

# IN THE SWAMPS OF MALAY

By CASPAR WHITNEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

IT is full seventy miles from Tanjong Rambah to Tanjong Tor facing the Strait of Malacca, and every coast-wise mile of it is mangrove swamp with the tide in and mud flat with the tide out. Long-necked, long-legged birds perch solemnly, grotesquely expectant, upon the scarcely submerged mangrove roots during high water, and range industriously for stranded fish and other smelling garbage things so generously exhibited at low water as to make profitable hunting for thousands upon thousands of winged scavengers. Behind this shimmering, bird-dotted mess, noisome banks of clinging mire run flatly away for one hundred yards or so until lost in the densely overgrown swamp of the jungle. Little creeks, little rivers, come winding out from the jungle through the swamps and the mud flats, making their way to the sea along shallow channels that are as one with the surroundings at high tide, but show bare and ugly when the tide is low. It is not a pleasing spectacle at best; but when the glistening, shivering muck stands revealed in all its nakedness, it is the most uninspiring bit of landscape eye ever rested upon. Yet one creature finds this foul place congenial. Back from tidewater, along streams with low, closely covered mud banks, breeds the hideous crocodile in numbers perhaps not excelled elsewhere in the Far East. And in the sea-washed bottom between the haunts of the crocodile and the last mangroves, the Malay fisherman, knee deep, explores for mussels daily; and nightly as well, for it is in the "noon of the night," as the Malays poetically call midnight, when the tide is high and the moon is full, that he likes best to venture upon his coast waters. It is then, too, that as he paddles his canoe to the sea, he must keep a sharp lookout, for crocodile lurk in dark turnings under the low banks.

Malay coast villages offer little architectural variation, but a divergence: in

human types such as may not be seen elsewhere on earth. Kwalla Maur, where I disembarked, bears no especial distinction in this respect; but as I started from the town with Cheeta, my Tamil servant, on a ten-mile drive to Aboo Din, it seemed as if never outside of Singapore had I beheld so many nationalities in a single community. It was kaleidoscopic; it is the daily scene. Here lumbers a great, complaining two-wheeled cart drawn by sluggish-moving, humped-shouldered bullocks; there goes a narrow, high-bodied wagon pulled by a single water buffalo that moons along, switching flies from its flanks and chewing its cud with equal unemotion. High on the cart seat, perhaps on the buffalo's back, rides the all but unclothed Kling driver; or perhaps a group of them lounge under wayside shade-trees, smoking or dozing or gambling. A Tamil woman carrying erect her well-formed partially draped figure passes silently, gracefully, laden with the ornaments of her class. In the side of her nose is fixed a silver stud as large as a nickel five-cent piece, from which swings a two-inch loop bearing several small ornaments, while from the top of her ear hangs another ring, twice two inches in diameter, weighted with dangling pendants. On one ankle jangle a collection of large, hollow silver bangles, and on one toe is a silver ring. Straddling her hip at the side, and held there by the mother's arm, sits a babe wearing only a necklace of tiny stone beads. Amid much shouting and good-humored confusion among the wayfarers, here comes a Malay syce, now whipping his gharry pony, now lashing out at some unoffending passing Chinese coolie who, under load big enough for two, has perhaps staggered in the way. Ever and anon, groups of half-breed Chinese-Malay women hurry by in all the colors of the rainbow, chattering, laughing, or stand before an open shop discussing in high key some bit of silk or jewelry with the Armenian tradesman. Here are a party

of Klings, half of them digging dirt which the other half gather in baskets that they carry twenty or thirty feet to a waiting cart. There is a jungle Malay, bearing a packing basket that reaches from the top of his head to below his waist line, who has come to town with cocoanuts to exchange at the Chinese shops for silver trinkets for his women kind, or maybe a sarong of finer weave than his home loom can make. Always the Chinese shops; and occasionally the traveling restaurant made up of one small box carrying charcoal fire, a second whose half dozen drawers contain the menu, and both borne on the Chinaman's shoulder, hanging from the ends of a bamboo pole. Dressed in European clothes, idly gossiping, lounges the Eurasian, son of a white father and an Asiatic mother, who, somewhat raised out of his mother's sphere, is rarely qualified by temperament or by character to fit into that of his father, and thus, as a rule, languishes unhealthfully,—a hybrid of discontented mind and vitiated blood.

Next to the Chinaman the most conspicuous element of the cosmopolitan gathering is the Indian chitty, or money-lender. He seems always to be thin and tall, his height accentuated by the caste costume of whitish gauze wound around his body and hanging somewhere between belt and knee line. The standing of these men is nothing less than remarkable. Their word is literally as good as their bond. They borrow from banking institutions without security; and if they fail honestly the chitty caste make good to their creditors; if their affairs are irregular they are driven from the caste and disgraced for life.

It was while I was studying the chitties that I engaged Cheeta, altogether the most remarkable and the most useful servant I ever employed. Apparently there was no office, from body servant to dhobi (washer-man), which he had not filled, and filled creditably, regardless of caste traditions and restrictions. He was really in disrepute among his own people for having professed Christianity; but this, he informed me, did not disturb him, as his dearest ambition was to save his earnings and finally become a money-lender himself. I had originally picked him up in front of the Chitty Temple on Tank Road, Singapore—there is a temple for every trade or caste in the town—which Cheets

haunted with a view to picking up jobs from visiting foreigners, and, no doubt, in the thought of fraternizing with the caste to which he aspired; though how Cheeta proposed breaking all the traditions of his people by going from one caste to another I cannot say; the workings of the Oriental mind are much too intricate to be fathomed by the simple Occidental student, Whatever Cheeta's ambitions, however, they by no means unfavorably influenced the discharge of present duty, or loyalty to his master. Indeed, too faithful attention to my interests was the only complaint I had ever to lodge against him.

In the Far East servants are carried free on steamers, and for a very small fare on the railroad; so it is customary on a journey to take your own servants, who guard your luggage and serve you on ship board or at the hotel. Now Oriental servants as a rule are notorious thieves, and in no way can one show his efficiency so well as by successfully guarding his master's belongings against the predatory assaults of fellow-servants, that sleep always with one eye open for loot. On the first trip Cheeta made he served me so signally as to put me in dread of arrest for harboring stolen property. We had disembarked at Kwalla Selangor, and after the night camp was made Cheeta, with an obvious air of complacency, led me to where our belongings were stored, pointing proudly to the ensemble. As an old campaigner, my kit is invariably reduced to a simple and practical working basis, without auxiliary pots or pans, or fancy culinary accessories. I was, therefore, somewhat surprised to view several strange; luxurious appearing camp things, not to mention a small collection of common or garden paraphernalia, which considerably enlarged my equipment. My first thought suggested accidental mixing of dunnage during the voyage, my next, that Cheeta had been making purchases; but there was a too self-satisfied air about Cheeta to be explained by aggrandizement of such conventional character. To my direct question, "Are they ours?" he replied "Yes," and then "No" to my further inquiries of "Did you buy them, were they given us?" Finally, nonplussed, I asked point blank where he did get them; and then he let me understand, in his subtle way, that he

Indian Boar (*Sus cristatus*)

had outwitted the other master's servants, who had tried to steal from my kit all the way from Singapore.

The dressing down I gave him appeared absolutely incomprehensible to Cheeta, the only impression remaining with him being of my ingratitude for his ever-alert efforts on my behalf. This was the beginning of a faithful service that kept me in almost constant terror lest he steal something and not tell me. He was the most inveterate and most successful thief I ever encountered, yet never stole from me; though continuously bringing me things he had stolen from other masters, under the very eyes of their servants, which he exhibited to me with unmistakable pride in his cleverness, calling my attention at the same time to our own full equipment, from which none of the other servants had been or ever were shrewd enough to steal while he was on guard. Invariably he presented a most aggrieved picture when, after he had brought a stolen article to me, I threatened him with a whipping unless he told me from whom he had stolen it, and set up a doleful wail always when I made him put it back. I never cured him, though I must say I punished him severely at times; he did not appear to care to keep the things he stole; his pleasure was in outwitting the other servants, and having done so he could not resist showing me the evidence, even though it entailed a thrashing. But I never had so competent a servant, and it was with genuine regret I had eventually to

leave him in a hospital ill of a fever he had contracted with me in the swamps, and from which he never recovered.

The road we traveled upon was an excellent one, as all roads in English Protected Malay are, and led us in three hours to a little fishing village where lived Aboo Din, to whom I had been recommended, and who extended me the hospitality of his roof, much to my surprise; for the Malay is a Mohammedan, and a Mohammedan is not usually pleased to have a stranger within his gates. But the surprise was an agreeable one to me, for although the Malay presents the not always comforting anomaly of dirty houses and clean persons, yet the invitation offered an exceptional opportunity for a near-by study of the native and I rejoiced to have it.

Din was good-looking, short and stocky, well put together, with thick nose and lips, and straight black hair. He had been to Singapore a number of times, counted white men among his friends, spoke English fairly well, and was altogether all enlightened Malay. His menage was a very simple yet a very interesting one, and though there were only four rooms I heard scarcely a sound, and never saw



Babirusa of Celebes.

anyone but Din and two children—a son of seven or eight and a daughter of fifteen or sixteen. I question if there is a more beautiful human thing on earth than a handsome Malay boy. Such eyes! and they remain attractive through their boyhood, or until their young manhood, when for a few lively years of pleasure-seeking they constitute the local *jeunesse dorée*; and the Malay species of this engaging genus of



Wild Pig of Borneo.

adolescence is about the swiftest of which I know. The girl children are not so handsome as the boy children; but Aboo's young miss was almost pretty with her lighter complexion, small hands and feet, and an ill-concealed ever-present wish, constantly suppressed, to laugh and be gay. Her eyes were those of her brother, only not so luminous, but the arch of her eyebrow was patrician. I came to be good friends with these children before I left them; and they brought other boys and girls until my group of little acquaintances grew to half a dozen; and never, I declare, have I met such lovable children, not even in South America. The little girl, by the way, was instrumental in letting me into the secrets of sarong-making; for one day she took me to an aged relative, who was weaving one of silk, with threads of gold and silver running through it, that was to be the child's gala garment at a festival soon coming. The old woman said that it took a month to complete such a garment, and about twenty days to make the less elaborate ones. They are all woven of cotton or silk, or cotton and silk mixed, invariably a check of gay colors, and there is almost no house outside of the towns that has not its handloom. Over the sarong the well-to-do women wear a looser garment, extending below the knees and not so low as the sarong, that is fastened at

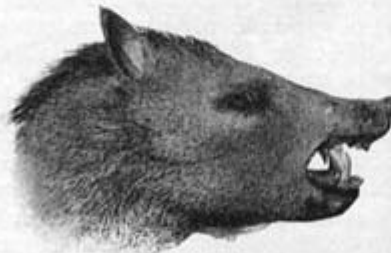


German Boar (*Sus scrofa*).

the front with an oval-shaped silver buckle four inches deep by six long. Although all of the same style—an oblong cloth from two to four feet in width, and about six feet in length, sewn together at the ends like a bag with the bottom out—yet an ingenious twist at the waist, or other touch of the eternal feminine gives the sarong individual distinction.



Mexican Peccary.



Brazilian Peccary.



Texas Peccary.

loved to gossip; there was not much of the social history of that little settlement I did not hear before we set out for the swamps in the jungle. Being well-to-do he indulged himself in fads, two—cock-fighting and highly ornamented crises. Also he had some fine pieces—betel-nut boxes chiefly—of old Malay silver exquisitely carved, and now so hard to get. He organized several cock fights while I was with him, and although his collection was

small it was not lacking in quality. He had also just bought a race pony, which he was training with a view to entering the holiday races at Singapore; for, next to his betel-nut and his women, the Malay dearly loves the speculative opportunities of a horse-race. But the up-country Malay of the old school cherishes most his kris, as the dagger with wavy or straight twelve-inch blade is called. There was a day, not so long gone, when the kris bore no value until baptism in human blood made it worthy to pass on to succeeding generations with its story enshrined in family tradition. To-day, with all Malay at peace, it has lost such significance, though remaining a much-prized possession and heirloom, according to its intrinsic value. It may have a wood or buffalo-horn handle, plain, or carved in the fanciful designs of which Malay workmen are past-masters; or the handle may be of ivory, of silver, or even of gold, chased and studded with jewels. Etiquette prescribes that the kris be worn at the left side, unobtrusively sheathed in the sarong, with the handle pointing in to the body; the turning out of the handle and the exposure of the kris indicates unfriendliness. Whatever the composition of its handle, however, the blade of the first-class kris is only of one and the best quality, fashioned of splendid Celebes iron, tempered ceremoniously and decorated punctiliously with water lines. These lines, which give the impression of inlaid silver, are the result of a process said to be secret; but Din told me they were made by leaving the blade for several days in a mixture of sulphur and salt after it had been incased in a thin coating of wax, and then cleaned, and rubbed with arsenic and lime-juice. How near this is to the truth I know not; I give it only as Aboo Din gave it to me.

The sheath of the kris is frequently as elaborate as the handle, made of a native mottled wood that takes a very high polish, and is often additionally mounted in highly ornamented brass. Sometimes the sheath is also decorated with gold and silver trimmings. In the old days the famous maker of blades attained to wide celebrity; now he is passing, almost passed indeed, and his art, like all the splendid native arts the world over, is being replaced by hideously unpleasing, if

practical, articles of civilization—civilization, destroyer of the picturesque and of the art instinct in the individual.

When Din learned that the real object of my coming into his country was to hunt wild pig, all his good humor vanished, for, to the Mohammedan, pig is an animal abhorrent. We had already made several successful deer hunts, for which purpose he kept an assortment of dogs and enjoyed quite a local reputation, and he was keen to give me more of the hounding, which I did not enjoy, and had joined in only for the experience; but he would have nothing whatever to do with my proposed hunt for boar; he would not even hire me his dogs. At least such was his attitude at first, but after a day or so his natural good humor and the lessons of Singapore asserted themselves, and he showed a more receptive mind to my proposition. At just this psychological moment word came from a neighboring kampong (settlement) of crocodiles terrorizing the people; and it was not very long before I had closed a bargain with Aboo Din that, if I would go with him into the swamps and help slaughter crocodiles for his people, he, in return, would organize my pig hunt. So with that mutual understanding we started off next morning with twenty men and a dozen dogs.

Curiously, the Malay is no hunter of the crocodile which infests his habitat, and it is only when one has carried off a child or a dog, or taken up its abode too near a village for the comfort of the inhabitants, that he organizes to kill. 'Twas on such an occasion that I happened now. For six or seven miles we skirted the jungle, across the mangrove swamps and the mud flats, before we came to a small collection of houses elevated upon piles along the banks of a sluggish stream. Here we pitched camp.

Shooting crocodiles is no sport; you sit in the bow of a canoe, rifle at hand, while two men paddle silently forward until you sight a dark, olive-green, loglike thing on the mud. The "thing" is not so inanimate as it looks. Perhaps you have momentary sight of a yellowish patch, the under side of its throat, as it moves off; and then you fire and paddle with all speed to where the creature was; *was*, I repeat, for nine times out of ten past



On the ocean-swept shore, where a number of naked native boys climbed the palms seeking coconuts—and their photographs.

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Malayan villages are very much of a piece, with their houses lifted upon piles built along the river bank or water front.

tense is the proper one. You may see a few spots of blood to indicate you have scored, but rarely is a crocodile killed instantly, and otherwise it is not secured. No matter how severely wounded, it finds its way into the river to die and sink, or to fall prey to other crocodiles. Of about a dozen I wounded to the death, I secured only one, and that because I was able to approach within ten yards, and, with my lead-pointed ball mushrooming, drilled the disgusting reptile through and through.

The Malays had a more certain way of securing the quarry. Their means was a bamboo raft, two and a half feet square which carried an upright two-foot pole flying a small bit of rag. To the under side of the raft was attached about fifteen to twenty yards of stout line, ending in three feet of chain, a couple of feet of wire, and a stout barbed hook, to which was made fast a live fowl and a small section of hollow bamboo to counterbalance the weight of chain and float the bait. Set adrift in the river, it was not long, as a rule, before a squawk and a splash announced the bait taken. Violent agitation of the raft followed upon the disappearance of the fowl; sometimes it momentarily disappeared from view as the hooked amphibian went ahead full steam, but always the little flag came bedraggled to the surface, and after a while remained stationary as the crocodile stayed his progress in an effort to disentangle himself from the bait. But by this time the hook had taken firm hold, and it became simply a question of putting a boy on the bank or on a canoe to watch the flag on the raft. By and by at their leisure the Malays would haul the crocodile ashore and murder it. Aboo Din seemed an artist in this method of catching crocodile, and always two or three of his flags fluttered on the river. Except for the satisfaction of killing the dangerous things, I cannot say I enjoyed the game; there is no sport in shooting lead into something you do not get, and when you do get it the reptile is so repulsive as to destroy all the joy of its pursuit. Therefore I was well content when Aboo Din announced that crocodiles had been butchered in sufficient numbers to quiet the fears of the residents—also, I may add, to increase his local importance, as indeed it well deserved to be—and he was ready to take me inland for wild-pig.

*Per contra*, no sport in the world is more thoroughly enjoyable than boar-hunting, or pig-sticking as it is done in India; for this is the pluckiest brute on earth. No beast has more courage than he; in fact, an old wild boar knows no fear, not even of a tiger. The wild boar never loses his head—or his heart; such bravery I have never beheld in any four-footed creature. He has all the cunning commonly accredited to the devil, and in his rage is a demon that will charge anything of any size. I have seen a small boar work his way through a pack of dogs; and his smaller brother, the peccary, in Brazil, send a man up a tree and keep him there. The boar looks ungainly, but the Indian species is fleet as a horse for about three quarters of a mile. He begins with flight, shifts to cunning, and finally stands to the fight with magnificent valor, facing any odds. As, riding upon him, you are about to plant your spear, he will dart—"jink," as they call it in India—to one side, repeating the performance several times, until he finds he cannot shake you, when, turning suddenly with ears cocked and eyes glittering, he will charge furiously. If not squarely met with a well aimed and firmly held spear, he will upset both horse and rider. Hurling himself again and again against the surrounding spears, he will keep up his charge until killed, when he dies without a groan. There is no animal like him; and truly is he entitled to the honors of the chase in Indian and in European countries where he abounds. The true home of the wild boar (*Sus cristatus* and *S. scrofa*) is India and Europe—France, Germany, Russia, Spain, Austria. Smaller and less formidable species of him are found in Hawaii, in the South Sea and in the East Indian islands; and in South America, Mexico and Texas, where he is much smaller and known as the peccary. The average shoulder height of a good specimen of Indian boar is twenty-nine to thirty-two inches, the tusk length four to six inches, and the weight two hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds; although in the Tent Club I heard of boars killed that had tipped the scales at six hundred—but that story came late in the evening. The other East Indian varieties, the babirusa excepted, will not average within one hundred pounds of the





The umbrella-topped trees at the edge of the Malayan jungle.



The roads are all good to travel on and picturesque to see.

Indian, and the peccaries are even smaller, probably fifty pounds lighter. Boar-hunting as sport attains to its highest excellence in India, where it is as bad form to shoot a boar as, in England, it is to shoot a fox; in fact it is the law of the land that none may be shot within forty miles of ridable ground. Elsewhere, because of unridable country, or from tradition, the boar is shot, and, having experience of both, I can say that boar-shooting is to pig-sticking as pot is to flight bird shooting. The peccaries differ little; the Mexican, called "javalinhas," have the more pig-like head; the Texan are the smallest. Some sport is to be had chasing peccaries in Texas, where, in small herds, they keep ahead of the horses and dogs for a short exhilarating burst of a couple of hundred yards, when they tire and come to bay. But Texas peccary hunting is not more serious than good fun, although the pig is pugnacious and valiant. A strong fighting dog can alone kill a peccary; and there never lived a dog which, single-handed, could live through a finish fight with an Indian boar. The Brazilian peccaries are the heaviest, travel in herds of considerable numbers, have more endurance and more fighting blood.

Beating pigs up on foot to shoot them as they rush from one patch of jungle into another has its exciting moments, and its risks are of no trivial order if you are called on to sustain a charge. I found this method in Brazil more sport than riding after them behind dogs in Mexico or in Texas, but it was much better still in Malay, where the pigs are larger and the cover dense and variously occupied. Indeed a fascinating feature of pig-hunting in Malay entirely peculiar to the Peninsula is the uncer-

tainty of what kind of animal may burst from the jungle ahead of the beaters, It may be anything from a *plandok* (mouse deer) to a tiger. In my experience, frequently it was the larger deer, sambar, locally called *ruso*, once it was a leopard, and several times smaller catlike creatures. Pig and deer live in the same localities in Malay, and wherever they abound the stealthy tiger lives also; but he is too wary to be driven out by a mere handful of men, as subsequently I learned, though I did walk one up and



Cheeta—my Tamil servant.

drive him out with less than forty beaters and no dogs. Pig-sticking would be impossible in Malay. Primeval forests of great, smooth tree trunks rise straight into the air fifty or sixty feet before sending out their canopy tops that scarcely permit sunlight to sift through. Far below grows a tangled mass of palms, ferns and small trees bound together by rattan, cane and climbing vines of such strength and profusion that the adventurer may advance only by frequent use of the knife. Water-soaked by the shoulder-high, dripping, coarse grass and torn by multitudinous thorn-armed bushes, he cuts his way slowly, even painfully. Needless to say such country is not ridable. Where agriculture has made its demand this jungle has been cleared, and tapioca, coffee, rice, pineapples and every tropical thing flourishes in luxuriant abundance; and when, as happens, land has been abandoned, a secondary growth of shrubs and small trees, and high, coarse grass, lalang, speedily covers all signs of attempted reclamation. On the edges of such country are favorite ranges for wild pig, which, after feeding at night, find here the thick

scrub near soft ground, where they can wallow and lie up during the day. Thus in Malay hunting boar becomes a matter of beating them out of these thick jungle patches, and the native dogs, though serviceable after deer for which the Malays train them, lack the courage needed to dislodge a stubborn or pugnacious boar. English residents have experimented quite a bit in breeding for a good dog; but nothing very notable has evolved, and the most dependable one seems to be got by crossing a pariah (mongrel) bitch with all imported harrier.

As a collection of mongrels, the dogs Aboo Din got together for our pig hunt were unbeatable; as a pig pack they were untrained and fickle, though not useless.

For a greater part of four days' travel inland from the coast we moved through ankle-deep swamp and multitudes of sago and cocoanut palms, seeing now and then on higher, dryer ground the traveler, most beautiful of all the smaller palms. Insects were troublesome, not to mention the omnipresent leech, and the heat very oppressive, especially in the close-growing *alang*; yet the surroundings of the swamp land were different from any I had seen elsewhere on the Peninsula, and therefore extremely interesting. We were wringing wet most of the time, for nearly always, as we made way through the swamp to reach higher ground beyond, we walked through the densest of dripping jungle. Once and again we passed a deserted plantation, the last signs of agricultural activity fast disappearing under the engulfing jungle growth; and on the sixth day, at noon, we came to a large tapioca farm, where I lunched deliciously on the refreshing milk of a freshly gathered cocoanut and the roasted, sweet-potato-like roots of the tapioca, with bananas and papayas plucked near by. Here was our pig-hunting ground and here we remained

a week, averaging about two drives a day. Although bunglingly done, I enjoyed no hunting experience in Malay more than this. We were always ready for our first drive about six o'clock in the morning. The beaters and the dogs, making a wide detour around a patch of jungle previously agreed upon, would enter it from the far side, while I took my position on the opposite side in the open places where the pigs were likely to come out—though they did not always perform as expected, sometimes running around and around within the jungle patch, in defiance of both dogs and men. The jungle patches were never of great size, so I could hear the beaters almost from their first shout on entering the cover. Such a racket and such a crew! for the beaters were as motley as the dogs. They included Chinamen, Klings, Tamils, Japanese, a few Malays, all of them naked except for a small breech-clout. Every man had a *parang* (jungle knife) swung at his waist; half of them had empty, five-gallon kerosene cans, with which Aboo Din had provided them on the coast. From the moment they entered the far side of the cover until they emerged on my side they hammered these cans incessantly, shouting and yelling and at the same time thrashing the jungle on all sides with long bamboo sticks. Such a confusion of shrieking men and crashing cans and yelping dogs I never heard. As they came closer the noise became an indescribable babel. There was never a day that did not result in pigs; they *had* to flee before that bedlam, though none had tusks longer than a couple of inches. It was a question of snap shooting as they popped out of one patch of jungle into another; and was, I must say, rather good fun, especially when the charge of two wounded ones rather stirred things up a bit.

But Aboo Din all the time maintained a dignified aloofness.