey	— <i>dak</i>

" (with long tail)	— <i>raoh</i>
Mouth	— <i>eneoong</i>
Morning	— <i>pawr</i>
Mother	— <i>amay, kenneen, kenung</i>
" (in-law)	— <i>tennah abbay</i>
Mountain	— <i>lot, loop</i>
Night	— <i>sin oar</i>
No	— <i>pay neay'</i>
Noon	— <i>dahjis</i>
Nose	— <i>moh</i>
Old	— <i>din grah</i>
One	— <i>nahnaw</i>
People	— <i>my</i>
Plain	— <i>barrow</i>
Pond	— <i>tebbahov</i>
Poison	— <i>chingrah</i>
Quiver	— <i>lock</i>
Rage	— <i>roh</i>
Rain	— <i>mahny</i>
Rat	— <i>hay loy</i>
Rice	— <i>bah</i>
River	— <i>tayhoo</i>
Season	— <i>moosin</i>
Sing	— <i>jeolah</i>
Sister	— <i>kaynah</i>
" (elder)	— <i>taynah kaynah</i>
" (younger)	— <i>mennang kaynah</i>
Sky	— <i>sooey</i>
Sleep	— <i>bet bet</i>
Slumber	— <i>n' tahk</i>
Snake	— <i>teegee</i>
Sorcerer	— <i>ahlah</i>
Spirit	— <i>ghenigh nee</i>
" (Evil)	— <i>ahtoo</i>
Star	— <i>pearloy</i>
Storm	— <i>poss</i>
Sun	— <i>mahjis</i>
Thunder	— <i>nghoo</i>
Thunder	— <i>nahkoo</i>
Tiger	— <i>mah moot, mah noos</i>
Tobacco	— <i>bahkoo</i>
Tree	— <i>jehoo oo</i>
Two	— <i>nahr</i>
Valley	— <i>wawk</i>
Water	— <i>tayhoo</i>
" for drinking	— " <i>engot</i>
Wedding	— <i>ba' kaynah</i>
Wife	— <i>kay el</i>
Wild	— <i>loo</i>
Will	— <i>engot</i>
Wind	— <i>poy</i>
Woman	— <i>knah, caredawl</i>
Yes	— <i>aye aye.</i> [12]

[160]

[161]

This poor language that seems to be composed of short coughs does not even lose its roughness in song, if I may so term the musical (?) sounds that proceed from the Sakais' mouths, because real songs they have none. They are accustomed, however, to improvise something of the sort in which they always allude to facts of the day but as there is nobody to collect these fragments of extemporaneous ballads they disappear from the world of memories as quickly as they have been put together.

It is for this that all my endeavours have been in vain to find amongst them some song transmitted from father to son which by referring to an event more or less remote might serve as a clue to the legends or history of this mysterious people. But nothing of the kind exists and not even in talking can they narrate anything farther, back than three or four generations. They could not tell you if the sun and the forest were in existence before their great-grandfather lived. One cannot wonder much at this, though, when it is known that these poor inhabitants of the wildest parts of the jungle can scarcely reckon beyond three and have no means of counting time.

[162]

With them the first three numbers are not followed by a series of others which always increase by one but from *neer* (three) it is rare that they pass to *neer nahnò* (three one) jumping instead to *neer neer* (three three), and by this addition they express number six. They use the words *neer neer nahnò* for seven and then jump again to *neer neer neer* which means nine.

When a birth, a death or any other event takes place which requires the exact period of seven days for the accomplishment of certain ceremonies according to their habit, the Sakai takes a strip of reed or rattan (splitting it into parts to make it flexible) with which he ties two groups of three knots each and a single one apart. Every day he undoes one of these knots and so knows when the time prescribed is finished.

If you ask him whether it would not be better for him to learn to count at least as far as seven, a number that for one thing or another is frequently necessary in his life, he answers you invariably:

"We know nothing. Our fathers did so and we too will do the same without being too fantastical".

Thus we see that the saying: "My father did so", may be an inveterate enemy of arithmetic whilst it establishes a close relationship between those who in civilized society put it into practice and the savages dwelling on the heights of Perak.

The Sakai renounces all attempts at counting more than nine, and his total abstention from commercial pursuits permits him to spare his brain this fatigue.



Two more solid huts.

p. 166.

Returning from a day's shooting, if they have had luck, my good friends do not trouble themselves much over counting the heads of game they have brought home. They will perhaps begin by placing their victims in groups of *neer* (three) until they amount to three threes but should the number exceed nine they simply declare them to be *jeho e* (many) and do not care about knowing anything more precise as they are satisfied at the fact that they, and any of their relations who like to partake of the feast, can live upon game until it is all finished.

[163]

Many times I have amused myself by asking a prolific father or mother how many children they had. My friends would get as far as three but then becoming confused would beg me to count them for myself, and their offspring had to pass in front of me whilst they called each by name, for example: *Roy* (boy) *No* (boy) *Taynah* (girl) *Po lo* (boy) *Tay lep* (girl) *Betah* (girl).

Counting them upon my fingers I would tell the parent or parents that they were six, to which

they agreed with:

"If you say they are six, they are six".

It is more difficult still for the Sakais to count time. They imagine pretty nearly what hour it is by the position of the sun overhead or from the various sounds which come from the forest announcing, as I have already said, morning, noon, and evening, and during the night the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* of the wild beasts' roaring proclaim the hours before and after midnight.

The shortest measure of time that the Sakais understand is that employed in smoking a cigarette.

They observe, although not with much precision, the phases of the moon that they gladly greet at her appearance but they do not feel any curiosity in knowing where she has gone and where she remains when they do not enjoy her soft light at night and during their dances.

[164]

The flowering of certain plants and the ripening of certain fruits gives the Sakai a faint idea of the longest period of time they are capable of imagining and which is about equal to our year. The seasons, which cannot here be recognized by diversity of temperature, are distinguished by the gathering and storing away of those fruits that supply them with food at regular intervals of time, such as the *durian* season, that of the *buà pra*, the *dukon* and the *giù blo lol*.

I think it would be quite impossible to find out the right age of a Sakai. Sometimes after the birth of a child its parents will cut a notch in the bark of a tree every time the season when he was born returns. But these signs never continue very long because even if the father or mother have not been compelled to abandon their tree-register to follow their clan to another part of the forest, after the third or fourth incision they easily forget to keep up the practice.

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When as often happens a Sakai has to undertake a journey of more than three days as in the case of seeking a wife or of making a large provision of tobacco for all the encampment, both he and those left behind have recourse to a novel calendar in order to remember how many days he is absent. They pick up some small stones or little sticks and dividing them into threes the traveller carries away a half with him leaving the rest with his family. At the end of every day those at home and the one who has departed throw away one of these stones or sticks. When the little stock is finished the Sakai is sure to return because he knows very well that any further delay would be the cause of grave apprehensions and anxiety to his dear ones which he is eager to spare them.

[165]

Some of them adopt the same system on this occasion as when counting the days of traditional ceremonies, that is by the tying and untying of knots in a strip of *scudiscio*.<sup>[13]</sup>

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Amongst those Oriental peoples not yet civilized the Sakais are the least known, and yet I firmly believe that they could surpass the others in intelligence—as they undoubtedly excel them in solid moral qualities—if they were to be made the object of assiduous care and benevolent interest.

Once these poor jungle dwellers could be brought to have full confidence in their white protectors, it seems to me that the best thing which could be done for them would be to induce them, by degrees, to dedicate themselves to agriculture.

But their aversion to any kind of labour cannot be overcome by coercive means or evangelical preaching. They would rebel as much against one as the other for they wish to be absolute masters of their own will and their own conscience. And this liberty of thought and action must be left them whilst very slowly and with great patience, by force of example and gentle persuasion, they are made to understand that by doing what we want they are giving us a pleasure which will be largely compensated with tobacco and with the numerous trifles that are the joy and vanity of savages.

He who would dream of redeeming them from their present ignorant state by treating them arbitrarily and thereby hurting their feelings and insulting their beliefs would find his undertaking not only fruitless but also dangerous because he would be immediately considered an enemy and the *Alà* would not fail to incite vengeance upon him in the troubled spirits of the tribe.

[166]

I think the method most promising in its results is that which I myself have proved. I slipped in amidst them, living the life that they live and respecting their opinions and superstitions, at the same time seeking indirectly to cure them of their natural laziness.

The Sakais are nomadic for two reasons: first, because when they have exhausted, by their prodigality, the edible treasures that the forest soil produces for them without need of toil, in the tract of land within reach of their settlement, they change their residence to a fresh quarter where this uncultivated product is for a long time in superabundance; secondly, because when somebody of their number dies they believe that an evil spirit has entered their village and that to free themselves from its malignant influence it is necessary to fly to another part.

Well, more than once I have made a point of sleeping in a hut lately visited by death to show them how absurd the idea is. At first they stood afar, looking at the forsaken spot and believing that I, too, was dead, but afterwards finding, to their immense wonder, that I was still alive and well, they began to doubt their own superstition and to build their huts a little more solid so that they might be of greater durability.

Overthrown in a definite manner one of the motives of their wanderings the other would cease to exist from the moment they were taught to work the ground. With this scope in view, from time to time, I make a distribution of padi or maize and am glad to see that little by little the miserable plots once rudely sown with corn are now becoming ample fields. [167]

Like the old philosopher I found in the forest, the other Sakais have never thought, or rather let themselves think, what a boon it would be for them to grow the things they like best, around their huts, instead of feeling obliged to get it from others, and they evidently shared his dislike to torturing the earth with iron, for before my advent and sojourn amongst them they simply burnt the pith of the trees and plants they felled and into the bed formed by the ashes they cast indiscriminately bulb and grain, covering up both with their feet or with a piece of wood, and afterwards they took no more care of it.

But this pretence of cultivation was nothing less than a greedy caprice and did not in any way help their domestic economy. The products of the planting which had cost them so little fatigue was deemed surplus food and they would eat up in a few days what might have lasted them for months, inviting friends even lazier than themselves (who had not taken the trouble so much as to imitate this rudimental mode of agriculture) to take part in the gorging feast.

It would be a real blessing to those Sakais who have already begun to cultivate their fields, to work with me in the plantations I am making, to help me in gathering in jungle produce and to apply themselves to some simple industry, if a few good-hearted, thrifty families of European agriculturists were to come and dwell amongst them. In this way my forest friends would make rapid and immense progress for they have already shown their aptitude and ability and the British Government would in a very short time have a flourishing colony by thus bringing them into direct contact with a wholesome civilization consisting of kindness, rectitude and honest work without their losing any of their characteristic integrity through the contaminating influence of spurious evolutionary principles. [168]

It is true that the wide dominions of England claim an immense amount of care and energy but her rulers display sufficient activity and wisdom for the need and would have no cause to regret, but rather rejoice, if they were to extend their beneficence to the far off worthy tribes of Sakais now wandering over Perak and Pahang.

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Returning to the character of my no-longer new friends I must really repeat that we should be fortunate if we could find similar traits in many of the persons belonging to civilized society.

Whether I am prejudiced by the sympathy I feel for this people amongst whom I live, and who have granted me hospitality without any limit, I will leave you to judge, kind reader, you who have the patience to peruse these modest pages written, not from an impulse of personal vanity, but in all sincerity, and whose only aim is to do good to the poor Sakais, unknown to the world in general and slandered by those who know them and who are interested in preventing any sort of intercourse with other outsiders besides themselves.

Nobody has ever been to teach the Sakai to be honest and as no kind of moral maxims are known by them it stands to reason that this honesty which speaks in their looks, words and acts depends upon their natural sweet temper and their way of living.

The real Sakai recoils from everything approaching violence and never assaults a fellow creature unless he believes himself or his family seriously menaced or badly treated.



**A young man procuring food with his blowpipe.**

*p.* [169](#).

Paolo Mantegazza has written that the nature of a weapon indicates not only the technical ability of a race but also its degree of ferocity. All those arms which serve to make suffer instead of to kill are certain signs of cruelty. [169]

Well, the Sakai inflicts no suffering upon his foe. The terrible poisons with which he tinges his fatal arrows cause almost immediate death, and his sole motive for killing is to rid himself of one whom he thinks will do him harm, but should his enemy run away before he can hit him he would neither follow nor lay an ambush for him. He might almost take as his motto the celebrated line by Niccolini:

Ripassi l'Alpi e tornerà fratello. [14]

Even if their gentle, peaceable characters did not disincline them for a deed of crime, if their indolence and lack of passionate feelings were not safe-guards from evil-doing the entire absence of incentive power prevents them from committing a guilty action. Why should they rob when their neighbours' goods are also theirs? When everything is everybody's, be it a rich supply of meat, fruit, grain, tobacco or accomodation in a sheltered hut? And why should they kill anybody?

For pure malignity? Because there is no other reason to prompt such a wickedness. They have no excuse for jealousy, even if they were capable of entertaining it, for when two young people are fond of each other no pressure is ever made upon them to suffocate their love or to fix their affections upon another through ambition or some sort of hypocritical respect for the usages of society. If the enamoured swain can manage his blowpipe ably enough to procure animal food for his wife their amorous desires are at once contented. And so is the custom among more mature couples. Should it happen that a man no longer cares for his wife or a woman for her husband (which seldom befalls) or should they have met with somebody else that they like better, no demoralizing love-intrigue, or guilty flirtation is the consequence; they simply announce their change of feeling to their conjugal half and if the latter still cherishes a sincere attachment for the faithless partner in wedlock he or she will hasten to make the other happy by giving up all claim upon the loved one and they agree to part upon the best of terms, as also they do when by chance they are reciprocally tired of one another's company. The fact does not give rise to drama, tragedy or Othello-like fury. [170]

Now tell me under what impulse can the Sakai become a criminal?

He is honest and sincere from the kindness and indolence of his character, because of the free life which is his, and the society of people like himself, not because he fears being punished or has any hope of a prize in Heaven.

Will not this strange fact induce some genius of the State to meditate the subject, there being full proof that the alliance of Prison and Hell does not succeed in eradicating the seeds of corruption

and crime in civilized nations?

This innate honesty of the Sakai is especially revealed in the manner he respects whatever engagement he has, of his own accord, assumed. Mistrustful in dealing with others, violent and apparently overmastering from the vivacity with which he speaks and gesticulates, as soon as the bargain is fixed he will keep it faithfully to the very letter.

In conformity with the custom that both the Sakai of the hills and his brother of the plain have of not providing for the future, he will consume even beforehand his share of the exchange agreed upon, but all the same he will perform his duties towards the other with the most scrupulous punctuality.

Many times I have intentionally left outside my cabin such articles as would excite in the Sakais a desire of possession, but upon my return I have always found them intact and in their right place. My habitation is always open, even when I am far away but I have never missed a single object.

[171]

A little from habit, a little from the virtue I have frequently mentioned, and a little, very likely, because he is too lazy to be otherwise, the Sakai is a just and upright man. He has a great respect for the old, seeks their advice, and—what is much more—follows it; he has a deep sense of gratitude, is unselfish, open-hearted and open-handed, and ever ready to do a service to those who belong to his own village. And this exclusiveness is one of the curious contrasts that may sometimes be noted in human nature.

Meeting upon his road a person who is evidently suffering and has need of aid, if he does not recognize in him, or her, one of his own tribe he will pass on with indifference and grumble out cynically: "All the worse for them". But if the same person were to make an appeal to his charity on the threshold of his rude home, he or she would receive hospitality without being known, and in the event of an accident or any other misfortune which has occasioned grief or trouble to a kinsman, however distant, he will share in their affliction, and do all he can to relieve them in their distress.

After all this, that close and continual observation permits me to affirm, may I not ask the public, or at least those who have followed me in my rambling notes until now: might not this type of savage be held up as an example of perfection to many of our acquaintances in the civilized world whose boundary line of honesty is where it ceases to bring profit, who scorn the thought of gratitude for a favour received as being inconsistent with their "spirit of independence" and who never lose an occasion for exemplifying the tender brotherly love of Cain?

#### Footnotes:

[12] The author of this book has given the pronunciation of the above words according to the sounds and rules of Italian and it has been a difficult task to present them in a sufficiently orthoepical form for English readers to understand, for the reason that all the vowels and many of the consonants are so differently articulated in the two languages.

Where *a* is followed by *h* it should be pronounced as in *father*; by *w* as in *all*; by *y* as in *may*. The consonants *g* *k* and *n* which precede certain words and which would be mute in English must be very lightly accented with the same sound they have in the alphabet.  
—*Translator's Notes*.

[13] The *scudiscio* is a very large fungus that grows upon trees. It is easily broken into strips which the Indigines use for tying up things and for putting round their necks to protect them from fever. The Sakais call it *tennak kahràh* that means literally "the root of a stone".

[14] Go back over the Alps and we shall be brothers again.



[172]

## CHAPTER XIII.

**First attempts at industry—The story of a hat—Multiplicity—Primitive arts—Sakai music—Songs—Instruments—Dances—Ball dresses—Serpentine gracefulness—An unpublished Sakai song.**

Primitive, like their language and their agriculture, are also Art and Industry among the Sakais.

They make blowpipes, arrows and quivers from bamboo, strings from twisted vegetable fibres, ear-rings and ornamental combs for the women. Now, under my direction, they have begun to plait mats with dried grasses, as well as bags and even hats, using for the latter the fibrous part of the pandanus, and copying one of Panama which I gave them as a model. I cannot give an estimate of the time and patience I spent over this new branch of industry.

The first time I mentioned such a thing to the women I had the unenviable success of making them laugh heartily. And I laughed with them, remarking however, that as they were so good and clever they would have no difficulty in accomplishing the feat if they would only set themselves to try.

Vanity is the great spring of a woman's soul that cannot resist the charm of flattery. This is proved by History from the time of Eve to our days and I myself proved it when I again spoke on the subject of hats. The laughter was not so loud and soon ceased altogether. At last the women answered me, with an annoyed and discontented air, that my insistence vexed them. Then I knew that the fortress was about to capitulate and re-doubled my attacks.

[173]

The day of surrender was near.

A girl, accompanied by a group of inquisitive, mocking companions, presented herself at my hut bringing with her something in the shape of a hat which was meant to be an imitation of mine. It was full of knots, puckers and other defects.

The little artist was very confused and mortified but I praised her work a great deal and after showing her the mistakes she had made I gave her several bead-necklaces.

In a few days the hats multiplied. The other girls and the women, seeing the presents I had given their companion, felt offended and devoted themselves with fury to the manufacture of the head-covering I desired, improving the form so much as to obtain an exact copy of the pattern one.

When some were finished they brought them to me and throwing them on the ground with a gesture of scorn cried:

"There! take your hats!". But a generous distribution of beads soon made their good-temper return.

Thus I was able to start this new industry by flattering the vanity of the Sakai females ("oh, Vanity, thy name is Woman" even among the savages) and the goods produced, after having been awarded a silver medal and a diploma at Penang were the object of general admiration at the Milan Exhibition of 1906.

It is some time now that I have got the men to work in iron. I provide them with the raw material and it is really a wonder to see how well they manage to make knives without possessing any of the tools used in the trade.

[174]

When they understood the necessity of a very fierce fire for reducing the metal into such a state as to enable them to make it take the wished-for form, they attempted to put together a sort of bellows and at length succeeded in the following way.

At the bottom of a very big piece of bamboo, they cut a hole into which they inserted a smaller one, joining and fixing them together with gum that the air might not escape from the wrong part. Then at the extremity of a thick stick they fastened a bunch of leaves and grasses large enough to pass with difficulty into the bamboo tube. By working this as a piston the air was expelled from the lower bamboo cane and kindled a bright fire.

After the iron has taken the form required, whilst it is still red-hot, they throw it into a bluish-coloured mud which smells of sulphur and leave it there to temper.

In fact the metal tempers and becomes very hard but I could not tell anyone what properties this slimy earth contains or how the Sakais came to know its value in connection with iron. I only know that they have to dig very deep in the ground before getting at it, a thing that is not either easy or agreeable owing to the lack of necessary implements.

Steel being a very scarce article amongst my good friends they have learnt to make great economy with it using it solely for the blades of the knives and for other purposes. They mix the two metals with surprising skill.

This is the boldest and most intelligent step that the Sakais have made as yet in the field of industry.



**Dancing.**

p. 176.

That Art which expresses elevated thought and refinement of spirit, in whatever form it manifests itself, is at its lowest ebb among the Sakais and especially representative art, although it is curious to notice how much more they prefer (I speak of the male sex) this latter to that of sounds. Music may procure some moments of bliss to those who yield themselves to its charms but it is transitory and, with them, leaves no reminiscence for the performer or the listener; on the contrary representative art remains and can also give satisfaction to the self love of the artist. It is limited to some rough designs and still more rough incisions on the blowpipes, quivers and the women's combs and their earrings. [175]

Bamboo is the principal material used in making their hunting requisites, their personal ornaments and their domestic utensils.

The combs are large and their teeth vary from 2 to 4 in number. Across them are carved, more or less deeply cut, various signs, some of an angular form that display a pretty correct geometrical precision and others in curved lines, all of which are intended by the several artists to represent birds' heads, snakes or plants. Sometimes this intention is expressed sufficiently clearly; at others there is need of interpretation.

The plants reproduced in this way are always medicinal or those to which superstition attributes some virtue, so that the primitive art is in a great measure due to the desire of possessing an amulet.

The same designs are repeated on the ear-rings, blowpipes and quivers. The Sakais are very proud of these incisions and he who has the most upon his weapon enjoys a certain fame. As a natural consequence this makes him somewhat jealous of his finely decorated cane, much more so than he is of his wife, that for her part gives him no motive for cultivating the yellow demon's acquaintance. [176]

Up to the time I am writing the Sakais' artistic genius has not passed this limit, unless we reckon the horrible paintings upon their faces and bodies, but this branch of art—it may seem irreverent, though none the less true, to say so—brings to the mind dainty toilet-rooms and cosy boudoirs in other parts of the world, in the very heart of civilization, where its devotees think to beautify (but often damage) Nature.

Oh! what a chorus of silvery voices are calling me too, a savage!

The Sakais like music but nearly always the notes are accompanied by a dancing movement, sometimes lightly as if to mark the time, but at others they kick their legs about so furiously, at the same time twisting and writhing their bodies in such a strange series of contortions that an uninitiated looker-on would surely receive the impression that they were suffering from spasmodic pains in the stomach, whereas in reality they are only imitating the wriggling of a serpent.

The woman is particularly fond of dancing and with it she measures the cadencies of her own songs and gives point to the words themselves whilst her companions repeat a sort of chorus which completes the musical passage.



Playing the "ciniloi".

p. 178.

It must not be thought, however, that song as it is known among the Sakais is the melodious sound we are in the habit of considering as such. With them it is an emission of notes, generally guttural ones which are capriciously alternated without any variety of tune and which in their integrity fail to express any musical thought. [177]

The women sing with greater monotony, but more sweetly, than the men. Often they join in groups singing and dancing, and this, I believe, is the gayest moment of their lives and to this honest pleasure they will abandon themselves with rapture, forgetting the fatigue of the day. Then feminine coquetry triumphs before the other girls and the young men.

When night falls the air becomes cool, and even cold later on. Having finished their evening meal the old folk and the children stretch themselves out to sleep round the fire which is always kept lighted. The women sit about weaving bags, mats and hats, their work illuminated by flaring torches composed of sticks and leaves covered with the resin found in the forest. To the extent permitted by their poor language they chat and jest among themselves, laughing noisily the while.

The young men are scattered around preparing their arrows for the next day's hunt, dipping them into the poisonous decoction when it is well heated.

It is not long before work gets tedious to the girls. They jump up and daub their faces in a grotesque manner. With palm leaves they mark out a space of some yards square that has to be reserved for the dancers, and then commences the women's song to which is soon added the stronger voices of the men. At times the chorus is accompanied by an orchestra of those instruments that the Sakais know how to play.

They will take two bamboo canes of six, eight or more inches in diameter, being careful to select a male and female reed. These they beat violently one against the other, the result being a deep note with prolonged vibrations which awake the forest echoes but not the old people and the children who are sleeping.

There is also the *krob* a very primitive kind of lyre that consists of a short but stout piece of bamboo on which two vegetable fibres are tightly drawn. The plectrum used by the player is equally primitive being a fish-bone, a thorn or a bit of wood. The sound caused by grating the two strings is more harmonious than one might suppose. [178]

But the Sakais possess besides a wind instrument that claims more study both in the making and the playing.

It belongs to the flute family and, of course, is made of bamboo. Like all its brothers in the world it is open at one end, with three or four holes on the top side.

Before playing it the performer carefully stops up one of his nostrils with leaves and then applies the other to the first hole into which he gently blows with his nose. From the instrument issues a sweet, melancholy note. By leaving all the holes open a clear *sol* (G) is obtained; by shutting them all a *mi bemolle* (E flat); the first hole gives the note *mi* (E) and the second *fa* (F).

The *ciniloi*<sup>[15]</sup> (for so it is called) is not artistic to the eye and loses all its poetry when one sees its owner blowing his nose into it but the notes emanating from it breathe a vague sense of melody and sadness not entirely unpleasant.

Some of the Sakais are quite masters of this instrument and the women too prefer it to the *krob*.

They seem to find extreme delight in sending forth those long sustained and plaintive sounds as though lulled by a dream, or absorbed in some pathetic thought.

On festive occasions when the solemnity of the entertainment increases in proportion to the noise made, there is a full orchestra. The choruses bawl, the bamboos deafen one with their loud noise like that of huge wooden bells, the *krobs* sob desperately at the way they are treated by the plectrum, the *ciniloi* whistles and laments, and all without any fixed measure of time or modulation of tones, in a confusion of sounds so discordant as to recall a very, very faint echo of the infernal nocturnal concerts of the forest.

[179]

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The orchestra prompt and the singing begun the female dancers advance by twos and threes into the open space confined by palm leaves. Their features are incognizable so disfigured are they with stripes and daubs in red, white, black and sometimes yellow.

Their ball costume is exceedingly simple. They just lay aside the girdle of beauty or chastity which they ordinarily wear and present themselves to the public as Eve did to Adam; or like so many brown-skinned Venuses with variegated masks.

They are however, profusely adorned with flowers.

The first time I saw a similar sight I was struck with surprise but then remembering the cut of some of the evening dresses worn by our Society ladies I came to the conclusion that comparing the clothes with which the latter and the Sakai women are habitually covered there was nothing to be said about the difference made in the toilet on grand and festive occasions.

But to return to the dancers. They hold in their right hands a bunch of palm leaves and begin their performance with curtsies, skips and the contortions I have spoken of; then follows an undulating movement of the flanks as they hurry forward, something in the same position as "cake-walk" dancers, lightly beating the leaves in their hand against others of the same kind they have fastened on their right hip.

The dance is a continual exercise of the joints and muscles, but its swaying motion is not without grace and displays all the seductive beauty of the girls whose freshness has not been destroyed by love and maternity.

[180]

A little innocent vanity may be found in this Terpichorean competition because every movement, every jump and contortion receive the greatest attention and are followed by admiration and applause, when worthy of the demonstration, from those who have danced before or have to do so afterwards.

The men sometimes take an active part in the dance but their steps and their movements are always the same as the women's.

The strange thing is that they take the serpent as their model of gracefulness and elegance and seek to copy as closely as possible the flexibility of its body and the gliding motion peculiar to that reptile.

A malignant person would perhaps find here the subject of a witty sarcasm thinking that in the forest serpents in the guise of women dance alone but with us, if we wish to dance at all, we are obliged to embrace them!

These dances will often last until dawn, just as it is at our own evening parties.

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Neither song, nor dance, nor the sound of those primitive instruments ever take the character of a religious demonstration.

Only on the nights enlivened by bright moonlight, whilst dancing in the open air, their impromptu songs contain a greeting to the shining orb that presides over their festivity and with its silvery rays enhances its enjoyment. But in this there is nothing to suggest a special cult.



A trio for Sakai instruments.

p. 178.

Over yonder they do not dance with any intention of intrigue in their minds, or with the pretext and hope of meeting young persons of opposite sexes in order to kindle the fatal spark that will lead them to matrimony; there they dance for the pure pleasure of dancing, for sincere, hearty enjoyment without any other scope or desire, because, as I mention in another place, the young men and maidens of the same village being all relations, marriage is not permitted between them; the wives must be chosen from a different tribe. This wise custom was evidently established to exclude consanguineous unions (with their degenerating consequences) and perhaps also to consolidate the brotherly ties between people of the same race.

[181]

I think if Mantegazza had ever been present at one of these dances of the Sakai girls, he would have added another beautiful page to his *estasi umane* ("Human Ecstasies") because at these little festivals, whether they are held in the hut or outside, one never sees pouting faces, frowning brows or any other indication of preoccupation or passion. Everybody is merry and their delight can be read upon their countenances (notwithstanding the frightful way they are besmeared with paint), and shines in their eyes; happy are the women who blow into the flute or grate the *krob* or beat the bamboo sticks; happy are the girls that dance; happy are the youths who join in the chorus. It is an innocent amusement for innocent souls.

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To finish off this chapter I here give a very free translation of a song, whose words I was able to catch and remember, which came from the lips of my dear friends upon my returning among them after a long absence:

"O'er mountains and rivers you have passed to come amongst us as a friend, as a friend who will not hurt us, and behold we are here to meet you bearing with us all that the forest has yielded us to-day.

[182]

"The clear and beautiful mountain announced the good news and now you have returned to us who rejoice at seeing you again".

The form was not so but I have given the thought exactly, a thought, as you see, full of affection and with a very faint perfume of poetry about it. You will not accuse me, therefore, of being too optimistic when I affirm that the Sakai, in spite of his semblance to a wild man of the bush, savage, suspicious and superstitious as he is, is susceptible of rapid intellectual progress whenever the right means are used in his favour, and towards that end.

**Footnotes:**

[15] Pronounced *chinneloy*—Translator's Note.



## CHAPTER XIV.

**The beliefs and superstitions of the Sakais—Metempsychosis—The Evil Spirit—Superstition among savages and ignorance among civilized people—The two sources of life—The wind —The ALÀ priest and physician—The scientific vigil—Venerable imposture!—TENAC and CINTOK [16]—Therapeutic torture—Contagion —A Sakai's death—The deserted village—Mourning—Births—Fire—Intellectual darkness—The Sakais and Islamism.**

The good notary Chirichillo, born in the fervid fancy of Ippolito Nievo firmly believed that the many tribulations of his modest life would be compensated one day by God, and that this recompense would be a second birth, when he would relive in another person, under another name and under a luckier star.

Although less learned and although they have but a vague intuition of the idea relating to the soul immortality, the Sakais do not refuse the theory of reward or punishment hereafter. According to them the spirit freed from the body wanders about in the air and often, in a transitory way, retakes a corporal form in the shape of certain animals (more especially the tiger, for which reason the terrible beast is respected as almost sacred by them) or it takes refuge in certain herbs which thus acquist healing properties. [184]

In no case will a Sakai willingly kill, wound or lay a trap for the animals he thinks consecrated by the indwelling of a spirit, this is so true that even whilst preparing one of the usual traps for catching big game he will turn himself towards the thickest part of the forest and murmur, «this is not for thee» to warn the tiger to be on his guard. And should one happen to be caught it causes real grief to the Sakai who you may be sure would give it back its liberty at once if he had not found it dead or did not fear to be killed himself as soon as it was free. The Sakai does not believe in the natural death of a person but attributes the decease to the spell of the Evil Spirit who is continually on the watch to play his wicked tricks. So ready is he to do harm that he even slips into the little holes made in their darts thus carrying death where they strike, otherwise the poison would not have the force to kill.

This is the superstition that inspires every sort of terror in the inhabitants of the jungle and which renders it so difficult to approach them and so dangerous to disturb the serenity of their simple minds. The wind, the thunder-storms, the violent hurricanes that frequently invade the forest, bringing destruction and fear in their course are the vehicles used by this Evil Spirit to declare open warfare against the frightened savages.

When the clouds begin to gather thick and ominously, and first with a distant roar and then with the fury and the voice of a hurricane, the wind sweeps fiercely on, howling and whistling over the great green sea that is quickly strewn with wreckage; when the colossal champions of the forest are struck by lightning and the fall of their huge branches and gigantic trunks increase the general uproar, whilst the boom of Heaven's artillery thunders around their huts, then the trembling Sakais throng together. They paint themselves in a manner to scare the devil himself (which is however their intention) and shoot out from their blow-pipes a volley of poisoned arrows, directed against the tumultuous messengers of the awful Being they fear; the women, keeping their children close at their side as if to defend them, throw pieces of burning wood into the air, and beat their big bamboo sticks till the noise is insupportable, at the same time screaming to the wind: [185]

«Go away and leave us alone! We have not harmed thee, so do not harm us!».

So they implore and imprecate, turning themselves into the ugliest and fiercest creatures they can, to frighten the evil spirits that they believe have come against them on the outspread wings of the storm.

To the wild cries, arrow shots and loud noise of the bamboos, the mothers add an exorcism. They burn locks of their little ones' hair and disperse the ashes to the wind whilst the *Alà* energetically spits.

And in civilized Italy is there not a superstition very like this of the poor savages? I refer to the odd custom still observed in the country, or at least in some of the villages (and which not so very long ago was put into practice also in towns) of trying to arrest a heavy thunder storm, by the tocsin, the deep noted ringing increasing the general alarm amongst the timid of the place. The women too, will go to the door and rattle together the shovel and tongs just as their Sakai sisters beat their bamboos, and olive branches (that previously have received the priest's benediction) are burnt with incense that the smoke may rise up to appease the fury of the elements just as over there locks of the children's hair are burnt for the same purpose. [186]

These are superstitions that vary a little in form but are exactly equivalent in the substance and show how much remains in us of primitive ignorance and how our boasted civilization is still bound to the antique customs and childish beliefs of the uncivilized, over whom we sing the glory of our own triumph.

The Sakais also admit the existence of a Good Spirit but precisely because he is good, so much so as never to reveal himself, they do not deem it necessary to bother him. To the Good Spirit the Sakais oppose in their mind, the Evil Spirit exercising his empire upon the souls of their ancestors. To him they make many and different exorcisms and supplications, with the hope not to be molested by him after death if they keep good. Such a belief may be considered as a kind of demonclatry.

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To learn thoroughly the beliefs of a people still in a savage state, and who are totally without any written guide to their faith, would be indeed a difficult undertaking. First of all they always fear that a stranger, particularly if white, brings with him a whole legion of bad spirits, and secondly because they are extremely jealous of their superstitions and are afraid of incurring evil by revealing them to others.

It must also be considered that the Sakais (like all the other peoples to be found on the same level of intellectual development) have ideas so fragmentary and undetermined about religious matters that they are quite incapable of giving an explicit description of their spiritual feelings and convictions. It is only by living amongst them for a long time in confidence and familiarity that one can obtain any correct knowledge, and even then only by intent observation of facts which pass under one's eyes, as it is useless to attempt to get an explanation or ask questions, for the Sakais, truthful as they are by nature, would most certainly tell you a falsehood for the reasons alluded to in another chapter. Superstition always prevails over veracity when treating with persons not belonging to their race.

[187]

Wilken so writes in his book *Animism*: "With all the peoples in a primitive natural state nearly every daily event, every illness, every misfortune, every phenomenon, when not attributed to the souls of their dead, has a special spirit as the author. Lakes, seas, rivers, springs, mountains, caverns, trees, bushes, villages, towns, houses, roads, air, sky, the ground in under, in short all nature and the principal things they see, are, in their opinion, populated by supernatural beings. I need hardly say that not all the innumerable spirits in whom they believe have the same importance in their minds and therefore are not all venerated to the same extent. In the animist's cult fear reigns over every other sentiment, such as gratitude, trust, devotion, etc., and the spirits that inspire the most fear are those invoked with the most fervour; in this way the bad spirits are installed in the place of the good ones".

We see then that the Sakais form no exception to this summary description of Mr. Wilken's.

They believe that only their sorcerers have the faculty of beholding spirits which satisfactorily explains to them the strange fact that they are always invisible to other eyes. For the rest, though, the Sakais, like all those on the same par in intellectual capacity, do not trouble their heads at all over whatever natural phenomena.

He feels deep veneration for the sun and water as being the two great sources of Life; he venerates also the moon and the stars without however applying any sacred rites to this sentiment but they do not care in the least to know of what these luminaries are composed, where they come from or where they go when they are not in sight. When the day arrives for the Sakai to put such questions to his brain he too will enter triumphantly into the vortex of civilization, impatient to find out the reason of everything he sees around and above him.

[188]

From force of habit he does not wonder at the change of day into night and the different phases of the moon but he is seized with great terror when an eclipse of the sun or moon takes place. He weeps and despairs, making horrible noises to put to flight the accursed spirit that is devouring one or other of the heavenly bodies, and as soon as the eclipse is over, he seems mad with joy that the *mahgis* (sun) and getcheck (moon) have got the better of their enemy.

He is equally overcome with fright at the appearance of a rainbow, or at a shock of earthquake.

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The Sakais have no idols of any kind, but they have great faith in the amulets which they make themselves by incising upon their combs and hair-pins (as before written) the form of certain plants, fruits, leaves and roots that they are fully persuaded are possessed of prodigious virtue.

In fact when a storm is approaching and the wind begins to agitate the forest, before commencing their usual invocations, both men and women hasten to stick in their hair all their combs and hairpins with the firm conviction that the wind, blowing upon these miraculous carvings will lose its power to do them harm.



Trap for big game.

p. 184.

Here it must be observed that, apart from the superstitious character of the fear the Sakais (especially those of the hills) have of the wind, this terror may be said to be almost justified.

[189]

The impetuous currents of air coming from below often bring amongst them the germs of various infections and in particular malarial fevers.

The poor natives in their ignorance of this, when they see their dear ones fall ill and often die after the wind's raging believe that it has brought into their village and left there, an invisible enemy.

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The *Alà*, sorcerer, physician, and magician of the local superstitions does all he can to keep unshaken the belief in spirits and exorcism. He fulfils the functions of his two-fold office with all the ignorance and the deception which is possible to him; ignorance, because he shares with the others a sincere terror of the Evil Spirit, and deception because he makes the others think that he can see the dreaded Being and has a certain power over him by means of words and gestures.

He is, upon a close and vigorous analysis, nothing but a vulgar swindler who obtains some sort of advantage by his artifices and succeeds in over-ruling his own people by giving advice which is often sought and always followed.

The *Alà* is generally the son of an *Alà*, a circumstance that might lead someone, who is fond of similar studies, to make accurate researches in order to ascertain if imposture should be considered as a hereditary disease.

When the Evil Spirit, notwithstanding the cabalistic signs and mysterious words that proclaim the *Alà*'s prerogative in resisting and defeating him, has overcome and killed him, the corpse is not buried but is placed in an upright position between the roots of a tree not very far from his late residence. For seven days continual watch is kept over it and it is provided with food, tobacco and betel.

[190]

An old tradition, which I have managed with difficulty to piece together from fragments unconsciously dropped now and then, pretends that *ab antiquo* a covenant was made between the tigers and sorcerers that after one of the latter had been dead a week his soul should enter a feline body.

If a son of the deceased *Alà* wishes to succeed to his father's dignity, he must, at the end of the seven days established, go alone to keep watch over the corpse, taking with him a sort of incense-pan in which he burns a great quantity of perfumed resin in honour of the dead (an honour that is most opportune for his own nostrils!). He passes the night in this way, or it is believed that he does, for nobody sets himself the task of spying his actions or of learning something about the night's proceedings fearing that evil would overtake him in consequence.

Whilst still engaged in this sanitary act, the tiger, animated by the soul of the defunct sorcerer, presents itself to the man who is engrossed in his scientific vigil and feigns to spring upon him to tear him to pieces. But he continues to keep alight the sweet-smelling resin and does not betray his inward perturbation or give the slightest movement of fear, which would, without emission, cost him his life. Then the terrible scene changes; the wild beast suddenly disappears and encircled by a soft light two beautiful fairies come forward to teach the new *Alà* the occult science of his chosen ministry including cabalistic words and medical art. The two elves then

become the familiar spirits of the sorcerer who is in this manner consecrated.

No witness is allowed to be present. No profane eye may see those two good spirits.

If it happens that the aspirant never makes his return it is immediately decided that he showed he was afraid and had been eaten up by the not too fatherly tiger. It would be, at least, a sure proof that he had watched that night in the forest!

[191]

The succession of a son to his father in the office of *Alà* is not obligatory but all the Sakais wish it to be so as otherwise the soul of the dead man would always remain in the body of a tiger and treasures of wisdom and power would be lost to the tribe he had belonged to.

Not all the villages have the fortune to possess an *Alà* of their own who—by the way—does not differ in his domestic life from any of the poor mortals around him. He has a wife, and children, makes poisons, chews tobacco and *sirih*, sleeps and goes out shooting. Those settlements that have no *Alà* in their midst go in search of one in the nearest encampment and the physician-priest responds quickly to the invitation by hastening to the spot indicated.

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There being no ritual in the Sakai ceremonies, the simple functions of the *Alà* are very limited.

He has to mumble in an unintelligible manner mysterious words (the meaning of which he does not know himself) when a poisonous mixture is being boiled in order to render its venomous virtue more efficacious. He makes exorcisms against the evil spirits when the wind arises or a heavy storm breaks or he is called to visit a sick person.

In the latter case duties are merged in those of the physician's for whilst preparing some remedies with herbs possessing medicinal properties (of which he knows very few out of the multitude that grows in the Malai forests) he proceeds to exercise the authority reposed in him, according to the Sakai beliefs by attempting to cast out the evil spirit from his patient.

[192]

This act is called the *tay nak*. He first asks the sufferer where the pain is, then making a sort of brush with some palm leaves he holds it in left hand. The right he closes loosely and lays it on the place that aches, puts his mouth to the opening left through the lightly closed fingers and begins to pull in his breath as hard as he can. Sometimes he is able in this way to draw out the demon which has caused the illness, from the patient's body into his hand and drives it away by energetically beating it with the brush.

The sorcerer is aware if the spirit has come out by a very pale light, which only he can see, though!

But if the malady is a serious one this cure fails, a sure proof that the spirit is one of the most dreaded class and must therefore be heroically fought by means of the *chintok*, as follows.

The village in which the afflicted person lives is closed in by numerous traps, and planted all round with poisoned arrows so that nobody can come near, even if someone were to succeed in crossing that original *cordon sanitaire* without any fatal consequence he would most certainly be killed inside it as it is feared that another evil spirit may be imported by an outsider, in aid of the one they are trying to get rid of.

Over the body of the infirm they form a canopy of medicinal herbs; the *Alà* and the company present paint themselves in the most horrible manner possible and as soon as it is quite dark (any sort of light is absolutely forbidden) they dispose themselves around the invalid and begin to madly beat their big bamboo canes. Their frenzy and the noise they make cannot be described; it makes one shudder, and the sound can be heard several miles off.



**Abandoned because of contagious disease.**

*p.* [193](#).

But it is intended to heal the poor wretch in the middle who, if he does not succumb to the violence of his disease, has a good chance of dying from the torture endured. [193]

The diabolical concert lasts until the garrulous harbingers of the sun announce the dawn but is repeated after sunset for seven days during which period only the men are permitted to go into the forest in search of food.

If on the seventh day the patient is still alive he is left in peace unless a relapse should render another night of music necessary, and if he dies it is believed that the malignant spirit would not depart without taking the soul of his victim with him.

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The most frequent illnesses to which the Sakais are subject are rheumatic complaints and very heavy colds which not rarely turn into severe bronchial and pulmonary ailments. Both are due to the cold at night against which they take no pains at all to protect themselves. Their huts shelter them from the rain but not from the air.

Some contagious skin diseases are also prevalent amongst them.

Directly somebody is seized with this malady a tree is selected at some distance from the settlement up which a little bower is hurriedly made and the person attacked is placed there and left with a little food at hand. Next day the relatives go to see if he or she is living and call out their demands, in a loud voice, a long way off. If there is a movement or an answer they go nearer and throw up some food but if there is no sign of life they hasten back and leave the corpse to decompose in the bower that now serves as a sepulchre.

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No rites whatever are performed at the death and burial of an individual. [194]

When the sufferer has breathed its last all the people in the village unite in making grand lamentations. They cry, moan and howl worse than at the proverbial Irish funeral, they blacken their faces with charcoal and daub it with other colours to frighten away the bad spirit whilst the family crowd round the dead body and let their tears flow freely, exclaiming:

"Alas! Look at us, don't leave us! Who will take care of us now! Who will defend us? Thou has departed before us and we shall follow thee".

The first moments of grief over they quickly destroy the hut visited by Death, then taking up the corpse they carry it into a thick part of the forest.

Here a grave is dug, from five to six feet deep and the body is placed in it, sometimes lying on its back, and sometimes in a sitting posture but always with its face turned towards the west. Some tobacco, betel and personal objects of the deceased are put near and then it is covered up with the ground. Sometimes these articles are strewn on the top of the grave and sometimes too instead of interring the corpse it is laid upon pieces of wood placed horizontally across the branches of a large tree, close to the trunk.

But whether buried or not, for seven days the dead person's relatives carry water, fruit, tobacco and sirih to the spot, over or under the last resting-place of their lost one, taking care to always keep a bright fire burning within the vicinity.

It is however with fear and trembling that this duty is performed and they regularly implore:

"Here is thy portion, but don't hurt us!"



**Tomb of a woman.**

p. 194.

Finished the seven days mourning the memory of the dead fades, only awakening afresh when somebody passes by the burial place when they deposit there a part of whatever they have with them, game or fruit. [195]

For the sake of truth, though, I must say that the grief of parents for a child is not so soon cancelled, for I have seen some moved to tears at the remembrance of one who had been dead perhaps for many seasons.

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The immediate consequence of a Sakai's death is the forsaking of the village by all the survivors for fear that the evil spirit which has bereaved them of a kinsman may do the same with another.

Then follows the march in search of a desirable spot, as I have already described. Taking the children and the little domestic goods they possess upon their shoulders they troop away seeking suitable ground for the erection of their new huts. The Elder, as head of the immense family, gives the signal for stopping where he thinks best and if there is an *Aiâ* in their midst he consults with him about the choice of position.

When the site seems favourable a fire is quickly lighted and if the smoke goes up straight they settle there otherwise they continue their wanderings for the Sakai thinks that his whereabouts will be betrayed if the smoke is dispersed in the forest and that it will serve as a guide to some bad spirit—eager to do harm—that will cast its fatal influence over the company fleeing from the cruel spell of another.

Once the decision is made, with wonderful rapidity trees, and bushes are cut down and the huts are raised.

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As in civilized countries. Death amongst the Sakais exacts an exterior manifestation of mourning, with this difference perhaps that with them it is much more sincere because they have not the comfort of a long expected and coveted legacy to make it a farce. [196]

All ornaments have to be put aside; ear-rings, bracelets, necklaces, nasal sticks, flowers,

tattooing etc, for a period of time determined by the Elder but generally for not less than six months.

Those in mourning are rigorously prohibited to sing, play, dance, marry and even (quite a Lenten sin) to eat fish and meat on the same day.

The Sakais observe all these prescriptions with the greatest strictness and are scandalized should any of them be infringed before the appointed time. Whoever violates them is judged a heartless being and if a woman loses all the consideration that was hers before.

The duration of mourning varies according to relationship. That for a father or a mother is the same, but it is shorter for brothers and sisters and for little children there is none at all.

In this respect the Sakais are not dissimilar to their civilized fellow-beings who measure their grief by the black clothes they wear and at the demise of a baby, notwithstanding its parents' desolation, make the church-bells ring out the liveliest tunes.<sup>[17]</sup>

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When a little Sakai opens its eyes to the light of this world no religious ceremony greets its arrival.

The woman who is about to become a mother separates herself from the rest of the family and retires by herself to a hut apart, where the floor is very high. Nobody assists her at her confinement because there is perhaps no other event in the existence of a Sakai so involved in tenacious and perilous superstition as is that of birth. Her own husband and the father of the new-born babe dare not cross the threshold of the hut or make the acquaintance of his child until a long time after, that is, until it has got some strength.

[197]



Grave of a Sakai man.

p. 194.

It is always feared that by entering the cabin the smell of the child may be carried into the forest by means of which the Evil Spirit would be able to trace it out and do it some mischief. And for the same reason the newly-made mother dare not have contact with any of the adults who go into the jungle to hunt or for other purposes, but has food and water taken her by the children.

It is superfluous to add that for a given time before and after a confinement the presence of a stranger in the village is not tolerated, worse still if he is a white man.

The *Alà*, seconded by all, both males and females, is inflexible about this, asserting that it would be the death of the babe, and it is a prudent thing to accept the veto with a good grace and to obey the sorcerer's orders without hesitation. Sometimes a stranger is not even allowed to look upon a woman who is in an interesting state, as it once happened to me.

Another time upon arriving at a village where a child had been born a few hours before, I was flatly refused hospitality, some Sakais preferring to accompany me a long way off and there erect a hut for my use on the formal understanding that I should not for any motive whatever attempt to approach the settlement. Had I not kept to this condition I should probably have been killed.

One cannot reason with terror.

The hut in which the poor woman is fulfilling the noblest of Nature's missions is jealously guarded by day and by night.

Woe to the unfortunate individual who is found loitering around it if he is not one of the village!

[198]

The floor of the hut does not touch the ground that the odour of excrements may not penetrate into the earth and proclaim to the Evil Spirit: Here a babe is born!

The mother herself, with extreme caution places everything of this sort in vessels of bamboo which she hangs high up on the bough of a tree.

There the torrid sun quickly dries it all up and the smell emanating from it being diffused in the upper air the spirit cannot find out the sick woman or her child.

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As soon as the period of gestation commences neither the woman nor her husband must eat the flesh of monkey or serpent in order not to transfer to the unborn child the tendencies of a quadruped or reptile.

They must also abstain from eating fish and meat on the same day and are obliged to be very careful not to enter a hut whilst it rains, this being always a very bad omen but especially so when an increase is expected in the family.

Another very bad sign is when the *cep pluì* sings near the encampment. The Sakais consider it quite as unlucky as the grating screech of the night owl (birds kept in awe by the Sakais as being in familiarity with the Evil Spirit) on the roof of a house, or the spilling of salt is believed to be in many countries we know.

A few days before her confinement the woman picks up some leaves of the *bakaù* which have fallen to the ground and makes a decoction with them. She drinks a little every day, continuing the cure even after child-birth. I do not know the wherefore of this but the women seem to think it exercises a particular effect upon them at this period.

Immediately the child is born its mother takes the fruit of the *buà kaluna* and squeezes out a few drops into the little thing's mouth.

[199]

I have never been able to understand the reason of such a practice but believe that it is inspired by some superstition or hygienic rule of the natives.

The fruit of the *buà kaluna* is sweet but has also a rather tart flavour.

After seven days have passed the newly made mother leaves the hut and makes abundant ablutions that have the same character and scope as the religious duty imposed upon the Israelite women; that of respect for elementary hygiene.

From this moment the wife may return to her husband but she is not allowed to go into the forest and is obliged to wear upon her stomach a hot stone, which serves her as a cure and exorcism.

She returns to her faithful mate but she does not abandon her child whose separation from all other human beings, including its own father, cannot last for less than six months.

The birth and death of a Sakai, as here seen, is devoid of every rite or ceremony, as in the case of matrimony or divorce and do not require even the intervention of the *Alà*.

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The fact of their being strictly forbidden, when kindling a fire, to lift their eyes from it until the wood has been well ignited and smoke proceeds from it would suggest the idea that there is either a superstition attached to this operation or that fire is also an object of veneration with them. But this concentration of the gaze may be simply a precaution (become a habit) not to retard the act of combustion by distraction of thought.

[200]

The only thing in connection with this custom I have succeeded in ascertaining is that the Sakais have no particular cult for the Sacred Fire like the priests of Baal the Brahmins in India and the Vestals of Rome but appreciate it as a means of cooking their food, preparing their poisons, of warming them during the night and of keeping wild beasts far from their huts. And I was convinced of this the first time I gave them matches and taught them their use.

Their wonder was mixed with satisfaction but had there been any pronounced religious sentiment they would have rejected the modern innovation and continued the old method of making fire.

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I have here given a rough idea of the superstitions and beliefs of the Sakais as best I have been able to understand them from close observation and words inadvertently let fall now and then. They may be briefly summed up thus: a supreme terror of Evil spirits; a vague principle of the soul's transmigration (a strange degeneration from the primitive conception of the Pythagorean theory).

The people of the jungle are still under the thick shade of cerebral inertia. They have not yet seen the swift, bright light of a first doubt flash across the darkness of their brain giving to it a shock

of unsuspected vibrations. As yet no glorious Prometheus has arisen amongst those primitive creatures far whom the discouraging counsel of the Italian poet might seem to have been in part written:

[201]

Meglio oprando obliar, senza indagarlo,  
Quest'enorme mister dell' universo! [18]

The Sakais have no real religion; they only have fear for everything they do not understand or cannot. And yet in the practice of morality they are much more forward than other uncivilized and even civilized peoples.

**Footnotes:**

- [16] Pronounced *tay nak* and *chintok*.—*Translator's Note*.  
[17] A custom in Italy when a little child is buried. *Translator's Note*.  
[18] Better by work to forget, without studying it,  
This tremendous mystery of the Universe.



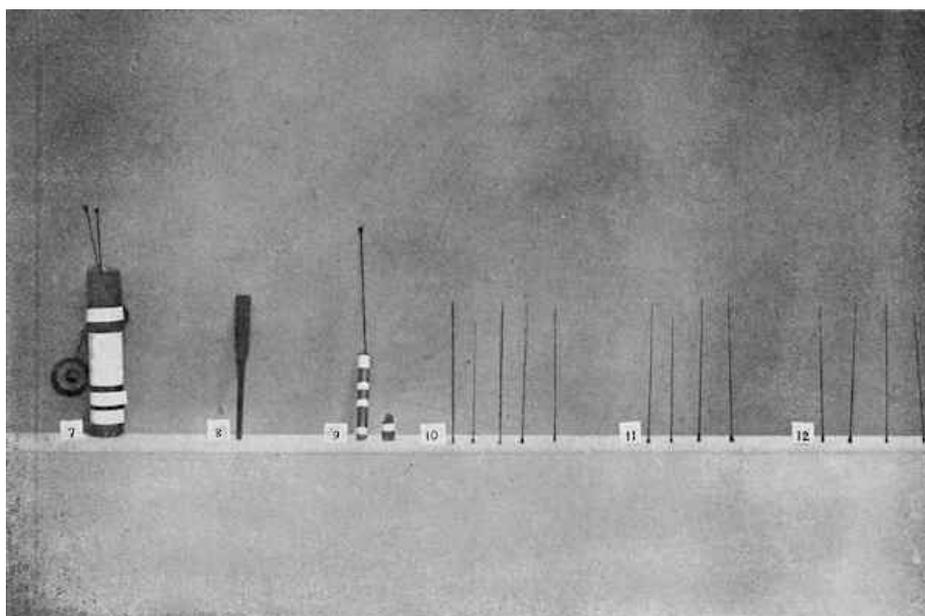
[202]

## CHAPTER XV.

**Sakai arms—Shooting—Serpent catchers—The Sakai and his poisons—TOALANG, RENGAS AND SAGOL—SLÀ DOL, SLÀ PLEK and SLÀ CLOB—AKAR TOKA—Ipok [19]—An antidote—The LEGOP—The Nai Bretaks—The preparation of LEGOP—Curious and superfluous ingredients—The effects of LEGOP—Strange contradictions—Experiments—Poisons and antidotes—The settler and science.**

The Sakai possesses only one weapon: the «*blai*» (pr. blahoo) called «*sumpitam*» by the Malays.

This reveals the peaceful character of these forest inhabitants who never seek adventures or commit aggressions.



**Quivers and poisoned arrows.**

p. [203](#).

The strong ugly knives which he procures from his brethren of the plain or manufactures for himself, and the little hatchets I have already described, are not for him arms in the exact meaning of the word but are simply instruments necessary for those living in the jungle. He

[203]

employs them for cutting down bamboos, creepers and trees and for preparing food, but very likely he would not know how to use them for an assault or in defence.

His weapon in this case is always the *blaù* (blow-pipe) which he carries about with him constantly even if he only goes just outside his hut.

It is a cane of bamboo from two metres and a half to three in length not very large in diameter but perfectly round, especially inside. At one end there is applied a mouth-piece similar to that of a trumpet.

Having introduced a dart the Sakai puts the cane to his lips and first drawing a very long breath he then blows into it with all his might. The little arrow flies out with the greatest velocity reaching to the distance of 40, 50, or 60 metres.

It is a pea-shooter but with the difference that the projectiles shot out are deadly in their effect, particularly so when in the hands of persons who, like the Sakais, seldom or never fail to hit the mark.

This dangerous weapon, which at first might be mistaken for a toy, is ornamented with designs lightly incised in the cane. It is kept with great care and when not in immediate use it is slipped into a bamboo of a larger size (this too decorated with incisions) which serves it as sheath.

The arrow is a little stick made of very hard wood of about 12 or 14 inches long and not much bigger than a big knitting needle. At one extremity is fixed a tiny cone made of palm-pith that stopping up the tube, receives the impulsion of the air blown into it so violently.

The other extremity finishes in an exceedingly sharp point (sometimes of bone or metal well inserted into the wood) contrived in such a mode that when the dart strikes an object the point breaks off and remains there. The force of penetration is however so great that the body of a man standing 30 metres off may be pierced through without its being broken. [204]

No animal, except pachyderms, can challenge with impunity the Sakai's arrow. It is always, and for all, a terrible messenger of Death, either in the precision of aim, the violence with which it hits, or the poison it inoculates.

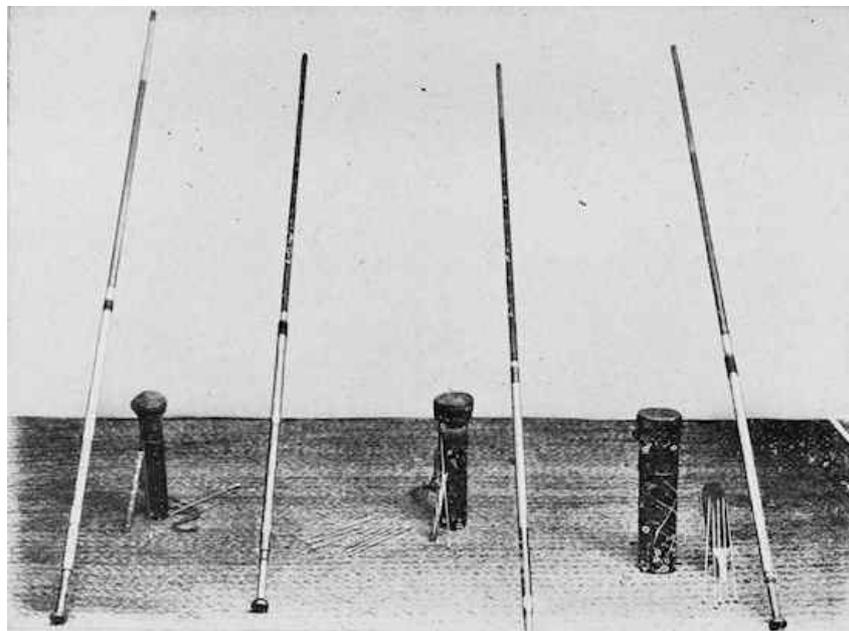
In the same way as the aborigenes of Australia throw their boomerang with inimitable dexterity and security, the Sakai manages his blowpipe with a cleverness it is impossible to imitate or learn. The Malays, who have studied to make themselves masters of this weapon, are but poor shooters compared to their forest neighbours.

Together with the *blaù* the Sakai always carries with him his *lok* (quiver) suspended from a girdle of bark, called *bò gnan* (pr. bo nean).

This quiver is also composed of bamboo measuring from 3 to 7 inches round and 13 or 14 long. It is very rare that the darts are placed in it without being first enclosed in thin reeds, known by the name of *damà* which preserve the points and prevent the poison from being rubbed off as well as saving it from getting damp, when it would lose its force. In its turn the quiver is enclosed in the *tchenkop*, a covering of ratan or palm-fibres woven so intricately as to render it water-tight.

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With his blowpipe ready the Sakai penetrates into the forest, creeping softly among the tall grasses and bushes. No rustling, no crackling of dry leaves denounces the presence of the man who advances cautiously under the broad green roof, casting keen and restless glances towards the branches of the trees. His ear catches the faintest flapping of wings. From time to time he utters a cry like that of a bird or a monkey, and quickly a feathered biped, moved by curiosity descends from a higher to a lower bough; a monkey swings itself down in answer to the call, or a pretty little head with a sharp nose and bright eyes peeps out of a hollow in the tree. [205]



**Blowpipes, quivers and poisoned arrows.**

*p.* [203](#).

Very slowly and quietly the Sakai crouches down, lifts his blowpipe and fixing his eyes upon the black mark he has made at the end of the cane, he takes a long and steady aim.

The bird and the monkey 30 metres above him are trying to provoke another cry from the voice they heard before; the squirrel looks puzzled and uncertain but neither of the three suspects the mortal danger that awaits them from below.

The Sakai blows into his *blaù*, the dart flies out with a slight whiz and perforates the victim's flesh. There is a cry and a fall, then the sportsman runs to pick up his prey.

Sometimes a wounded bird will fly away from the spot where it has been hit, but the savage knows perfectly well the infallibility of his poisons which will bring it to the ground in a few minutes, so he follows the way it has taken.

Something of the same sort may also happen with a monkey. Although it is usually cowardly enough to let itself fall a dead weight as soon as it is touched (so breaking all its bones) it may by chance cling to the bough upon which the Sakai shot it, but if the arrow itself does not succeed in killing it, the poison never fails to do so and nothing can save it from the fatal effect. The monkey holds on convulsively but the *legop's* influence cannot be resisted, there is a brief struggle against death and then the animal is precipitated heavily to the ground.

The Sakai runs to pick it up but perhaps is arrested by seeing an enormous boa constrictor twisting itself round the crushed body of the little beast.

[206]

But at this sight the hunter does not despair. He observes the surrounding trees with great attention and discovers that the one upon which he had found the monkey has a large hole beneath, where the huge reptile has taken up its abode.

He hurries away to let his comrades know, for a boa constrictor excites the spirit of gluttony amongst the Sakais.

They instantly and unanimously resolve upon its capture and accompany him to the scene.

Guessing nearabouts the length of the serpent they cut down a very strong bamboo cane that if not longer is not shorter than the reptile and at the end they fasten a stout piece of rattan ably folded into a noose.

Terminated his repast the boa retires to his den and settles down for a little nap that will help his digestion.

This is the right moment: two men, with great caution approach the hollow, keeping in their hands the knot made of the Indian cane. Very gently but with a rapid movement they lift up the snake's head and slip it through the noose. The snake gives a shake but it is too late. At a sign from the two who have disturbed its slumber, the others pull hard the bamboos that they are holding in their hands. The noose is pulled tighter and the boa constrictor fights furiously to get free. But the more it resists the closer the knot becomes. The struggle between captor and captured is not soon finished. The monster pulls, jumps, writhes, sometimes giving such sudden springs as to make the tenacious Sakais run here and there to keep their equilibrium and to stay out of its reach.



Shooting poisoned arrows through the blowpipe.

p. 205.

Often they strive so for more than an hour but at last the serpent is suffocated and is reduced to a lifeless mass. Then its victors carry it triumphantly to their village where it makes a banquet for almost all the inhabitants.

[207]

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The Sakais would find but a scanty result from their hunting and shooting-, and their own lives would not be sufficiently protected if the forest did not provide them with an inexhaustible and infallible means of dealing death with their blowpipes and darts.

There is such a rich and varied quantity of plants growing in the jungle which produce poison, that Man has the choice of using the one he deems more adapted for this or that particular need.

The Sakai is enthusiastic over his poisons, so much is he engrossed in the science that it takes with him the post of a besetting. Like a maniac which always speaks of his strange fancies, so this poor savage speaks all day long of his poisons, and studies their qualities.

And they provide him with all the necessaries for his primitive existence for he utilizes them in shooting, fishing, and in setting traps for big and small animals, they are a defence for himself and the whole village where he lives, besides furnishing him with the means (by barter) of obtaining tobacco, rice or any other article that cannot be found in the forest.

All his best intellectual faculty is consecrated to the research and preparation of poisons because it must not be thought that he uses one instead of the other indifferently. Those with which he is most familiar are each used as the occasion may require.

Just as a gun is not loaded with the same sized shot when shooting small birds and partridges, the Sakai does not waste his strong poisons when a weaker one would be equally effectual.

His selection of one rather than the other is frequently regulated by the state of the atmosphere (damp being pernicious to venomous productions) and sometimes by the phases of the moon.

[208]

These plants are herbaceous, arboreous and often creepers, but not all those that grow in the forest, nor even those known to the savage for their efficacy, are yet in the knowledge of Science.

This is a very great pity as I fear that these medicinal treasures, which may contain miraculous properties, will be inevitably lost if a scientific study of this wild jungle produce is not quickly initiated.

The fever of colonization has attacked the forest and here and there it rages; for certain it will not be a long time before that vast extension of tropical vegetation with the extraordinary fertility of its soil will give place to plantations of Parah-rubber, gutta-percha, coffee, sugar, rice, tobacco, etc.

For this reason I shall be very pleased to give what aid I can to the cause of Science by means of notes, collections and specimens of plants and animals not yet thoroughly known or studied, should anyone feel inclined to respond to the offer before it is too late. Such help would seem to me a sweet chain of thought, linking the mind of the colonist in the remote depths of the Malay Forest, to the Mother Country and that civilization from which he has withdrawn himself.

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The "*giu u toalang*" is one of the colossal trees of the Jungle for it reaches from 40 to 46 yards in

height. It may be said that its whole organism is poisonous because its deadly properties have the same force in the juice under the bark as in the leaves, when they are rubbed or broken. If this sap finds its way under the skin, in contact with the flesh or blood-vessels it has a quick and mortal effect. It seems to me that even the smell might produce fatal consequences but of this I am not sure, although it is a certain fact that it makes one feel very ill and the indisposition can only be cured by keeping the patient in a high temperature.

[209]

Almost the same poisonous power has the "*giù u rangas*", a tree of more modest dimensions, and the "*giù u sagol*" smaller still. It is dangerous to touch the leaves of these two plants because they bring about a severe irritation of the skin, covering it with pimples and little bladders, that itch intolerably, whilst the body becomes swollen. And yet the temptation to scratch must be resisted or ulceration follows with the probability of gangrene. When one is able to renounce the momentary relief procured by rubbing or scratching the inconvenience passes in a couple of days.

The *toalang*, *rengas*, and *sagol* are to be found scattered profusely over the forest but the Sakai does not interest himself in their venomous properties because he finds that those of which he already knows the secret fully satisfy his wants in promptness and effect. On the contrary he wages a continual war against these noxious plants beating them down and destroying them wherever he comes across them. He is very careful, however not to touch them with his hatchet but chops down one of the giants growing near which bears them to the ground in its ponderous fall.

As soon as the dangerous trees are down the trunk and branches of their involuntary assassin are pulled away and they are left on the spot for one or two months to dry, and when completely withered they are burnt.

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There is also a large and varied number of plants in the forest whose leaves are very dangerous. I will mention for an example the *slà dol*, *slà plek* and the *slà clob* the leaves of which, if eaten, may engender fatal consequences according to the Sakais.

[210]

In some the poisonous qualities are located only in the roots. Of the *legop*, which belongs to this class I will speak further on, for now I will only name the *akar tobà*.

This root is first well pounded and then left to soak in some water for a few days after which the venomous liquid is thrown into a pond and a perfect massacre of big and little fish follows, all of which may be eaten without doing any harm to the persons.

What sort of poison this is I cannot say for it has never been made the object of special study. I have proved its utility in destroying insects and particularly the larva of mosquitoes and the little worms that ruin fruit and vegetables.

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The *ipok* called "*upas*" by the Malays and "*antiaris toxicaria*" by botanists is a tree which supplies a poisonous juice to the Sakais of the plain. It is a colossus of the forest, and belongs to the nettle family.

It has broad, shiny leaves something like those of the magnolia, and numerous species are to be found in the Malay Jungle.

When the season is not too damp and there is a full moon the Sakais make some deep cuts in the bark of this tree and place some bamboo tubes around it in order to catch the sap which flows out abundantly. This juice has a gluey, resinous appearance and is white or yellow according to whether it is extracted from the trunk or from a young bough.



A branch of the poison-tree "Upas".

p. 210.

Then, whilst still in the thick of the forest, they light up a fire and boil the liquid during which process the *Alà*, who presides over the work, mutters the magical words without which the poison would not have the desired force.

[211]

It is not taken from the fire until it presents the aspect of tar, in thickness and colour. Finished to boil, some lemons are squeezed over it and after throwing in red arsenic and other drugs it is all stirred up together and the mixture is ready for use.

The substances added to the *ipok*—with the exception of the arsenic—are not toxic but are only the expression of Sakai prejudices.

The flesh of animals killed with arrows dipped in *ipok* are perfectly eatable after being cooked a little, but the precaution must be taken of cutting away for about an inch round the wound which turns purple immediately from the action of the poison.

An antidote against *ipok* poisoning is found in the juice of a climber called *lemmak kapiting*. By energetically rubbing the wound with this juice all baneful effects of the *ipok* are checked.

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I believe that it is amongst creepers that the most powerful poisons must be sought.

The Sakai is on confidential terms with the *giù u legop*, *giù u labor*, *giù u lampat*, *giù u masè* and the *giù u loo*, but the *lampon* and *broial* are not forgotten either. [20]

The roots of these two plants yield poisons that are amongst the most terrible of those which abound in the forest.

[212]

It seems to me that the only difference passing between these creepers is in the intensity of virulence, but not in the nature of the venomous substances, and it is just for this that the Sakais favour the *legop* and make it the centre of their primitive chemical studies because it furnishes them with the strongest and most fatal of poisons.

This parasite, as soon as it is long enough, clings to one of the superb vegetable kings of the forest, twining round it with a tenacious hold.

Its trunk is from 2 to 4 inches in diameter and gives vigorous life to about 5000 feet of its offspring.

The *legop* leaves are green, smooth and glossy, similar in form to those of the lemon, but they are larger. They are covered longitudinally by prominent nervures.

The fruit borne by this dangerous plant is of the size and form of a small orange, slightly depressed at the stalk and the opposite part. It is very black and hard to break, a hammer or its substitute being necessary to disclose its contents which consist in a great number of little seeds

embedded in a scanty pulp.

All the Sakais extract and prepare poison from the *legop* but there is a tribe living in the most remote parts of the forest, severed from all intercourse with civilized beings, and in consequence pure barbarians, who are renowned for their ability in the preparation of the same, and whose products are considered much superior in strength.



Extracting poison from the "Upas" tree.

p. 210.

It is the Mai Bretak tribe to whom all the other Sakais have recourse, carrying with them a large tribute of the goods usual in exchange. This speciality mixed with *ipok* is the Essence of Death in drops. The minutest particle that enters the blood means imminent extinction of life. The sentence is irrevocable for no remedy is known with which to avert it. The utter impossibility of saving a creature that has fallen a victim to this terrible poison has given rise to a superstition among the Sakais that an evil spirit hovers over, or goes into the mixture when it is being prepared and for this they do not set themselves to the work without taking numerous precautions.

[213]

*Ipok* is extracted and condensed (under the exorcism of *Alà*) in the presence of, perhaps, all the village but no women or girls may assist at the preparation of *legop* lest the invisible enemy should do them some injury. (The spirit is evidently a woman hater!).

The man who prepares it may not eat fish or meat on the day fixed for the important operation and once he has begun it he must remain fasting until he has finished. He is scrupulously attentive not to expose himself to the steam escaping from the bubbling liquid and often (here superstition comes to the aid of cleanliness and hygiene) has to wash his face and hands. But even all this caution is not sufficient and he is considered as a sick person for some days.

The earthenware pot or bamboo used for the purpose must be new, nothing must have been cooked in it before, and nothing after. Directly the *legop* has been poured out it is thrown away because contaminated.

The perfect newness of these vessels serves to increase the power of the poison.

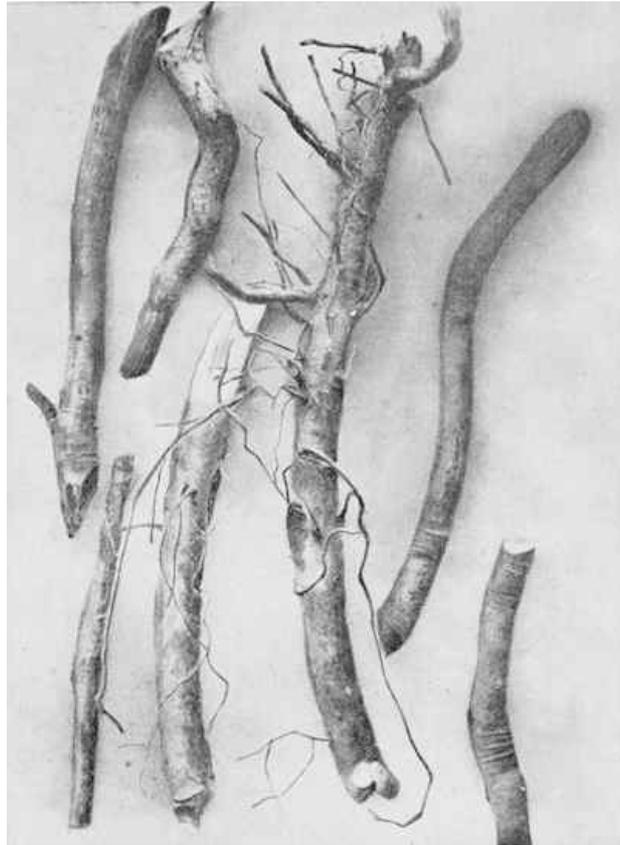
A couple of days before the Sakai wishes to prepare the deadly mixture he goes in search of the creeper, which having found he uncovers its roots and to assure himself that he has not made a mistake, he tries if it has the bitter taste natural to it. Secure upon this point he digs up a nice lot and then fills up his dossier with two sorts of bulbous plants which secrete a glutinous substance but whose name and quality I have never found out. This done he rambles about the forest until he is able to find two kinds of wasps or bees (whichever they are); one is very big and black the sting of which causes a high fever, and which generally has its nest on the ground; the other is little and red, stings like a nettle and has its nest under the leaves of a tree.

[214]

If he has in store some teeth of the *sendok* snake, or of any other equally venomous, he now returns to the village, otherwise he looks for one, kills it and possesses himself of its fangs.

Having thus all the necessary ingredients, the Sakai begins to pound the roots into a paste. This mass he then puts into a tube stopped up by leaves which lets pass a liquid but not a substance. Keeping this primitive filter suspended over the receptacle to be used for boiling, he slowly empties some water into it which soaking through the paste becomes of a brown colour before it reaches the vessel beneath.

Terminated the filtering process he takes the two bulbous plants and squeezing them in his hand he sprinkles as much of their juice as he thinks fit, into the same vessel. The serpent's teeth and the bees are then pounded, they too, and cast in with all the rest which is at once placed on a slow fire. When the mixture begins to boil the Sakai skims off the impurities floating on the surface and adds a little more *legop* if it seems to him necessary, taking great care, meanwhile, not to breath or to be enveloped by the fumes rising from the pot.



Root of the poisonous creeper "Legop".

p. 212.

The poison is lifted off the fire as soon as it has got to the consistency of a syrup and is of a dark reddish colour, the darts are dipped into it and its virulence is put to the test without waste of time. If the proof is satisfactory the thick fluid is poured into bamboo receptacles, covered with leaves, and a piece of deer-skin fastened over them with a band of *scudiscio* and finally the vases are collocated in the driest corner of the hut, from whence from time to time, they are carried near the fire to prevent that their contents should lose force through humidity.

[215]

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Now the question is this: do the ingredients which the Bretak Sakai believes indispensable in this concoction augment the virulence of the *legop*?

I am inclined to doubt it a great deal as I do not think those two plants containing the glutinous juice are poisonous, or at least very little so, but that they are added merely to give denseness to the mixture or else from a false supposition of the indigenes.

And less still can serpents' teeth or crushed wasps have any influence in increasing the power of this poison, which is in itself intense.

Evidently the Sakais, well aware of the lethal effect of a bite from a serpent, think that by introducing into the wound, by means of their dart, a tiny portion of the organ which determines this effect, an equal result will follow.

He neither knows nor imagines that the tooth exercises a simple mechanical action in consequence of which the little reservoir of poison, being compressed, lets a drop fall into the wound produced by the bite.

But there is nothing to be surprised at in this because in history we learn that the superstitions and sorceries practised by more advanced races than the Sakais offer the most curious documents in proof of such odd reasoning.

It is enough to remember that in the time of Augustus the jaw bone of a female dog, which had been kept fasting, and a quill plucked from a screech-owl were required for the enchantments of Canidia, *ossa ab ore rapta jejunae canis, plumanque nocturna strigis*. And yet it was just at that period Rome had inherited from Greece the Philosophy of the Epicureans and that of the Sceptics and was maturing the poem of Lucretius Carus!

[216]

And quite recently has it not been narrated by Parson Evans, of Wales, how he had been badly treated by a spirit because he had forgotten a fumigation during one of his enchantments?

If there has been so much imposture or hallucination amongst advanced peoples (or supposed to be such) we cannot reproach the poor Sakai for his ignorance if in all good faith he thinks that a pinch of pounded bees and serpents' teeth increases the virulence of the *legop* poison. Does he not also believe that the mysterious words muttered by the *Alà* give greater force to his murderous preparations?

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As to the effects of the *legop* strange and contradictory versions are given.

Some affirm that the smallest possible quantity brought into contact with the blood, causes instantaneous death; others declare that it is not sufficiently powerful to kill a man or a beast if the quantity inoculated is not in proportion to the size or if they are strong enough to resist it.

It is my opinion that both these assertions are exaggerated.

One day I asked a Sakai if he thought it possible to kill a man with *legop*.

He replied that nearly every day animals of double the bulk and strength of a man were killed in the forest, and that the poison supplied by this creeper speedily fulfils its mission. As a proof of this he related that once he was standing near a Javanese who had been guilty of violating a woman. This man was hit by a poisoned dart and died almost immediately. [217]

Without appearing in the least to doubt the fact I begged him to show me the exact spot where the dart entered the poor fellow, and where it came out, and from his indications I could convince myself that the dart having penetrated under the shoulder blade had passed through the heart from part to part and had been arrested in its course by the muscles of the thorax.

It was therefore clear to me that death was due to the passage of the dart through the victim's body and had nothing to do with the poison in which the missile had been previously steeped. To my knowledge no recognized studies have ever been made to ascertain the true force of *legop*, so one is free to calculate it at its maximum or minimum, especially when its susceptibility to atmospheric changes is considered.

When the weather is dry it carries death on the wing of the arrow, but if it should be wet, or damp, the poison becomes moist and remains on the surface of the wound (where it can be easily rubbed off) instead of penetrating with the dart into the object aimed at.

And this was the disillusion of one who wanted to try its effects on a dog. The poor beast howled with the pain but did not present any symptom of poisoning.

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Science alone can pronounce accurately upon the toxic qualities of the *legop* and I am always ready to assist it with my modest experience.

Wishing to solve every doubt and also to find out an antidote to this poison I sacrificed many innocent creatures, but I will relate the pitiful end of only two. [218]

I selected a fine fowl full of healthy vigour and taking one of these poisoned darts I made a wound of not more than a half an inch long upon the upper part of its leg.

For a minute after it moved about slowly without even noticing the wound, then it stopped as if overcome by a strange sense of stupor, but soon began to peck the ground.

Two minutes and a half later it opened and shut its beak and let its tail and wings fall limply on the ground. Another half a minute and with its legs bent under, as though sitting, it sought to raise and shake its drooping head. For an-instant it succeeded but the poor member wagged without energy (as happens to us when in travelling we get sleepy but have no place to repose ourselves) whilst its eyes now shut, and now wide open wore an expression of unconsciousness.

About the fourth minute the animal was seized with violent convulsions and at the fifth it was quite dead.

I made the same trial upon a middle-sized dog, wounding this also upon a leg in order not to touch a vital part.

At first it seemed quite insensible to what I had done but after three or four minutes had passed it got very inquiet and sniffed the ground and everything that was around as if to find out what was the matter, turning round its head from time to time towards its thigh which it evidently felt was the seat of its uneasiness. It gave a jump, a prolonged shudder and then lay down.

Once it feebly barked but when it made a second attempt it entirely failed. The cry was not one of pain but seemed to be a sound emitted under the impulse of profound bewilderment.



Branch and fruit of the poisonous creeper "Legop".  
p. 212.

Its head rested for a moment upon its fore-legs but was soon lifted up as the animal rolled over on one side of its body which had the appearance of being paralyzed. Its eyes became fixed, expressionless. The body shivered and gave little starts but the head remained motionless, lying heavily on the ground, and the eyes in their glassy stare revealed the absence of all perception of the senses rather than pain or mortal anguish.

[219]

At this point I turned my attention to its heart which was beating quickly and violently. It stopped an instant, then continued but very, very weakly whilst the whole body began to take a rigid form.

A quarter of an hour after the inoculation of *legop*, the dog was dead.

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If I do not mistake, the first and almost immediate effect of this poison is upon the nerve centres. For certain the blood remains unaltered, or at least no change is visible and the flesh of animals killed with *legop* does not lose any of its flavour nor is there any danger in eating it.

But I dare not speak with any precision about the nature of certain venomous products because where the vast field for scientific research begins, the unpretending labour of the colonist, who collects, refers and describes, finishes, leaving to the chemical student and the physiologist the task of drawing from the information given, those results which may be for the good of humanity in general.

The poisonous flora of the forest is not limited to trees and climbing plants; it extends also to countless herbs, to an infinite variety of fungi, berries, flowers and tempting fruits.

The realm of poison is known but very little. It still reserves the greatest surprises for the scientist who wishes to explore it. And because provident Nature in every manifestation of its fecundity has the habit of putting different qualities in contrast I think that amongst such an abundant vegetation of dangerous plants there may be another, perhaps less plentiful but which would serve to oppose the deadly effects of the first.

[220]

The Sakai knows no antidote except those I have mentioned: the *lemmah kapiting* and the one empirically prepared with quicklime and urine. Neither of them, however, can be warranted as genuine articles, so in this field Science would have everything to discover.

The great Sorceress, the great and incomparable Malayan Forest, offers wonderful treasures to the world, some of which give charms to Life and others conceal the snares of Death.

It is for the *homo sapiens* to distinguish this from that and to make himself the master of their secrets as he has done with Electricity, thereby making it the means of illumination, motive power, and the alleviation of many physical sufferings.

This forest, which would have answered to all the criminal exigencies of the Borgias as regards

poisons, is still a waste land, notwithstanding its extraordinary riches.

Let Science tell us of the immense treasures there produced for the welfare of Mankind.



Preparing "Legop" poisons.

p. 214.

#### Footnotes:

[19] The *i* is almost an *e* and the *a* in all these words are pronounced as *ha*. *Translator's Note*.

[20] The professors, A. Benedicenti and G. B. De Toni, of the Camerino University have published the result of their studies upon the roots and some juice extracted from the *broial* which I sent them for the purpose in 1902. I think, however, that the conclusions of these two scientists would have been in favour of a greater and quicker effect of this poison if, in spite of all my care, the samples had not suffered from the change of climate and, very likely, been exposed to dampness.



[221]

## CHAPTER XVI.

### Past and future geography—Mountains and plateaus—An attempt at a census— Temperature—Maladies and remedies—ALÀ a quack.

Thirty years ago, even in our best geographies, very little mention was made of the Malay Peninsula.

Something was said about its coasts and a scanty product of tin, antimony and coal but there was not a single word about the wide stretch of land far from the shores, partly unexplored and partly inhabited by savages, beyond stating that a chain of mountains ran the whole length, beginning at Kedak and Kelantan and terminating at the extreme end of the peninsula, so dividing it almost in the middle.

But a geographer in our days would have to write a great deal more, for the interior of this country is no longer a deep inviolated mystery, and its aspect has proved very different from what studies, made at a prudent distance, had led us to imagine.

The high mountains (the Berumbun reaches 6530 feet in height) present to the gaze scenery which would satisfy an artist. Some of the tops are covered with a rich, wild vegetation, some are rugged or have sharp peaks from which torrents of sparkling white foam dash down the narrow dark crevices with roaring fury.

[222]

From those superb masses extend a series of plateaus like so many terraces which the more they

descend the more they unfold the fruitfulness of the soil, irrigated by smooth rivers and rills.

There, where mountainous fertility ceases, one to the east and the other to the west, lie the plains of Pahang and Perak whose industrious hands guided by civilized ideas are carrying on a work of redemption from abandonment and malaria by the extension of cultivation and sanitary principles.

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The forest—the territory of the Sakais—covers the central part of the Peninsula. On the outskirts live those less savage because of their contact and dealings with the Malays, Siamese, Chinese and Indians, by whom they are surrounded. The others press always closer on towards the mountains at the same rate that civilization approaches them, fixing their abode at an elevation of not more than from 1500 to 2000 feet. I have found some, but a very rare case, at a height of 4000 feet.

It is true that up there, there are not so many dangers to be met with, for wild beasts (with the exception of an occasional bear) and serpents do not frequent the heights but the cold is too intense to be well supported by individuals who do not wear clothes and who do not build houses to protect themselves from the inclemency of the weather.



Poisoning the arrows.

p. [214](#).

The tract of land inhabited by the Sakais is, at a rough guess, comprised between 3° 50' and 5° 50' North latitude and 101° and 102° East longitude (Greenwich). But for such an extension they are very few in numbers because in the year 1903, passing from one village to another in 25 days, I could not count more than 6800 persons camping round the durians at the ingathering season.

[223]

Reckoning the women left behind because of a recent confinement, the old and infirm and the little children I do not think that altogether they can be many more than 10,000 souls. It is truly the case to say: "*rari nantes in gurgite vasto!*".

It would be impossible to take a real census of the Sakais owing to their distrust of everything they do not understand and the difficulty their nomadic life presents.

The climate where they live, although damp, is good, for the thick foliage of the forest and the breezes that often hail from the mountains mitigate the heat of the sun's rays.

There are no alternations of seasons as in temperate zones but only the distinction of dry and rainy ones, the former being determined by the monsoon blowing from the east, and the latter from that coming from the west.

It is not unusual for the heat at noon to surpass 40° (centigrade) but to the torrid temperature of the day follows a cold night and the hotter the day is, the colder the night. From 40° it easily falls under 20°. The Sakais who possess no garments, or rugs and whose huts are very open and airy, sleep all huddled together (to keep each other warm) round a large fire but they frequently suffer from these variations of temperature.

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As I have before mentioned severe colds are very prevalent among the Sakais against which they

have no efficacious remedy so that it often happens for a simple attack of influenza to turn into a serious bronchial or lung affection and finally result in consumption.

[224]

Neither the *tenak* or *cintok* is of any use then; the evil spirit never leaves hold of his prey.

Cases of fever are very rare and these few must be attributed to the wind which ascends from the plain bringing with it germs of infection. It is extremely seldom that a woman dies in child-birth, but a great many succumb to senile decay at about 60 years of age.

Both men and women are very subject to a cutaneous disease which covers the body with large blotches of a lighter colour than their skin, giving a repugnant appearance to the poor wretch so afflicted. But it is neither a serious nor a contagious illness, nor does it excite amongst the jungle-dwellers that loathing which it would with us because this discoloration does not prevent them from getting married and having children as healthy as other peoples'.

Sometimes one of them is struck down by an infectious disease for which they know no remedy or cure. The sick person is at once isolated from all the rest and is almost entirely abandoned in order to check any propagation of the malady.

I have never noticed any illness which might be considered as peculiar to the people themselves or the region they inhabit but I have been able to establish the fact (from a special study made by me as to the causes of death among the Sakais) that the victims of wild beasts and serpents are on a very low average.

It is quite an extraordinary thing for anybody to lose their life in this way if they have not by some imprudence brought death upon themselves.

I only remember, perhaps because it took place not long ago, that a young woman incautiously wandered away from her hut one evening, as it was getting dark, and was attacked by a panther which fastened its teeth into her lower jaw. Hearing her scream the husband rushed out just in time to kill the animal and save his poor wife's life, but she, of course, remained deformed.

[225]

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The pharmacopoeia of these foresters, freed from all superstition, is of truly primitive simplicity and only contains vegetable remedies. A decoction of the root *tenak celes* is an excellent purgative. A poultice made of its leaves pounded with lime and *sirih* and applied to the forehead is intended to cure headache.

The *sla delok* (a bitter leaf) serves in the place of our worm powders for children.

Another leaf (the *slà poó*) is used for curing dysentery.

They have also several other medicines (whose virtues are kept secret by the *Alà*) for complaints of the stomach or that may be used at will without any precise knowledge of the illness needing treatment.

The gum extracted from the *singret* is employed for stopping decayed teeth and is also rubbed over the cheek during a fit of tooth-ache to preserve it from the air, without putting on bandages.

The Sakai makes great use of charcoal powder in his medicinal preparations, dressing sores, wounds and the bites of animals with it. This might make one suppose that he either knows or divines the disinfecting properties of charcoal. He also makes it a means of defence against the invasions of ants which change their direction when they find the black line across their way.

The water in which a piece of charcoal, made from bitter wood, has been for a long time infused, is according to them a first-rate remedy against debility of the organism and coughs.

The *Alà* wisely acting for—his own good, reserves for himself the prerogative of mixing certain pharmaceutical specialities which make the patient recover if the indisposition is merely a passing one, but help to kill him if the conditions of his health are serious.

[226]

He always keeps prompt some plasters prepared from herbs, either of a soothing or irritating nature, in case of fractures, sprains, or dislocations caused by accidental falls.

But it is scarcely worth while to discuss the merits of these cataplasms, for the Sakai, who is the first person interested in the question, acknowledges and admits their healing virtues.

All the world is akin, and the much respected *Alà* of the forest is nothing less than an uncivilized colleague of those charlatans, inventors of miracles, who by the sale of powders, lotions, medicinal waters and ointments make their fortune in the midst of civilized society, often deceiving science and common sense by means of well placed advertisements.

One is an educated and the other an uneducated quack.

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My notes finish here. They are wanting in order and art but not in verity because above all I have dedicated this writing to the truth, prompted by feelings of gratitude and good will towards my

[227]

kind friends the savages. I have wished to illustrate the customs and character of a people very much calumniated, amongst whom I have found strong and devoted friendship free from every taint of jealousy or self-interest.

Sixteen years of a tranquil, laborious life have I passed among the Sakais and still to-day I feel a pang of home-sickness thinking of that wonderfully fertile land and its good and simple inhabitants.

If my words have been clear to you, dear reader, you must have remarked that in those savages are to be found real treasures of uprightness, honesty and common sense. And the first seeds of these virtues were sown by nobody for they bud and blossom in their souls as spontaneously as from the bosom of great Mother Nature the marvellous multitude of flora rises up towards the sun, seeking light and heat.

It is not so amongst us. Civilization teaches virtue: sermons preach it; moralists condense it into precepts and aphorisms; historians honour it in the ancients in order to inspire it in the moderns; laws, and the menaces of Hell, want to impose it. And yet, notwithstanding all this, it cannot flower well for too often it is fettered by the frenzy of "getting ahead" and by the spasms of passions which in the superb majesty of the forest, and under its sublime influence, are neither known nor understood. Here one works serenely, undisturbed by the fear that others will rob you of your profit.

[228]

I mention the fact but leave others to draw the conclusion because if I arrived at that which would seem most logical after the premise, I should be called a worse savage than those I have held up to public admiration and if I arrived at any other I should be accused (and with reason) of contradiction.

I will instead declare that, in spite of certain discouraging proofs, I firmly keep my faith in human progress, believing that Science will one day succeed in lessening the grand anguish accruing from the incessant and cruel "struggle for life".

My chief reason for illustrating the virtues and defects of the little-known Sakais is to present them more closely to the attention of England, that, by delivering them from the contempt and able trickery of other races, might easily lead them to civilization and at the same time form important and lucrative centres of agricultural product in the interior of the Peninsula.

It is without the slightest idea of boasting that I state I have always remained among the Sakais alone and unarmed, in my work as a colonist. In this way it was possible for me to overcome hostility and mistrust, winning confidence and affection from one of the most uncivilized of peoples. And the fact gives me the greatest satisfaction for it demonstrates in a modest, but not for that less eloquent manner, that armed expeditions however fine and imposing in appearance (according to taste) have not the practical or lasting value of peaceful, friendly overtures. Civilization which pretends to impose itself by violence, slaughter and sackage only sows hatred. The pretended saviours become oppressors, and having begun by force they are compelled to resort to force if they wish to keep the dominion which a ferment of hatred, little by little, is undermining.

[229]

Therefore no arms, no missions (tending to substitute one terror for another) but only patience and calmness are necessary for the conquest of those simple souls and to subsequently teach them, through example, to devote themselves to work. They must be made to feel that civilization is useful, the inspirer of good and not an insidious injurer.

What can savages think when they are subjected to depredation and bloodshed by those who, with these measures, have come to them to proclaim the principles of respect for other people's property and the inviolability of human life?

It is indeed a great pleasure to me finding that to-day the Sakais no longer distrust civilization and some of them, especially the younger ones, do not refuse or shrink from work as they once did and neither do they oppose such an obstinate resistance to those innovations which I too had a part in introducing among them.

I leave it to my readers to judge if I am guilty of vanity in thus expressing my contentment.

And now I have finished.

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Transcriber's Note: This errata prepared by the author/translator is included for historical and archival interest only. All the changes specified by this errata have already been implemented in the etext.

Page	14	line	26	—	<i>qualities.</i>
"	39	"	32	—	<i>wished.</i>
"	50	"	16	—	read <i>debtors</i> for <i>creditors.</i>
Chap.	IV	"	3	—	<i>twilight.</i>
Page	61	"	3	—	<i>centuries.</i>
"	80	"	14	—	<i>inefficacious.</i>
"	84	"	19	—	<i>safeguard.</i>
Chap.	VIII	"	7	—	<i>coronation.</i>
Page	85	"	12	—	<i>gratify.</i>
"	96	"	30	—	<i>previous.</i>
"	107	"	12	—	<i>too.</i>
"	111	"	13	—	<i>too.</i>
"	"	"	17	—	<i>search.</i>
"	112	"	last line	—	<i>enjoy.</i>
"	124	"	1	—	<i>attained.</i>
"	128	"	last line	—	<i>equal.</i>
"	131	"	28	—	for <i>economic</i> read <i>financial.</i>
"	133	"	29	—	<i>consequence.</i>
"	134	"	13	—	<i>without.</i>
"	139	"	2	—	<i>read same time.</i>
"	141	"	2	—	<i>obliged.</i>
"	146	"	16	—	<i>appetizing.</i>
"	178	"	footnote	—	<i>chinneloy.</i>
"	187	"	6	—	<i>falsehood.</i>
"	193	"	1	—	<i>But it is.</i>
"	207	"	32	—	<i>Sakai.</i>

#### TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

Every effort has been made to preserve the original text, including non-standard spelling and grammar as well as inconsistencies in the transliteration of non-English words (both in spelling and use of diacritics.) Non-standard spelling has been preserved if the word is understandable in context. Changes to the text have only been made in the case of obvious typographical errors and where not making a correction would leave the text confusing or difficult to read. All changes are documented in the notes below. The original text also included an errata page by the author/translator. The changes specified in this errata have been implemented and are also documented in the notes below.

Treatment of quotation marks. In the original text, the author/translator used a variant of a European convention in which quoted text began with double quotation marks and ended with double low-9 quotation marks (present in unicode as U+201E). For the convenience of users who may not be able to display unicode, the double low-9 quotation marks have been replaced by regular double quotation marks.

In the author/translator's original style of punctuation, full-stops were always placed outside of the closing quotation marks. Where quoted text ended with an exclamation or question mark, these would be placed inside the closing quotation mark and then a terminating full-stop would be added outside the quotation mark as in this example: "*Sacramento!*". This style of punctuation has been preserved.

Some blocks of quoted text were enclosed in double angle quotation marks (or guillemets). This style of punctuation has been preserved.

Inconsistencies in the hyphenation of words have been preserved. (blowpipe/s, blow-pipe/s; earrings, ear-rings; earthenware, earthen-ware; goodbye, good-bye; hairpins, hair-pins; midnight, mid-night; recalled, re-called; recommenced, re-commenced; reproduced, re-produced; woodcutter's, wood-cutter's)

Pg. 12, "meetins" changed to "meeting". (but once a meeting has)

Pg. 12, "sould" changed to "should". (why should we consider the fierceness)

Pg. 14, "qualilies" changed to "qualities". From author's original errata. (qualities of courage and energy)

Pg. 20, "philosphy" changed to "philosophy". (But my philosophy soon took the)

Pg. 20, "come" changed to "some". (a Pullman's car or some other vehicle)

Pg. 21, closing quote inserted to end at end of paragraph. (a continual increase of danger".)

Pg. 25, "consequence" changed to "consequence". (in consequence, the presence of)

Pg. 28, "stiffness" changed to "stiffness". (Besides the stiffness of my joints)

Pg. 29, "as" changed to "us". (you insult us and call)

Pg. 35, "dutieu" changed to "duties". (all the various duties of)

Pg. 35, "kiching" changed to "kicking". (kicking and batting)

Pg. 35, "belongig" changed to "belonging". (of some land belonging to two)

Pg. 36, "te" changed to "to". (my desire to become better acquainted)

Pg. 36, "contry" changed to "country". (but in him his country lost)

Pg. 36, "recipt" changed to "receipt". (tight hold of the receipt)

Pg. 38, "indefaticable" changed to "indefatigable". (his indefatigable energy brings forth)

Pg. 39, duplicated "a" removed. (we threw a well-pounded leaf)

Pg. 39, "wishcd" changed to "wished". From author's original errata. (if I wished for fortune)

Pg. 47, "af" changed to "of". (in spite of its glass eyes)

Pg. 47, "consequence" changed to "consequence". (The consequence was quite)

Pg. 50, "creditors" changed to "debtors". From author's original errata. (as his debtors could not pay)

Pg. 51, "equal" changed to "equal". (is quite equal to the task)

Pg. 59, Chapter VI summary, "Everlasting twilight" changed to "Everlasting twilight". From author's original errata.

Pg. 55, "sirene" changed to "sirens". (and its steam sirens?)

Pg. 55, "Telok Ansom". Author's original text retained, although he probably intended to refer to the town more commonly called "Telok Anson".

Pg. 55, "Sakay" occurs here and in a few other instances in the text. Elsewhere it is spelled "Sakai". The original spelling has been preserved in all instances.

Pg. 60, "in cease" changed to "increase". (swarms of insects increase its agony by making)

Pg. 60, "miriads" changed to "myriads". (these myriads of plants)

Pg. 61, "centures" changed to "centuries". From author's original errata. (destined to brave centuries)

Footnote 5, "i" changed to "I". (I ate it with relish)

Pg. 71, "Proctectorate" changed to "Protectorate". (remote Eastern Protectorate)

Pg. 71, "Pymalion". Author's original text retained, although more commonly spelled "Pygmalion".

Pg. 76, "varities" changed to "varieties". (varieties of serpents, big and small)

Pg. 77, "smakes" changed to "snakes". (danger from snakes)

Pg. 80, "ineffaticious" changed to "inefficacious". From author's original errata. (inefficacious when a man)

Pg. 84, "safe-guard" changed to "safeguard". From author's original errata. (behaviour being his safeguard)

Pg. 85, Chapter VIII summary. "incoronation" changed to "coronation". From author's original errata. (coronation of King Edward VII)

Pg. 85, "gratisfy" changed to "gratify". (such as to gratify a little ambition)

Pg. 87, "responsable" changed to "responsible". (to establish the responsibility)

Pg. 93, quotation marks fixed. "By thus living separate, "he said" each family....' changed to "'By this living separate," he said "each family....'".

Pg. 96, "aud" changed to "and". (produces and causes)

Pg. 96, "previons" changed to "previous". From author's original errata. (to my previous position)

Pg. 97, "angiuish" changed to "anguish". (that awful anguish I had)

Pg. 107, "two" changed to "too". From author's original errata. (I, too, have often made)

Pg. 110, duplicated word "of" removed. (I speak only of the Sakais)

Pg. 110, "investicating" changed to "investigating". (feel of investigating our neighbour's past)

Pg. 111, "two" changed to "too". From author's original errata. (are too long in proportion)

Pg. 111, "scarch" changed to "search". From author's original errata. (the like in search)

Footnote 8, "eujoy" changed to "enjoy". (If to-day is ours to enjoy.)

Pg. 112, "consequence" changed to "consequence". (in consequence of their long exposure )

Pg. 117, extraneous comma in "etc., Rice" removed as it appears a new sentence is being started. (etc. Rice is an imported luxury)

Pg. 118, "elever" changed to "clever". (are very clever)

Pg. 120, "off" changed to "of" (or of ill-treating them in any way)

Pg. 121, "consequence" changed to "consequence". (agree in consequence of the difference)

Pg. 122, "risult" changed to "result". (but the result of the circumstances)

Pg. 124, "altained" changed to "attained". From author's original errata. (attained or the future)

Pg. 126, caption of illustration following this page, "Bois practising shooting" changed to "Boys practising shooting".

Pg. 128, "equal" changed to "equal". From author's original errata. (all are equal)

Pg. 131, "economic" changed to "financial". From author's original errata. (financial conditions to permit the formation)

Pg. 133, "consequence" changed to "consequence". From author's original errata. (The immediate consequence of)

Pg. 134, "withont" changed to "without". From author's original errata. (and without any hope of reward)

Pg. 139, "same" changed to "same time". From author's original errata. (has, at the same time, to)

Pg. 139, "civilized" changed to "civilized". (with what civilized)

Pg. 141, "obbliged" changed to "obliged". From author's original errata. (I have been obliged)

Pg. 141, "boudaries" changed to "boundaries". (the boundaries of village)

Pg. 141, "settlments" changed to "settlements". (these settlements that I have)

Pg. 143, "to-morow" changed to "to-morrow". (to-morrow a common danger)

Pg. 143, "betwen" changed to "between" (which exists between)

Pg. 146, "appetising" changed to "appetizing". From author's original errata. (into appetizing capons)

Pg. 150, "inventory" changed to "inventory". (the inventory of their kitchen)

Pg. 153, "Notwithslanding" changed to "Notwithstanding". (Notwithstanding this sharpening)

Pg. 158, glossary entry under "Evil", "sonnd" changed to "sound". (*alphabetical sound of e*)

Pg. 161, "scems" changed to "seems". (that seems to be composed)

Pg. 162, "attempts" changed to "attempts". (renounces all attempts)

Pg. 171, "indipendence" changed to "independence". (their "spirit of independence")

Footnote 15, "chineloy" changed to "chinneloy". From author's original errata. (Pronounced *chinneloy*)

Pg. 180, "contorsion" changed to "contortion". (every jump and contortion)

Pg. 184, "de" changed to "do". (Sakais do not refuse)

Pg. 184, "reasou" changed to "reason". (reason the terrible beast)

Pg. 184, "Spirt" changed to "Spirit". (Evil Spirit who is continually)

Pg. 184, "wcked" changed to "wicked". (play his wicked tricks)

Pg. 184, "serinity" changed to "serenity". (the serenity of their simple minds)

Pg. 184, "frequently" changed to "frequently". (hurricanes that frequently)

Pg. 185, "thay" changed to "they". (evil spirits that they believe)

Pg. 186, "esixtence" changed to "existence". (the existence of a Good Spirit)

Pg. 186, "os" changed to "as". (so much so as never)

Pg. 186, "II" changed to "It". (It must also be considered)

Pg. 187, "falshood" changed to "falsehood". From author's original errata. (tell you a falsehood)

Pg. 188, "siezed" changed to "seized". (seized with great terror)

Pg. 189, "imdetuous" presumed to be "impetuous". This text has several instances of inverted letters, as though the type-setter placed the type upside down. (The impetuous currents of air)

Pg. 189, "twoo" changed to "two". (two-fold office)

Pg. 189, "breaded" presumed to be "dreaded", which makes more sense in context (see the dreaded Being)

Pg. 189, "sceeds" changed to "succeeds". (and succeeds in over-ruling)

Pg. 189, "tò" changed to "to". (in order to ascertain)

Pg. 189, "notwithstending" changed to "notwithstanding". (notwithstanding the cabalistic)

Pg. 189, "sesisting" changed to "resisting". (resisting and defeating him)

Pg. 189, "kflled" changed to "killed". (has overcome and killed him)

Pg. 189, "upringht" changed to "upright". (in an upright position)

Pg. 190, "dayu" changed to "days". (For seven days continual)

Pg. 190, "provider" changed to "provided". (it is provided with)

Pg. 190, "fother's" changed to "father's". (his father's dignity)

Pg. 190, "keed" changed to "keep". (alone to keep watch)

Pg. 190, "ir" changed to "in". (incense-pan in which he burns)

Pg. 190, "spyng" changed to "spying". (of spying his actions)

Pg. 190, "ningt's" changed to "night's". (the night's proceedings)

Pg. 190, "alght" changed to "alight". (continues to keep alight)

Pg. 190, "slinghtest" changed to "slightest". (the slightest movement of fear)

Pg. 190, "sciene" changed to "science". (the occult science of his)

Pg. 191, "the had watchad". Either a word is missing after "the", or "the" was meant to be "he". Changed to "he had watched". (proof that he had watched that night)

Pg. 191, "suol" changed to "soul". (soul of the dead man)

Pg. 191, "pzwer" changed to "power". (power would be lost)

Pg. 191, "moltals" changed to "mortals". (poor mortals around)

Pg. 191, "efficacious" changed to "efficacious". (venomous virtue more efficacious)

Pg. 192, "throug" changed to "through". (opening left through the)

Pg. 192, "patien's budy" changed to "patient's body". (from the patient's body)

Pg. 192, "thereforo be heriocally" changed to "therefore be heroically". (must therefore be heroically fought)

Pg. 192, "villagn" changed to "village". (The village in which the)

Pg. 192, "forbibben" changed to "forbidden". (light is absolutely forbidden)

Pg. 193, "But is" changed to "But it is". From author's original errata. (But it is intended)

Pg. 193, "succomb" changed to "succumb". (if he does not succumb)

Pg. 193, "corpe" changed to "corpse". (leave the corpse)

Pg. 194, "aud" changed to "and". (performed and they regularly)

Pg. 199, "aed" changed to "and". (and makes abundant ablutions)

Pg. 199, "Sakia" changed to "Sakai". Sakai is presumed to be the word most likely intended. (death of a Sakai)

Pg. 199, "aven" changed to "even". (not require even the intervention)

Pg. 200, "bi" changed to "by". (by distraction of thought)

Pg. 200, "partticular" changed to "particular". (have no particular)

Pg. 200, single quote mark changed to comma. (cooking their food, preparing their poisons)

Pg. 200, "nigt" changed to "night". (warming them during the night)

Pg. 200, "mathes" changed to "matches". (I gave them matches)

Pg. 200, "Thek" changed to "They". (They may be briefly summed)

Pg. 200, "stil" changed to "still". (are still under the thick)

Pg. 200, "dobt" changed to "doubt". (bright light of a first doubt)

Pg. 200 "far" changed to "for", appears more appropriate in context. (creatures for whom the discouraging counsel)

Footnote 18, "studying" changed to "studying". (without studying it)

Pg. 201, "pratice" changed to "practice". (the practice of morality)

Pg. 201, added full-stop at end of sentence (they do not understand or cannot.)

Pg. 202, Chapter XV summary. An entire line "The *labar*, *lampat*, *masè* and *loo*" appears to be missing as can be seen from the equivalent summary paragraph in the Table of Contents.

Pg. 202, Chapter XV summary. "Nai Bretaks" is given as "Mai Bretaks" in the table of contents. Original text preserved in both cases.

Pg. 207, "trionphantly" changed to "triumphantly". (victors carry it triumphantly)

Pg. 207, "sch" changed to "such". (There is such a rich)

Pg. 207, "areparation" changed to "preparation". (preparation of poisons)

Pg. 207, "famigliar" changed to "familiar" (most familiar are)

Pg. 207, "Jnst" changed to "Just". (Just as a gun)

Pg. 207, "Sakais doen" changed to "Sakai does". Includes author's original errata. (the Sakai does not waste)

Pg. 208, "frepuently" changed to "frequently". (the other is frequently)

Pg. 208, "properrties" changed to "properties". (contain miraculous properties)

Pg. 208, "soffee" changed to "coffee". (coffee, sugar, rice)

Pg. 209, "intollerably" changed to "intolerably". (that itch intolerably)

Pg. 211, "ealled" changed to "called". (climber called *lemmak kapiting*)

Pg. 214, "ander" changed to "under". (its nest under the leaves of)

Pg. 215, "*of scudiscio*" changed to "*of scudiscio*". Author's style was to italicise non-English words but there did not seem to be a reason to italicise the word "of" and this is possibly a typographical error. (with a band of *scudiscio* and)

Pg. 216, "Lucretuis" changed to "Lucretius". (the poem of Lucretius Carus!)

Pg. 221, "Kedak" probably refers to the place now more commonly spelled "Kedah", however the original text has been preserved. (Kedak and Kelantan)

Pg. 224, "propogation" changed to "propagation". (propagation of the malady)

Pg. 225, "seream" changed to "scream". (Hearing her scream the husband)

Pg. 228, "nowithstanding" changed to "notwithstanding". (notwithstanding all this)

Pg. "229" "to day" changed to "to-day" (that to-day the Sakais no longer)

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