The Orchid Seekers

A Story of Burma

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By the Same Authors.

THE RIDERS

or

THROUGH FOREST AND SAVANNAH

WITH THE "RED COCKADES"

With 26 Illustrations.
THE ORCHID SEEKERS
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Form No. 513, Rev. 1/84
Boy produced a knife and scraped away the greater part of the mud.

p. 96.
THE ORCHID SEEKERS

A STORY OF

ADVENTURE IN BORNEO

BY

ASHMORE RUSSAN AND FREDERICK BOYLE

WITH ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.
15 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND
INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

Some of our boy readers may cry, on seeing the names of two authors on the title-page, "What! A couple of 'em?" And at any point they will be likely to ask themselves, "Now, I wonder which of the two wrote this?"

The public in such cases is commonly left to wonder, but circumstances here are unusual. When Mr. Ashmore Russan formed a project of writing a story upon the subject of orchid-collecting and its many dangers, he applied to Messrs. Sander, of St. Albans, the great importers of orchids, for special information. They referred him to Mr. Frederick Boyle, as one who had travelled in many lands where those plants flourish, who grows them, as an amateur, with unusual success, and publishes much about them. Mr. Boyle had no time to take an equal part in writing the story, but he consented to advise, direct, and in general to lend his assistance. The outline of the tale is his, and for all statements therein, historical, local, or scientific, Mr. Boyle is responsible. It naturally happened, since he was treating of scenes he had himself beheld, of peoples and individuals he himself had known, that he found it necessary to take the pen from Mr. Russan's hand and write a few lines here and there. But in general he confined himself to his functions of director and critic. It will be understood, after this explanation, that the tale rests on a solid basis of fact all through.

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GLOSSARY.

Meaning of the names of orchid genera mentioned in this story; names of species are interpreted in a note where they occur. It is usual to transform the Greek "ON" to the Latin "UM."

**Angraecum** Latinised from the Malay *Angrec*, signifying an epiphytal orchid of any kind — that is, an orchid which grows on a tree. It is now limited to one genus.

*Angraecum* Greek, "Child of the air." A name used generally in the early days of orchid culture—now limited to one genus.

**Aerides** Greek, "Child of the air." A name used generally in the early days of orchid culture—now limited to one genus.

**Anecto-chilus**, "Open-lipped."
**Bulbo-phyllum**, "Bulbous-leaved."
**Cal-anthe**, "Beautiful Flower."
**Cata-setum**, "Downward bristle." From the two horns of the column.
**Celo-gyne**, "Hollow stigma." From a cavity in the column.
**Cory-anthes**, "Helmet Flower." From the shape of the lip.
**Cymbidium** Greek, "Boat-shaped"—in the form of the lip.
**Cypri-pedium**, "Venus's Slipper."
**Dendro-bium**, "Living on a tree."
**Epi-dendrum**, "Upon a tree."
**Grammatophyllum**, "Lettered leaves." From the marking of the foliage.
Masdevallia  After Dr. Masdeval, a Spanish botanist.

Odonto-glossum  Greek "Tooth - tongue." From the form of the lip.

Peristeria  "Dove." From the astonishing resemblance of the column to a figure of that bird.

Pescatorea  From the name of a great amateur, General Pescatore.

Phalenopsis  Greek "Like a moth."

Ren-anthera  "Kidney-anthers." From the shape of the pollen masses.

Sacco-labium  Latin "Bag-lipped."

Vanda  It is commonly understood that this word was "made up." If so, there is a curious coincidence. Sanscrit scholars tell us that Vanda signifies "mistletoe" in that language. It was applied, however, to all parasites, among which orchids were classed, even by botanists, until late years.
THE ORCHID-SEEKERS.

CHAPTER I.

A PALACE OF ENCHANTMENT.

We must look back to the month of June, 1856. The orchid palaces which are now regarded as adjuncts almost indispensable to a great country-house, were few in number then, and, by comparison, poorly furnished. Yet botanists and amateurs who recall that time think of it as a golden age! They had beauty enough and wonders enough to satisfy them in the present, and a future without bounds. Strange and delightful rumours came to hand every day, and found acceptance. Why not, when living plants arrived continually, as beautiful and as marvellous as the most glowing fancy could conceive? An orchid grower in those days had all the world before him. A point here and there had been touched, but every collector returning with his spoil—so easily gathered, though, alas! so woefully diminished when he reached home—had stories to tell of greater marvels seen or reported. The points thus touched were very few and far apart; between them, all through the Tropic realms, lay spaces measureless, where imagination
roamed unchecked. Such spaces have grown narrower year by year. Some, perhaps most, of the rumours and legends have been proved true. We possess those glorious treasures—such of us as survive—of which we dreamed thirty years ago! Those who visit an orchid house now may think that—as it is expressed by one who should have been a poet:

"All beauty that the mind can hold is there—the quintessence of all charm and fancy. . . . If Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like a lily of the field, the angels of Heaven have no vesture more ethereal than the flower of the orchid!"

Yet it has ever been admitted that hope is a more blissful state of mind than fruition.

Among the few importers and growers of that era was Ralph Rider, an enthusiast.

On the day upon which this story opens he was pacing the central walk in one of his orchid houses, engaged in earnest conversation with a companion. Mr. Rider was a squarely built, broad-shouldered man, in the prime of life, with a ruddy, kind countenance; his hair and beard were glossy brown, with not a grey thread in either.

His companion was a young man—not more than thirty—with a striking personality. He stood six feet two in his stockings. His oval face was of the colour of burnished copper, bronzed by the scorching tropical sun, which had bleached the heavy flaxen moustache at least two shades lighter than his hair, but had not dimmed the lustre of the blue, watchful eyes.

His nationality could be seen at a glance almost—he was a German. His name, Ludwig Hertz. Occupation, a Collector of orchids. He had only one arm, the left. In place of the right, lost in some machinery, he had an iron hook, as useful as some people's fingers. Indeed, his dexterity with that curved piece of iron was something to marvel at. His English friends, and he had many,
said he had "been everywhere, and done most things." Mr. Hertz rarely spoke of his achievements, never boastfully. He was well read, and a thorough botanist, acquainted with every tree and herb in the universe, or nearly so. His occupation had made him a great traveller. Had he been dropped from a balloon in any part of the Tropics an examination of the flora would have told him his locality. He had sought orchids in more lands than he could count on his fingers. He had risked his life as often as Othello, and thought very little of it. Such escapes from savage animals and equally savage men, from miasma-breathing swamp, river flood, and ocean storm, were all in the way of business. He loved his occupation, and would not have exchanged it for a dukedom. Now, conversing with Ralph Rider, he recognised a kindred spirit.

They were too much interested in their discussion to heed the familiar loveliness around. But it was a scene hardly to be matched in those days unless at Chatsworth, where the Duke of Devonshire was forming that noble collection, with vast expenditure and pains, to which science owes so much. Here stood pots of *Peristeria*, the *Spirito Santo* of the Spanish Americans, who regard it as a standing miracle. From the mass of its big, wrinkled bulbs rose flower stems crowned with wax-like blossoms, each showing at its heart the figure of a snowy dove, with purple-spotted wings—erect, as if taking flight. Hanging in baskets from the roof were *Oattleyas*, chocolate-brown with rosy-purple lip; tenderest green, with crimson lip; pale lemon-yellow, margined with white; olive-green, dotted with crimson; most glorious of all those glorious things, golden-yellow with a great frilled lip of purple streaked with gold. In baskets, also, were *Oncidiums*, dropping garlands of white mottled with green and chocolate; brown outlined in gold; pale violet barred with rosy purple, and white lip. Warm
Odontoglossums were blooming there, of richest yellow, spotted and splashed with brown; or huge flowers of pale orange on a short stalk, banded with a deeper tone. Here a noble Sobralia, like an Iris enlarged and glorified beyond all that fancy could conceive—crimson purple with a golden heart. Yonder Dendrobiums, white, straw-colour, crimson splashed; scarlet Epidendrums; Miltonias white and purple.

One of these two men had enjoyed the triumph and the ecstasy of discovering some among the beauties named in their forest home; scarcely less had been the other’s delight in restoring to health and loveliness the plants that came to him in shape of leafless, withered bulbs and dry sticks.

Of course Mr. Rider had his favourites—not always the “Kings” and “Queens” of the orchid world. If favouritism might be judged by attention, they were the delicate children, often the perverse; those which rival orchid growers could not induce to bloom in a foreign land; which drooped and died on the slightest provocation, or despite the greatest care. Somehow, these fragile ones were often the most lovely. Nature holds the balance very fairly. Among them was one acknowledged Rex, the lovely Wana Rajah, the Ceylonese “King of the Woods,” the most beautiful of the Anoectochili, with leaves of brown velvet thickly reticulated with gold that gleamed and sparkled. For more than ten years he had imported and studied this genus. Again and again the delicate plants died on his hands. Undismayed, he imported others, always experimenting, trying different temperatures and systems; and now, in a warm moist corner, he could show such a mingled mass of lovely velvet foliage, picked out with gold, with silver, with rose-colour, olive-green, grey, and coppery-red, as provoked the envy of his compeers, few of whom could prevail upon the perverse Anoectochili to live.
Ralph Rider was proud of his success as a man could be, but not boastful. It was all owing to his system of "trying again." He was, as has been said, an enthusiast, also a genius—that is, a man endowed with a great capacity for taking pains.

"I want your opinion," he said, during perhaps the sixth turn down the hot-house. "By that I intend to be guided. Do you think this wonderful 'blue' orchid exists?"

Ludwig Hertz stopped suddenly.

"Wynot?" he said, "Nodings ish too marvellous. I have seen so many marfels dat I gan believe anydings. Und de man has seen idt!

"Then you think his tale worthy of credence?"

"Wynot! He couldt nodt—nodt—what ish de vordt?"

"Invent the story?"

"Ja! He ish nodt learnedt. He knows nodings of flowers—nodings of idts value. He hafe no motife to lie."

"True. Bounce is an indefatigable yarn-spinner, like most old salts, but this seems rather out of his line. Now, taking for granted that it exists, will you go to Borneo and find it?"

"I vill go und look for idt, Misder Rider. Where ish de man?"

"Wandering about the premises, somewhere. I told him to look around and amuse himself. We will seek him."

They left the house, and entered another devoted to Phalaenopsis. From baskets and blocks of teak-wood overhead the roots hung down like tangles of riband—green, grey, and mottled. The flowering season was past, but here and there some belated plant let fall a wreath of pearly blossom, the lip veined with purple and gold, or snow-white touched with yellow. The man was not
there, and they went on without remark. But Hertz glanced to and fro incessantly, with a watchful eye that noted every object as he passed; the civilised man soon learns that vigilance from the savage, or his wanderings in a Tropic forest would speedily be cut short. Suddenly he paused in deep excitement, pointing with his finger.

"Ach!" he cried. "You hafe idt—you hafe idt! Ach! I am robbed!"

His hand quivered with agitation to the degree that Rider could not have identified the object by that means. But he guessed it.

"My new Phalaenopsis? You are acquainted with it?"

He looked for the pole by which distant baskets were lifted down; but Hertz extended a prodigious length of arm, with a hook at the end, and secured it.

"Agquainted mit idt!" he growled. "Idt's mine! Ach! whay a beauty; some shkellum has robbed me! Tell me his name!"

Mr. Rider was not alarmed or shocked by this imputation of theft, understanding by experience that the Collector spake figuratively. Hertz had discovered or heard of the new Phalaenopsis, but a rival had been before him in bringing it home.

"Whay dey gall de shkellum, sir?" he went on. But Rider put the question by.

"That's the only specimen in Europe," he said. "Handsome, aren't they—those dark green leaves marbled with white and grey? I'm told the flower is better than a match for them."

"Idt's heachsenly! manfe und white und yellow spodted mit red, t'ree inch agross; t'ree hoondred of dem, mit a shpike a yard long! I'm a rooined man! I kept de segret of dat Phalaenopsis,* Misder Rider, for a great

* Phal. Schilleriana.
coup, und now idt’s boorst! Budt tell me how you got idt?

"Just in the way of business, my friend," Rider laughed, restoring the basket to its place. "I used no magic. As for great coups, get this blue orchid in Borneo, and that will console you."

In the Vanda house they found their man, standing with his back against a column, rolling a quid of tobacco round his mouth in silent awe.

A short, muscular, bow-legged tar, scraggy-bearded and hairy-chested, with twinkling, deep-set eyes, and a gash in lieu of mouth.

A comical-looking, self-assertive gentleman was Mr. Robert Bounce of the Merchant Service. He had visited many strange lands, and seen many strange sights, but Ralph Rider’s orchids had rather knocked the assertiveness out of him. Just now he was meek as a shorn lamb. The mood, however, was not lasting.

Bounce had served a number of years as ordinary seaman on board the Mary Anne, a vessel hailing from Singapore, trading in the China seas and about the Malay Archipelago, wherever a cargo might be disposed of or obtained. He had returned home to get rid of his earnings in the customary foolish fashion, which he had succeeded in doing. The little town of Draythorpe, which could boast of orchids, as fine, perhaps, as any in Europe—Ralph Rider’s—was Bounce’s birthplace, where, having nothing better to do, the old salt had passed his time in the congenial occupations of yarn-spinning, sucking at a short, very black clay pipe, or chewing twist tobacco. One of his yarns had been overheard by a gardener in Mr. Rider’s employ. The man at once informed his master of its purport. The Orchid Importer himself interviewed Bounce, digested his strange communication, and called in Ludwig Hertz. The Collector having arrived, Bounce had again been sent for, and here he stood!
"Well, if this don't beat all as ever I see!" he cried, as the Importer and the Collector entered the "house."

"Regular knocks the wind out o' me sails, that it do; an' I've seen some purty things in me time—wonderful things too. Flowers like great quart jugs, a'most all the colours o' the rainbow, full o' liquor as the monkeys drinks, so they say, an' flowers as the very smell'll knock you over like a cannon ball! But, bless you, they was only here an' theer; these be like a shoal o' herrings!"

"You mean a cloud of butterflies, Bounce. Herrings? There's nothing fishy about my orchids, I trust, though the blue one you say you have seen may be a 'whale.' But let us get to business. I want you to tell this gentleman the yarn you spun to me. You may leave out the fighting and get to the flower as quickly as you can.

Bounce shifted his quid of tobacco from the right cheek to the left, where it bulged out the size of a walnut, folded his arms, and spake thus:

"Right you are, Mr. Rider, I'll get under way at once. I was aboard the Mary Anne, bound from Manilla to Singapore with a mixed cargo o'——"

"Never mind the cargo," Mr. Rider interrupted.

The old salt removed the quid from the left cheek to the right, and began again:

"I was aboard the Mary Anne, bound from Man——"

"My good fellow, never mind that," Mr. Rider once more interrupted. "Forget the pirates, and begin at Sarawak. There, I'll tell it. The Mary Anne got too near the coast of Borneo. You were attacked by pirates, rescued by a British cruiser before the scamps had time to kris you. You went up the Sarawak River to Kuching, and got the holes the pirates had knocked in your hull plastered up, or mended somehow. Whilst there, you and a few others travelled into the interior. You saw a great many strange sights too numerous to mention, and mostly not at all to the point. Amongst them a certain
blue flower growing on a very big tree. There's the story it would have taken you an hour to tell. Is it correct?"

Once more Bounce moved his quid. This time his eyes twinkled.

"Well—I reck'n it are; an' I reck'n as you ought to know as well as me. From the way you spins the yarn, sir, it strikes me as you must ha' been theer."

"I hadn't that pleasure. I wish I had. But fire away! Tell the story after your own fashion."

For the fourth time the sailor shifted his quid. For the third he commenced the yarn of the *Mary Anne*.

"I was aboard the *Mary Anne*, bound from Manilla to Singapore, with—"

"An obstinate old donkey among the crew!" interjected the Importer, angrily. "Haven't I already taken you and your *Mary Anne* to Sarawak, and you I don't know how far into the interior? Can't you pick up the loose end of your yarn there?"

"Ay, I reck'n I can, Mr. Rider," rejoined the old fellow, perhaps fearful of losing the expected reward; he knew the Importer was not a man to be trifled with.

"Well—me an' Jim Green, the bo's'un, an' Tom Reynolds, the second mate, we gets hail-fellow-well-met with some o' Rajah Brooke's Malays, an' goes up country to a place as was familiar to me, seeing as they called it Bow. It were Bow, that's what it was, an' I 'membered it 'cause theer's a place o' the same name not far from London Docks. Well—I was a-looking around somewheer about theer—I can't say for certain to ten miles or theerabouts just wheer it was—when I sees the splendiddest thing in flowers as ever I set eyes on—"

"There at last!" Mr. Rider exclaimed.

"It were up a tree—high up—a reg'lar mass o' greenery, an' garlands o' blue flowers a-hangin' down all round it! I never seed nothing like it—never! I've
seen nothing like it here, though what you've got's enough to take a man's breath away."

Hertz showed great excitement. The iron hook shook. He shifted his position, nervously moving, but did not speak, though he watched the sailor narrowly, as if to assure himself that the man spake the truth.

"Can you describe the flowers?" Mr. Rider asked, forcing indifference, though he also was excited by Bounce's enthusiasm, so unusual in an ignorant sailor, and which could not be other than genuine.

Bounce scratched his head. He may have had the blossoms in his eye. There, however, neither Mr. Rider nor Mr. Hertz could see them.

"Dunno as I can, sir. They was like—like a cloud o' them butterflies you spoke about, all blue, an' all tied together with string, an' a-tumblin' down head-foremost."

Mr. Rider turned to the Collector, laughing.

"Have you any idea what it is?"

"Nein, nein! vait till I see; und, mit luck I vill see. Den I vill tell you. I am satisfied—I hafe no doubt adt all. Bounce has seen idt—dat ish sure! Vhy nodt I?"

"Suppose we take him round? He may be able to point out something similar."

"Goedt!"

Mr. Rider led the way down the Vanda "house," halting before a mass of broad, leathery leaves nearly two feet long, from which drooped a dozen spikes, each bearing from ten to fifteen flowers—golden yellow, blotched with cinnamon-brown.*

"Was it anything like this?" he asked.

The sailor went through the customary preliminary to speech, shifted his quid, and replied:

"Well—it were, an' it weren't, you see. The leaves

* V. gigantea.
were summat like, I reck'n; but the flowers—well—they was blue; as blue as—as the bottles you sees in the chemist's winders."

"Another charming comparison!" laughed Mr. Rider. "Bounce, my good fellow, do stick to the butterflies."

"Budt de shape—de shape?" interjected Hertz.
The sailor scratched his head again.

"Well, the shape were summat like, that's certain," he said, very slowly, as if anxious not to commit himself. "Theer's a sort o' family look about most of 'em, now I comes to think of it; but you see, Mr. Rider, not havin' a telescope, an' not havin' wings, I couldn't look at the blue un that particular."

"Look at that!" cried the Importer, pointing to another Vanda,* a mass of long-leaved stems and flowers eight feet high; the blossoms garlands of yellow, streaked and spotted with crimson-purple.

"De Pride of Shava!" murmured the Collector, ecstatically.

Bounce shook his head. He was getting muddled.

"The flowers be summat like," he said, "the leaves weren't half as high."

The Importer turned to the Collector.

"I can't carry it any further. We mustn't expect a sailor to remember. If it were a vessel's rig, now, it would be different. It may be a Vanda; again, it may not. If we can get it here we shall be able to classify it."

"Dere ish a blue Vanda in Burmah," Hertz rejoined. "I hafe nodt seen idt, budt I know," he added.

"Ah, yes, Vanda cæruleascens; discovered in '37."

"Ja! budt nodt on a tree."

"You are right; and now let us proceed. Bounce, will you accompany Mr. Hertz to Borneo, and guide him to the spot where you saw this wonderful flower?"

* V. suavis.
The old salt’s eyes twinkled with satisfaction. He wanted a ship badly, but had not expected Mr. Rider’s proposition. The horizon of his expectation had been a crown piece, or at most a sovereign.

“Ay, ay, sir!” he cried, “I’ll lead whererever he likes to follow.”

The Collector smiled. Well he might. Mr. Rider laughed outright.

“I fancy you’ll be the follower, Bounce,” he said. “I mean you will obey Mr. Hertz’s orders, of course. When will you be ready to start?”

The answer required a little deliberation. The sailor could be ready at half an hour’s notice, and would have been, if necessary. But eagerness, he fancied, would be rather bad policy. Besides, he was constitutionally averse to it, being a slow-going fellow. Before the reply was forthcoming, the small parliament of three had increased to five. Two young men joined the group, shaking hands with Mr. Hertz, and greeting Mr. Rider in a manner that evidenced their relationship.

“Well, dad, and what’s afloat now?” asked the taller of the two, a bright-faced, stalwart youth of nineteen.

“An expedition to some unknown region, you may be pretty sure,” said his companion. “We know what to expect when Mr. Hertz is called in.”

“Next Monday, if so be that’ll suit,” suddenly exclaimed the sailor, waking up. “Always perwidin’ as theer’s a ship,” he added.

“Very good, Bounce,” said Mr. Rider. “We shan’t want you to set out quite so soon. I’ll let you know the date of sailing, be sure. When we have arranged the pay, and other necessary matters, you’ll take your orders from Mr. Hertz, and suit yourself to his convenience.

“Where is Mr. Hertz going, dad?” asked the youth who had first spoken, with much interest.

“To Borneo.”
"You promised that I should go with the next expedition to the East."

"And you promised me, too," added his companion, Mr. Rider's youngest son.

"My boys, the danger will be too great, I'm afraid. I certainly promised you, Jack, but I hadn't Borneo in my mind; though perhaps there isn't much difference. One jungle is much like another. As for you, Harry, I'm pretty sure your mother will refuse to hear of it. She knows something of the risk a collector runs."

"Danger! Risk!" echoed Jack, the elder of the brothers, rather scornfully. "Why, Mr. Hertz has been pretty nearly all over the world, and he doesn't look a penny the worse for it! A man may lose an arm by machinery anywhere. I don't believe there is any danger at all. I appeal to Mr. Hertz."

Mr. Rider laughed. He knew what the Collector would say.

Ludwig Hertz curled his flaxen moustache and smiled: The time had been when he also had scouted the idea of danger. He was wiser now.

"You appeal to me, eh, Yack? Vell—I will decide de question. De dangers are—deat' by fever, by drowning, by natifes, by nodings to eat. You may be shtung almost to deat' mit andts und shcorpions und centipedes. You may be poisoned mit shnakes und torn mit vildt beasts. A friendt of mine vent to Madagascar to find a shcarlet Cymbidium. De natifes gatch him und roast him alife. I haf been lucky, budt I haf been in many dangers. Idt ish moosh safer to shtay at home."

"I'll admit that; but when a fellow has made up his mind not to stay at home if he can help it; when he wants to travel and find orchids, and feels that he'll do no good at home, what then?"

"He had besser gome mit me."

"Hurrah!"
"And leave me to get mouldy at Draythorpe!" cried Harry. "It isn't fair!"

"Jack hasn't gone yet, my boy," said Mr. Rider, kindly. "It all depends on his mother, and I know pretty well what she'll say. Bounce," turning to the old sailor, who had never ceased to chew his quid, listening intently the while, with an expression of great amusement, "go into the house; get something to eat. Afterwards see me, and I'll give you your instructions."

Bounce touched his hat, and rolled away. Not far, however; he turned at the sixth step, uplifting his forefinger.

"If I might make so bold as to advise that young gen'leman as wants to visit them there beasts o' pirates," he said, "I'd tell him to stay at home along of his father an' mother. When he's had a bit o' steel as looks like forked lightning stuck behind his shoulder blade, same as I have, he'll begin to think as there is just a trifle o' danger to be met with in them there parts."

Having delivered which warning, Bounce opened the door and disappeared.
The atmosphere that surrounded Ralph Rider's establishment was admirably adapted for nourishing that longing to roam which is the heritage of British boys.

The Orchid Importer employed agents and collectors in many lands, whose reports, if printed, would have made a very exciting book of adventure. They fired Jack and Harry Rider with a desire to emulate the achievements of the writers—exactly what might have been expected.

Extraordinary reports indeed!—brimful of strange legends of flowers of marvellous beauty in almost unknown regions, with collectors' remarks thereon, and prophecies. A native of the Philippines had seen a wonderful red orchid. A glorious plant! The story reached a collector. He listened, believed, and reported it. Mr. Rider spent hundreds of pounds in the search, but did not find that red orchid. Yet it existed, and has since been discovered. It now bears the name of *Phalaenopsis Sanderiana*. Somewhere in Assam a yellow *Cymbidium* of almost inconceivable magnificence was supposed to be wasting its sweetness and glory. More expense. A search protracted for years. No yellow *Cymbidium* was found. From New Guinea and Madagascar came wonderful rumours, but here almost certain death awaited the too daring collector.
Reports received with scorn were often proved to be true. The great Warcewicz, travelling in Columbia, saw an orchid of beauty so marvellous that his description excited mirth. Blossoms six inches across, yellow and crimson, lined and reticulated with gold, since described as "the stateliest and most imperial flower on earth." But no one else had seen it—no collector could find it. Yet Warcewicz, though laughed at, had not exaggerated a jot. Ludwig Hertz himself had seen in Costa Rica acres of rarest *Masdevallia*, planted by the natives solely to decorate their churches. He had seen forest churches one mass of orchids—festooned from the roof, twisted round columns, suspended wherever the architecture would allow. In place of the ivy, holly, laurel, and yew with which we in England at Christmas and Harvest Thanksgivings decorate our places of worship, these Costa Rican villagers at their festivals use glorious orchids. They cherish the plants which their forefathers removed from the forest and set around their huts. Often no sum will tempt them to sell. Especially is this so when the species is rare, even in Costa Rica. Then they frequently refuse to sell at prices which would astonish those unfamiliar with the large sums often paid for orchids in England.

The youths' minds were crammed with orchid lore. That collector who, visiting Draythorpe, could have escaped an examination by Jack and Harry Rider, must have been deaf and dumb. Stories of transport—how specimens of this or that genus or species travelled for weeks on men's backs, and for weeks in canoes, before even the coast of their native land was reached; tales of trials, of difficulties surmounted, of dangers—to these they were constantly listening, yet both resolutely refused to believe that any real danger existed.

So much evidence to the contrary was afforded—so many of the adventurers returned home! No heroes of
fiction were they, but real, flesh-and-blood, bronzed and bearded travellers. From time to time one failed to answer to the "roll-call," of course. His bones probably lay bleaching in some tropic forest; but the slain in the cause of science, as in battle, are too soon forgotten. Only the scientific remember their laurels.

The returned travellers did not confine themselves to orchid legends. Some of them had fought Indians face to face; had opposed cunning to cunning, woodcraft to woodcraft, and triumphed. They could show arrow and spear wounds in proof.

The warriors of science are rarely boastful. Simple tales they told in simple language, besprinkled with many questions by the deeply interested listeners.

Stories of adventures with wild beasts; of the velvet-pawed panther noiselessly stalking the jungle wanderer, or lying in wait for him on a branch of some giant tree; of deadly, almost silent struggles—the gleaming, fiery eyes, blood-flecked jaws, and glistening teeth; the velvet paws transformed to curved, cruel, tearing claws—with no witness save some chattering, terrified monkey, twittering bird, or bright-eyed lizard! Stories of shipwreck, of exposure on some sun-scorched coral island; of sufferings by fever, hunger, and thirst—to all these the youths listened breathlessly. But the danger was prospective, and therefore ignored; in short they wilfully shut their eyes to it.

Then the Orchid importer's calling is absorbingly exciting. The element of uncertainty is never absent. At Mr. Rider's the moststartling surprises constantly arose. The collector, instructed to spare neither time nor money, might not find the object sought—this, indeed, was rare; but he would frequently send home something even more magnificent. Again, a dispatch might come to hand with a glowing description of a treasure—perhaps several thousands of specimens—on
the way home. The anxiously looked-for cases would arrive, and, alas! not a single plant of their contents alive. Year after year, for nine years in succession, Mr. Rider imported one Costa Rican species. Not a plant lived! Out of a consignment of ten thousand, not a hundred showed even a sign of vitality when landed. Steamships were fewer thirty years ago. The exports and imports to and from out-of-the-way places were carried by sailing-vessels mostly, and the long sea voyage, far more often than not, proved fatal to the delicate beauties. Thousands of pounds have been expended in the search for one orchid, still undiscovered, and all on the strength of a story told by some poor semi-savage.

But if the adventure stories and the orchid lore had failed to fire the youths' imaginations and make them long to roam, other incentives would probably have succeeded. Their friends the collectors did not forget them when far away, lost to sight in the jungles and forests of tropical regions.

Curiosities of native workmanship frequently turned up among the sticks and withered bulbs, all that remained of the once radiant orchids when they reached Draythorpe. Ornaments, skins of beautiful, rare plumaged birds, of tiny animals; butterflies, moths, green and gold tropic beetles—the jewellery of the jungle—insects, cocoons, chrysalids; these might be looked for in the cases in addition to the orchids, and often successfully. What if a scared ship rat did now and again spring out and scamper away! It would scarcely rank with the unexpected. No more would the giant cockroaches, ants an inch long, alert and vicious, huge spiders, sleepy scorpions, and centipedes as large as a man's thumb.

Unpacking orchids is somewhat of a hazardous occupation. Those engaged in it keep a very sharp look-out,
but are frequently bitten, and sometimes laid up—poisoned by the bite of some venomous insect, generally an ant. But to return to our friends.

When all things are considered it will be evident that it would have been almost impossible for Ralph Rider's sons to belong to the "Cling-to-mother's-apron-string" species of the genus "Molly Coddle."

Jack was in his nineteenth year—on the brink of manhood. Here is his portrait:

He stood five feet ten inches in his stockinged feet. He could jump, with a run, five feet five in height; he could throw a cricket ball one hundred and ten yards. His face was fresh-coloured, and youthful even for his age, but very determined. His hair was dark brown; so were his eyes. His character will be found in the chapters that follow.

Harry, two years his brother's junior, was about three inches shorter, and not nearly so powerfully built. His hair was light brown; his face, like Jack's, fresh coloured and healthy looking; but he was much more book-worm than athlete. His character also must be allowed to unfold itself.

Though neither youth was a "Molly Coddle," both were deeply attached to their mother; both would have done anything to please her. The true test of manliness! The "hall-mark" of upright and earnest young England—or of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, if you will. Because Jack and Harry Rider happened to be English is no reason why the "hall-mark" should not apply to the United Kingdom, or, indeed, to the whole world.

And Mrs. Rider was a mother to be proud of. Picture a gentle, soft-voiced lady of forty, in an old-fashioned gown and cap of velvet, white lace, and flowers. Rather antiquated attire, now, perhaps, but at that time nearly every married lady wore just such a cap. A sweet, motherly person she was, skilled in everything belonging
to the household, and far more precious to Ralph Rider than all his orchids.

She, to a very great extent, had made our heroes what they were. She had taught them to love truth for its own sake—to be honest in word and deed; and, not least, to be manly.

Mr. Hertz having left Draythorpe to make preparations for his journey, Jack lost no time in laying his case before his mother, and asking her consent.

"Mr. Hertz is quite willing to take me, you know," he said, "and there won't be any danger with him. He's had so much experience. He's been nearly everywhere."

"For so young a man his record is extraordinary," Mr. Rider interjected. "I would rather you went with him than with anybody else."

"I am afraid you underrate the danger," Mrs. Rider rejoined. "Borneo is inhabited by savages, is it not?"

"At Sarawak," Mr. Rider answered, "where Hertz is going, Sir James Brooke rules. All's quiet there, I believe, at present. Sir James has introduced a settled form of government; and, indeed, the risk's no greater there than in any other part of the Far East."

Even then a storm was brewing in Sarawak. Of this, Rajah Brooke himself was ignorant, so Mr. Rider could not be expected to know.

Mrs. Rider sighed, but did not reply. Silence gives consent. So, at least, Jack understood. He went up to his mother and kissed her.

"Harry wants to go," he said, "but doesn't like to ask."

Harry had not spoken during the discussion.

"Harry!" Mrs. Rider cried, alarmed. Her younger boy had been delicate when a child. He was now as strong as the majority of youths of his age, but his mother remembered the time of anxiety, and imagined all sorts of weaknesses that had no existence whatever.
“Yes, I wish very much to go,” Harry said quietly. “But I also wish to please you, and I’m afraid you’d be vexed if I went.”

“I am afraid I should be greatly troubled and very anxious,” his mother rejoined.

“Then we’ll say no more about it.” Not another word of his desire to travel did he utter, but, he thought about it a great deal, and brooded over his disappointment. He tried to take an interest in Jack’s plans and preparations, but, somehow, could not give his mind to them. He moped and looked miserable. The poor fellow really could not help it; he tried hard to be cheerful, but was unable to sham what he did not feel.

Mr. Rider observed the disappointment. Very little escaped his keen, kindly eyes.

“My dear,” he said to his wife, “that lad will fret all the time Jack’s away. If he stays at home he’ll make himself ill. That will be harmful and a certainty. In Borneo the harm is merely a contingency, therefore less to be feared.”

“You are right, I think,” Mrs. Rider rejoined. She also had noticed Harry’s unhappiness.

“I think we had much better let him go.”

“I shall agree with your decision, whatever it is.”

“Then he may go.”

So it was decided that both of the youths should accompany Ludwig Hertz and Bob Bounce in their search for the “blue” orchid. Harry, at first, could hardly believe his good fortune; but when convinced that he was really going, he was fully as energetic in his preparations as Jack.

Mrs. Rider also was very, very busy. She had so many things to purchase and make.

Mr. Rider superintended the arms department. He had always a stock on hand; his collectors sometimes used them for purposes of barter. A rifle, indeed, had
often succeeded when money failed to purchase a rare orchid. A rifle and smooth-bore double-barrel for each were selected and packed; also two revolvers, and the same number of strong hunting knives. The Orchid Importer was a firm believer in the wisdom of being prepared for the possible.

Hertz gathered together his own goods; he best knew the requirements of the natives. The bulk was shipped to Singapore, there to await the arrival of the travellers. It was a strange mixture of articles! Brass wire and rods; red cloth, shirtings, chintzes, beads; a magic lantern with its slides and cloth; tobacco, hatchets, looking-glasses, knives, and a host of toys and trifles too numerous and various to particularise.

One thing he omitted to procure—a supply of coin current in Borneo. A few tons of brass guns, i.e. cannon, from a few pounds to a ton or so in weight, would have cost too much for transport. Besides, this extraordinary "coin of the realm" is unknown on European exchanges, and, as may be imagined, rarely passes from hand to hand in Borneo. It is a measure of value rather than a circulating medium. Loose change, such as Chinese "cash," and bars of iron cut into various short lengths, was also not provided.

Mr. Rider supplied Bounce with weapons—a musket, cutlass, and pistol, with plenty of ammunition. He was rather doubtful of the sailor. The man was such a boaster and chatterer, and the Orchid Importer was inclined to distrust great talkers.

"Now understand," he said, when everything had been arranged. "I shall expect you to obey Mr. Hertz's orders always without question. If he tells you to do a thing, don't argue, but do it. Should anything happen to him you will take orders from my eldest son."

"Ay, ay, sir," Bounce rejoined, winking deliberately at his employer. "Mr. Hertz'll be the skipper o' this
'ere ship's company o' four, as is going to look after the blue awkward; an' as such I'm bound to obey him. I've signed articles, I reck'n. Master Jack, he'll be first mate, an' Master Harry second. I'll do my dooty, sir, never fear. I only hopes as we don't meet them theer beasts o' pirates. It ain't pleasant to ha' the point o' a wavy—-”

“Hush!” Mr. Rider interrupted. His wife was within hearing. “You will alarm Mrs. Rider if you talk like that. You appear to have pirates on the brain.”

Bounce, however, could _not_ hold his tongue—not for many consecutive minutes at any rate. He remained silent for a few seconds, then against burst forth:

“I 'members when I were aboard the _Mary Anne_, bound from Manilla to Singapore with a mixed cargo o’—-”

“If that's how you are going to obey orders in Borneo, I think you had better stay in England!” Mr. Rider exclaimed angrily. “I don't wish to hear again about the pirates.”

The old sailor stopped suddenly. Four times he had attempted to spin the yarn of the _Mary Anne_ without success. It was annoying—very. But he consoled himself with the reflection that he would tell the story some day, the pirates permitting.

There was sorrow at Draythorpe when the inevitable day of parting arrived. Only by great resolution was poor Mrs. Rider able to bear up. But she did not wish her boys to carry away with them sorrowful memories of home, and she forced a gaiety she did not feel.
CHAPTER III.

THE AMOK.

There was no Suez Canal in '56. Travellers to the East had choice of two routes—round the Cape of Good Hope, or via the Mediterranean, Isthmus of Suez, and Red Sea. Hertz chose the latter.

The Orchid Seekers embarked on a P. and O. steamship at Southampton, and soon Old England resembled a cloud on the horizon. Naturally Jack and Harry were delighted with the novel experience, more particularly as the sea was as calm as a fresh-water sailor could desire. Hertz, also, was in capital spirits. He, the soldier of science, was going on active service. Victory was by no means certain—he might not find the "blue" orchid. But he would tread new ground, not as a pioneer; botanists had visited Borneo—where had they not been? He himself had spent some time there, not fruitlessly. Still, the region was almost untouched.

Bounce was at home, yet not at home. His position was novel—a passenger, with nothing, absolutely nothing, to do. No ropes to splice, no sails to mend or set, no deck to scrub, no tar to dabble his hands in. He was not even called upon to obey the bo'sun's whistle. No watch, no "chanty" round the capstan, no "Yeo, heave ho!" no anything, except liberty to lounge about, eat, drink, and smoke. Therefore he grumbled. Not because he wished to work, or disliked free quarters and liberty, but because he was at sea in two senses.
"Give me the Mary Anne," he growled. "I can't get me sea-legs aboard this 'ere floating willage. Shouldn't wonder if I were sea-sick d'reckly."

The good ship Oriental churned along merrily. Lisbon was touched at, and left behind. Soon the mighty rock of Gibraltar loomed in sight. Our adventurers gazed at the gigantic fortress from the upper deck. How their hearts thrilled! Who can look on "Old Gib" without being impressed with the power of the Anglo-Saxon race, its hold-fast, bull-dog endurance, its long arm, and longer look ahead?

Three days later the Oriental reached Malta, where the youths went ashore. They visited Abercrombie's tomb, and the house of the Grand Master of the famous Knights of St. John, re-embarking to leave the vessel finally at Alexandria, whence Hertz hurried them on to Cairo. Even here he would not sanction delay. "Forvardts!" was his watchword. The Tombs of the Caliphs might be very interesting; the Pyramids of Gizeh might well repay a visit, but the Collector was inexorable. His business was to seek and find a "blue" orchid, not to moon around ruins. From a parapet in front of a Mosque, Jack and Harry had their first view of the Pyramids, indistinct in the distance; then hurried away to catch the diligence, which was to convey them to Suez.

It was a small omnibus, holding six inside, drawn by four coal-black, plunging steeds. Seventy miles across the desert! Sand and rocks! Rocks and sand! Picturesque, notwithstanding, with a wild beauty of its own. But the mode of travelling was hardly conducive to that equable frame of mind needed for a just appreciation of desert scenery.

The horses plunged and kicked viciously when starting, but, long before the first stage came to an end, fell into a steady gallop. The sand on the rock-strewn apology for a road was not deep, except where it had drifted, and
the horses drew the vehicle with comparative ease; but
the diligence had its full complement of passengers, and
the heat was stifling!

This was not the only annoyance. The Egyptian coach-
builders of the period—presuming that the diligences
were not importations—knew nothing of "Cee" springs
and rubber tyres. The carriage progressed kangaroo
fashion—by leaps and bounds. Had the interior been
more roomy, someone would probably have been hurt.
Fortunately the frequent flights terminated before any
great velocity could be attained, owing to the exceedingly
short distance the projectiles had to travel. Still, it was
unpleasant to be converted into a bomb and fired off
against a fellow-passenger every ten minutes or so. Bounce grumbled loudly. He had some difficulty to
avoid swallowing the tobacco he so industriously chewed.

"I never could abide a chopping sea," he growled, after
a headlong plunge more severe than usual, "but I didn't
expect to be turned adrift on such water in a clumsy
bumboat, with never a bit o' ballast to steady her, an'
ever a oar to cling to if she turns turtle."

The unpleasant pilgrimage ended in due course
at Suez, a horrible den then, and not greatly improved
now.

The expected P. and O. boat was waiting, to Hertz's
great satisfaction. Their personal baggage had crossed
the desert on the backs of camels. As soon as it arrived
the travellers went aboard.

Down the Red Sea, very glad to see the last of Suez
for the time, past Mount Sinai, through the Straits of
Bab-el-mandeb, and across the Indian Ocean to Ceylon,
that earthly paradise. Here the party, with the excep-
tion of Bounce, landed and visited the Cinnamon Gardens
Another long stretch of the Indian Ocean, and they were
in the Straits of Malacca. At Singapore their voyage by
steamship ended.
Just before they went ashore Jack observed Bounce in the act of concealing a cutlass down the leg of his loose trousers.

"Is that necessary?" he asked. "Singapore is British territory."

"Ay, ay, Master Jack," the sailor rejoined, winking deliberately. "Singapore's British, right enough, with police an' all that; but look at them boats, an' look at their crews!" pointing to the numerous prahus and sampans moving about the roadstead. "Pirates, most of 'em. If they ain't, their looks belies 'em. When I was aboard the Mary Anne bound from Manilla to Singapore with a——"

But Jack fled, laughing.

Hertz had business to attend to—the goods he had shipped from England to look after. Before landing he discarded the travel-stained apparel he had worn across the desert and aboard ship, and put on a long blue frockcoat and peaked cap of naval cut. Unusual garments for Singapore!

Before leaving his young companions he warned them not to ramble far from the town until he or Bounce should be at liberty to accompany them.

"Dere are queer charactars adt Singapore," he said. "Idt ish a port for pirates when dey dink idt safe to ven-ture; and dey say," his blue eyes twinkling humorously, "dat in Singapore de tigers are almost so many ash de Europeans. Dey shvarm in de yoongle mitout doubt. I hafe heard dat dey gome in de shstreets, und talk about so moosh adt home ash eferybodies. I hafe nodt seen one," he added, with a sly smile, "dough I hafe been many times here, und hafe seen many human tigers. Budt idt may be so."

"Tigers!" Jack exclaimed. "Why don't the Europeans hunt them?"

"De Europeans gome here for money. Dey trade and
make moosh profit: budt dey do nodt trade in tigers. Idt's too moosh trouble to gatch him. De profit all go in egspense."

So Jack and Harry rambled about the town, where everything was new and strange and delightful.

Indeed, no more pleasing introduction to Oriental life could be found than that which Singapore offers. It has not the beauty of Ceylon, which, as has been said, should be put under glass and preserved as a sample of Eden. The Far Eastern capital is a place of business, as keen and eager and anxious as London itself; yet, until long use has blunted the observation, it seems an ever-changing show. In the streets of the European quarter, broad enough, and tolerably clean, the merchants, clerks, and ship captains who pass to and fro are clad in white from head to foot, with pith hats like mushrooms, and almost all have a cheroot in their mouths, whatever their errand. From the wide, shadowy entrance of each "go-down"—a merchant's place of business—come strange and powerful odours rising from the bags of produce set out on either side for customers to test. The walls of the passage leading to the big showroom are hung with "cloths" of bright colour, Manchester goods, to attract the colour-loving native. Fat Chinamen pass in and out; tall, half-naked Klings, neatly built Malays in tartan petticoat, burly coolies, with pigtail twisted round their heads like a coronet, but no dress beyond the baggy blue breeches. Here and there stalks a lean Arab in flowing robes and the green turban which marks his descent from Mahomet—in these parts, so far from Arabia, where no one is likely to challenge them, very few are so honest as to confess that their family had no connection with the Prophet. All along the roadway sit Malays or Chinamen, with baskets of strange fruit before them, pineapples, pumilos, which we call shaddocks, lancets, or loquats, rambutans, Chinese gooseberries, mangos—thought good
only by those who have never eaten the Bombay variety—and the horrible, fascinating durien, of which more anon.

There are points and incidents in the scene, however, to which Europeans never grow used, though they spend their lives here. Jack and Harry took it for granted that the Chinamen, distinguished from those poor fruit-sellers crouched along the side-walk by a white jacket and a paper umbrella alone, were tradesmen in a small way, or native clerks. As for the Klings, all were dressed—or, rather, undressed—alike. Those who wore a snowy roll of stuff about their waists had simply, they thought, put on clean clothes that morning. Had anyone told them that these men were worth, perhaps, hundreds of thousands of pounds, or even millions—that they lived in vast and magnificently furnished houses, with scores of servants—that they drove to town in the handsomest carriages, with the handsomest horses, in the island—the English youths would have thought such assertions too extravagant to be amusing.

So it was, however, and so it is. Nor, when our young travellers came to understand the state of things, did they feel by any means sure that these extraordinary people are not wiser than we. They dress in the manner which they find comfortable; they take, or rather borrow, from Europeans just what suits them and no more. What happiness does a man get from fine clothes? From time to time the Chinaman will give a superb entertainment, in the English style throughout, to which the Governor, the naval and military officers in command, and the leading merchants are invited. A vast sum is spent—his house is magnificently decorated, and his gardens lit up. He plays his part as host, clad in silks and embroideries, perhaps makes a speech—proposes the Governor's health. But on the morrow he returns to business in plain white jacket and blue breeches. All
the English paraphernalia are put aside for the next occasion, and gladly he resumes his chopsticks. Is he not wise, if he find his own way of living more comfortable?

It was all-entrancing to our youthful travellers, but they thought the native quarters most delightful, jostled though they were in the densely crowded, evil-smelling streets. The three races most numerous — Chinese, Malay, and Kling—dwell apart; the two latter in huts comparatively scattered. But Chinamen pack tight in their _campong_. They do not care for breathing space, and their little wooden houses form a continuous row, with a rough arcade in front. Every one has its shop, or even two, where any sort of object which the owner can pick up as a bargain anywhere is exposed for sale. Wonderful are the collections, as may be imagined, but it is not a place to loiter in. The narrow arcade is thronged with a moving mass of coolies, who carry something as a rule, and take no pains to avoid hustling anybody. You must not pause to survey the scene, or the multitude, checked for an instant, will sweep on with redoubled impetus and carry you off your feet. Nor is it judicious to enter and look round the tiny booth with no particular object in view; for you will hardly escape without buying something you do not want, even though the shopkeeper cannot speak English, so shrewd and persistent is he.

Dirty, perspiring, half angry, but wholly amused, the pair struggled along. Suddenly a louder hubbub arose at a distance, screaming and shouting. It seemed to rush towards them. Quick as thought the dense throng turned like one man and swept back, carrying Jack and Harry with it as corks are borne on a flood. Happily they were on the outer edge, where the frequent posts of the arcade broke the violence of the rush. Pulling up behind one of these they escaped into the roadway, which had filled, indeed, upon the instant, but not with a compact
mass like the side-walk. An English sailor running by perceived them, and shouted without slackening his pace:

"Look out—look out, mates! Cut for your lives!"

"Look out?" Jack echoed. "What is it?"

But the sailor was lost to sight.

Being in the "City of the Tiger," Harry naturally thought of that ferocious animal.

"Is it a tiger?" he gasped, "a mad dog, or what?"

Jack did not reply; he could not. A sudden rush of terrified people almost carried him off his feet, and forced him to seek shelter behind a post of the arcade, where Harry joined him. Standing here they caught the word which all the fugitives were panting:

"Amok—amok!"

It had no significance for them, but they saw that some terrible danger was approaching fast.

Not half a minute had passed since the disturbance began, but already the crowd had dispersed—some bolting down side streets, some forcing their way into the little booths, and crouching on the ground there in heaps. But the laggards ran in more desperate panic, and the cry "Amok!—amok!" sounded more clear as the tumult of voices died away. Then they saw an awful vision!

Down the narrow street, frothing at the mouth, his eyes upturned, yellow and glaring, his black hair streaming behind, dashed a half-naked Malay, swinging a heavy sword, striking right and left at anything, at nothing. A man ran across the road. The poor fellow had probably lost his head—as men do when panic-stricken—perhaps mistrusted his place of refuge, and, seeking another more secure, ran into the danger. The madman cut him down—and rushed on.

Jack and Harry stood directly in his path, too surprised, too bewildered to attempt escape. The amok came on, staring straight before him with yellow, blood-
shot eyes that saw nothing distinctly. The youths had just time to mark—like a spectre in some horrid nightmare—the ghastly, working face, the grinning lips, foam-covered—they never forgot the sight! Next moment the Malay was upon them. He stopped, for a moment rigid. Then the bright blade flashed through the air and descended!

A clash of steel! Another blade received the blow. A short, squat, but agile figure leapt in front of the young men and engaged the would-be murderer. A quick guard, a well-delivered cut, and the madman lay in the road, lifeless, with a cloven skull.

Their preserver wiped his weapon on the dead man's only garment, and turned, at the same time moving a quid of tobacco from his right cheek to the left.

"Well, young gen'lemen! Are you still of opinion that there's no danger to be met with in these 'ere parts?"

"Bounce!" they cried together.

None other. The man whom Ralph Rider suspected to be a coward because he boasted now and then; perhaps because his father's name happened to be "Bounce"; the man whom Ludwig Hertz distrusted because of his grumbling propensities; whose yarns both Jack and Harry disbelieved and laughed at; whose courage, in their opinion, was an exceedingly finite quantity; a man of no account whatever, except as guide to the "blue" orchid.

How very easy it is to be mistaken, if we judge a man's character by his appearance!

"You came in the very nick of time, Bounce," said Jack, seizing the sailor's hairy paw and wringing it, an operation immediately afterwards performed by Harry. "You've saved our lives, that's certain, and I don't think you'll find us ungrateful. But what does it all mean?"

A very natural question for a stranger to ask.
Now that the danger was over, the fugitives returned, crowding round the dead man and his slayer.

One incident was quite English. Two policemen, swarthy Sikhs, walked up just too late to be of service.

The throng appeared to be a great deal more interested in the living sailor than the dead Malay. The Asiatics evidently looked upon Bounce as a hero. Their exclamations were very flattering.

"Baik—baik! Baniah brani!" (Well done! Very brave!)

Of course the youths did not understand the exclamations. Bounce, however, knew a smattering of the Malay language, picked up aboard the Mary Anne and in port. He did not appear to relish the praise half so well as might have been expected. At Draythorpe he had contrived to cover himself with glory. His yarns were invariably of the "Alone I did it" order. Now, having singly faced an amok and conquered him, he actually tried to escape the well-deserved congratulations, and endeavoured to force his way out of the admiring crowd.

Jack repeated his question. "What does it all mean?"

Before Bounce could reply, a burly Englishman elbowed his way through the throng and slapped the sailor on the back with a huge hand.

"Here's a sovereign, my man," he said, "well-earned if ever one was. I saw that guard and cut—as neat a thing as ever I witnessed. It isn't every day a man goes out of his way to meet an amok; not in Singapore, anyhow. It's much safer to bolt into the first handy burrow, and lie low till the row's over.

Bounce thanked the donor, spat on the coin, and stowed it away in his fob. A policeman asked for his name and address, which were cheerfully given.

"Let's get out o' this," he said, pushing through the press. "That chap were an amok, stark, staring, raving mad. Amoks are a deal worse than tigers, worse than
them beasts o' pirates. Sometimes they'll kill a dozen innocent folks as haven't harmed 'em afore they're killed theirselves. They gen'rally sarves 'em as they does mad dogs in England—shoots 'em down. It's lucky I thought o' the cutlass, an' was here."

"Were you looking for us?" Harry asked.

"That's exackly what I were doing. The skipper's got a ship as'll sail for Sarawak to-morrow, an' he sent me to look you up."

Hertz was rather surprised when he heard the amok story.

"I am glad de man has courage," he said. "I feared—I dinked he vas a shkellum. I dink vell of Bounce. I write to Misder Rider to-day."

The Collector was not the only writer. Jack and Harry each penned a long epistle before going to bed. Nor, when they knelt in thankfulness, did they forget the sailor.
CHAPTER IV.

A BRUSH WITH PIRATES.

The inquest on the Malay caused no inconvenience to the Orchid Seekers. It was held on the day that he was slain. Bounce answered the few questions put to him, and left the court. He had committed no crime. The man had forfeited his life by allowing the madness to obtain the mastery. For the *amok*'s condition, at first, is voluntary. He rushes out to kill and be killed.

The cause in this instance did not transpire. Perhaps the man’s sweetheart had jilted him. He may have lost his little all in some gambling den, or at a cockfight. The name of the “unclean animal” may have been applied to him. Whatever the cause, the man, of his own free will most probably, had chosen to *amok*, and had met the *amok*’s fate. The inquest was a matter of form.

Meanwhile Hertz had been busy. He had obtained his goods, and transferred them to a vessel in the roadstead. No European ship bound for Sarawak being available, the Collector had bargained with the Reis of a trading *prahu* to convey his party and merchandize from “The City of the Tiger” to “The Town of the Cat,” otherwise Kuching, the capital of Sarawak.

Had Bounce seen the *prahu* before he informed the youths that “the skipper” had “got a ship,” he certainly
would not have applied that term to it. It had no better claim to the title than a stuffy canal boat.

A roughly built vessel, forty feet long, without bulwarks. The deck resembled the roof of an oblong thatched outhouse. It sloped upwards from each side to a junction in the middle, forming a ridge, astride which crew and passengers were obliged to sit when the vessel sailed on an even keel, which, fortunately, was not often. Otherwise there was nothing to prevent them rolling down the slopes into the sea, except an upright piece of timber at intervals of a few feet. The deck was constructed of *atape*, a thatch made from the leaves of the Nipa palm. In the stern was a cockroach-haunted hole called by courtesy a cabin. It was a sleeping lair, devoid of furniture, nothing more.

The crew consisted of five Malays and the Reis, an Arab. The Malays were intensely ugly, but looked good-humoured as they stood on their sloping deck, grinning at the consternation on the faces of Jack and Harry, and the palpable disgust on Bounce's hairy visage.

"Bear a hand, messmates?" shouted the old sailor, handing up a portmanteau from the *saman* which had brought them from the shore.

"That's if you be messmates," he added. "I never thought to sail along of a crew o' pirates turned honest. That grinning beggar theer," addressing Jack, and pointing to a little, squint-eyed, yellow fellow, who was laughing more boisterously than the generally polite Malay is accustomed to do, "be the werry image o' the scamp as well-nigh settled me aboard the *Mary Anne*. His brother, most likely. *He* went down in deep water with a couple o' shot tied to his legs. Now then, you—you pirate's first cousin, bear a hand!"

With the assistance of the crew the baggage was got on board, and stowed away with the cockroaches, centipedes, and scorpions in the cabin. The Reis fixed
up some mats, called *kajongs*, to protect his passengers from the fierce sun; and Jack, Harry, and Hertz climbed upon the ridge to shelter beneath them.

The Collector was as merry as a cricket. He had feared a long detention at Singapore, and was delighted at being able to get away so soon. The discomfort of his present position had no effect upon him. It was nothing. Rather an agreeable episode in a Collector's life than otherwise. He told tales, chaffed the crew in the Malay language, and satirically sympathised with his fellow-passengers.

When the trader got under weigh she settled down on her beam ends, the effect being to render one-half of the deck nearly as steep as a wall, the other almost horizontal, thus enabling the passengers to walk about with some degree of comfort on the upper half. But the voyage was an awful experience for the youths. The first night they crawled into the hole called a cabin, but were speedily repulsed by the cockroaches, which, if they had only been unanimous, as the Irishman said of the fleas, might have seized the *prahu*, and converted its mixed cargo to their own uses. After this first attempt our adventurers passed the nights on deck.

On the fourth day the wind, hitherto favourable, dropped, blew in gentle gusts, and now and again almost died away. This caused the experienced sailors great anxiety.

"I shouldn't wonder," Bounce muttered to Hertz, as he took a long look round the horizon, "if we was to get becalmed. If we do there's no knowing what'll happen. Reck'n I'll go forrard an' whistle."

He joined the Reis, who had surrendered the helm to a Malay, and now stood in the bows. The Arab, a tall fine-looking fellow, in a voluminous turban and vest edged with frayed gold lace, seemed very uneasy in his mind. He gazed anxiously ahead, taking no notice of
the English sailor, who had actually spat his quid overboard to have both cheeks at liberty for the absurd occupation of “whistling for a wind.”

The youths were unaware of the cause of this disquietude; in fact, they did not know that anxiety existed, as Hertz did not care to alarm them without real cause. But the prahu was now approaching the dreaded coast of Borneo, the haunt of fierce Lanun, Sulu, and Balignini pirates. More wary now that they had frequently felt the power of Britain’s long arm, they still had the hardihood to cruise in the neighbourhood of Singapore in big fleets of ten to twenty well-armed vessels, each carrying perhaps a hundred men, plundering ships wholesale, and murdering or enslaving their crews.

But since James Brooke had become Rajah of Sarawak, and Labuan—an island on the west coast of Borneo, near to Bruni—had become British territory, with the result that British cruisers were rarely long absent from these waters, the pirates more frequently put to sea in smaller vessels and lesser squadrons. It was safer. A fleet of, say, sixteen big ships could hardly expect to scour the seas with impunity, whereas two or three small vessels might easily pass for peaceful traders, and under this guise escape the vigilance of their foes. However, the “big squadron” system was not finally relinquished until ’62, in which year no less than twelve fleets put to sea. One, comprising six large vessels, was attacked by Rajah Brooke’s nephew, the Rajah Mudah [young Rajah], in the Rainbow. He gave them the stem of the steamer, and sank no less than five one after another; the sixth escaped in shore, to be destroyed by the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns. This disaster made the wretches more cautious.

A becalmed vessel was peculiarly in danger. The pirates appear to possess a sense like the vulture’s, which enables the bird to become aware of the presence of carrion at an
immense distance, be it sight, smell, or instinct. But they probably watch for victims more keenly when the wind drops, knowing that a becalmed ship, if not too strong, is entirely at their mercy, as their oars make them almost independent of the wind.

But to return to the prahu. The Malays shared the Reis’s anxiety. They ceased to grin, and did their work silently, often pausing to glance from sea to sky, thence to each point of the compass fearsomely.

The yellow face of S’Ali, the little squint-eyed fellow, was at least three shades paler, or, rather, duller. Its ordinary hue was that of dull brass; it was now brass and tin, with more of the latter metal than the former in the amalgam. The erstwhile twinkling eyes were still and mournful; the conical grin was a lugubrious grimace.

"Are you afraid of meeting pirates, S’Ali?" Hertz asked him, in Malay.

"Why should I be, Tuan [Lord, or master]?" S’Ali returned. "If it be Allah’s will that we meet them—good! If Allah wills that they kill me—good! Why should I fear what is decreed? I cannot put aside the will of Allah, the All-Merciful."

"True; but if we are attacked you will fight for life, I hope? You will not kneel to be killed?"

"Does the Tuan think I will die like a woman, crying—I, an Orang laut [man of the sea]?" cried the Malay, with flashing eyes. "No, my life is as dear to me as the Tuan’s to him."

Every inch of canvas was spread to catch every possible breath of wind, and everybody, except the youths, kept a sharp look-out, Hertz with the aid of a field-glass.

"What are you looking for?" Jack asked him. But the Collector ignored the question.

The youths knew that pirates were occasionally to be
met with—that crews of European vessels were now and again butchered in these waters, but they did not know that the failing wind would probably bring the piratical fleets out of their ports in the hope of finding an easy victim.

Bounce was as much alive to the danger as the Reis. He was particularly restless—too uneasy even to chew. He had encountered the scourges of the Archipelago once, and did not hold them cheaply. The familiar copybook maxim will not apply to Lanun or Sulu pirates. Familiarity with them does not breed contempt.

Suddenly the Arab captain uttered an exclamation. He was gazing eastwards, shading his eyes from the fierce sun with his hands. Hertz turned his glass in the same direction.

The Malays gathered together, talking in low tones. Bounce gave one steady look, then walked to the stern and crawled into the cabin, returning almost immediately with his masters’ arms.

"Theer's two prahu's in sight," he said. "It ain't altogether sartain as they're them beasts o' pirates, but it's likely enough."

This was the first intimation the youths had of the danger.

"Pirates!" cried Jack. "Shall we have to fight?"

The question was asked rather gleefully.

"Maybe we shall," murmured the old sailor, in anything but a joyous tone

Hertz came aft, and took a rifle and a cutlass.

"Bounce says there are two piratical prahu's in sight," said Jack. "At least, he thinks they're pirates. Do you think they will attack us?"

"If dey are pirates dey vill," Hertz replied.

"We can beat them off, can't we? I suppose these yellow fellows will stand by us? They can't very well run away."
"De crew vill fight, nefer fear," rejoined the Collector, smiling. Stepping forwards he spoke a few words in a low tone to the Reis, who uttered a command to the crew, a silent group, every man anxiously gazing in the direction of the approaching prahus.

In an instant all was commotion. Spears, guns—perhaps almost as dangerous to the marksman as to the object aimed at—krises, parangs—heavy Malay swords—were fished out of unexpected places, from beneath mats, from holes in the ataps, from coils of rattan cordage. Having collected their arms, the crew, with the exception of the man to whom the Reis had surrendered the helm, whose fighting wants had been attended to, gathered in the bows in a body, evidently determined to fight to the last gasp if necessary.

As yet the character of the approaching prahus had not been determined, though they were now so near that the sweep of the oars could be distinguished. Two long, low vessels, creeping on serpent-like, or, rather, centipede-like, keeping pretty close together. It was evident that they were bearing down on the trader—they had changed their course to do so; nevertheless their intentions might be peaceful.

"What you dink, Bounce?" Hertz asked, handing his glass to the sailor.

Bounce looked at the prahus steadily for about twenty seconds, then gave back the field-glass.

"Pirates, as sure as my name's Bob! Why, the decks be crowded, an' I can see their brass guns—jingals, as they calls 'em. They're pirates, right enough."

"Ash I dink. Ach! dere ish more vind! Vill she maneuvre, dink you? Take de hellum and pudt her away."

Bounce shook his head. "It's not a bit o' use skipper. We can't get away; we've got to fight. Them beggars don't want no wind."
"Ach! you nodt oondershtand! I nodt mean run. Dat ish deat'—certain deat'! I mean see what dey are for certain—see if dey vill follow us."

Bounce understood now, and went to the helm. At a word from the Reis the crew sprang to the ropes, and the vessel fell away, turning broadside to the prahuś, as if about to flee on another course. They instantly parted company, one keeping on, the other moving off to the right on a line which would enable her to intercept the trader. Their character was now only too evident.

"Dat vill do, Bounce!" Hertz cried. "Ve hafe to fight, und ve vill fight. Go for dem now; you oondershtand?"

"Ay, ay, skipper."

Slowly the ungainly but far from unmanageable craft swung round and gathered way, to flee no more, nor even counterfeit it. Indeed, an attempt to escape would have been fatal, as Hertz well knew. The wind freshened a little, and the sails filled. Hertz joyfully marked the instant increase in the vessel's speed.

"Ash shtraight ash you can, Bounce!" he cried. "Go between dem, und keep on. Budt mind dey don't board—mind dey don't board!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" the sailor cried. "I reck'n they'll board if they've a mind to," he added, muttering. He had evidently given up all hope.

As the youths watched the Collector, who had thus taken command of the ship, he seemed to grow several inches taller before their eyes; his blue eyes flashed, his motions were quick and martial, his tones imperative. They wondered at the metamorphosis. He was no longer the peaceful seeker after beautiful flowers, no longer the devoted scientist, but the warrior, striding over the ataps, and swinging his hook in the air as he uttered his commands—instantly obeyed, for the born leader of men is soon recognised.
“Get goods on deck for breastwork,” he shouted in Malay. Portions of the ataps were removed, and the Collector’s merchandise, packed in bales and cases, was dragged from the hold and disposed to protect the craft’s defenders. The Reis drew a small brass cannon from some hiding-place aft forward to the bows, and pointed it at the enemy; then assisted by S’Ali, hauled forward a couple of bales to protect the gunner.

Hertz never for a moment stayed his efforts to make the vessel defensible. Inserting his hook in the cordage of a heavy case, he hauled it by main force to the stern, where Bounce stood at the helm, the Reis’s post ordinarily, quite unprotected.

This done, the Collector dived into the cabin, whence he returned immediately with a portmanteau, which he emptied on the deck, scattering its contents about, while the youths looked on, wondering.

“Is he going to dress up some dummies?” Jack whispered.

“It looks like it,” Harry answered.

But the Collector had no such intention. Turning over the heap of clothes with hurried, nervous fingers, he threw on one side the long blue coat and peaked cap he had worn at Singapore, and flung the other things back into the bag. Then he turned them out again, rummaging the heap over. Evidently he could not find what he sought. He glanced around. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and rushed to the Reis, crouching down beside his artillery. A few words in Malay, and the two began to tear the gold lace from the Arab’s vest.

“Whatsoever is he doing?” said Jack.

Harry could not answer the question.

Hértz sat down with a bunch of the lace, and with hook and hand quickly converted it into the semblance of a pair of rude epaulettes. In a moment they were attached to the blue coat with pins.
Bounce watched the proceedings, chuckling. He had divined the Collector’s intention.

The Reis handed Hertz another bunch of lace, which was as swiftly smoothed out into a band, and pinned round the peaked cap. Then the Collector flung off his white linen jacket and pith hat, and arrayed himself in the long blue coat and cap.

“Ach!” he cried, “a scarecrow in naval uniform! But it will glitter well enough, and I think it will do.”

The pirate prahus, again in company, were now not more than two hundred yards distant. The bows of both were shaped like a dragon’s head, with large shells for eyes. Their fighting decks swarmed with half naked figures, yelling, and brandishing weapons; here and there gleamed bright-coloured vesture of silk or satin. Silk scarves fluttered in the slight breeze; head-handkerchiefs glittered with gold. They advanced very slowly, as if hesitating to attack. Probably the daring tactics of the trader had rather upset their calculations. Such vessels almost invariably seek safety in flight, but rarely find it.

Not a man of the trader’s crew could have been visible from the pirates’ decks. All were concealed by the improvised breastwork, except Bounce, who crouched behind his sheltering box. But in the bows the muzzle of the brass gun protruded, and amidships eight death-dealing tubes.

Jack and Harry lay together, with fast-beating hearts and white faces. Their hunting-knives and revolvers were ready to their hands.

Nearer and nearer crept the prahus. Fiercer and fiercer grew the yells; louder the chanted war-songs, intermingled with fiendish laughter. Jack, looking along the barrel of his rifle, could see the wild, rolling eyes, even distinguish the features of the savage warriors. Suddenly Hertz threw up his hook.
Hertz sprang to his feet towering over the breastwork, waving his cutlass, and shouting at the top of his voice.
“Fire!” he thundered, repeating the order in Malay.

The brass gun boomed and belched forth its contents, principally rusty nails; the rifles cracked; the Malays' old guns roared; for a wonder, they all went off.

“Loadt!” cried the Collector, peering through the smoke.

The volley was instantly returned. A hail of jingal balls and bullets rattled against the cases and bales, ploughed into the ataps, whistled overhead, and cut ragged holes in the sails. Such a storm of fiendish screams accompanied the discharge as no man who has not heard the like can imagine. Over all, a hoarse voice giving orders.

Before the smoke had lifted from the trader's deck Hertz sprang to his feet, towering over the breastwork, waving his cutlass, and shouting at the top of his voice.

“Back, you shkellums! Back, or I'll blow you oudt of de vasser!”

Jack rose up. The Reis, who had left his gun, forced the too daring youth down.

“How dare you attack a British ship?” the Collector bellowed. “I'll sink you, you shkellums!—Fire!”

Jack and Harry emptied their revolvers. Some of the Malays' muskets roared. This time the brass gun was silent. High above the uproar rang the strident voice of the brave Collector:

“I'll gatch de lodt of you und hang you at Singapore—you murderous rashcals!”

The yells died away suddenly. Again the hoarse voice was heard. Then the rattle and splash of sweeps moving swiftly. Then—

“They're sheering off! Hurrah! Give 'em another dose!”

The shout came from Bounce, at the helm. Hertz still
stood erect, waving his cutlass. Jack and Harry sprang to their feet, cheering; but their voices were hoarse and tremulous, their cheeks blanched. The Malays yelled frantically, danced for joy, called on Allah, and brandished their parangs at the retreating prahus, which had parted company and were speeding away in opposite directions.

"Bluff has von," said Hertz, laughing. "When you can't run, be bold."

"Ay, ay, skipper," muttered Bounce, still at his post, "Bluff's a good dog sometimes, no doubt on it; but if them beasts o' pirates hadn't took you for a British officer they'd ha' boarded us for sartin, an' krissed the lot of us by now. Hullo! what's up with S'Ali?"

The little Malay reclined against a bale, gasping for breath, with the blood pouring from his side at every respiration and sinking into the ataps.

Hertz and the Reis sprang towards him and caught him as he fell. They knelt down by the poor fellow's side, and tried to stanch the crimson stream that flowed from a ragged wound no ball could have made, and which must have been caused by a rough fragment of iron fired from the pirate cannon.

The case was hopeless. The man's eyes were glazing fast. His complexion had changed to a leaden hue. Harry turned away his head; he felt faint. He had seen the amok die with scarce a tremor; but S'Ali was a friend—a comrade.

"It is no use, Tuan," gasped the dying man, trying to smile at Hertz, who was bending over him with womanly tenderness shining in his blue eyes. The half-smile ended with a shuddering gasp. The end was near.

"Is there anything I can do?" the Collector asked, in Malay.

S'Ali shook his head, then suddenly raised himself on his elbows, his eyes strangely bright.
“La ilaha illa-la, Mahmoud resool illa!” * he cried hoarsely but exultantly.

A convulsive shudder shook his frame, and he fell back dead, even while his profession of faith rang in the ears of the listeners.

* A Malay corruption of the Fetva:—“Allah is the one God. Mahomet is the prophet of Allah!”
CHAPTER V.

AT THE TOWN OF THE CAT.

"Land oh!"

Bounce stood in the bows of the prahu, which since the affray with the pirates, Jack had christened H.M.S. Cockroach.

"Land oh!" he repeated.

"Where?" cried Jack, running forward. "Where's your land?"

Bounce pointed to the east. "Yonder! I reck'n mountains be land of a sort, Master Jack. Anyhow, them mountains be in Borneo, an' theer's a fairish step o' land betwixt here and theer."

But Jack could see nothing except a chain of bluish, immovable clouds on the horizon.

"Are those clouds mountains?" he asked, unconscious of the absurdity of the question.

"I reck'n they are, an' I'm werry glad to see 'em."

Glad they all were. Life on board the Cockroach had become almost unendurable. For two days and nights crew and passengers had hardly dared to close their eyes. The pirates had not been beaten off, but frightened away. The unexpected apparition of what they took to be a British officer in full uniform, the possible trap, and prospect of prompt punishment, had driven the rascals off at their best speed. But the Collector had feared that the wretches would pluck up courage and again
attack, most probably at night. Hence the watchfulness.

Harry came to gaze on the land, but he, also, only saw what appeared to be a chain of clouds. However, just before the sun went down far astern of the little craft, Bounce pointed out a nearer but less lofty mountain, of far more substantial appearance.

"That's Santubong," he said. "The mouth o' the Sarawak River's just beyond. I 'members a reg'lar nest o' pirates at the foot o' that hill. You'll see the village they lived at when we gets nearer. They ain't theer now; I reck'n Rajah Brooke made it too hot to hold 'em."

"But how far is it to Kuching?" Jack demanded, thoroughly sick of his confined, uncomfortable quarters.

"I can't say exackerly, but we'll be in the river first thing to-morrow morning, an' you'll be able to sleep to-night; them pirates generally gives Rajah Brooke's rivers a wide berth."

Another uncomfortable night, not sleepless, and our youthful travellers awoke to find themselves slowly progressing between banks covered with a thick belt of mangroves, indistinct in the dense mist which rose from the water and curled fast away among the thin snaky roots; rising in wreaths that grew more and more fleecy along the sides of Santubong, now visible as a lofty, wooded peak. Behind the mangroves they caught occasional glimpses of an almost impenetrable jungle—a living wall of vegetation.

Signs of life were not numerous as they floated upwards with wind and tide in the early morning. Now and again a tiny sampan pushed out from the bushes, paddled by a woman who sat at the stern, her weight raising the nose of the slight craft a foot or more above the water. With admirable skill she guided her course across the flowing tide, and vanished under the foliage of the further bank.
Not beautiful nor romantic were the ruddy-tartan-draped figures, but they harmonised somehow with the scene.

Now and again, also, a larger sampan overtook them, and sped by under a pretty rig of Nipa palm leaves in place of sails. The feathery foliage arching upwards from the gunwale on either side, and crossed above, held the wind admirably.

The banks were scarcely inhabited, but in every shallow stood long lines of "fishing stakes," hurdles, as we may say, disposed in successive squares, leading from the deep water towards the land. A certain proportion of the fish that enter wander on and on through passages that grow continually smaller, until those that reach the end cannot mostly find their way back. The owner comes from time to time, when he has nothing else to do, takes what luck has given him, and departs. Such methods would not suit our fishermen, but they commend themselves to an indolent and gambling people like the Malay.

Tide and wind just served to carry the vessel as far as Kuching. The capital of Sarawak had at that time some ten thousand inhabitants, Malay, Chinese, and Kling—that is, Hindoo emigrants; no Dyaks dwelt there, or even in the neighbourhood. For a distance of half a mile from the little jetty by the fort at which passengers landed—a very very rare event—the eternal verdure of the jungle was broken. The Chinamen, indefatigable market-gardeners, had their little patches of cultivation. Groves of bananas, cocoanuts, and areca palms—loveliest of all that lovely family—encircled the Malay huts, raised aloft on piles. At every few yards a canoe or a sampan was moored to the bank, and others shot swiftly to and fro. Cheerily the paddlers greeted the strange vessel, and cheerily the crew replied, in the musical sing-song that carries so far over water, affected by this water-loving race. The first words of colloquial Malay
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which our adventurers mastered were "Derimana datang?"

[Where do you come from?]  

At length, amid a cheerful bustle, the good ship Cockroach cast anchor in midstream—here some hundred and fifty yards broad. So many white faces had never been beheld upon a native craft before, and the news spread fast. Hundreds of people, pleasantly excited, mustered at the landing place, among them a tall European in black jacket laced with gold, white trousers, and red sash. He had strolled from the neat little fort, fifty yards above, and at a word from him a trim sampan, paddled by Malays in uniform, shot out to land the strangers.

"How do you do?" he said, as the party reached the jetty. "You are English, I think?" smiling pleasantly.

"T'ree of us," Hertz replied, returning the greeting. "De ooder ish moosh de same, sir. You are——"

"My name is Merriman." The stranger fixed his eyes on the Collector's hook. Like Hertz, Mr. Merriman had only one arm, and the coincidence appeared to strike him as singular; as, indeed, it did the Collector.


Mr. Merriman shook the youths' hands heartily.

"Ah, then, I needn't ask if you are here for business or pleasure. It's a combination of the two. You, I see," addressing Hertz, "like myself have been where arms are lost."

"Ach! Ja. Oonfortunately I hafe been in machinery. Be sure I lose my arm moosh against my vill. Ash you, I dink, sir?"

Mr. Merriman smiled, saying briefly, "I cut mine off myself. Come!—if you three gentlemen will again take
your places in the boat I will conduct you to the Rajah."

"Did you hear?" Jack whispered. "He said he cut his arm off himself."

Harry had heard, and was much interested, but Mr. Merriman gave no explanation.

Bounce returned to the Cockroach. The sampan, paddled by Malays in uniform, crossed the river, and our adventurers landed before Government House, the residence of the Rajah, Sir James Brooke.

A square building with a broad, open verandah, standing on the crown of a grassy hill. Here and there stood pretty cottages among flowers, palm trees, and clumps of shrubs, with a background of jungle. In these, visitors were lodged when a ship of war paid a visit to Kuching.

As the Rajah of Sarawak is no hero of the imagination, we may give a sketch of his extraordinary career previous to the date of this story. It will be a key to the ensuing chapters. The strange and eventful story of his life in Sarawak has been told many times; he himself wrote a diary, and at least two of his friends have supplemented it. Therefore it will be told very briefly here.

In November, 1838, James Brooke, a private gentleman, sailed from England in the yacht Royalist. He had been fired by descriptions of the anarchy prevailing in these lovely lands—the utterable wretchedness of the people—and he went out, to use his own words, "to see whether nothing could be done."

In 1839 he wrote: "At length, then, I am on the coast of Borneo. Our work is commenced. I have toiled and sacrificed much for this consummation; and now that it has arrived, I ask myself if I feel equal to the task.... Oh! that my ability to serve these benighted people were equal to my inclination to do so! My anxiety and my desires to ameliorate their condition are boundless; and
though the love of home may beckon me thitherward, yet I must never dream of returning to my native land until at least some measure of good has been accomplished. . . . It is not only on private views of advantage that I would act, but that I would, generally speaking, seek rather to add to my reputation than my fortune. To develop the resources of a large country is a task I should be most proud to accomplish; and whether we look to the benefits which must accrue to the natives, or to the extension of British trade, it is equally calculated to arouse our best energies."

His proceedings were bold and prompt. At that time a revolt unusually determined was being suppressed—at least, combated—by measures even unusually savage. After studying the situation, Mr. Brooke went on to Bruni, where the Sultan dwelt, and represented to him in strong terms the danger as well as folly of allowing the province to go to ruin. No revenue had been paid for years. The Dutch threatened. The English would not be patient of such horrors for an indefinite term. The Sultan, alarmed, asked Mr. Brooke if he himself would undertake the government; Mr. Brooke assenting joyfully, he put the province in his charge. This was in January, 1841, and so speedily did the Englishman restore order, with no force beyond the crew of his yacht and his own undaunted spirit, that eight months afterwards he was declared "Rajah and Governor." The country now was in his hands. He could do as he wished. He immediately drew up a code of just laws, issued in 1842. In the same year he commenced his crusade against piracy, the scourge of the Archipelago, fostered and covertly encouraged by the Bruni nobles, sometimes openly. To say that he risked his life a hundred times will convey but a poor idea of the dangers and trials he encountered in his heroic endeavours to benefit the country of his adoption. He bore a charmed life. Wounded he was,
several times seriously, but work remained for him to do, and he was spared to do it. In August, 1842, Sarawak was ceded to him by the Sultan upon the yearly payment of a sum of money. In 1847 he visited England after an absence of nine fruitful years.

Her Majesty the Queen invited him to Windsor and received him most graciously. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the metropolis presented him with the freedom of the city of London. The University of Oxford conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. All classes united to praise him and to do him honour. Some time afterwards he was made a Knight Commander of the Bath.

The honours were well deserved. He found Sarawak a land of misrule—a haunt of pirates and head-hunters; the Malays downtrodden by the Bruni nobles, the Dyaks persecuted by the Malays. Murder stalked abroad under the light of the sun. Among the Dyaks, that man who had slain the greatest number of his fellows, and could show their heads in proof, was honoured and feared. No man was safe, nor anything that was his. In a few years James Brooke made it a comparatively peaceful, prosperous, law-abiding State.

Mr. Merriman led the party across a smooth lawn, set with flowering shrubs and creepers here and there, over a pretty bridge spanning a creek, to the steps of Government House. A sentry stood there, Malay of course, in pale-blue jacket, red sash, and white trousers, trim and soldierly. They entered the broad, shady corridor, furnished with cozy lounging chairs of wicker, tables, and abundant books, with piles of English newspapers. Barefooted servants, neatly dressed, stood around; one of them, salaaming gracefully, went ahead to announce the visitors.

The corridor surrounded all the house; passing along they saw comfortable looking rooms one after another on
their left, handsomely furnished. Books and papers everywhere—plainly the Rajah was a great student.

He was standing to receive them with a smile, having watched their transit over the river—a man of middle height, strongly and actively built. The Malays, who pride themselves on their swordsmanship, admitted that the Rajah had no match. His face, somewhat scarred by small-pox, was waxen pale, very pleasant in expression, but very firm. The keen eyes looked his visitors through and through. The thin lips, smiling now and always upon friends, had a terrible sternness in repose. The jaw was hard and square, as if cut in marble. No leader of men carried his credentials in his face more plainly to be read than Rajah Brooke. He was born to rule, and instinct had led him to the scenes where his character could find free play. His attire was careless, but admirably suited to the climate: white duck trousers and dark coat; a loose, turn-down collar, and black sailor's knot; just showing, rolled round his waist, the national Malay sarong. No glitter of barbaric gold and jewels; no pomp. Yet he was every inch the Rajah, always just, and kindly, grandly courteous. He accorded to the lowest, the most degraded of his subjects the treatment of a man.

Mr. Merriman briefly introduced his companions and explained their business.

"I welcome you to Sarawak," said the Rajah, pleasantly. "I hope you will find what you have come so far to seek. I may tell you that I have not heard of this 'blue' orchid, but for your sake I hope it exists. You may count on me for any assistance in my power. Of course, you will come and go as you think fit. Mr. Merriman will conduct you to a house which I hope you will look upon as your own while you stay. And now a word of caution. I am addressing you young men more particularly."
Jack and Harry bowed.

"First—no adventures! I hope you understand that I do not allude to ordinary adventures of sport or travel—"

Here Hertz, catching the Rajah's drift, bowed. The Rajah resumed:

"Above all things be courteous to natives. Remember that semi-civilised races generally, and Malays especially, have a more exacting, scrupulous, and constant code of politeness than Europeans. And do not forget that the Dyaks' manners are copied from the Malays'. So far as your treatment of them is concerned, they are one and the same race. Should you go among Sea Dyaks, bear in mind that these people are extremely high-spirited. You must thoughtfully avoid rousing the slightest suspicion of deriding anything you see—above all, of laughing at their usages. You must not play tricks among yourselves, much more with them. But frank, hearty, sympathetic laughter will never give offence—quite the contrary. The Sea Dyaks are a hospitable, improvable people, but they will not stand any nonsense whatever. I shall be glad of your company at dinner this evening; Mr. Merriman will tell you the hour. I leave you in his care."

There was no mistaking the purport of the Rajah's words. Courteously, pleasantly spoken, they implied that he would stand no nonsense—no liberties with his people; and they were so understood.

Mr. Merriman reconducted the party along the corridors, pausing at a room set apart for a collection of arms, curiosities, and appliances.

"This will interest you," he said, addressing the youths. "I presume, Mr. Hertz, that you have goods to land? Suppose we leave our young friends here? I will show them the town when I have taken you to your ship."
So Jack and Harry were left to amuse themselves in the museum, whilst Hertz returned to the pruhu to superintend the removal of the goods and baggage.

Very interesting indeed did they find the Rajah's collection. Here they made acquaintance with the singular sumpitan, or blow-pipe, a tube of hard wood with a spear-head attached: the arrows slender thorns of the sago-palm, or slips of wood scraped fine, their points said to be poisoned with an extract from the Upas tree, so deadly that the Ujit, Kayan, Kennowit, or Pakatan is able to kill his foe at forty yards, death ensuing within half an hour in most cases.

Here, also, were numerous kris—-the Court sword of the Malay—with beautiful wavy blades, some inlaid with silver, the hilts of ivory, gold, and wood, encrusted with jewels. Here were lances, boar-spears, strange-looking flint-lock guns, and numerous parangs, both ilang and latok.

They carefully examined a parang ilang, of which weapon they had heard something from Bounce. It is the national sword of the Kayans, an inland tribe, and is also used by some of the Sea Dyaks, but it can only be safely wielded by a practised hand. Even Dyak boys, familiar with the weapon from babyhood, sometimes wound themselves severely when handling their father's sword. The blade has a peculiar twist, only to be seen when looking along the back. It is concave on the one side, convex on the other, and the concave side must always be turned towards the object struck at, or the weapon may fly back and wound the striker. Inserted in the sheath is sometimes a long-handled, short-bladed knife, with which, when the larger weapon has done its work, the Kayans are said to sever the head from the trunk of an enemy.

The parang latok is the commonest of Malay weapons or instruments, carried by everybody, since it is used for
all manner of purposes;—for chopping wood, clearing a path, driving nails, or anything, as well as for battle. It is a long, pointless iron sword, two inches broad at the extreme end of the blade, thence gradually narrowing to the hilt, where it is square, and half an inch thick. The hilt itself, which is very small, is bent at an obtuse angle to the blade, which makes it extremely awkward to use by unpractised Europeans.

The youths had not examined a tithe of the curious articles in the museum when the courteous Mr. Merriman returned to guide them on a tour of inspection through the "Town of the Cat."

Picture a swift stream crowded with boats. On each bank, extending for nearly three-quarters of a mile, are the houses of the inhabitants—those in the Malay campong erected on piles from six to twelve or eighteen feet high. Intermingled with the houses are groves of areca and cocoanut palms, with a background of jungle. For colour, groups of natives in brilliant costumes; the men, that is, the Malays, in bright-patterned tight jacket of silk or cotton, white trousers, head-handkerchief, and red and green tartan sarong, a kind of petticoat, gracefully looped round the waist.

Mr. Merriman led the way to the Chinese quarter. Here, separated from the river by a muddy street and grove of cocoanut palms, they found the bazaar, faced by a colonnade, and shaded from the fierce glare of the sun by draperies hung from pillar to pillar.

The youths were at once reminded of the Singapore street where they had encountered the amok. Similar incongruous and extraordinary articles were exposed for sale. Silks, gold embroidered cloths, and edible birds' nests; turbans and turtles' eggs; tobacco, monkeys, and old guns; sword-blades, krises, parangs, skinis, birds,—parrots and parroquets, even small bears—a wonderful medley! The thronging, jostling crowd, Malay, Chinese,
and Kling, was familiar, but here and there stalked a curious Dyak, naked, except for the *chowat*—a waist-cloth—and numerous brass rings. The Malays preponderated largely, even in the Chinese *campom*.

Presently a group of three men attracted the youths' attention. They were evidently strangers, as much interested in the novel scene as the English lads. Fine athletic men they were, though short, clad in holiday attire. Scarlet *chowats* gleamed round their loins; equally brilliant "cloths" swung loosely over their broad shoulders. Innumerable brass rings glistened on their arms and round their knees, tinkling pleasantly as they walked; while in their ears—the lobes of which hung almost to the shoulders—were still more rings of various sizes, as many as six in each ear, small at the top, and gradually increasing in size, the lowest weighing not much less than a quarter of a pound. One, apparently a chief, wore, in addition to the rings, an alligator's tooth, the upper part of the beak of a bird—the rhinoceros hornbill—and several little tinkling bells. At his side each man bore a *parang*, the hilt decorated with human hair dyed scarlet.

"Sea Dyaks from a distant river," said Mr. Merriman, noticing the youths' interested glances. "These are the men the Rajah particularly warned you about. They have come to see the sights of Kuching, as country people visit London—perhaps to beg a favour from the Rajah. He won't grant it, though," he added, smiling.

"What is it?" Harry asked.

"Permission to go head hunting. They often ask, but of course are always refused."

"I thought head hunting was a thing of the past," Jack remarked.

"Not quite. We hope it soon will be. Of course the Dyaks will continue to take the heads of enemies slain in battle; that the Government doesn't object to; but
lying in wait in the jungle for the first head that comes along, caring little whether it grows on the shoulders of friend or foe so long as it is obtainable—going on the prowl for weeks together, and murdering every stranger that can be taken unawares,—these are little Dyak pleasantries the Government doesn’t countenance. Here, in Sarawak, taking heads in the old style is called by an ugly name, murder, and punished accordingly."

“But why do the Dyaks do it?”

“Because their fathers did so. It’s a strange custom of the country, one of many. Perhaps some chief wants to name a child. A short time back a head was absolutely necessary. Perhaps a chief is dead. No doubt these fellows believe that if they can get a head, the man who has lost it will be the deceased chief’s slave in the Dyak heaven. They have always plenty of reasons to urge.”

They inspected the fort, a log building surrounded by a moat covered with clusters of a delicate white flower, its banks bright with crimson shoe-blossoms and pink lotuses; then visited the Malay campong, which extended for a considerable distance on each bank of the river. The houses were raised on piles, the verandah of some being reached by a runged ladder, of others by a notched tree-trunk. The walls were of wood, or of atap-thatch, the roofs invariably of atap-thatch.

While they examined these “dove-cots,” a little girl suddenly dashed down a ladder into the pathway, screaming and laughing. She was followed by a crowd of girls, lads, and even men, all yelling at the top of their voices. Numerous Malays on the narrow winding path joined in the chase, or sprang forward to intercept the fugitive, and soon the girl was caught.

“What has she done?” cried Jack, alarmed.

Mr. Merriman laughed, but did not answer.

The youths rushed up to the crowd with frightened
faces, fearing they knew not what—nothing less than a tragedy. The captive stood screaming in the centre of the throng, struggling in the grasp of at least a dozen girls armed with scissors, with which they were busily engaged snipping off the victim's luxuriant black hair.

"Why, she has gold on her head!" Jack cried.

"Exactly," laughed Mr. Merriman. "This is a prettier custom than head-hunting. You see her hair gleams with gold dust. It was sprinkled by her parents, who turned her out of doors to be chased and caught—to lose the gold, and her hair with it."

"But why have they done it?" Harry asked.

"Oh, the Malays believe that this extraordinary hair cutting will result in even greater luxuriance. It's a sort of charm."
CHAPTER VI.

A SCRATCH EXPEDITION.

"It's no use, skipper; I can't remember it."

"Dink!"

Bounce bent his knees, reducing his stature four inches, dropped his broad shoulders, sunk his head between them, and, frowning horribly, fixed his eyes on the bamboo floor of the little cottage in which the Rajah had lodged the Orchid Seekers. Attitude of earnest thought!

"Vell?" Hertz cried impatiently.

The sailor rolled his quid to his left cheek, still keeping his gaze on the floor, grimaced, and leisurely lifting his right hand, scratched his tousled head. Attitude of hopeless thought!

"Hafe you dinked?"

"Ay, I'm thinking like a thousand 'oss-power steam-engine; but it ain't no manner o' use. I can't remember their outlandish names."

"De only place you recollect ish Bau?"

"Ay, that's so. But I fancy the mountain sounded summat like it. Bow?—Bow?" Again Bounce assumed the attitude of earnest reflection.

"Vas Sir James Brooke here?"

"Sir James—Sir?—Why, boil me into lobscouse, skipper, if that ain't it! Sir-am-bow—that's the port we was bound for!"

Goodt! You had four Malays mit you? Deir names?"

Bounce groaned. He had endured the cross-examination half an hour. Hertz was jotting down in his notebook minute particulars of the sailor's previous visit when he had seen the "blue" orchid.

"Deir names?" the Collector repeated imperatively.

"Ve get deir names, perhaps ve find de same men. You say dey vere de Rajah's servants? I dink fort-men —soldiers."

"You've settled me now. All as I knows is that one o' the yellow chaps spoke English—pigeon English, summat like a Chinaman; though, if I 'members right, there wasn't much 'likee, makee, breakee' in his lingo. I reck'n he put his 'ees' first. But I ain't sure if they wasn't 'bees.'"

"'Betaken be—be maken?'" Hertz suggested.

"Ay, that's the lingo."

"He vas a Malay. His name?"

"I've clean forgot."

"Your head ish gotton-vool. Gome! Ve go find him."

And Hertz, followed by Bounce, descended to the grassy lawn, leaving Jack and Harry idly gazing across the river at nothing in particular.

"I imagine Mr. Hertz has a big job on hand," Jack remarked. "Something like seeking a needle in a haystack. I propose we get up an expedition on our own account. Let's hire a boat and go for a trip up the river?"

Harry sprang to his feet and took up his double-barrelled shot-gun.

"I'm ready," he said.

Soon the youths were traversing the narrow winding path in the Malay campong, seeking a boat and crew. No prolonged search was required. Scores of sampans lay
in the mud on the river bank; on the path, exposed to
the fierce noonday sun; among the piles of the houses.
Plenty of Malays, in jacket and trousers, with sarong
looped up and head-handkerchief cocked, lounged about,
industriously chewing penang—a mixture of areca nut,
tobacco, gambier, and lime, the whole wrapped up in a
leaf of siri, a species of pepper.

"Boat, Tuan?" said one of these gentlemen, smiling
pleasantly.

Jack nodded, thinking the Eian had exhausted his
knowledge of the English tongue, then pointed up the
river. "Yes," he said, very slowly, "we—want—boat—
and—crew—to—go—ten—miles."

The Malay salaamed, waited a moment, then said, very
very modestly:

"I Inggris speak. Boat have. I you take."

"We're in luck's way!" Jack gleefully cried.

"We are," said Harry, "and our boatman is a perfect
gentleman." This aside. Indeed, the politeness of the
Malay is something for rough, abrupt Europeans to
wonder at.

Meanwhile the boatman had rigged up an awning of
mats over the stern of a sampan, and, aided by four
companions, pushed it down the bank into the water.
The youths followed, and got aboard; the Malays sprang
in, and soon the boat was in rapid motion, the krook-krook
of the paddles making music as pleasant as could be.

Jack and Harry had seen many sampans, and, at
Singapore, had gone aboard H.M.S. Cockroach in one,
but had no leisure to examine the craft. However, now
they had plenty. The keel was the hollowed trunk of a
tree; on this foundation roughly hewn boards formed a
gunwale, protruding four feet beyond the keel in the
bows, and a like distance astern, almost horizontally.
Total length about twenty feet; width, three.

The owner of the sampan, who sat near his passengers,
informed them that his name was "Buyong," adding that the *Tuans Inggris* (English gentlemen) at Kuching knew him well, and generally called him "Boy." Here Boy smiled, doubtless understanding perfectly well how his name lent itself to the familiar diminutive. When perhaps a mile had been covered, he, with some hesitation and much respect, begged to know his passengers' object—if they wished to go to any particular place, or to see anything definite.

"Yes," said Jack, "we want to see anything, everything—animals, birds, flowers, orchids particularly, if you know where any are to be found. But perhaps you don't know orchids by that name; they grow on trees, high up; on logs, anywhere, very beautiful blossoms."

"Weh!" cried Boy, showing all his jetty teeth. "Rajah of them fond. So all Malay men be. *Tuans Inggris* more be. Go look long way—many day's journey."

"Have you ever been?" Harry asked.

"Two times I go. More. I not know how many."

"The very man for Mr. Hertz," said Jack; "we must tell him when we get back."

The *sampan* moved swiftly through the water. The Malay paddlers laughed, cracked jokes, and sang peculiar nasal songs. Jack and Harry kept a sharp look-out for game of any description, but so near Kuching, and on a river so much frequented, game was scarce. Harry shot at and missed a splendid blue kingfisher. An occasional water-wagtail, quite as impertinent as the English variety, skimmed along the stream, or perched on a snag, flippantly flirting its long tail in the faces of the youthful sportsmen, who ignored its existence. Now and again a pigeon flew from tree to tree, out of range. A kite hovered overhead, also too far off. A white crane slowly lifted itself from a spur of sand, and flew ponderously away, its feet touching the water for twenty yards. An
alligator, saluted with four charges of shot, which made no more impression upon it than if fired against a stone wall, waddled off the muddy bank, plunged into the water, and disappeared; then, as the sampan swept round a sharp bend, Boy suddenly shouted:

“Pig, Tuans!”

Jack and Harry sprang to their feet, but sat down again even more hurriedly, not desiring a bath just then; the crew yelled, and dipped their paddles with extraordinary vigour, making the sampan almost fly with their efforts.

Our sportsmen looked in the direction pointed out by Boy, and saw four pigs swimming across the stream, here not nearly so broad as at Kuching, the leader a big boar, shaggy-headed, and with gleaming tusks.

“What idiots we were not to bring rifles!” Jack cried. “Their tough hides will be as impervious to shot as that alligator’s. But the last is a little one; let’s give him the lot!”

The pigs had fifty yards to swim to reach the bank; the sampan a hundred to get abreast of them. Urged by the yells and laughter of the Malays, the grun ters quickened, and the leader reached the bank before the sportsmen were sufficiently near to shoot. He disappeared in the jungle, followed by the next, and the next. The smallest, and last, had ten yards to swim.

“Let him have it!” Jack cried, as the boat shot past. But before either could draw trigger the ugly head of a huge green alligator rose between the boat and the quarry, so startling the sportsmen that they lowered the muzzles of their guns. The pig, aware of the new danger, squealed with affright, and struggled hard to gain the bank. It got its fore-legs on the mud; but the alligator, with wonderful agility for a beast apparently slow and clumsy, leaped at its prey, seized it with its teeth, swung it round as a terrier swings a rat, and dived to the
An alligator, saluted with four charges of shot... waddled off the muddy bank.
bottom of the river, there to swallow the unlucky porker at its leisure.

Boy stood up in the *sampan*, shouting at the top of his voice in Malay. He probably consigned the alligator’s father and mother to perdition, and figuratively spat upon it. Jack and Harry, not understanding Malay, could not comprehend his remarks; but Boy certainly was in a great rage; not at the loss of the pork—strict Moslems will not touch it—but because the alligator had spoiled the sport of the *Tuans* under his charge. Having exhausted his vocabulary of abuse—no easy matter, for the polite Malay can utter a long list of severely comminatory speeches—Boy sat down and resumed his steering paddle.

Half an hour’s uninterrupted paddling took the party to a small stream on the right-hand side of the river. Up this the *sampan* swept. The stream was narrow, and soon the trees met overhead, hiding the sky—a mass of dense trunks and branches, gigantic ferns and climbing rattans, through which the sunlight gleamed fitfully.

“Stop, please!” Jack cried. “The trees are loaded with orchids, and we—stupid donkeys that we are!—have brought no field-glass!”

Boy gave the word, and the paddlers ceased their exertions. But the jungle was impenetrable. Sixty, eighty, a hundred feet overhead were masses of orchid bulbs, spikes, and blossoms—these hardly distinguishable at such a height; the species it was impossible to tell.

“We’ve mistaken our vocation,” Jack muttered. “Mr. Hertz wouldn’t have come orchid seeking without a field-glass. But I mean to climb one of those trees somehow.”

“Fruit garden not far, *Tuan*,” said Boy. “Chinaman clearing make, and leave. There we land. Plenty flowers.”

“That’s the spot, Boy. Fire away.”
Again the sampan glided forward, but not far. Boy guided it to a landing place on the right bank, a notched tree lying on the mud. To the inexperienced eyes of Jack and Harry the jungle seemed as impenetrable here as at the point which they had previously tried.

"Is this a garden?" Jack naturally asked.

"Orang kina (Chinaman) trees plant many years ago," said Boy, pointing up the stream.

The Malays, having made the sampan fast to the landing place, proceeded to clear an old path with their parangs. It led up a gentle hill, on the slope of which our adventurers found the deserted garden. Here, intermingled with lofty palms, and numerous forest giants which they could not identify, they found fruit trees, duriens, mangoes, lancets, rambutans, mangusteins, and many others. Forty feet below, on the left, ran the river, the banks here high and inaccessible, necessitating a landing place a hundred yards distant. Hardly had they gained the spot when a sharp-eyed Malay raised a cry of "Mias!" At his feet lay the rind of a "durien," an immense, prickly, oval covering, hollow—the inside had been scooped clean—as large as a forty-pounder shot.

"Mias, Tuans!" said Boy, peering into the mass of foliage overhead.

"A mias—an orang utan!" Jack echoed, following the Malay's example. The orchids, growing like glorified bunches of mistletoe, loading the branches overhanging the stream, were instantly forgotten. The "man of the woods" had prior claims if only he could be found.

Presently Boy pointed upwards. An umbrella-like structure in the top of a lofty tree had caught his eye.

"I him see!" he cried. "He sleep!"

Jack could see nothing but an immense nest of branches, twigs, and leaves; however, Boy assured him the orang
utan was there, probably asleep, and suggested a rough awakening with a charge of shot. Jack threw up his gun, pointed it at the nest, and fired. An instant commotion! A huge brown body swung itself out of the nest, and paused, looking at its rude disturbers, whether in anger or merely curiosity could not be distinguished at the distance. Harry fired, and the mias moved off, pulling itself from branch to branch with its powerful arms at a rapid rate. The Malays yelled, and dashed into the jungle, doubtless hoping that the mias would be forced to halt in a tree standing alone. Jack and Harry followed as best they could—the Chinaman’s deserted garden, or orchard, was almost impervious. The Malays stopped at the foot of a gigantic durien, growing on the bank of the stream, which, in this particular spot, was not bridged by the branches.

“He stop here,” cried Boy, gleefully, “or back go. You shoot him now.”

“Isn’t it cruel to shoot him with shot? We have no bullets,” Harry interposed. “We can only wound him, you know.”

But Jack would not be denied.

“They’re terribly mischievous brutes,” he said; “aren’t they, Boy?”

Boy assented warmly.

“Mias eat up Dyak farms all same Balla” (a war party).

So, with an easy conscience, Jack fired both barrels at the orang utan and hit it. It was only slightly wounded, however, and Jack recognised the impossibility of killing it with shot at a height of not much less than a hundred feet, with a mass of foliage, cabbage palms, and gigantic tree-ferns intervening. But the Malays seemed bent on catching the animal. Two rushed to the tree and hammered the trunk with their parangs, yelling at the top of their voices. Seeing this, Jack reloaded his gun.
and fired again. Harry declined further part in the proceedings.

Now the orang utan became conscious of its danger. It dashed about wildly, and would have crossed the river had the branches extended sufficiently far. Then it plunged back to the middle of the tree. Crash! through the intervening foliage and branches came a spiked globe the size of a man's head, narrowly missing Jack, who stood peering upwards with his head thrown back, noting the effect of his shot. Crash! thump! came another, burying a third of its body in the soil within four inches of Boy's naked toes, making that polished gentleman jump like a spring-bok. Crash followed crash in quick succession, and Boy, with Jack, Harry, and the Malays, promptly bolted out of range.

"Is it throwing them down?" Jack asked, in astonished tones.

"I not know, Tuan," Boy answered, laughing. "Dyak man say it throw. So Malay man. I think angry mad be—shake branches; fall fruit. Weh! durien kill Dyak and Malay man; two times I tell; break head be."

"And as our skulls are probably not thicker than the Dyak and Malay, we may get our heads broken if we venture back," said Harry. "Let the poor brute go. It will take us hours to kill it. The tree must be cut down, or climbed, and I shan't volunteer for that job. I don't think Boy will, either."

Jack turned to the Malay for an opinion.

"With bullets, Tuan." said Boy, "I him fetch down three-four shoot. With shot, no. We tree cut down; not kill other way."

"That settles it. We'll let him live. But I want a sample of the beggar's shot. Pah! what a stench!" The durien had burst open in falling.

Jack dropped it like a hot coal. Boy picked it up, an immense globe, as hard, almost as iron. The Malays
gathered all they could find eagerly, and then pushed through the jungle path towards the landing-place, leaving the orangutan in quiet possession of the tree-tops.

"How big is it, do you think?" Harry asked Boy as, in Indian file, they traversed the narrow path.

The Malay turned and raised his hand four feet from the ground.

"This tall he be." Then, making a circle at the full stretch of his arms, "This big."

"And strong?"

"Strong he be as four Orang läit" [Malays; literally "men of the sea"].

"I'm very glad he only pelted us," said Harry.

In the boat Jack remembered the orchids.

"We can't go back and tell Mr. Hertz we've seen scores of orchids without a single specimen to show." he said; "I can just imagine what he'll say if we do—pierce us through and through with sarcasms. Boy, we've forgotten the flowers."


Up the stream, past the high bank over which the durien towered—the mias was nowhere to be seen—and on at a steady pace for a quarter of a mile. Boy’s restless eyes incessantly wandered from the branches overhead to the banks—here low and overgrown with jungle—from the banks to the branches. Presently he gave the word to cease paddling. Right overhead grew a branch covered with long stems, leaves, and blossoms of orchids, in two or three distinct masses.

"Hurrah!" cried Jack, "we'll have the lot, if possible."

The sampan drew in to the bank, and the youths scrambled out and up it, followed by the Malays. The trunk of the tree to which the orchid-covered branch belonged was entwined with creepers, and comparatively
easy to climb. Jack flung off his linen jacket, and, to the great astonishment of the Malays, commenced to climb it. Boy and his crew were altogether too polite to make remarks, but, judging from their looks, the *Tuan putih* [white lord] was doing an unheard-of thing—an undignified, preposterous thing—exerting himself to climb a tree when he had Malay attendants to do it for him. Jack struggled on in blissful ignorance of the sensation he had created, and soon reached the desired branch.

"I say, Boy," he shouted, "hadn't you better get into the *sampan* and paddle it underneath to catch these things?"

The Malay obeyed; and the adventurous climber crawled out along the branch until he was just over the middle of the stream.

"They’re *Dendrobiums!*" he cried, drawing his knife to detach a plant from the tree. A few minutes later the orchid dropped into the outstretched hands of the Malay, who deposited it in the *sampan*.

"They’re just splendid! I’m going to have the lot!" cried the excited youth. An exclamation of pain followed—a scramble—the knife fell, and after it, plump into the water, the orchid collector himself! He would have tumbled headforemost into the boat, and stove it, perhaps broken his neck, had not Boy, with a quick stroke of the paddle, sheered the *sampan* out of the way.

Jack rose to the surface blowing and spluttering, to be hauled into the boat by Boy.

"Something bit me," he explained, examining his hand. "It was exactly as if a red-hot iron had been thrust in. Never felt anything so severe in my life. It was awful!"

"*Sumut api* it be," said the Malay. "Fire ant—red."

"I saw some black ants. But can an ant bite like that? I’ve been bitten at home; but this is frightful!"
The knife fell, and after it, plump into the water, the orchid collector himself!
“Weh! Black ant he bite not as sumut api bad. Malay man he afraid sumut api. Run far.”

The ant and the douche quenched Jack’s zeal completely, for the time. He wanted no more orchids just then. Harry and the Malays took their places, and soon the sampan was swiftly gliding towards Kuching. Harry took up the orchid, and examined it gingerly. Other ants, alert and vicious, might be hidden among its pseudo-bulbs and blossoms.

A Dendrobium evidently, as Jack said, but one unfamiliar to them—with pseudo-bulbs six feet long, stained purple, and grand sprays of rosy flower, four or five of them at the tip of each.

“We are in luck!” Harry cried, “I feel almost sure it’s a new species!”

The trip home was uneventful. Except a few birds, nothing in the way of game was to be seen. An awful smell hung round the boat—the perfume of the duriens, the quintessence of all the seventy-two stinks Coleridge identified in Cologne.

Jack asked Boy to take the sampan to the Rajah’s landing-place, thinking that Hertz would be sure to engage him, with his boat and crew. Here they found the Collector with Mr. Merriman and Bounce.

Jack held up his orchid, Harry an immense durien—at arm’s length—as evidence that they had not returned empty-handed, and leaped ashore. Boy also landed, and walked up to Bounce, smiling.

“You Tuan Bob!” he said.

“Hullo! I say, skipper!” cried the old salt, seizing the Malay’s hand, “if this ain’t the werry chap we’ve been looking for! I ’members his name now. It’s Boy!”

“Goodt!” cried Hertz. “No wonder ve nodt find him in Kuching.”

It transpired that the Malay had at one time been
in the Rajah's service; and, though not actually with Bounce when the latter saw the famous "blue" orchid, had been in charge of the men whom the English sailors accompanied into the interior. Mr. Merriman gave him an excellent character for trustworthiness.

"His father was a 'hadji.'" he said, "with great influence in Sarawak." A "hadji," it may be remarked, is a Mahommedan who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. "A few years ago," Mr. Merriman continued, "Buyong might have been a pirate—the commander of a prahu. Even now he might be an official of the Government, if he would only settle down. He is rather a reckless, adventure-loving fellow, but skilled in river and jungle craft. Just the very man you want."

Hertz at once engaged Boy with his sampan and crew, at the same time instructing him to obtain another boat to carry goods, provisions, and sundries.

This business concluded, Jack presented his Dendrobium with no little pride.

"Isn't it a new species, Mr. Hertz?" he asked confidently; adding, "I call this an omen."

"A particularly bad von, den," the Collector returned, smiling. "Idt's treasherous, my poy, treasherous—de vorst of all omens. Dere hafe been more hearts broken, ash dey say, ofer dis orchid dan ofer any Oriental shpecies. So gommon und so beautiful, shiploads hafe been sent to Europe! Budt no von in de segret vill buy idt now. Maybe you hafe seen a poor liddle ding in your fadter's collection, mit half-a-dozen poor liddle pink blooms—he call idt Dendrobium secundum?" *

"Do you mean," cried Harry, "that this noble plant dwindles down to that feeble object in Europe?"

"Ja! Idt's von of de many ve nodt oondershtand. I dink idt ish von of de few ve nefer be able to treat efen

* The meaning and derivation of generic names is given at the commencement of the volume. Secundum (Latin) signifies "lucky."
when ve gome to oonderstand dem.” Then, seeing Jack’s disappointment, he added kindly, “Budt ve vill take idt home mit us for a trophy, idt ish de first orchid collected. Fasten idt on von of de trees yonder mit de copper vire ve bring for de purpose.”

“It’s a poor bag,” Harry remarked; “an orchid that won’t do any good in Europe, and these evil-smelling duriens!”

“Ach! I forgot de duriens! Ish dere time, Misder Merriman, to eadt dem before dinner?”

“The Rajah dines at seven,” Mr. Merriman replied, looking at his watch. “It is now half-past five. You have an hour and a half to eat the fruit, get rid of the perfume, and dress. I’ll join you if you have no objection?”

“Mit all de pleasure in de wortldt! Come along, sir.”

Seizing a prickly globe as large as his head almost, Hertz tucked it under his arm, and marched triumphantly to the cottage. Mr. Merriman followed with another, a beaming smile of anticipation on his face.

“I hope you don’t object to the theft,” he said to Jack, who was comically regarding him. “I am very fond of duriens.”

“I object!” Jack laughed. “Oh, dear, no. I don’t want it, I can assure you. I’m more than satisfied with the smell. I was on the point of throwing them overboard a dozen times. I couldn’t help fancying that some night-soil men must be cleaning out an ash-pit somewhere close at hand.”

“In Singapore,” said Hertz, placing the ill-smelling monstrosity he had confiscated on the bamboo floor, and inserting the point of his cutlass in a split in its side, “dere are Durien Clubs. I tell you vhy. De shmill ish so terrible, und idt shtay so long in de house, dat dey gannot shtand idt often. so de Club ish formed, und eash
member takes his turn to have de shmell. Say dere are twenty members; vell! dey have twenty durien feasts, und only von shtink at home! Ach! I gannot open idt.”

“Try your hook,” suggested Mr. Merriman, who was chopping at his fruit with a parang.

Hertz inserted his book in the crack, gave a mighty wrench, and burst the durien open, revealing a whitish pulp, very like custard, which encased a number of large black seeds.

“No, Yack! now, Harry!” he cried, “taste und try; de shmell ish all oudtside!"

Harry shook his head. Jack, more daring, took a portion of the pulp on a knife-blade and smelt it, with many grimaces. Finally he tasted it.

“Custard, flavoured with onions!”

“Ja; und fery godt custard, too! Hafe some more?”

“Er—no, thanks. A little goes a long way.”

“De more for Misder Merriman and me,” Hertz rejoined.

Soon only the rind and the seeds remained. These Hertz carried away and threw into the jungle.

“I vant perfumes of Araby,” he cried, returning to the cottage, “or I gannot dine mit de Rajah. Ach!” he ran to a case of toys and burst off the lid. “I vas dink I trow idt away,” he went on, producing a large flask.

“Idt vas packed oop by mishtake, I dink. I did nodt order idt. Vell! I vash mit Eau de Cologne dis efening.’ And he bore away the bottle.

Mr. Merriman left the cottage and crossed the river, but returned almost immediately, accompanied by five Dyaks, whom he had met in the Chinese quarter, whither they had arrived with a sampan load of beeswax, edible birds’ nests, gutta-percha, and other commodities collected in the jungle.

“These men are from Sirambau,” he said. “They
know the district you are going to explore thoroughly, and you can't do better than engage them. This fellow,” motioning towards the tallest of the party, “is Nyait, son of Meta, the orang kaya [head man] of Sirambau. He is willing to accompany you, and has a good boat here in Kuching.”

Nyait smiled. He was a stout, jovial-looking fellow, but not more than five feet four inches in height—the party averaged perhaps five feet two inches. Their dress was very simple; the chowat round the loins, with “tail-mat” hanging down behind, a jacket, and fantastic bark head-dress. For ornaments—brass rings round arm and leg, and necklaces of beads and brass wire. The chief’s son, Nyait—quickly corrupted to “Night” by Bounce—wore, in addition, a necklace of tiger-cat’s teeth, with several neatly plaited rattan rings, stained black. Their arms were the parang latok, and a short-bladed, long-handled knife. Each man carried at his side a bamboo case containing his siri.

Hertz was aware that he must have Dyaks—that they were as indispensable to him as hounds to the hunter; so he promptly engaged them.

“Now,” said Mr. Merriman, “you only want personal servants and a cook, and you’ll be ready to start. With regard to servants,” he went on, “the Rajah will have something to say. He has already spoken to me; and I think I may tell you that they are found; so if you choose you may start early to-morrow morning.”


“Quite right, too. The Rajah was pleased to learn that you had not brought any. But he will explain.”

And Mr. Merriman hurried away, leaving the Orchid Seekers to dress for dinner.
CHAPTER VII.

A START IN EARNEST.

At the appointed hour our travellers, clad in evening dress suited to the tropical climate—short, snow-white muslin jacket, drill trousers, black tie, no waistcoat—found themselves in the Rajah's reception room. The Ruler of Sarawak, wearing a black jacket—distinguishing apparel confined to himself—was awaiting his guests. He gave them a pleasant welcome, introduced them to the Resident, Mr. Crookshank, and an officer from an out-station on leave at Kuching, and at once led the way to the dining-room, a large apartment hung with arms.

Numerous servants, clad in white, relieved by sarongs of varied colour and brilliant head-handkerchiefs, flitted about noiselessly, finally stationing themselves each behind a guest's chair.

The dishes and service were European, pleasant and wholesome; but an odd flavour turned up now and again. The national cooking of the Malay is limited to curry and the sambals that attend it. They cannot be restrained, however, from using spices and condiments unfamiliar to our palates. But the vegetables were quite different. In all confidence the youths helped themselves to potatoes and greens; the one proved to be a dry and mawkish root unknown to them, the other—luckily Hertz perceived what they were about,
"Hallo!" he cried, "put dat down! Idt's capsicums!"

After tasting the minutest particle they felt inclined to think it was red-hot coals in disguise.

Dinner always ends in the Far East with Malay curry—prawns floating in a green soup, with which is served rice and a variety of highly seasoned adjuncts, each in its little saucer, arranged upon a tray. No one dislikes Malay curry at the first trial, perhaps, but very few are willing to believe that it will grow so rapidly upon the taste as to cause a craving which the man or woman who has become accustomed to it will never lose.

Then a great pineapple, without the rind, but prettily carved in a pattern, was set before the Rajah; and the servants withdrew, after handing round cheroots and placing a "fire-stick" upon the table. Propped upon one end it smouldered hour after hour, emitting a faintly perfumed smoke.

Presently the Rajah took it up, lit his cheroot, and passed it on to Hertz.

"This is not your first visit to these regions, I understand?" said he, with a certain gravity. "Have you ever paid attention to the Chinese Secret Societies?"

"I hafe, Rajah," Hertz rejoined. "Ach! I hear more ash enough of dem in de Philippines!"

"Ah, yes! They are very troublesome there."

"In de Dootch colonies, too. Dey seized Manilla vonce, und fery nearly took Banjermassin. Idt's deat' to belong to von all t'rough de Nedderlands India, und t'rough de Shpanish ash vell. I dink, Rajah, if I may say so, dat de Englisch are fery—ach!—foolhardy to let dem do yoost as dey please in Singapore und Penang. I hafe seen de shtreets of Singapore crammed mit a mob of howling, fighting men for two days und nights, mit more dan a hoondred killed. Shinese Segret Societies! I hafe shtoodied dem, Rajah, so moosh ash a white man may!"
The Rajah exchanged a glance of satisfaction with the Resident.

"I am very glad to hear this, Mr. Hertz. On my return from Singapore we must have some serious talk upon the subject, if you will kindly give us the benefit of your experience." Hertz bowed. "In regard to measures of repression, I would only point out that the Dutch and Spanish have failed to put down these Societies. Their bitter laws have provoked a fierce hostility, but by all accounts they have done little good. Our English system is to let them alone, and in the result, though they murder one another, they show no hostility to the Government. This we will discuss at leisure. It is an abstract question for me, because I have not the soldiers and sailors and police upon whom the Governor of Singapore can rely at need. My position is very different. Now, Mr. Hertz, you are going to Bau. A Secret Society is established there to my knowledge, and I constantly receive intelligence of the most alarming character from thence. You are aware that refugees from Sambas, in the Dutch territory, have established gold-washings under the direction of a kunsi; and my Government demands its dues, of course. The kunsi has not yet refused to pay, but my collectors report that the gravest threats are uttered publicly. Month by month the number of diggers is swelled by parties that steal across the frontier. They are now, as I am informed, not less than four thousand able-bodied men, all exasperated by the persecution of the Dutch; for of course they think it persecution to forbid their Secret Societies."

"Den idt's persecution to poonish murderers und teifes," said Hertz. "I oondershtand, Rajah, dat you vish us to keep our eyes open, und report what ve observe?"

"Quite so; and I congratulate myself upon the chance which has given me such a capable agent. You will not
attract attention. You may even enter into relations with the kunsi, studying their system and so forth—a most interesting investigation you will find it too, for these people have solved many social problems which perplex European economists. I think it is needless to say more. The servants I have assigned you will carry any letters you address to the Resident. I also place at your disposal a Chinese boy, educated at the Mission School, a steady, trustworthy young fellow, who, I expect, will be most useful, both as your body-servant and also as a medium of communication with the diggers."

The Rajah clapped his hands; to the Malay who instantly appeared he spoke briefly, and a stalwart young fellow in white cotton bajo—a kind of jacket—and baggy blue trousers reaching to the calf, was ushered in. He had a pleasant face, good-looking for a Chinaman; his simple dress was spotless; his glossy pig-tail, unrolled out of respect for "the quality," fell below his waist, and the skein of blue silk which bound its tip almost reached the ground.

"This is your master, Wo-Sing," the Rajah said. Wo-Sing bowed. "Attend him at the cottage tomorrow at daylight with your baggage. I have explained to Wo-Sing," he added, turning towards Hertz, "what is required of him, and I have no doubt that he will do his best. That's all, Wo-Sing." The youth bowed and departed. "Now, does anything further occur to you?"

"Nodings, Rajah. We do our best, like Wo-Sing. Idt's nodings less dan a segret mission dat's entrusted to us, Yack und Harry, und idt's dangerous, too. Budt please heafen you'll show yourselves vortdy of de name of Englisch boys."

"Please heaven, we will, Rajah!" they answered heartily.
"I am sure you will," the Rajah rejoined. "We've all heard of that brush with the pirates. Now, Mr. Hertz, the Secret Societies are a new thing in Sarawak. Tell me what you have learned about them."

For an hour Hertz told stories of absorbing interest, for they all had the element of mystery, and they dealt with crimes ruthless as inexplicable. Even the Rajah was startled, used as he was to tales of blood and outrage.

"They have no idea of all this in Singapore," he said. "Murders are committed there often enough under mysterious circumstances. But if your report be true, Mr. Hertz, as I doubt not, the severity of the Dutch and Spaniards needs no excuse."

When Jack and Harry retired to their beds, well curtained to exclude mosquitoes, they could not sleep, tired as they were. The most eventful day of their lives had just ended—a day crammed with matter for reflection. But Hertz would not discuss the situation.

"Vait und see," was all he would say.

At 5 A.M. on the morrow he aroused his party—that is, he awoke Bounce. Jack and Harry did not need awakening.

At the landing-place they found Wo-Sing, and the two Malays provided by the Rajah, respectively named Paham and Gani. The latter acted as cook, the first was Jack and Harry's body-servant.

At six the expedition started in three sampans. The Dyaks took the lead, then followed the boat carrying food and goods, with Bounce and the Malay servants in charge; last came Boy's sampan, with Hertz, Jack, Harry, and Wo-sing.

The first halting place, as arranged, should have been Siniawan, a little Chinese town on the left-hand branch of the Sarawak river, at the foot of Sirambau mountain; but when they reached the creek previously explored by
Jack and Harry, Boy said he knew of a *batang* path, leading through a district where there were “plenty flowers,” which would cut off a corner and enable the travellers to reach Siniawan almost as soon as by river. A *batang* path is simply a line of treetrunks place end to end, supported on tressels when the ground is rough or swampy. Hertz decided to take it, however; as well face the inevitable at once. There are no other roads in Borneo, outside the Chinese settlements. He ordered Wo-Sing to proceed with the boats to Siniawan, and landed with Boy, Paham, another Malay, and Nyait with two of his Dyaks. Of course, Jack, Harry, and Bounce were of the party, which struck the *batangs* where a rude bridge—a single trunk forty feet long—spanned the creek. The landing-place was on the right-hand side, the road lay to the left, so the bridge had to be crossed at the very start.

“Now you are going to try a batang path!” laughed Hertz, squatting down and pulling off his boots.

Jack and Harry, seeing the difficulty of performing on the tight-rope with their feet encased in leather, followed Hertz’s example, as also did Bounce. The Dyaks shouldered their *tamboks*—baskets laden with provisions, etc.—and stepped along the narrow log lightly and easily. The Malays followed; their toes are equally prehensile; then came Bounce’s turn. He also was quite at home; his sailor’s training enabled him to cross with almost Dyak ease. Jack and Harry crossed with faltering, nervous steps, balancing themselves with their rifles, from which the caps had been removed to prevent accidents. Hertz brought up the rear; he experienced no unusual difficulty.

Right through the dense jungle the *batangs* lay—now twelve feet above the ground, now nine—six—three, now lying on the swampy soil. Long before a mile had been traversed the youths were walking on their bare feet
like the others, their socks worn to rags. Falls they had
innumerable. No looking out for possible game—no
orchid-seeking. Every nerve was at its fullest tension—
every muscle strained—every energy devoted to keeping
their feet on the slippery logs. With knitted brows, dizzy
brains, and eyes bent down, they shuffled along—
bathed in perspiration—behind the light-hearted and
lighter-heeled Malays and Dyaks, who, chewing penang
incessantly, bounded over the intervening blank spaces,
sprang up or down as the elevation of the next log might
demand, in a manner that would have astonished the
labouring orang putih (white men) behind, had the orang
putih dared to lift their eyes from the path to watch
them.

Bitten by virulent ants—luckily they did not encounter
the terrible sumut-api—with limbs bruised by the falls,
and feet cut—almost every fall meant a scratch or a gash
—the youths strove their utmost to keep in touch with
the Dyaks and Malays, for the honour of Old England;
but it was awful work.

"If mother could see us now she would certainly faint,"
Jack groaned. The next moment he lay at the bottom of
a bamboo clump. "I won't speak again," he muttered,
as he struggled out and climbed upon a log. "It isn't
safe."

"Not far, Tuans!" Boy shouted; and Harry echoed,
"Thank Heaven!"

Presently the batangs terminated in a swamp. The
Europeans pulled on their boots; Hertz produced two
straps and buckled them round his ankles over his
trousers.

"Dere vill be leeches here," he said warningly.

The youths took the hint, and tied the bottoms of their
trousers with string. Well was it for them that they did
so. Jack brushed no less than five of the horrid creatures
from his ankles at the first examination. But there was
no pain, though the punctures bled considerably. The bites, or rather the suction, was not even felt.

Higher ground now, and a better path. No batangs. Dyaks and Malays drew their parangs and made the path quite passable. It had been used a great deal at one time, but was now overgrown with jungle, through which the Dyak leaders cut and slashed their way. Presently Boy halted in a tiny, charming glade.

"Plenty flowers here, Tuans," he said.

Ah! that awful march was instantly forgotten when the Orchid Seekers glanced around!

The earth was carpeted with giant leaves so deep that they moved as noiselessly as the barefoot Dyaks, each leaf as large as an umbrella; the tree that bore them, by no means proportionate in size, stood opposite. The glade was not more than thirty feet across, surrounded by a wall of foliage so dense at a man's height that the eye could not penetrate a yard. Across the very middle lay a fallen trunk, its roots and its head alike invisible. Evidently, it had not lain there many months, for the innumerable creepers burst asunder by the crash still waved above it, green and flowering, though they had lost their support. The sunshine admitted to an impenetrable jungle by this accident had given an amazing impulse to vegetation, and revealed plants that would have been sought in vain under ordinary conditions amongst the crush of leaves.

"Oh, it's a garden!" Harry exclaimed. "Oh—oh—oh!—isn't that a Phalanopsis?"

And "Oh!" cried Jack, "just look at that Nepenthe! It would hold a quart of water!"

But the marvels they saw here demand a chapter for themselves.
CHAPTER VIII

WHAT IS AN ORCHID?

Hertz gave a mere glance right and left in the tiny glade, as the excited youths pointed out one treasure after another, and resumed his study of a grand Dendrobium high overhead.

He examined it with his field-glass from different points of view, without a word, but in growing excitement. Had any disinterested spectator been there to enjoy the humour of the scene he would have laughed. Everyone was staring upwards with intense gravity—the Dyaks at least as serious as any; for they had not a notion what to look for, and in a general way the savage always expects witchcraft when people do mysterious things.

At length Hertz spake to himself, or rather murmured, the murmur growing into a shout: "Idt ish—idt ish! Ach! Ach! Hi—Boy! Send von of de Dyaks oop dat tree! Tell him to t'row down a few of de flowers dere!"

The stout little Dyak did not like the commission after such extraordinary goings on; but his fellows laughed at him—they were not asked to go—and reluctantly he began to climb.

The creepers made it an easy task, giving both foot-hold and hauling ropes; but the tree was very high. After seeing him start, Hertz looked around. He offered no explanation of his excitement, and disregarded questions.
“Ja,” said he, “Phalaenopsis grandijlora, a fine shpecimen—dat’s ploonder, ash ve say. Und dat Nepente ish new, I oondertake—he’s ploonder, too. Ach! what’s dat? Lebe hoch!” He ran towards a trunk on which, just above the belt of undergrowth, a large green creeper twined like a snake; but at intervals on its body stood great bulbs as stout as a hen’s egg, and longer. Big leathery leaves sprang from the tips, and from the sides hung pendant garlands, the most singular in colouring, and almost the sweetest among flowers. The youths recognised them by description.

“Cœlogene pandurata,* isn’t it?” they burst out. “What a marvellous thing!”

A marvel it was indeed! Fancy a flower of most graceful shape, grass-green, with a long fiddle striped with black velvet hanging from the centre—a score of them, each three inches across, on either side of the spray, filling the air with perfume for yards round! They stood in admiration.

“We must be very careful in taking it off the trunk. I can imagine dad’s delight if we brought him all these yards of stem in fair condition!”

“I dink I nodt meddle midt dem now,” said Hertz, “nor dose Grammatophyllums oferhead. Ach! dere’s anoder noble Cœlogene dat I don’t regocknise—idt’s nodt in flower. I dink de yoongle round ish full of grand orchids, und oop above, oonless I mishtake. No von vill toush our garden! Ve vill leafe de flowers to grow, und pick dem at de last moment—dey travel more safe.”

“But we may gather the beautiful things, may we not?” Harry asked.

“Yoost ash you please.”

Harry plucked the Phalaenopsis blossoms; Jack the Cœlogene.

* Pandurata (Latin), like a fiddle—from the shape of the lip.
"Tuan!" Boy called out. They turned, and Hertz sprang upon the flower in the Malay’s hand. It was a lovely purple, tinged with magenta here, with crimson there, and again with delicate lilac, emitting a scent even stronger than the Coelogene’s, though not so sweet—an odour of rhubarb.

"Lebe hoch! Lebe hoch!" cried the Collector in great excitement, indulging in a little dance, and swinging his hook like an animated windmill. "Ach! I said idt—I said idt!" he panted, "budt no von believed me! Where Phalænopsis grandiflora grows, dere you may look for Dendrobium macrophyllum!* I said; und dey ask me vhy? I nodt know vhy, und nodt try to convince dem. Ach! in de yoongle ve feel dese dings—de man fit to collect orchids does!"

"Dendrobium macrophyllum isn’t new, I think?" Harry remarked.

"Nein—nein! Budt idt’s new in Borneo, or anyvheres oudtside de Philippines—nearly a t’ousand miles away. Gome—we’ll loonsh here! Dis ish a beginning indeed!"

They sat upon the fallen trunk after examining it carefully for snakes and insects. Boy produced food—rice boiled in a bamboo tube—turned it out, an almost solid cake, nicely flavoured, and very palatable, and set it before the orang putih.

Their seat was clothed with an exquisite Coelogene, very small, much like a lily-of-the-valley.

"You see," said Hertz, "dis tree vas killed by de creepers whish got hold of idt fery young. Adt de begin-ning of dis rainy season—if Saravak gan be said to have a rainy season—I dink idt fell, clearing dis liddle glade—dat ish, idt poolled down a lodt of shmall trees dat Dyaks passing down de river hafe garried avay for firevood. Ish idt not so, Boy?" he added, repeating the question.

* Macro-phyllum (Greek), large-leaved.
WHAT IS AN ORCHID?

Boy asked the Dyaks, who assented, laughing.

"By dis time negst year," Hertz resumed, "dere vill nodt be a trace of de agsident remain, egsept some mouldering frackments of our seat. Und de orchids vill be buried mit leaves again. Ve are in luck!"

Harry put down his "rice pudding," as Bounce called the food, and said, in a thoughtful tone, "There's some-thing I would like to ask you, Mr. Hertz, but I'm half ashamed."

"Vhy?" Hertz cried. "Idt's icknorance ve should be ashamed of! De only vay to escape idt ish ashking questions—of a book or a man, idt's all von! Oudt mit idt!"

"Well, you know, we were brought up among orchids. The first thing I recollect distinctly is the Odontoglossum house at dear old Draythorpe, when the crispums and Pescatoreis were out—not that my recollection is very distinct, after all," he added, laughing, "for it's associated somehow with a bleaching field."

"Very naturally, too," Jack cried. "In May and June, when we have the house full of crispums and Pescatoreis, it's just a white sheet of flower. I wish nobody ever bought them and spoiled the picture! And it's my private belief that the governor wishes the same thing in his heart. Fire away, Harry."

"Well, though we've lived among orchids all our lives, and know, I really think, a good deal about them, for youngsters, there's something I don't know, and I'm sure Jack doesn't know; and—well—I don't half believe that dad knows. I asked him once, and he looked—well—as you, Jack, used to do when Dr. Graham asked you a poser."

"Oh, I say, Harry!"

Doubt of his father's knowledge was downright heretical in Jack's opinion. Had Mr. Rider been asked if he had anything to learn about orchids, he probably would have
replied, "Almost everything." But Jack imagined that what his father did not know amounted to nothing.

"He did!" Harry went on. "And he began to say something, hesitated, pulled up short with an 'Eh?' began again, stopped, muttering 'That won't do, either!' At last he said, 'I must think, my boy, and I'll tell you some day.' But he never has."

"This is an awful mystery," Jack rejoined. "We are all dying to hear your tremendous question—even Bounce Fire away."

"I'll not say that, Master Jack," said Bounce cautiously. "This is what puzzles me, Mr. Hertz. Not less than five thousand species of orchids are known, I believe?"

"I dink nearer ten t'ousand," Hertz rejoined.

"Well, they show as much difference all round as roses and tulips, or cabbages and peas. Some live on the air alone, like this *Phalaenopsis*. Some won't flourish unless they have dead leaves about their roots; and some grow in the soil just as other plants do, like *Cypripediums*. They are found in almost every climate of the globe, from the arctic circle to the temperate zone of the antipodes. They have every colour—that's nothing, of course; but they have every sort of shape and every sort of habit. This *Coelogene pandurata* creeps and is evergreen; that yonder, which you think new, stands erect; others die down when resting. This has a round pseudo-bulb, that oval, that flask-shaped, that long and smooth and even as the branch of a tree, and that again has no pseudo-bulb at all. Look there!" he cried, pointing upwards; "the *Grammatophyllum* yonder would fill a wheelbarrow—and here the lovely little *Coelogenes* we're crushing as we sit are not half the size of a daisy. Some flower from the bottom of the bulb, some from the side, some from the top, and some from the axils of the leaves. They bloom singly, in doublets, in sprays, or in close masses. The
flower may be eight inches across, like some of the
*Cattleyas*, or it may be discernible only with a microscope.
It has a great broad lip, or it has none visible. The
inflorescence consists of six parts, or five, or three—I mean
the sepals and petals, of course. One has tails eight
inches long on each side—one has a single tail a foot long
in the middle; but ninety-nine in a hundred have no tail
whatever. In short, Mr. Hertz, as I said, these ten
thousand species differ as much among themselves as a
rose differs from a tulip. But they are all orchids! And
the question I ask is, What *is* an orchid?"

"Dear me!" Jack muttered, thoughtfully.

"Goodt boy!" cried Hertz. "I don’t remember dat I
vas efer ashked dat question pefore. Misder Rider gould
noldt answer idt adt vonce, eh? *Ach!* I don’t vonder;
I’m noldt surprised adt all. He is a pragtical botanist,
und he *feels* de definition of an orchid; budt a man who
has nefer dinked to pudad idt into vordts would be de more
puzzled de more he knew. Yoost so fast ash he dinks of
a rule he remembers de egspception. Misder Rider ish a
busy man, und I dink he he has noldt vorked idt oudt yet.
Vell, Harry, if you gan oondershtand plain Greek, I
would tell you dat orchids are *petaloid monocotyledons*, mit
irregular *perianth* und inferior ovary, *gynandrous.*"

"Avast!" cried Jack, lifting up his hands, while
Bounce muttered:

"Malay’s A B C to that lingo!"

"Or you may take idt," Hertz proceeded gravely, "dat
orchids are a family of *monocotyledonous phanerogams*, mit
albuminous seeds und an undivided embryo."

"I won’t take that either, please," Jack interrupted.
"Orchids aren’t all Greek! We have a good many honest
English species. Do stick to those, Mr. Hertz, and tell us
about them in their native tongue."

"Dat gannot be, my boy," said the Collector, laughing
good-naturedly. "When de Englisch language vas formed people did nodt dink idt necessary to invent vordts dat vould describe a botanical order."

"Did they when the Greek was formed?" Harry asked.

"Ach!—no. Budt de Greeks vere a great people—a people so great dat de more ve learn de more ve are—are—vhat ish dat for a vordt? Ach! erstaunished adt deir—deir brain-power—deir intelligence. Bear in mind alvays, boys, dere ish von test of an icknorant fellow dat vill nefer deceife you! If you hear anybody shpeaking lightly of de ancient Greeks, be sure he knows nodings vort' knowing! Idt's moosh ash if a man shneer adt de sunshine—you know he must be blind!"

They were rather dumbfoundered by this proposition—Jack especially—and they kept silence. Hertz resumed:

"Idt ish certain dat de Greeks had no ogcasion to define orchids any more ash elecric-telegraphs; budt dey invented a language so perfect dat idt vould serve efery purpose to which a language gan be turned—yoost ash you buy a box of fine tools, not dinking vhat use you pudt dem to. Budt vhen need gomes—vhen you vant to mend or make somedings—you hafe eferydings you vant. Idt ish dere—in de box! I gan't describe efen Englisch plants in Englisch, Yack, but I dink I gan answer your brodher's question roughley—roughley." He plucked a flower of the *Phalænopsis*. "You see dis knobbed proyecion shtanding in de middle?"

"The column? Yes."

"Dere lies de segret of de orchid!"

"Well I never!" muttered Bounce, who had been staring at the Collector with incredulity marked in every wrinkle of his face.

"Dere idt lies! By gareful dissection oonder de microscope ve find dat idt ish composed of de shtamens und shtyle, which all oder plants hafe; budt here dey are con-
He plucked a flower of the Phalœnopsis.
solidated into a single mass, holding de pollen grains adt de tip—see!—und bearing de shtigma oonderneath—here idt ish! You oondershtand dese vordts? I vill pudt idt ash plain ash I gan. An orchid ish a flower dat consists of t'ree sepals and t'ree petals, mit de organs of reproduction—separate in oder plants—fused togedder. All de differences you hafe shpeak of, Harry, are nodings—oonder de micsroscope dey disappear. Efery orchid of dose ten t'ousand shpecies has de same component parts, dough so modified or transformed ash to be invisible to de naked eye. Dere lies de marvel und delight—whe we take de flower to pieces! I show you dat some day; budt idt's time ve go."

All rose. The Dyaks, who had been sitting on their "tail-mats," with their arms round their knees, grinning—not stupidly nor offensively—at the unintelligible talk of the orang putih, gained their feet in one movement. The Malays repacked the tamboks and Shouldered them. The Dyak chief took the lead, and in single file the little party resumed their march. But Hertz paused a moment. "Oondershtand, Harry," he said, "de definition I gife you ish nodt enough for a botanist. Egseptions und—ach!—amplifications should be made. Budt idt's quite enough for unscientific persons."

Bounce trudged along in great perplexity. He had immense respect for the "skipper," but it was sorely tried on this occasion. At length, when a favourable opportunity offered, he could contain himself no longer, and approaching Hertz, he said, in a low and cautious tone, afraid that the others would overhear: "'Scuse me, skipper, but you never was more mistaken in your life about them theer Greeks. I saw a deal of 'em in the Levant, an' I reck'n they're the dirtiest scamps—aboard ship, anyhow—as you'll find in the Medi-terranean. I'll take me hafidavy on it. As for their
lingo—well—I don't understand it meself, an' I reck'n that a marcy. I'll say no more than that. A nod's as good as a wink to a blind 'oss."

Hertz kept his gravity. "You're quite right, Bounce," he said. "I vas shpeaking of deir faders who are dead."

The sailor sacrificed his quid to make the amende.

"Oh, well, in that case, skipper," he replied apologetically, "I begs your pardon. But," sinking his voice to a whisper, "ain't it shocking to think as the young uns ha' turned out so badly?"

A reflection which has shocked greater men than Bounce.
CHAPTER IX.

HARRY OVERHEARS AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION.

The Orchid Seekers reached Siniawan very tired indeed. Soon after leaving the lovely little glade where the Collector replied to Harry's question, "What is an orchid?" they struck another batang path, or rather a continuation of the first, the result being exhaustion.

Even Bounce's iron sinews felt the strain. Indeed, few exercises are more trying; every muscle—in feet, legs, back, neck, and arms—is employed in the constant effort to maintain the balance. Stiff, tired, bruised, and sore, the travellers welcomed the little Chinese town as a haven of rest indeed.

Wo-Sing sat in his boat under a kajong mat at the Siniawan landing place, keeping watch over the goods entrusted to his care. As the Dyak leaders appeared on the bank opposite the town, he ordered the sampans across to transport the wearied party.

A notched log lay on the mud on the bank of the stream, with one end in the water—the usual makeshift pier; much better than none, however. Dyaks and Malays climbed down it, hanging on by their prehensile toes, and took their places in the boats. Bounce followed, groaning and grumbling, for which he now had a sufficient excuse.

"It ain't much of a ship," he muttered, as he settled down, "an' it's a mighty poor specimen of a hocean, but
it’s water anyhow, and it does my eyes good to see it. Reefing topsails in a gale o’ wind’s nothing to this ’ere tree-skippin’!

Harry came next, feebly clinging. Boy rose up in the sampan to aid him, remarking:

“Mud deep, Tuans.”

Jack was speedily in a position to vouch for the truth of the Malay’s warning. In the pride of his heart disdaining assistance, his shaky legs gave way—he slipped off the log and fell in the mire up to his waist. There he stuck, as fast as a stray snag. Hertz and Boy rescued the animate “jetsam” and deposited it in the boat, woe-begone and caked with slime, but plucky still.

“It’ll rub off when it’s dry,” the unlucky one muttered, surveying his nether limbs with a look that plainly expressed his feelings. “It doesn’t matter, nothing matters; nothing ever will matter any more.”

But Boy produced a knife and scraped away the greater part of the mud, while the little flotilla took a diagonal course to the opposite landing place.

“What,” cried Bounce, as the leading sampan stopped; “you don’t mean to say as we’ve reached port? The v’yage ain’t over yet, surelie?”

“This is Siniawan, sir,” Wo-Sing said, demurely. “Boats can’t go up Sirambau stream.”

“Nor down, I dink; only corks,” Hertz interjected.

Bounce consigned the Chinese town to the tender mercies of a gale of wind, and scrambled ashore. The goods were landed, and the sampans drawn out of the water. They would not be required until the Orchid Seekers should change their headquarters from Sirambau to Bau, or elsewhere, as the search for the famous “blue” orchid demanded.

Wo-Sing had foreseen that the Europeans would be unable to travel further that day, and was ready with a suggestion, not entirely disinterested, as it turned out.
"I think, sir," he said, addressing Hertz, "that we shall find Wang-lo here. He lives at Bau, but he has a shop at Siniawan and comes often. He is a very rich man, and," sinking his voice to a whisper, "a chief of the Kunsi. If we ask him to lodge us to-night, he will not be so likely to watch us to-morrow and after. He will see what you do in Sarawak with his own eyes, and perhaps be content."

"Good! Capital!" Hertz exclaimed. "Go to his house. Ask him to take us in mit de baggage. We vill pay his sharge, so he hafe no egscuse. A Shinaman is always ready to make a liddle profit."

But this did not seem to suit Wo-Sing. He hesitated, confused.

"I think, sir, if Buyong goes, it will be better," he faltered. "Wang-lo knows me, and may refuse."

Hertz fixed his keen blue eyes on Wo-Sing's face. Fery vell. Send Buyong. Where vill you pass de night?

Wo-Sing looked up and smiled. "As your servant, sir, I shall be able to get into Wang-lo's house; he will not see me."

Hertz looked thoughtful, but asked for no explanation. Perhaps he guessed something of the truth. Wo-Sing had been very eager to start from Kuching, and eagerness about anything is foreign to the Chinese character. Even their money-making is methodical.

Wang-lo was at home, and quite willing to turn his house into a "travellers' rest" for the time. Indeed, it may be taken for granted that he would have been perfectly ready to do anything asked of him, if able—at a price.

A big, burly Celestial, clad in the usual blue trousers, and a jacket that revealed a vast expanse of naked yellow chest; with heavy, impassive, pockmarked features—no index whatever to his character—pig's eyes, and pendent pigtail.
He greeted the travellers civilly enough, and conducted them to a large bare room—bamboo walls and floor, of course. A coolie brought water, and mats, on which Jack and Harry promptly flung themselves down. Wo-Sing entered, carrying on his shoulder a package, which concealed his face. He also lay down, turning his face to the wall, until Wang-lo disappeared, when he arose to assist Gani, the Malay cook, to prepare food.

Nyait and his tribesmen went on to Sirambau, promising to return early in the morning with sufficient force to carry the whole of the goods up the mountain to the Dyak "house," whence, for the present, Hertz intended to prosecute the search.

Scarcely a glance had the youthful adventurers bestowed upon the town. A rather uninteresting place, inhabited almost solely by Chinese traders and gardeners. The former carried on a considerable commerce with the Dyaks and the Chinese gold-workers and antimony miners; the latter supplied their fellow countrymen with vegetables and fruit. The houses were of bamboo, thatched with palm-leaves chiefly, materials the most easily procured.

That night even the mosquitoes were powerless to interfere with their rest, though both Jack and Harry had arranged their mosquito-nets anything but carefully. The experienced Collector was more particular. But there might not have been a thirsty mosquito in the neighbourhood, and Wang-lo's hard mats might have been luxurious couches stuffed with swansdown, so soundly did the travellers slumber. When Harry awoke he found the sun well up, and the room unoccupied save by himself and Jack, who was snoring peacefully. Harry seized his brother's shoulder to shake it, but drew back his hand, listening intently.

Boisterous laughter in the next room!—with only a wall of beaten-out bamboo intervening. Then an un-
mistakable feminine giggle! The first explosive laugh must have been emitted by Wo-Sing. But the giggle!

"Why have you come, Wo-Sing? Why are you here? If father catches you, he——"

Another giggle, smothered this time.

The voice was soft—a woman's; and, wonder of wonders, speaking excellent English. So astonished was Harry that he did what under other circumstances he would have blushed to think of, placed his ear against the bamboo partition and listened.

"I have come to see you, Li-dah. What do you think? Ha, ha, ha!—Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Te-he! Te-he! Te-he!"

"When did you come from Bau, Li-dah?"

"When did you come from Kuching?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Te-he! Te-he!"

"What softs!" murmured the listener. A rustling of silk followed, then more giggling—stifled, and explosive laughs. Could the gentleman be embracing the lady? No crack being handy, Harry could not tell.

"Li-dah, when did you come from Bau?" Wo-Sing repeated.

"Last week. When did you come?"

"Last night."

"Why did Wang-lo come?" Wo-Sing asked. "Has the Kunsi many meetings?"

"The council meets every week."

"Have strangers come from Singapore?"

"I have heard so. I have not seen them."

"Ah! is your father chief now?"

"Yes; Wang-lo is chief of the Kunsi."

"So I heard in Kuching. I heard that he was very busy—buying arms and boats."

"Why, who told you?"

"A Dyak bird. Ha, ha!—Ha, ha, ha!"
"Te-he! Te-he!"

Harry listened intently. He had caught the drift of Wo-Sing's questions. Evidently the Rajah's confidence in his servant was not misplaced. Wo-Sing had certainly lost no time in attempting to get information of the doings of the suspected Kunsi. But he was also very cautious, and pursued the subject no further, not desiring to arouse suspicion. A pause followed the laughter, then Wo-Sing spake again, in a very different tone. Very seriously he asked what certainly was a very serious question.

"When will you marry me, Li-dah?"

Harry heard a half-sob; but it was immediately followed by a giggle.

"I shall never marry, Wo-Sing."

"I hear you are going to marry Inchi Ch'en. I won't believe that."

Another pause. A rustle. Then, very faintly:

"Four months ago father said I was to marry Inchi Ch'en. I said I would die. He said 'Die then.' I thought I would run away. But no. For where could I run? To Kuching? The Rajah is just; he would send me back to Bau. Then they quarrelled—father and Inchi Ch'en, and so I escaped. But they will soon be friends again—they have business."

"And then, Li-dah?" Wo-Sing's voice was pathetic enough now, and Harry knew that he was deeply, dismally in love with his companion.

"I shall die."

"No! I shall be at Sirambau, Bau, or Bidi a long time. When Wang-lo and Inchi Ch'en are friends—when Inchi Ch'en claims his wife, you run to me."

"To you? Te-he! Te-he! What for should I run to you?"

"To marry me instead of Inchi Ch'en. You hate him. You don't hate me."
AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION.

"Te he! Te he! I marry you?—you? Oh, Wo-Sing, I should laugh at you every day."

"That I would like. Oh, Li-dah, do you remember when we were little—when we learnt English out of the same book at the Mission School?—when we were good boy and good girl? Ah, I never shall forget. You said you would marry me then, some day. I shall always think of that. When I heard of Inchi Ch'en I thought of it, and I knew you would not marry him. When will you marry me, Li-dah?"

Harry heard no more. He suddenly remembered that he was playing the part of Paul Pry.

"Jack!" he cried, "wake up! It's eight o'clock, and we're left behind, I believe."

Jack grunted, rolled over, and opened his eyes.

"Eh! what do you say?"

"Mr. Hertz has gone; I don't know where. Get up."

Jack sprang up, stretching his arms high over his head and yawning. "Oh, dear," he groaned, "I'm as stiff as a poker."

"Here Wo-Sing entered, very subdued, and with a suspicious moisture in his eyes.

"Mr. Hertz and Mr. Bounce have gone to see the Dyaks start with the loads," he said. "Mr. Hertz will come back soon. Gani is getting your breakfast."

Presently Gani entered with a chicken and rice, followed by Wang-lo. The big chief of the Kunsi started and frowned when he saw Wo-Sing, but did not address him. Wo-Sing bowed and stood back, meeting his host's malevolent glances with steady, fearless gaze. Wang-lo spoke a few words of greeting and inquiry, which Wo-Sing interpreted, and left the room. Not a word did he utter to the youth, who Harry now knew was his daughter's lover. Harry ate his breakfast almost in silence, and walked out on the verandah to look round.
A pretty girl tripped by, charmingly dressed as a Malay lady of position in a gold-embroidered silk jacket with a gold lace edging, and silk *sarong* worked with gold. But she was unlike the Malay maidens, whose attire is often dirty, in other respects. Her hair, lustrous as satin, was coiled close to her head in neat plaits; her face, ivory white, but not in the least ghastly, shone with health and good spirits. Her teeth were pearly; Malay girls think it becoming to stain them black with *sinka*, or burnt cocoanut oil, and they are often iridescent with *penang* juice, which also colours their lips brick-red. Beautiful the Chinese maiden was not, as we understand the term—each race has its own standard; her face was too broad and too flat, her eyes too small and oblique. But she was decidedly good-looking, and very pleasing in her rich dress.

"Good morning, sir," she said, showing all her pearly teeth in a rather broad smile. Then, with a smothered "Te-he!" she vanished through an adjacent doorway.

Harry was so taken aback by her appearance that he omitted to return her greeting.

Hertz suddenly appeared beneath the verandah with Bounce and Paham.

"Vhere's Yack?" he cried. "Nodt awake yet? Shtir him oop, und tell him to come along mit Wo-Sing. Dere's a long climb before you dat you von't like in de hot sun adt noon."

Harry delivered the message and got his gun. Then the party left the house of the big Celestial, into whose care the boats had been given until required.

Wo-Sing seemed in very low spirits—turned round several times, and looked back furtively. Harry could not resist the temptation to do likewise. The Chinese beauty stood on the verandah, gazing after them. Presently Hertz looked back—the action appeared to be contagious. Harry stole a glance at the Collector's face.
"Good morning, sir," she said, showing all her pearly teeth in a rather broad smile.

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Hertz was smiling; an odd expression in his eyes, an amused twinkle. He, in his turn, glanced at Wo-Sing, walking along with eyes cast down, quite unconscious that two of his companions had discovered his secret. Then Hertz glanced at Harry and saw that his knowledge was shared by that young gentleman.

"Ach!" he said, "hooman nature in Borneo is moosh like hooman nature elsevhere."

Wo-Sing looked up quickly, but nobody was regarding him. The Collector appeared to be deeply interested in a lofty tapong tree. Harry was looking straight ahead at Sirambau, which from this point of view appeared to be a single peak, seventeen hundred feet high. All the land round Siniawan had been cleared, and afforded no shelter from the scorching sun; but in front and to right and left the jungle extended up the mountain slope in all shades of green; here bright, where a grove of palms marked the site of a Dyak village more than a thousand feet above the level of the sea; there Dyak clearings, almost brown.

The path, if such it may be called, lay in the bed of a mountain torrent—now dry—and must every now and then, after a heavy shower, have been impassable. It was roughly paved with stones, which, as the ascent became steeper, changed to rude steps, mostly very high, and requiring considerable exertion to climb.

These soon changed to notched trunks of trees leading from rocky platform to rocky platform. Very difficult ladders the youths found them! There were no rungs to grasp hand over hand; the trunk had to be clasped with the arms, just as the bears at the Zoo climb their poles. Lean the pole a little out of the perpendicular, remove the steps and replace them with notches, and you have it!

Bounce's odd remarks kept the party in continual good humour.

"I say, Wo-Sing," he shouted, at the top of the third pole, "how far d'ye make it to the mast-head, now?"
Wo-Sing did not know, and said so, exploding of course. 
"Ask Paham," Bounce went on.
But Paham did not know. Neither did Gani. They came from a distant station. Boy and the other Malays, with the Dyaks, were at the village by this time.
Bounce chewed his quid in silence for a moment, then sang out:
"When you gets to the mast-head, just you tell them ther Dyaks to rig this 'ere ship. It'll take some rope, I'll allow, but rope's cheap enough hereabouts. You've only got to go into the jungle an' cut it, any length as you wants"—he alluded to the useful rattan—"an' it'll make the craft look a lot more ship-shape. Tell 'em as they can't expect a British sailor to visit 'em if he has to swarm up bare poles. I didn't come this way last time," he added, turning to Hertz. "We stuck to the water all the way to Bow; an' I wish we'd done it now. We was only capsized four times, if I 'members right."

But if the path was laborious, the scenery made ample compensation. On either side grew lofty fruit trees—duriens ten feet in circumference and a hundred and thirty feet high, crowded as closely as trees in the jungle. Mangusteins, lancets, all the varieties the youths had observed in the Chinaman's deserted garden, and many others, intermingled with glorious tree-ferns spreading their great fronds in every direction, lianas, climbing rattans, and thickets of bamboos fifty feet high.

Every now and again the travellers halted at a platform where the Dyaks had placed rude benches. Here were to be obtained rest and refreshment;—tiny rills of water splashed and trickled from bamboo tubes, also the handiwork of the Dyaks, who have led the little streams from their natural courses to the side of the rocky path. From some of these resting places the views of the surrounding country, spread out like a panorama below, were magnificent.
The Path up Sirambau.
AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION. 105

But Hertz at least had no eye for scenery. His gaze wandered incessantly from the boughs overhead to the carpet of verdure beneath their feet, and from side to side, but through a break in the foliage he never looked. At each few steps he paused, adjusting the ready field-glass to peer upwards, stooping to gather a flower or a leaf, which was consigned to the wooden box—padded with felt to exclude the sun—across his shoulders, or thrown aside after examination. All his leisure hours henceforth were devoted to the study, dissection, and classification of plants which could not be carried home. It was a real course of botany which the young men went through, night after night, in the weeks that followed, and they profited by it all their lives long.

Scientific lectures have rarely been delivered in such scenes—makeshift hut in the jungle, natural cave, Dyak "house" lighted by a candle stuck in a bottle; professor and students squatted on the floor of loose sticks, surrounded by a crowd of naked Dyaks squatting in ranks, chewing *penang* silently in awe!

The Malays were not so impressed. More familiar with white men, and sustained by the pride of their Moslem creed, they would not admit that any proceedings of a Christian were above their intelligence. Yet they were often uneasy, and in their desire to hide the feeling they even disregarded the rules of politeness—singing extracts from the Koran as they lay upon their backs, so loud sometimes that Boy was sent to bid them hold their tongues.

For a botanist, or even for an unscientific lover of flowers, that path up Siramban seemed to traverse a garden of enchantment. The youths saw aromatic gardenias, masses of white blossom on bushes six feet high; rhododendrons—pink, crimson, scarlet, yellow, blood-colour; *Nepenthes*—climbing "pitcher" plants, here white with rosy pink spots, of the shape of a claret jug
and as large; there purple, with pink fluted mouth and great green lid, some capable of holding two quarts of liquid; here again red—a long tube with green base and frilled mouth of coral!

"Ploonder—all ploonder; budt nodt now," Hertz remarked. "Ve gone back dis vay; if nodt ve gone again. Some day I dissect a 'pitcher.'"

"I say, skipper," Bounce interjected, "is it a fact as the monkeys drinks out o' them great jugs?"

"May be. I nefer saw him. Keep a sharp look-out, Bounce, und tell me w hen you gatch him doing idt."

Soon afterwards, Hertz being alone, Wo-Sing approached him and whispered:

"At Wang-lo's house, sir, I heard the Kunsi is gathering boats and arms. I do not know why."

"Ach!" was the reply, "ve go to Bau und see ash soon ash possible."

Upwards, still upwards, past a Dyak village, just showing through a grove of palms, which Wo-Sing said must be Bombok, and on, along a fairly level path, winding among huge rocks, to Sirambau, hiding in its palm groves, buried from the world on the side of a mountain. Meta, the orang kaya, with his son Nyait, came to meet them and to conduct them to the principal "house"—a long building, indeed, some four hundred feet from end to end, erected on piles twenty feet high, and comprising an outer and inner verandah—the first open to the sky—and the sleeping apartments under the roof. This house was connected with the next by a bamboo platform or bridge.

Sirambau is unlike most Dyak villages, invariably called "houses," in that it comprises more than one building. Some Dyak "houses" are a thousand feet long, the dwelling place of the entire clan. The orang kaya's apartment is always in the middle; to right and
left range the sleeping quarters of the villagers, with
their wives and children, behind the inner verandah.

Meta shook hands all round, and made a little flowery
speech of welcome, interpreted by Boy. Hertz replied,
and the party ascended a notched log to the outer
verandah. Meta conducted them to the inner verandah,
where great preparations for a feast were going on.
Numerous ladies of various ages, in short petticoat and a
vast quantity of brass wire, crowded round, smiling and
laughing. The girls were not in the least shy, which is
more than can be said for Jack and Harry. Over the din
rang Bounce's cheery voice; he was superintending the
ascent of the baggage from the ground to the verandah
with many cries of:

"Belay there, my lass! Now my little dears, stand
aside, if you please! Bear a hand, you in the blue petti-
coat an' shell necklace! That's right, me hearties! Pull
away!"

Of course the girls did not understand a word the old
salt said. But judging from their screams of laughter
and rushes to and fro, their ignorance of English made
his cheery exclamations all the more funny. An orang
putih* of Bounce's kind did not visit Sirambau every day.

* White man.
CHAPTER X.

A DYAK FEAST.

The baggage safely stowed away, Hertz and the youths, attended by Bounce, Wo-Sing, Boy, and Nyait, and followed by a crowd of curious Dyaks, left the inner verandah of Meta's house to look round, with no more definite object in view than to escape the awful din.

But as Bounce, who had previously visited Sirambau, seemed anxious that the youths should inspect the "head house," Boy was requested to interpret the desire to Nyait, who promptly led the way, along a platform attached to the outer verandah, to a circular building with a sharp conical roof, raised on high posts. Within, it was so dark that at first the youths could see nothing, but Nyait lifted a portion of the palm-leaf thatch, propping it up with a stick.

A rough divan ran round the apartment against the wall, which was decorated with rude carvings interspersed with earthenware plates in tiny rattan baskets. From the centre of the roof depended a something which at the first glance the youths imagined to be a kind of chandelier. A second look, however, dispelled the illusion.

"Why, they're human heads!" Harry whispered.

"Did you no dt egspet to see dem?" Hertz asked.

"Well, yes—something of the kind; but not strung up like this, and not so many."
Jack counted them, thirty-three in all, hanging to a hoop in a circle. In the eye-sockets of some, cowry shells gleamed, whilst tufts of dead grass protruded from the ears! It was not a pleasant sight.

"Oh, let us get out of this!" cried Harry.

"Wait a minute. Boy, ask Nyait where they got them."

Boy put the question, or rather interpreted Jack's desire: "The young lord who eats at the Rajah's table desires to know where you got those heads."

Proudly Nyait answered. Boy interpreted.

"They heads of enemies in battle killed, Tuans."

"What enemies?"

"The young lord who sleeps in the Rajah's bed desires to know whose heads they be?"

Nyait answered.

"He say they heads of Dyaks be; some orang kina [Chinamen]; some Pakatan; some Kayan."

Boy added a little information on his own account.

"Very old, Tuans," he said slyly. "Nyait not know whose heads. Kill before he born." Then, with a comical smile and roguish glance at the ghastly chandelier, "I two mias see."

Hertz laughed. "Dere ish adulteration efen in heads, I dink."

"It's a pity they're not all orang utans," said Harry. "Come away, please, now. This isn't precisely the appetiser I would choose before dinner."

Out in the open air Jack asked Boy the use of the divan.

"Young men sleep in pangeran house," was the reply.

The Collector supplemented the information. "Adt von time the pangeran, or 'head-house,' vas alvays oc- cuped by de unmarried men adt night. In de event of an attack dey vere all togedder, mit no shtragglers to cut off,
Budt de custom has fallen into disuse since Rajah Brooke made dings more secure, und, ash you see, de *pangeran* house has fallen into disrepair."

"They've got some werry tall bees' nests here, skipper," said Bounce. "I've seen 'em, but I don't just remember wheer. Perhaps you'll ask Boy to ask Night to show the way."

Hertz did so. Boy at once obeyed.

"The lords who shake the Rajah's hand desire to see your bees' nests."

Nyait grinned, and stepped briskly along a jungle path, followed by the crowd, in single file, of course.

Presently our adventurers found themselves at the foot of a *tapong* tree, whose straight stem, crowned with green foliage, rose probably a hundred feet without a branch.

"Here bees' nests, *Tuans*," said Boy, pointing to the top of the trunk.

"Gracious!" cried Jack, throwing back his head, "how do they find them? I can see nothing. And how do they get at them?"

Hertz handed the youth his field-glass, which, like a prudent collector, he was rarely or never without. With its aid Jack made out a discoloration on the trunk, just below the crown. It was not much less than a hundred feet from the ground, and almost invisible to the untrained, unassisted eye.

"I see it!" Jack cried, handing the glass to Harry. "But how on earth do the Dyaks get up? They haven't wings."

Hertz called his attention to several small holes, one above the other, extending up the tree as far as the eye could follow them.

"De Dyaks make a ladder," he said. "Dey plant a big bamboo here. See!—dere ish a bit of idt left. Den dey bore a hole in de tree und fix a rung—von end tied to de
bamboo. Above dat dey put anoder rung, und vhen dey get to de top of de bamboo dey yoost tie anoder bamboo on dat, und so on to de summit, or vherefer de hive ish."

"It must be very dangerous work," Harry remarked. "Ja! Budt de Dyaks are used to idt. Dey get shtung badly often, budt I dink dey seldom fall."

Bounce next suggested a visit to an edible birds’-nest cave, in the possession of which the Sirambaus were rich. But Nyait seemed unwilling to guide them. Finally, he said his father would be awaiting his visitors, so the tourists returned to the orang kayas’s house. Here the entire clan had gathered, with a number of chiefs and warriors from adjacent "houses." Such a handshaking as immediately ensued the young travellers had never experienced.

Meta, a tall old man, that is, tall for a Dyak, with very prominent cheekbones, flat and scarcely visible nose, and an immense mouth, filled with black, sharp-pointed teeth, with a gap here and there, was truly grand! He wore a hussar jacket—nobody knows where he got it!—with extra trimming in the shape of gold lace stitched on anywhere, anyhow. Over this were at least a dozen necklaces—of beads and brass wire and tiger-cat’s teeth. On his head was a fantastic head-dress of bark and beads. Round his loins the chowat. His yellow skinny legs were naked, except for a number of brass rings.

This being a festive occasion some of the Dyaks wore the jacket and trousers, with the Malay sarong. A few ladies also had put on a jacket. All wore necklaces of rings and beads, armlets of rings and white shell. One lady’s dress was very remarkable. She was a priestess. On her head was a red cloth topped with a cylindrical cap, embroidered with black, white, and red beads. From her waist depended a short petticoat fringed with hundreds of little bells; round her neck were six strings of white, red, and
black beads; over her shoulder a baldrick of teeth, hawk bells, and beads. A very imposing personage indeed!—in two senses probably.

In the pride of his heart, or perhaps because it was the custom, Meta had sent for the heads from the pangeran house and piled them up in a heap with a miscellaneous collection of spears, parangs, sacred jars, charms, gongs, &c., just before our adventurers' noses!

But the feast! Neither Jack nor Harry could remember what he ate, or rather tried to eat, but the menu comprised venison, fowls roasted with their feathers on, bananas, sugar-cane, rice and pickles, stale fish, decayed fruit, eggs black with age, and a variety of Dyak dainties, unpleasant to read about—more so to contemplate and smell. Indeed the smell was terrible!

"Can't we go?" Harry whispered after an hour of suffering, his face very pale. "I never felt so sick in my life."

"Nodt mit'out giving offence," Hertz answered; and the victim of Dyak hospitality sat the feast out to the bitter end.

Presently the fragments of food remaining were cleared away, and a number of huge bathing jars, filled with arrack, made their appearance.

Then Meta rose to his feet and made a speech.

"He some forget," said Boy, who sat behind the Collector to interpret.

The "some" or something was soon apparent. Nyait disappeared, returning with a couple of live fowls. These he shook over the heads of the orang putih, in a fashion which would have been absurd had it been less unpleasant. Holding the fowls by the legs, he bumped their dangling heads against each of the guests' in succession.

"I hope he ish nodt going to cut deir t'roats so," said Hertz, looking up apprehensively.

"Here, I say, Nyait!" said Jack, in alarm,
Nyait grinned, and took the unlucky fowls away. The "something" forgotten was over. Now the proceedings became lively indeed! The Dyaks seized cups, cans, bottles, cocoanut shells, any article that would contain liquor, and made an onslaught on the bathing jars.

"I'm not going to drink that stuff!" said Harry.

"What is it, Mr. Hertz?"

"Probably arrack made from rice, or de fruit of de tampui tree or de gomuti palm. You besser yoost taste idt if Meta ashks you."

The orang kaya brought a jar with his own hands almost immediately.

Hertz wet his lips and passed the jar to Jack, whilst the Dyaks yelled with delight. Jack swallowed a mouthful, looking as pleasant as he could, and passed the jar to Harry.

"What idt taste like?" Hertz asked.

"Sour cocoanut milk and old cheese sweetened with sugar at first," Jack answered. "But it's as hot in the mouth as cayenne. I can't drink any more of it."

"Ugh!" cried Harry, "I prefer cod-liver oil. Is it intoxicating?"

"Yait und see," said Hertz, oracularly.

As the arrack got into their heads the Dyaks became very uproarious. They laughed, yelled, and shrieked to an accompaniment of gongs and drums furiously beaten—the noise was deafening! A space was cleared and a board laid on the bamboo floor. Then Nyait, armed with spear and parang, and protected by a huge shield decorated with human hair, sprang upon the board. Another Dyak, similarly armed, followed, and the two warriors faced each other.

"Show Dyaks fight," said Boy.

First the warriors squatted, one at each end of the board, glaring at one another like two spiteful cats. Then they sprang up simultaneously, advancing and
retreating along the board, cutting and guarding to slow time. Presently the gongs and drums beat a quicker measure. The combatants danced, hopped, stooped under shelter of their shields, bounded sideways, backwards, forwards, cutting and slashing at each other all the time. After a few minutes of this, Nyait retreated to his end of the board, covering his body with his shield, and working his hands as if to sharpen something with a knife.


The spikes were invisible, but Nyait evidently intended them to be imagined, for he pretended to place something in the path, and immediately retreated, followed by his antagonist. This gentleman also was able to imagine the spikes. Whilst rushing eagerly forward he suddenly stopped with a howl of pain, and lifted up one leg.

"He's trodden on an invisible spike!" Jack cried, in great glee. "He's lame, and the fight will soon be over!"

Nyait heard the howl, stopped, listened, and dashed back. A three-legged combat ensued, extraordinarily fierce while it lasted. Nyait's foe hopped about on his sound leg, wielding his *parang* as vigorously as ever. But alas! Nyait had two legs, therefore his adversary was at a great disadvantage. However, seeing that the combat took place exactly where the *orang kaya*’s son had placed the invisible spikes, it was rather a mystery how that doughty warrior avoided them.

After a desperate struggle, all in time with the music, the lame warrior fell, and Nyait promptly cut off his head. This had to be imagined. What Nyait really did was to pull off the dead man's head-dress, and run away with it.

"Back soon," said Boy.

Nyait returned, ran to the dead man, and examined
his face attentively. He ought, of course, to have looked at the head-dress in his hand. A slip there, somehow.

"Brother kill," explained Boy.

Even so. Nyait started back with a gesture of horror, wept floods of tears, wailed, and lifted his hands above his head in an agony of remorse.

"Goodt! Bravo!" Hertz cried.

"Encore!" yelled Jack.

It was really capitably done, and needed no explanation from the Malay. But what followed sent the orang putih into fits of laughter. Nyait, having spat twice into the head-dress, with measured step again drew near the body, and clapped the cap on its head.

"Put head on, Tuans," said Boy.

Then the orang kaya's son advanced and retired several times, at each approach shaking one or other of the dead man's limbs. Suddenly the slain sprang up as lively as ever, and the encounter terminated with a frantic dance that left the performers exhausted and streaming with perspiration.

Other dances followed, all duly explained by Boy—deer dances, mias, alligator, and various others, but they did not equal Nyait's.

The Dyaks after a time grew comparatively quiet, because exhausted; which was lucky, for the bowl still circulated freely among them. These people seldom drink, but when they do, the fit lasts at least twenty-four hours. Yet the presence of the white men repressed their usual uproar. The elders and the important guests gathered round the orang kaya's hearth; the others sat, each family round its own fire, in front of its own sleeping apartment, or wandered from one to another, cup in hand.

A portion of the inner verandah was set apart for the Orchid Seekers and their belongings. Hertz lit a candle and placed it on a case. Boy sat on the floor cleaning
his weapons. Gani produced food—eatable—and set it out on another case. After supper Harry suddenly said:

"I wish, Mr. Hertz, you would tell us something about the Chinese Secret Societies?"

"You heard what I told de Rajah?" the Collector rejoined.

"Yes, but you didn’t explain. You mentioned the T'ien-ti and other societies as being responsible for this or that dreadful tragedy; but what is the T'ien-ti?"

"I vill tell you. I vill begin adt de beginning."

Jack and Harry bent forward to catch every word. Bounce shifted his quid to listen comfortably. Boy ceased to polish his kris, and filled his mouth with penang. Wo-Sing folded his arms and leant his broad back against the bamboo partition, having first glanced right and left and above. He appeared not altogether easy in his mind. Though his posture was one of ease, his muscles did not relax.

"De principal Segret Societies," Hertz went on, "are two. You may gall dem all Hués, whish means ‘Association,’ or ‘Companionship.’ Deir names are de T'ien-ti Hué,* or ‘Heafen und Eart’ Alliance; und de Wu-Wei Keaou, or ‘White Lily,’ sometimes galled de ‘Do Nodings’; Dere are many more—dey are legion—butdt de T'ien-ti ish de oldest und de principal; de ‘White Lily’ de most malignant. De organisation of the T'ien-ti ish moosh like dat of de Freemasons. I say ‘moosh like’; dere are men who say de von sprang from de oder. I nodt trouble your heads about idt—egsept to say dat de procedure in deir lodges ish similar—butdt go adt vonce to de origin of de

* Pronounced Tain tay Whay. Hué is spelt Hoey, Huey, or Hwey indifferently, but it is always pronounced "Whay," with a strong aspirate. The T'ien-ti is split into scores of branches, deadly foes to one another for the most part, but all owing allegiance to the Great Council.
T'ien-ti, ash ve know idt now. De fery beginning of all nobody knows. Idt claims to hafe egissted from de beginning of dings, und idt must be fery old. Before 1674 idt vas a benefolent society, philosophic und religious. Idts pass-vordt vas ‘Obey Heafen und do Righteousness.’ I tell you dat in practice now ish ‘Obey de Defil und do his vork!’ Idt ish shtill a sort of Benefolent Society, or trades union, ash are all de oder Hués. Idts councils vatch ofer de interests of members, und are supposed to protect de vidows und orphans, dat is, provide for dem. Budt idt’s nodt now philosophic und religious; idt’s political, und idts veapon ish murder! I vill tell you de legend of how de transformation came about.

“In 1644 de Manchu Tartars egspelled de natife Shinese dynasty. Twenty years afterwards de Eleuth Tartars invaded de Empire. De Emperor appealed to his soobjects, und a Buddhist abbot, Kim-Tat, of Hok-Kien, gollected his monks, und vent to var mit de Eleuth. He beat dem und drove dem from de gounty. Budt a traitor Shinese sheneral denounced de vigtor, und received orders to murder him. Dis vas done, und de Buddhist monastery burnt. Five monks eschaped de shlaughter und took refuge in a temple. Von day, ash dey walked along a rifer bank, de Sam-po, dey saw a censer floating whish dey got oudt of de vasser. Idt was inshscribed ‘Ofert’row de Cheng: reshtore de Beng.’ Dis means ‘Drive oudt de Manchus: reshtore de natife dynasty.’ Oders joined de monks; dey svore broderhood on de censer, adopted de inshcription for a pass-vordt, und prepared to ‘ofert’row de Cheng.’ A grandson of de last natife Emperor revealed himself, und dey marsched to var, gommanded by a giant, Ban-Lung. Dey fought de Manchu Emperor und beat him, budt Ban Lung fell in de moment of vigtory. De segcond in gommand dis- missed eash man to his own house, dere to enlist soldiers
for de goodt cause; dere to live in segret, concealing efen his name. So de T’ien-ti, ash ve know it now, vas founded. Budt, ash I said, idt vas nodt de beginning; idt vas de transformation. Idt ish now a vast gon-
shpiracy. I tell you about idts power.

“De shvay of de Supreme Grand Master—if dere ish von—egstends all ofer Shina, for in efery town dere ish a Lodge or more; und Shina has four hoondred million peoples, ash you know. Idt egstends in t’eory, perhaps in fact, ofer all emigrant lodges from de Philippines to Australia und California. Wherefer Shinamen are esta-
blished dese Societies flourish, de T’ien-ti, de ‘White Lily,’ or some oder. Budt nobody knows de Supreme Grand Master of de T’ien-ti; nobody knows where he dwells; it ish de united Council of de t’ree Grand Lodges vhish gifes orders. De Shinese Government moosh like to gatch dose shentlemen. De soospicion of belonging to de T’ien-ti ish deat’ in Shina. De vorltd must nodt be uttered. Dey try many times to shtamp idt oudt. Ach! t’ree t’ousand bredren vere beheaded in von day adt Canton; ten t’ousand pudt to deat’ about Pekin in a veek. De Dootch und Shpanish try deir hands, und shoot und hang. Idt all of no use. De Hués flourish; dey have moosh money. De Sing-seng, de lodge shief, alvays hafe many t’ousands adt his disposal for murder or vhat he shoose. De Lao Ko, de District Grand Master, hafe millions of dollars for defilry, mit t’ousands of slaves to do his vill. Vhat de Supreme Council of de T’ien-ti hafe in money nobody guess, budt it hafe myriads of men—body und soul! De Hués quarrel and fight among demselves, ash I hafe seen meinself adt Singapore—you heard me tell de Rajah? Adt Perak vonce, t’irty t’ousand men fought, mit two t’ousand killed. De Dishtrict Grand Master dvells in comfort oonder de Britisch flag, und sends oudt his orders to shtab, torture, und poison mit’out danger to himself. Dere! I dink I hafe told you ash
moosh ash ish goodt for you. What you know, Wo-Sing?"

Wo-Sing started and shivered. His face turned livid. "Don't be afraid," said Hertz, smiling. "Dere ish no Hué here, und no members eider."

"I know nothing, sir," Wo-Sing faltered, "but it is the truth you have spoken."

"Den you know somedings, idt seems? Vell, a shtill tongue, Wo-Sing, ish often in a vise head." He turned to the youths. "Wo-Sing's knowledge ish probably confined to tales of mysterious murders und oder tragedies. He knows de Hués by repute vell enough, budt perhaps has nefer gome in contact mit dem, und idt ish hooman nature to dread de occult more ash de visible. For him de T'ien-ti und de 'White Lily' hafe supernatural powers. Deir emissaries practice magic, read de doughts of deir victims, and compel dem to do deir vill adt any distance. Dey are horrid phantoms of no hooman shape—pitiless—ach!—inshcrutable murdering ghosts! Don't shpeak of dem more to Wo-Sing, or perhaps you shange a brave fellow into a poltroon. What you dink of de Hués, Bounce? You must hafe heard of dem before to-day."

"Ay, ay, skipper," the sailor replied, "I've heerd of 'em, an' by your leave, I don't want no closer acquaint-ance."

"One question, Mr. Hertz," said Jack. "Do you think we shall come across any of the Tien-ti fiends when we go to Bau?"

"Maybe—maybe. Goodt-night."
CHAPTER XI.

A VERY STRANGE ADVENTURE.

The Orchid Seekers' first night under a Dyak roof did not pass without incident. Towards dawn Jack awoke in a great fright. He fancied something long and sinuous was gliding about the verandah. On reflection he concluded that he must be suffering from a variety of tropical nightmare, induced by the contemplation and smell of strange food on a floor-table decorated with human heads. He turned over, but instantly heard a violent rustling plunge overhead in the palm-leaf thatch, followed by a squeak. He awoke Harry. The junior, however, scoffed at his fears, grumbling loudly. Presently the noise was repeated, also the squeak. What could it be? Could the emissaries of the T’ien-ti, or the Wu-Wei Keaou, the dreaded "White Lily," be exercising their magic at a distance—endeavouring to prevent the contemplated visit to Bau?

Harry aroused Hertz, and informed him of the mysterious sounds. He had scarcely finished when a third rustling plunge was heard, and a much louder squeak. Hertz laughed.

"Pooh!" he exclaimed. "Idt's a rat-gatcher!"

"A rat-catcher?"

"Ja! A boa!"

The answer was scarcely calculated to allay their fears. "A boa-constrictor!" Harry cried, in renewed alarm.
“A huge serpent!” Jack added.

“I did nodt say a huge serpent, nor a boa-constrictor. Dat term applies only to von Sout’ American shpecies. I said a boa—a pyt’on. De Dyaks und Malays gatch shmall boas und turn dem loose in deir houses to eadt de rats und mice. A gapital rat-gatcher he makes, too—you heard him doing idt. Budt go to shleep. De huge serpent nodt huge enough to do you any mischief. When he grow big he prefer de yoongle.”

Hertz turned over on his back and was soon snoring, oblivious of pythons, boas, anacondas, and all the serpent tribe. But the youths had no more sleep that night. They lay awake, whispering, listening to the rat-catcher’s every movement, half fearing it would prove to be a “huge” serpent after all—certainly it made a great noise—and that it would take a fancy to victims more satisfying than rodents. The boa, however, did not show itself when daylight came; it was probably fast asleep in some cosy nook in the thatch.

Hertz awoke early, eager to get to work. The “blue” orchid had rarely been absent from his thoughts. Now it was paramount. Somewhere to the west of Sirambau, and not further distant than twelve miles, Bounce had seen it! But where? Hertz made another attempt to fix the spot by questioning the old sailor.

“All as I knows is as we made this port from Bow, and had roughish weather all the way,” Bounce answered. “I sighted the blue awkard when we was lying to for grub. But I hadn’t got no chart to prick it on, an’ I reck’n I shouldn’t ha’ thought of it if I had. You see, skipper, it were only a flower, and not a reef or a shaller.”

“Vas it nearer Bau or Sirambau?” the Collector demanded.

Bounce couldn’t say. He hadn’t got no chart, and hadn’t took its bearings, because he had neither compass nor sextant.
"How did you get here?" was the next question.
"Stumped it under bare poles all the way."
That figurative answer was beyond Hertz.
"What's dat?" he asked impatiently.
"Walked every step of it."
"By batang or yoongle pat'?"
"Both, if I 'members right. But, skipper, if you was to ask Boy, mayhap he'll remember better than me."

The Collector questioned Buyong. The smart, brisk little Malay remembered the road, and could guide the party over it. But he had neither seen nor heard of the "blue" orchid. Hertz set him to explain his wants to the Dyaks, and to question them, which rather surprised the youths.

"Would Dyaks know rare flowers?" Harry asked.
"Trust dem!" Hertz replied. "Dey lofe flowers, und hafe a name for all common sorts—for all uncommon vons, too, probably, if nodt so fery rare ash to be unknown to dem. I shall tell dem to remember de shpot where eash kind dey bring in vas found, und if idt ish twelve mont's hence when ve vant to go see, dey vill lead us shtraight to idt."

Meta at first seemed a little dull of comprehension; but when Hertz, to stimulate his energy, showed him the treasures he intended to leave in his care, promising to reward him liberally, and, by way of earnest, distributed a few presents—toys, beads, and trinkets—the orang kaya became very interested. Not only would he search the mountain for the "blue" orchid, but collect every rare flower met with during the quest.

Hertz, through Boy, instructed him how to preserve the orchids during his absence by fastening them on the trees round the village. This done, the Collector constructed a platform of sticks and bamboos in a sunny place, roofed, or, rather, shaded with sticks, so that the sunbeams passed through brokenly. The floor was not
compact, but so arranged that the rain would go through instantly. Here, well apart, so as to dry gradually, he laid one or two orchids, of no great value, which the youths had found whilst rambling about.

All preparations having been made, Hertz gathered together his party, Malays and Dyaks, preparatory to striking into the jungle—by Dyak path, of course—in search of the coveted flower.

But it was not in Dyak nature to start on any expedition whatever without first consulting their oracles, the "omen" birds. It may be remembered that when Li-dah asked Wo-Sing who told him that her father was purchasing arms and boats, he replied: "a Dyak bird." Probably the Chinese maiden took the answer half seriously. She would be well aware of the peculiar attributes of Dyak feathered bipeds.

Harry asked Hertz why the Dyaks were waiting.

"For a goodt omen bird to cry," was the reply. "De principal yoorney omen birds are t'ree—de Kushah, Kariak, und Katupung. When de Kushah or de Katupung ish heard on de right, or de left only, or in front, no sugcess vill attend de yoorney. Budt if de cry ish heard on de left, und den answered on de right, de trafeller may start sure dat all vill be vell. If de Kariak ish heard on de right, de omen ish good; if on de left, somedings vill happen; if behind, de somedings vill be deat'. Adt night, if de shcream of a hawk or an owl ish heard in front, idt ish an ill omen, und de trafeller must return. So great ish de fait' placed in dese oracles dat a Dyak accused of de breach of an engagement has only to plead: 'I had a bad bird,' to be held blameless."

The Collector waited patiently until Nyait had heard "a good bird," then gave the word to advance. Nyait and his Dyaks, the latter carrying tamboks filled with provisions and other necessaries, with empty tamboks for the plants when found, took the lead, accompanied b-
three dogs, larger than a terrier and smaller than a spaniel, of a pure breed. The Malays followed, carrying nothing except their arms; the proud *orang laüit* objects to the rôle of a beast of burden. The Europeans, with Wo-Sing and Boy in close attendance, brought up the rear. Thus began the search for the famous "blue" orchid!

The Collector’s keen eyes wandered about incessantly—his field glass was never out of his hand. The youths, also, kept their eyes wide open, as, indeed, did all the party, but with much less effect than "the skipper."

The path wound down the south-western side of the mountain, and for some distance, until the Dyak clearings were passed, was fairly easy; but afterwards it became a mere track in the jungle, almost indistinguishable among huge ferns, tree and ground species, canes—green, red, spotted, and vermilion—bamboos, rattans, and climbing and creeping plants innumerable, with giant monkey-haunted trees—*tapong*, gutta-percha, palm, and many others which the youths did not recognise, with here and there an ironwood. The leaders drew their *parangs* to widen the path for the *orang putih*, and the progress was very slow and cautious.

Every now and again the Collector halted to examine an orchid overhead, or a *Nepenthe*, flowering on the ground, or on a tree trunk in a close mass, like covered cups on a table, or singly, hanging from the end of its own leaves. Occasionally he consigned some leaf or flower to the case on his back for future examination; but whenever he halted Dyaks and Malays also came to a stand; the former curious and politely inquisitive, the latter equally interested, but too proud or too polite to show it.

During rather a prolonged halt Jack and Harry, followed by Bounce, pushed ahead, but Nyait instantly raised a warning cry. Boy responded, shouting loudly:

"You killed, *Tuans!* Dyak first go!"
"Ach! Ja!" Hertz cried, in great alarm. "Come back! De pat' full of Dyak traps!"

Not a sign of trap or snare had the youths seen, though they had several times observed a Dyak linger behind his fellows until the orang putih had passed. Hertz, whose accustomed eyes had noticed the warning marks, crossed bamboos before and behind the trap, knew that the man had loosed off the spring, and would re-set the trap when all had gone by.

Jack and Harry remained perfectly still until Nyait and Boy came up, when the Dyak leader pointed first to two crossed bamboos not a yard in advance, then to a young tree, the top of its stem bent to the earth, hidden in the dense jungle growth. Now they saw a rattan, which crossed the path a foot above the ground. Cautiously Nyait struck it with his spearshaft; the tree instantly flew up into its former perpendicular position, and a heavy spear shot across the path at about the height of Jack's waist! Had he walked against that innocent-looking rattan he must certainly have been transfixed!

"Oh, I say!" he cried, "this is too much of a joke! Are there many of these death-traps about?"

"Near Dyak house," Boy answered. "We far go, no traps find."

Hertz, coming up, explained the arrangement and purpose of the trap, whilst Nyait re-set it. The Dyak forced the tree down, and fastened it with a spring catch, which a pull on or push against the rattan disarranges. Then he fixed the spear in position. This was a deer trap; for pigs the spear is so placed as to strike lower.

The youths abandoned the idea of sport in that dangerous spot, and allowed the Dyaks and Malays to precede them. Game of any kind was scarce. An occasional monkey was seen, swinging on a creeper festooned from tree to tree; a few squirrels, some no bigger than a mouse,
inquisitive little creatures; others very large, with red-striped sides. A gay green lizard, darting to and fro among the foliage; nothing more important. The leaders disturbed the more wary creatures, which promptly vanished. Now and again a hornbill croaked—a good omen in Dyak estimation—or an Argus pheasant uttered its “tu-wau.” Once or twice a Malay sang out “Ulär!” (snake), but the serpent had glided away when the youths reached the spot. They were not particularly anxious for sport; the search for the “blue” orchid, which had brought them so far from Old England, had but just commenced.

Lunch time arrived before any valuable plant had been discovered. The “rice puddings” eaten, the party resumed their quest. Presently they struck a batang path, raised on the usual tressels, some six or eight feet from the ground. Upon this Nyait climbed, followed by the others. But Hertz had scarcely traversed it a hundred yards when he sprang to the ground with a loud cry, and in great excitement forced his way into the jungle, tearing a path with his hook.

Jack and Harry leant their rifles against a handy tressel, and followed the Collector. They found him clinging to the creepers on a dead, but erect trunk, nervously but carefully removing an orchid.

“A new Bulbophyllum!” he cried, in great glee. “Idt ish grand, too! Someding to talk about I tell you! Ach!—dis ish vort’ goming to Borneo for—dis alone! Look—look adt de great flower! Ach!—a beaudty—a beaudty!”

The youths fully shared Hertz’s enthusiasm when they beheld a mass of flowers, each four inches broad, blossoming singly on slender stalks not more than four inches long. Great spreading sepals and petals of a deep tawny yellow; the upper sepal and the lip spotted with purple; oblong leaves, six inches long.
A VERY STRANGE ADVENTURE.

But the beauty of the flowers was not the most astonishing part of it. As Hertz, with the utmost care, removed it from the trunk, to which it clung as if welded to it, the purple-spotted, tremulous lips kept tumbling head over heels, and then resuming their original position. So droll was the performance of these gaily coloured acrobats that the youths burst into laughter.

"Oh, Mr. Hertz!" Harry cried, "every flower is protesting against the insult you are offering it; one would imagine each had a concealed spring:"

"So idt has! Idt's a fly gatcher! I tell you presently. Budt look about while I get idt. Ve find more new dings, certain!"

A great hunt immediately ensued. Dyaks and Malays were summoned to assist by cutting paths into the jungle in every direction. Hertz, having removed the *Bulbophyllum* from the tree, rushed about wherever a path was opened. Jack and Harry, equally excited, seconded their leader's efforts. But no other new *Bulbophyllum* was discovered, or any valuable orchid.

Proudly the Collector bore his treasure to the *batangs*; carefully he deposited it in an empty *tambok*, with many injunctions to the curious, grinning Dyak who would bear it. Then the march was resumed.

"You think it is a new one, Mr. Hertz!" said Harry, not doubtingly, but simply to hear it confirmed.

"Dink! I dink! I knew idt de moment I saw idt. Vhy, idt's Heafenly!" Heavenly was the Collector's super-superlative, beyond which beauty could not go. "Ach!" he went on, "what's dat?" sniffing the air. "Vhat ish idt?"

"It's an awful bad smell, skipper, that's what it is!" said Bounce, hurrying after the Malays and Dyaks, who

* *B. Lobbii*, named after Mr. Lobb, collector to Messrs. Veitch.
were travelling very fast, laughing, and holding their noses.

Hertz again became excited, peering into the bushes right and left, before and behind, above and below. The youths buried their noses in their handkerchiefs. The smell was very bad, much stronger than the duriens', and it grew worse.

"It must be a dead elephant, or some other big animal," said Harry. "It's really awful!"

"Where you get your elephant?" cried Hertz, sarcastically. "Dere's no elephant in dis part of Borneo, dead or alife! I tell you idt's a plant!"

"A plant! Good gracious!"

"Idt's a plant or a fungus; I dink a plant!"

The three were alone. Bounce and Wo-Sing had hurried on as fast as they could after the Dyak leaders, who had hastened away from the awful smell at their best batang speed, no despicable pace. All were now out of sight; a slight twist in the path having brought the dense jungle between the van and rear. The smell increased in strength, and became so terrible that Jack stood still.

"Is there no way round?" he gasped. "I feel sick."

Hertz did not appear to hear the question. "Idt somewhere dere!" he cried, pointing with his hook into the brushwood on the left hand. "Gome along, Yack—Harry, ve go und interview dat shmell!"

"Not for a hundred pounds!" cried Harry.

"Dere no hoondred pounds here," the Collector rejoined in his most sarcastic tone, springing from the log, and bursting into the jungle, which swallowed him up and concealed him from sight in a moment.

"Oh, I say, I don't like this," muttered Jack. "We ought to follow him. We mustn't desert him. What do you say? It's awful, but——"
"Go on; I'll follow," said Harry, dropping his rifle. "We can't stay here."

They sprang from the log and forced their way after the Collector. A dozen yards—twenty yards—they penetrated the jungle, stung by ants, torn by thorns, tripped up by creepers, terrified by imagined snakes. But no Hertz was to be seen. They called out. No answer. The horrible smell oppressed them—dazed them—almost forced them back. In despair they stood still, not two yards apart, yet scarcely visible to each other in that dense brushwood.

"Mr. Hertz! Mr. Hertz! Where are you?" Jack shouted at the top of his voice. Still no answer. Not even an echo. "This is horrible! Is there a tree near you that we can climb?"

"Close to my left hand," Harry replied. "The trunk is covered with parasites."

Jack crushed to his brother's side, and the two climbed the tree, pulling themselves up by the creepers, hand over hand. Seated on the first branch they could overlook the undergrowth. Nothing at first was to be seen. Jack climbed higher.

"What's that?" he suddenly cried. "I can see a—a glimmering something! It's—it must be—a mass of flowers, covering a tree trunk completely! And, oh, Harry!" in a horrified tone. "Mr. Hertz is lying beneath it, dead, or insensible! He doesn't move. I can see him plainly."

Down the tree they scrambled—tumbled would perhaps better express that downward climb—and, hurrying in the direction Jack had marked, broke into a tiny oval glade. In the centre stood a dead trunk; round it, twining like a huge serpent, was some strange plant, one dense mass of yellow blossoms! At its roots lay the Collector, unconscious!

"Tie up your mouth and nose!" cried Jack, snatching
out his handkerchief. This was done, and thus protected, they dashed up to the prone Collector, grasped him by the shoulders, and dragged him out of the glade. The rough usage brought him to his senses.

"What you doing?" he stuttered, rising somewhat feebly, and facing the terrified, perspiring lads.

"Oh, Mr. Hertz!" Jack gasped, "you were insensible under that awful tree! It must be the Upas! We thought you were dying."

"Dying! Ach! I remember! Upas? Id't's anoder new *Bulbophyllum*. I must hafe idt!—I must hafe idt! I knew de shmell vas a plant!"

And, faint as he was, he moved towards the deadly glade.

"No—no," cried Jack and Harry, together. "We'll go! See—we have handkerchiefs!"

Before the Collector could gather his wandering wits sufficiently to negative the proposal, the youths, holding their breath all the time, had rushed back and torn a great mass of flowers from the tree. In an instant they stood with their prize at Hertz's side. He snatched one flower from the mass, dropped the remainder, and plunged into the jungle, followed closely by his rescuers.

"*Tuans!*" cried a voice in tones of alarm. "Where you be?"

"Here! Dis vay, Boy," Hertz answered breathlessly.

Then was heard the "swish-swash" of *parangs* cutting through the bushes and creepers, letting daylight into that twining, matted vegetation. Boy and his Malays, Nyait and his Dyaks, Bounce, Paham, Gani, Wo-Sing—all were there, making a path with their keen blades, nervously wielded, for all were in a state closely bordering on terror. The two parties met, and very glad were the Dyaks and Malays to see the *orang putih* safe. Needless to say, they lost no time in getting out of range of that new *Bulbophyllum*
"Idt's a flower, Boy," said Hertz, in answer to the Malay's look of enquiry. "A great sthem twining round de tree like a serpent, mit masses of liddle yellow blossoms like dis," producing the bloom. "What you dink idt be?"

"I no think, Tuan," said Boy. "Nyait say he smell before. He no smell afraid; he say flowers antus. He no dare go and see."

"Antus—shpirits! Ach! I nodt surprised adt dat. In Sierra Leone, Harry, dere ish a Bulbophyllum dat de negroes dink ish a shpirit. Idt's de perpetual mofement of de lip dat terrifies dem. I hafe somedings to say about idt when ve shtop. You vonder vhat on eart' dat horrible shmell ish goodt for? I tell you dat, too. Nature ish wonderful—wonderful! Bear in mind, boys, when I say 'Nature' I mean 'Gott!' Nature ish like a big machine, mit dis difference—idt nodt turn oudt von pattern only, budt billions! Und Gott made dat machine! He ish de Engineer! He drive idt! He made idt vork right! Ve rest soon, den I tell you de wonderful vays of Nature mit orchids!"

The batangs ended at a rapid stream, rushing down from the mountain, foaming among huge rocks that impeded its course. It was almost a cascade, very pleasant to contemplate, and filling the air with music.

Here the Collector determined to pass the night. The Dyaks drew their parangs to cut bamboos and brushwood for lang-kans, a sort of hut, roofed with palm leaves, whilst Gani and Wo-Sing collected fuel for fires. Hertz removed the Bulbophyllum first discovered from the tambok, and fastened it on a tree. Bounce leant his back against another tree, filled his pipe, and motioned Nyait to give him a light. The Dyak leader smilingly complied, greatly astonishing Jack and Harry, who happened to be looking on.

Taking a bit of earthenware from the siri or penang...
box of bamboo at his side, he placed on it a little tinder, which he held under his thumb. Then, grasping the box in his left hand, he struck it sharply with the crock, and instantly offered Bounce the tinder alight.

"Much obliged, Night, I'm sure," said the old sailor, puffing at his pipe. "I reck'n that dodge well nigh licks matches."

"It's wonderful!" cried Jack. "How in the world is it done?"

Nyait, comprehending that his strike-a-light had interested the orang putih, proffered it for examination. But neither Jack nor Harry could produce a spark, try how they would. Boy, however, succeeded at the first attempt. So did Wo-Sing.

"How is it done?" Jack repeated, puzzled.

Wo-Sing exploded. It was such a very simple matter to get a light, a sharp stroke, nothing more, that the question seemed ridiculous; therefore Wo-Sing laughed. But he could not explain it, nor suggest anything, all the same.

Jack appealed to Boy, who was looking daggers at the boisterous young Chinaman, evidently disgusted with his rudeness in laughing in the Tuan's face. Boy salaamed, probably to show the difference between Malay manners and Chinese, but he also was unable to solve the mystery.

Harry then asked Hertz, but this was one of the not numerous things that the Collector did not know. However, he was able to hint at a possible explanation.

"If idt vas a plant," he said, "I might tell you somedings about idt; dat ish, I could advance, perhaps, a reasonable t'eory; budt I hafe nodt shtoodied eart'envare in goantact mit bamboo. Probably, dough, de segret lies mit de bamboo. De oudter shkin gontains a great deal of silex-flint."

"Your allusion to plants," said Harry, "reminds me that you promised us a lecture on fly-catching orchids."
"Ja! Vait till de huts are builded, und de dinner eadten; den I tell you."

As soon as the first lang-kan was ready, Hertz flung himself down on a couch of boughs. Jack and Harry followed the Collector's example, eager for the promised discourse. But before Hertz could utter a word, Boy came up to report that the Dyaks had discovered a pool, about half a mile distant, much frequented by deer and other wild animals, whose slots were numerous.

"Fery goodt," said Hertz, "perhaps ve hafe venison for breakfast. While I tell you about orchids, you listen, und if a deer cry, all you hafe to do ish go shoot idt. Budt ve hafe dinner first."
CHAPTER XII.

AN INTERRUPTED LECTURE.

After supper Hertz again flung himself down in the lang-kun, a long, make-shift hut open in front and without a back; in fact, a mere roof of palm-leaves and ferns, supported by bamboos. Jack and Harry lay on either side, eagerly listening, but with their rifles beside them.

Bounce, also, was prepared for a pot-shot at any unwary animal which might afford one, whilst Boy had loaded Jack’s shot-gun with ball, with a similar intent. Squatting on their “tail-mats” to the Collector’s right hand, embracing their knees, and silently chewing penang, were the Dyaks; on the left lay the Malays, engaged in the same interesting occupation. Hertz could not complain of inattention on the part of any individual of his motley audience.

“I dink dat Bulbophyllum* has de most terrible odour of any plant whatever,” he began. “I am nodt sure dat my report vill be believed—dat I, a tough fellow like me, fainted, und had to be dragged from oonder de tree like a bale of goodts.”

“You can’t very well take it home to prove its existence,” Harry interjected.

“No. Idt’s no goodt to Misder Rider. Dat shmell is

* Rediscovered by Dr. Beccari and name Bulbophyllum Beccari. Its awful stench is not exaggerated.
unique, but nobody vants idt. Many orchids are scented—vhy does dis von shtink? But de plant ish marvellous all de same. To-morrow I go back und get more of de flowers; dem I take home. Dere must be t'ousands of blossoms! I nefer saw soosh great pendulous masses—de lip of every von oscillating mitout cessation. I vas holding my breaf, budt I vas so astonished dat I opened my mout', so I shvallowed de effluvium und fell down in a faint. Idt's de orchid giant mitout doubt—de biggest of all! Und de tiny flowers are marvellous, too! De lip ish joined to de base of de column mit a t'in shtrapp like elastic; so idt mofes in efery breaf of air. Vhy?

I can pudit forwardts a t'eory, goodt for vant of a besser. Now, Harry, what you know about fertilisation mit insegts?"

"Well," said Harry diffidently, "I know that orchids are so arranged that when an insect enters one it almost necessarily bears away the pollen masses, which stick by their viscid disc to the insect's head, or thorax, or back, and that the insect can scarcely enter another flower without leaving that pollen on the stigma, thus fertilising it; but there must be various and complicated arrangements for effecting this purpose of which I know nothing whatever."

"Quite right! Boy, yoost fetch me a flower of de heafenly plant I first find. Idt's on a tree, yonder."

Boy obeyed, returning quickly with a blossom. Hertz took it and touched the labellum, or lip, which instantly turned head over heels, so to say.

"De lip, you see," he resumed, "ish hung on a sort of svivel. Vere a fly oder insegt alights, oop idt flies, und ofer idt turns, und de insegt ish shut oop in a box, shooted on de shtigma; und dere idt shtay till de business ish done—wvish of course idt do adt vonce—dat ish, fertilise de flower.

"Now ve gome to dis terrible Bulbophyllum! First,
you may take that the colours and nectar and perfumes of flowers are given them for this purpose—to attract insects. Now you would say that awful smell would be smelly enough a hundred yards away, or two, or three; and that an insect would have no difficulty in finding it?"

"Certainly, if the insect had a smelling apparatus," said Jack.

"Ja! But what insect is wanted? That's the point! It's not a bee—he's too big to enter the flower; besides, he likes sweet perfumes and sweet tastes; there's no nectar here, and no sweet perfume. It's not a blue-bottle—he's too big, also! I take that the fly that is best fitted to fertilise that terrible Bulbophyllum is that go about seeking dead bodies in the young—dead animals, or what not. These insects live on the larvae live on the putrid matter. Now you would say that he must be very small—buzzing about the young, looking for something putrid! All once he smell that terrible odour! 'Ach!' he say to himself, 'there is a grand feast; there I go!' But when he gets there he is puzzled—there is no flesh, notings putrid whatever! But then there is the smell—the flesh must be somewhere inside the shaking flowers, which all once attract his attention! The insect howls about for that; he does not find any putrid flesh, but he fertilises every flower he enters! You may be almost sure that the only insect, able, from its shape and machinery, to fertilise that Bulbophyllum, is that very scarce—otherwise so mooshy attraction—soosh a powerful smell—would not be needed! Hafe I made dis clear?"

"As clear as daylight," Harry answered. "The ways of Nature are truly wonderful!"

"When you say that," Hertz resumed very gravely, "nefer forget dat you mean de vays of Gott. What scientists gall Nature ish de great shcheme originated und garried out by Gott. Now I go on. I dink idt ish
nodt so difficult to tell what is a bee flower und what is a fly. You oondershstand? I mean what flower vants some kind of bee to fertilise idt, und what vants a fly. Bee flowers hafe shenerally bright, clear colours, shweet perfumes, und negtar; fly flowers are often reddish or yellowish brown, mit an unpleasant shmell. When I say 'fly,' I don't mean butterfly, or, ash a rule, mot'. De flowers dat vant butterflies are fery bright coloured, mit negtar und a shweet perfume Now I tell you of de wonderful arrangements of some flowers to make de bee or fly do de necessary vork—dat ish, garry away, or bring de pollen, ash de case may be——”

Suddenly a sound arose from the jungle like a long, low stroke on an exquisitely toned gong.

"Rusa, Tuans!" Nyait whispered, excitedly.


"Vell, boys," said Hertz, "vill you shtalk de buck, or listen about orchids?"

"We'll do both, if possible," Jack answered. "Perhaps the deer will come nearer."

"He nodt gome fery near, be sure. If he shmell us idt all ofer mit shhort."

Again the musical challenge rang out; no nearer, however, judging from the sound.

"Go on, please, Mr. Hertz," said Harry.

"Fery vell. I vas about to tell you of Coryant'es,* a Sout' American shpecies. Now here ish a goot definition of a flower—‘A flower ish dat temporary apparatus attached to a plant by vhish fecundation ish effected.' Ve vill egamine de apparatus of de Coryant'es. De lip forms a large bucket, mit a shpout adt de back. Ofer de bucket are two taps—I gall dem taps. De flower segretes fluid dat drips—drips t'rough de taps into de bucket—

* C. macr-antha (Greek), large-flowered.
you can see de drops fall. When de bucket ish getting too full de fluid overflows at de shpout. Now dis fluid ish nondt negtar; idt's only vasser. I vill tell you what idt's for. Say de bees gome mit oder insegts; vell—de bees nondt vant vasser, dey vant negtar. Dere ish none, budt de edge of de lip or bucket ish shveet. Perhaps von bee in a t'ousand, shtopping to gnaw idt, tumbles into de bucket und vets his vings, so dat he gan't fly oudt—he must crawl oudt! Vhere? T'rough de shpout, of course, dere ish no oder vay. Now ofer de shpout are de shtigma und pollen masses in soosh a position dat de bee in crawling oudt must brush against bot'—first de shtigma, den de pollen; de pollen shticks to his back. Now mark dis! De bee has damp vings; he nondt fly far till dey are dry. So de shances are a hoondred to von dat he vill alight on de fery negst flower he gomes to—anoder Coryant'es of de same plant! Und mark dis! When he gets on de lip he ish nondt now able to balance himself—because his vings are damp—und he ish almost certain to tumble in anoder bucket! Oudt he crawls, t'rough de shpout, ash before, budt he leaves de pollen from de first flower on de shtigma of de segcond, und garries avay de pollen of de segcond to fertilise anoder flower, if he ish so daring ash to get on anoder lip, und so oonfortunate ash to tumble in anoder bucket! So ve dare to say dat bucket of vasser ish for no oder purpose budt to vet de bee's vings, so dat he vill nondt be able to fly oudt of de bucket, budt must crawl t'rough de shpout!"

"Marvellous!" cried the youths. The buck's challenge rang out once more. All listened.

"He near, Tuans," said Boy.

"Vill you go, boys?" Hertz asked.

"Let him come a little nearer if he will," Jack replied.

"I dink you care more for knowledge ash shport. Vell—bot' are goodt, budt knowledge ish besser."
“How is it, Mr. Hertz,” said Harry, “that the bucket of the Coryanthes doesn’t contain nectar? In that case the bee wouldn’t have to tumble in. It would get in of its own accord, and the fertilisation would be much more certain.”

Before the Collector could frame a reply the buck belled again, undoubtedly nearer.

Boy sprang to his feet. “He come drink,” he whispered excitedly. “He wind get, he go!”

Nyait rose, also in a state of excitement, and spoke eagerly to the Malay.

“Nyait say we go pool before buck,” Boy exclaimed.

Jack and Harry rose and took up their rifles. Bounce shouldered his musket. The Dyak chief crept into the jungle path he had previously explored, and followed by the others in single file, stole towards the pool. The pace was scarcely a mile an hour. Nyait and Boy moved through the jungle almost noiselessly, but the youths and Bounce could not avoid sticks that cracked and bushes that swished. Every time a stick cracked Nyait halted, and Boy whispered warningly “Tuans!” But it was no use. Clothed and booted Europeans could not traverse that jungle path with the stealthy silence of a naked Dyak or the noiseless steps of a barefoot Malay. After half an hour of this snail’s pace, Nyait left the path, and, dropping on his hands and knees, crept beside a rock overgrown with creepers and plants to the bank of the mountain stream.

“This is as bad as that plunge into the jungle after Mr. Hertz,” whispered Jack.

“It’s awful!” Harry rejoined. “My hands and face burn as if they had been in a fire. The ants are dreadful!”

“Tuans!” whispered Boy reproachfully, pointing out the way Nyait had taken to reach the water, “No noise. Water splash.”
Cautiously they slid down the steep bank, entering the water, fortunately shallow, without the "splash" feared by Boy. No cracking of sticks now; no rustling of bushes; but slippery stones formed the bed of the stream, and the greatest caution was necessary in putting down shod feet. Presently Nyait left the water, crawling up the bank on his hands and knees. Peering over it, he signalled Boy to follow, who, in his turn, signed to Jack.

Six paces from the top of the bank they found Nyait lying under a bush, and sank beside him. They were within twenty yards of the drinking place, with the wind blowing towards them. A fringe of bushes effectually concealed the hunters; beyond was a clear space which the deer must cross to reach the pool, should it come to drink.

Hitherto the buck had belled every few minutes—his voice, in fact, had guided Nyait to the spot. But a quarter of an hour passed without his musical cry being heard.

"He's winded us," Jack murmured, under his breath. Boy instantly laid his hand on the youth's arm. Immediately the "gong stroke" rang out, not a hundred yards from the hunter's ambush, causing the youths' hearts to beat violently. Five minutes passed—they seemed an hour; then, as a filmy cloud rolled from before the moon, and the full light of its beams illumined the open space, tinging the tree tops and the edges of the bushes with silver, Nyait cautiously extended his naked arm, pointing to the further side of the pool. At the same moment Boy whispered:

"Buck see." His lips formed other words of caution, but he uttered no sound.

So they lay, waiting for the deer to cross the open space. But that wary animal was in no hurry. Probably it never went to drink without like caution. Apparently both the Dyak and the Malay could see the quarry, but
neither the youths nor Bounce could distinguish anything unusual in the dark mass of vegetation.

Presently Boy cautiously levelled his gun, signing to Harry, who happened to be nearest, to glance along the barrel. Guided by this, the youth made out the buck's antlers, just showing over a shrub. Noiselessly Harry raised his rifle, and, aiming just below the deer's horns, fired.

Nyait sprang to his feet with a yell, and, dashing across the open space, disappeared into the jungle, from which he presently emerged, dragging a fine buck.

"You him kill, Tuan?" said Boy, smiling.

Harry wondered at the half question. Of course he had killed it! He had fired. There lay the buck. What doubt could there be? But a brief examination showed a bullet hole behind the shoulder, with no wound in the head

"Well, this is odd!" he cried. "I don't set up for being a crack shot, and I hadn't the least notion where the shoulder would be, so I aimed at the head—below the antlers, anyhow. But it seems I hit him in the right place—behind the shoulder."

"Not so very odd," rejoined Jack, much chagrined at his inability to see the buck; "you don't seem to be aware that Boy also fired. The reports were simultaneous, but I saw two flashes."

"Did you shoot, Boy?" cried Harry, surprised.

"Wheh!"

"Then that settles it! You killed the buck. But how in the world did you make out its body? Only the antlers were visible."

Boy held up two fingers. "Him horns so; him shoulder here."

The Dyaks at the lang-kan let the dogs go when they heard Nyait's yell. These now came up, tearing through the jungle, followed by their active masters. The buck
was borne in triumph to the camp, and laid before Hertz.

"You hafe him!" he cried. "Ach! dat ish goodt. Who killed him?"

"Boy," Harry answered. "Only the horns could be seen, but he put a bullet behind the shoulder."

"Ach! Boy ish efidentsly an egspierienceed hoonter. De result—venison for breakfast. Now I answer dat question about de Coryant’es."

Boy and Nyait hung the deer on a tree before the hut, the Dyaks squatted as before, the Malays flung themselves down carelessly, whilst the Collector resumed his dissertation on orchids.

"You ashked, Harry, vhy de bucket did nodt gontain negtar, und said de fertilisation woud be moosh more certain if idt did. Budt in dat case de fertilisation might nodt take place adt all. De bee vould shtay gorging, perhaps get droonk und die. I am nodt sure what idt vould or wouldn’t do, egsept dat idt wouldn’t go t’rough de shpout. Be sure dat ef ery ding in Nature ish vorked right; you gan’t improve idts machinery. All de same, idt ish gontinually improving or altering idts own."

"Now take de Catasetum, anoder Sout’ American orchid. De lip hangs downvards. In de middle ish a deep cavity, bordered by crests. Dere ish no negtar, budt de valls of dis cavity are shveet und fleshy, und insegtz gome to gnaw dem. Yoost ofer de cavity are two long tapering horns—triggers, no less. Suppose a large insegt gome—a humble-bee, for instance; he must touth de left-hand trigger—he gan’t help idt. Inshtantly de gun goes off! —I pudt idt dat vay. De flower shoots oudt idts pollen, und de viscid disc shticks to de bee’s t’orax; if no bee ish dere—if someding else touth de trigger, de pollen vill fly t’ree feet! De bee gan’t get rid of dat shticky disc; dat tiny bit of cement vill support a weight of t’ree ounces! Presently de bee visits a female flower. De ligament
breaks, und he leaves de pollen on de shtigma; so dat flower ish fertilised. Budt I forget someding important. De pollen ish nodt left to take idts shance, anyhow. Idt seems idtself to have life; idt's capable of movement on de bee's t'orax. You know what idt's like, roughly—a knob adt de top of a tube, mit a shticky, flat disc adt de bottom? Vhen dat disc shrikes de bee, de tube ish nearly perpendicular. A liddle while—to gife time for de bee to get to anoder flower—und de pollen tube mofes; idt svings down until idt's nearly horizontal; idt points de pollen ofer de bee's head horizontally. De bee gannot pudt idts head anywhere mitout horizontally. De bee gannot pudt idts head anywhere mitout horizontally. De bee gannot pudt idts head anywhere mitout horizontally. De bee gannot pudt idts head anywhere mitout horizontally. De bee gannot pudt idts head anywhere mitout horizontally.

"I reck'n, skipper," Bounce interrupted, "that the flowers you'm a talking about must be alive. Wheer do they grow? I never seed nothing of what you've said."

"Dat's not de flowers' fault!" Hertz retorted. "Budt gonsole yourself, my good fellow, you see ash moosh ash ninety-nine men in a hoondred. More, perhaps. You saw de 'blue' orchid, which bring us all here!"

"Ay, ay, skipper!" Bounce rejoined, "I saw it right enough; an' when I sees it again, I won't forget to sing out."

"Now look adt de Cypripedium!" Hertz resumed. "Ash you know, de lip ish like a shlipper. Now if a fly enters de poush or shlipper forshveets, he gan't easily get oudt de same vay, because de upper valls are smoot', und de top edges turned invards; he falls back efery time. He shtruggles about—perhaps he crawls oop to de toe—no vay oudt dere. Den he tries de heel. But over de instep de sides of de shoe close in and de column shtands up in de middle, so dere ish a narrow passage on each side of idt. Dat fly can take which he please of dem, but he gan't get through mitout taking a pollen mass on his back, dat's cer-
tain. He flies to anoder shlipper und gets in; he hafe to get out de same vay ash before, und dere he leaves de pollen.
“Some orchids close up like a box ash soon ash an insegt enters, und idt hafe to force a vay oudt adt de veakest shpot. Budt adt dat veak shpot de shtigma und pollen are sure to be found, und de insegt must broosh against dem, or die in idts prison.”

“And we may understand as a general rule,” said Harry, “that all flowers are designed and furnished so as to attract the particular insect best adapted to fertilise them? Some require large humble bees; some must have small bees; some wasps, some flies, some butterflies, some moths.”

“Ja! De Angræcum sesquipedale,* a Madagascar orchid, mit flowers like shtars of snowwhite vax, has a negtary, a tube elefen inches long, mit de negtar adt de bottom. What dat prove, dink you?”

“I can’t say,” Harry answered.

“Idt proves dat in Madagascar dere ish a mot’ mit a proboscis ten or elefen inches long. Hafe no von seen idt, budt it must egsist, or de orchid Gould not. I vill tell vou vhy. De pollen und shtigma are at de mout’ of de tube. If a mot’ mit a short proboscis vent, he would nodt be able to reash de negtar, so he would nodt trouble. If de negtary vas full to de brim his proboscis vould not be t’ick enough to press against idts sides, so de pollen vould nodt be garried away, egsept by shance. No; idt must be a tremendous proboscis, long und t’ick adt de base!”

“But,” said Jack, “a moth with a proboscis ten inches long must be an extraordinary creature!”

“Ja! und soosh a mot’ ish known to egsist. In Brazil dere ish a sphinx mot’ mit a proboscis of dat lengt’. When nodt in use idt ish gurled oop in a shpiral of twenty vindings.”

“So if the moth became extinct the Angræcum sesqui-

* Sesqui-pedale (Greek), A foot and a half long.
pedale would also cease to exist, unless it were artificially fertilised?"

"Yoost ash de *Vanilla aromatica*, de orchid from whish ve get de vanilla of commerce. Vhen idt ish grown in foreign gountries idt ish artificially fertilised. In idts American home dere egsists some insegt adapted for de vork whish is nodt known in dose foreign gountries. Yoost again ash de red clover, whish sets no seeds in some of de Britisch colonies because dere are no humble bees, und de hive bee's proboscis ish nodt long enough. I shpeak a vordt about *Nepent'es*—de 'pitchers' whish ve hafe seen so moosh of.

"De *Nepent'e* ish von of de many plants able to digest animal matter; und idt ish said, mit trut' I believe, dat soosh plants grow more vigorously ash oders. I vonce found a dead rat in a pitcher; budt I don't dink idt able to digest dat—idt take a long time, anyway. Buut idt digests insegts mit ease. Some are lined mit hairs pointing downwards, so dat de insegts gan't crawl oudt. De lid of some opens und shut; idt shut, be sure, vhen someding's gone inside! Buut I dink de most vonderful ding about a pitcher ish dis—vhat I gan't oondershtand. De vasser mitin—und you know some vill hold two quarts—ish somewhat acid; idt absorbs und digests de insegts so oonfortunate ash to get in idt. Buut if you take away dat vasser before de pitcher has been egsited—dat ish, before an insegt has been in idt, idt vont digest any dings, yet idt ish yoost ash acid! Den dere ish de coil in de petiole. You oondershtand?—de shtalk. Idt leaves de shtem ash a flat leaf, den contracts to a shtalk mit a coil in idt, und de pitcher at de end. Dat coil enables de plant to climb—it tvines round any support dat may be handy; if dere is nodings to coil round, idt coils yoost de same, round nodings. I dink I hafe talked enough. Good-night!"

Swarms of fireflies flashed among the trees. Wild deer
belled far distant—a thousand murmurs rose from the jungle, all musical! To sleep in the open air for the first time is always a memorable experience. The boys never forgot that lonely glade, walled round with vegetation, black in shadow, silvery in the moonlight.
CHAPTER XIII.

THE OPHIOPHAGUS.

Jack and Harry watched for game in turns during the night, but had their trouble for nothing.

After the early cup of coffee Hertz took Wo-Sing aside. "I vant to speak of de Kunsi. I dink de information given you by dat girl, dat Wang-lo ish gollccting boats und arms, should be sent to de Rajah adt vonce. De girl —vhat ish she?"

"She's the daughter of Wang-lo, sir."

"Ach, ja! I know. Where did you meet her?"

"At the mission school, sir. Six years ago Wang-lo came to Sarawak from Sambas, very poor. He left Li-dah at the mission and went to Bau. There he got rich very soon. Now he's the chief of the Kunsi. I went to the mission school; there I met Li-dah."

"I see. I dought someding vas between you. I suppose you vant to marry her?"

"Yes, sir,"

"But Wang-lo ish nödt villing?"

"No, sir. A year ago he came to Kuching and took Li-dah away. He told her she must marry another chief of the Kunsi, Inchi Ch'en. She will not marry him."

"She has promised to marry you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you believe what she says?"
"Li-dah always speaks the truth, sir. She's a Christian."

"Good! De information she gave you must be sent off adt vonce."

The Collector wrote a brief note, which he gave to Paham, instructing him to proceed at once to Siniawan, thence by sampan to the capital, where he was to deliver the letter to the Rajah or the Resident, and return without delay to Bau.

The Malay salaamed and left.

Hertz at once broke up the camp. Nyait, following Boy’s instructions, led the party in a north-western direction, so as to strike the Chinese road from Siniawan to Bau; this was the route by which Bounce had reached Sirambau.

Steadily they marched on, the Collector, as usual, keeping a very sharp look-out. No tapong tree passed without scrutiny, for, from Bounce’s description, Hertz had formed the opinion that the “blue” orchid would be found on a tapong. Presently they came to a Dyak bridge of a kind the travellers had not yet encountered. The stream which it spanned foamed among jagged rocks between banks seventy feet high. On either bank grew a fine tree, opposite each other. From tree to tree, stretched the bridge, a single bamboo, suspended by rattans and bamboos to the branches above. The bamboo foot-path, a hundred feet long, was not six inches in diameter—it swayed in the slight breeze! On either side was a flimsy handrail of thin bamboo. Bounce halted the instant he saw it.

"Boy," he cried, "didn’t we cross this ’ere shaking tight-rope?"

"Yes, Tuan," Boy answered.

"Didn’t we stop here or hereabouts for grub?"

The Malay looked puzzled. Hertz explained.

"Did you shtop here to eadt food?"
Boy reflected a moment, and answered in the affirmative.

"I can't say for certain as this is the place, skipper," Bounce went on. "We stopped for grub no end o' times. But theer's a lot o' big trees here, an' there was a lot wheer I saw the blue awkward."

"Ve searsh de yoongle t'orougly—bot' sides de shstream!" cried Hertz, in great excitement.

Boy called the Malays and Dyaks together. The latter put down their tamboks. The jungle was dense only in patches; here and there it was easily penetrable. The Collector, thinking correctly that Bounce would have avoided the thick brushwood, examined those trees most easy to approach, leaving the dense patches of jungle to the Malays and Dyaks.

Suddenly he gave a loud cry, and sprang forward, dropping on his hands and knees, heedless of snakes, scorpions, and centipedes.

"He's got it, I believe!" cried Jack, forgetting that the "blue" was an *Epiphyte*, not a terrestrial—that is, it grew on a tree.

The youths rushed up to the Collector and found him in ecstasies over a number of tiny plants growing in a moist, turfy hollow, protected from the wind by trees.

"Anoectochili! Hurrah!" cried Jack, as soon as he reached the spot.

"Ja!" Hertz responded, in wild delight. "T'ree new shpecies! T'ree! Dink you—t'ree! Vonderful—Vonderful! T'ree new shpecies mit'in a dozen yards! Happy day dat ve shtopped here! Look you—dere are two! Und dere"—pointing with his hook—"ish de oder! Dere nefer vas soosh luck—nefer! Look adt dis?" he cried, rising, with a plant in his hand. "Look adt de velvet green leafes! Look at de gold veining! See oonderneat'—pale primrose yellow, tinted mit rose-colour! Heafenly—heafenly! I dink dere ish budt
von more heafenly plant in Europe. Misder Rider has idt.”

The *Anoectochilus* Hertz held had no flowers of any importance, but its leaves were marvels of loveliness. Try to picture a fleshy stem, six inches long, bearing a crowded rosette of foliage, each leaf four inches long by three broad: the upper surface dark green shaded with brown, velvet to the touch and in appearance; every line—every vein of the leaves picked out with pale gleaming gold! The under surface pale yellow, tinted with rose-colour.

“Oh, it’s lovely!” Harry cried.

“Lofely?” Hertz burst forth again. “Vhy, idt’s heafenly! I tell you dere ish budt von Anoectochilus dat tounhes idt! Dat ish de Vana Rajah—de ‘King of de Voods,’ de setaceus vhish Misder Rider has. He had idt—idt may be dead. You remember? Brown velvet leafes spangled mit gold. Now look adt dis—und don’t forget dat dese leafes vill shtop yoost ash dey are from four to eight years! Did you efer see soosh beaudties—soosh heafenly dings?”

The second *Anoectochilus (A. javanicus)* claimed as new by Hertz, had leaves of apple-green, with silver-grey veins, the under-surface rose-tinted. The third (*A. concinnus*) was less beautiful, but the leaves were larger—five inches long, olive-green, with coppery red stripes and network.

“We take all dese!” Hertz went on, carefully removing the plants from the mossy turf with his knife. “If ve find more ve take dem too. Dey vill nodt sell, ash I daresay you know. People know dey gan’t keep dem alive, so dey nodt buy. But Misder Rider gan grow dem, und dese vill delight his heart. I tell you he vill dink ash moosh of dese ash of de ‘blue!’ I can see him look adt dem! I can see his face crimson oop mit de grand—de glorious pleasure!”

* A Lowii, named after Messrs. Low of Clapton, who introduced it.
"How do you account for all these growing together?"
Harry asked.

"If I vant a place to grow Anoectochili, dis de fery shpot. A moist hollow, shaded from de sun, und alvays warm. Be sure plants somevay vill find oudt de shpot where best dey flourish, und dere dey vill gat’der togedder."

Suddenly a Malay, hidden in the jungle somewhere to the left of the hollow, uttered an exclamation.

"Dat's Gani!" cried Hertz, springing to his feet. "He find somedings! Go—go—quick!—idt may be de 'blue.'"

"Tuans!" cried the man, excitedly.

"Dere! What I tell you?"

The youths needed no second summons. They crashed through the undergrowth, leaving Hertz busy with the Anoectochili. Gani stood beside the trunk of a huge tree—a durien—looking upwards. His ill-shaped mouth was wide open; his beady, bright eyes glistened. Instantly his expression changed. His face turned ghastly—his eyes showed all white.

"Ular!" he gasped. "Ular tudong itam kechil!"

"Tuans! Tuans!" screamed another voice—Boy's—

"Run! Run! Bad snake!"

"Where?" cried Jack, turning towards the invisible Boy.

No answer. But on every side rose cries of terror in Malay and Dyak. Crash succeeded crash as the panic-stricken men tore through the undergrowth. Gani had disappeared—how—when—the youths did not know; but immediately above the spot where they had seen him, a snake hung from a branch, moving its head from side to side, its glistening eyes fixed upon them. Even while the youths gazed, too startled to utter a word, its coils relaxed, and it dropped to the ground, as Hertz's voice rang high above the tumult.
"To de guns, boys! Run for your lifes!"

That cry broke the spell. The youths turned and fled. Fortunately the brushwood was not thick between them and the bridge, where the guns and tamboks had been left. Here they found the Collector, with every Malay and Dyak, all gazing fearfully towards the jungle whence they had issued.

"Shpeak! are you bitten?" hoarsely cried the Collector.

"No," Jack answered, "we saw the snake, and——"

But Hertz cut the story short.

"Sharge de guns—quick!—if dey nodt loaded. Dere ish only von shnake dat vill attack und follow man, und dis ish he!"

"Mine are loaded," Jack answered. "I don't——"

"Gife me de double-barvel! Don't shtand like dat! I tell you you've been mitin an inch of deat'! Gife idt me! I gan shoot on occasion. Ach! Boy, look to Gani!"

The Malay's face was livid; a slight froth had gathered about his lips, whilst the pupils of his eyes had disappeared. He stood rocking himself to and fro, naked parang in hand, crooning—murmuring a song. Boy darted behind him instantly, pinning his arms to his sides. Hertz wrenched away the parang, handing it to another Malay.

"Whatever is the matter?" Jack cried.

"Nodings. Dere might hafe been. De man ish frightened. He vill be besser soon. Are de guns all loaded?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Dat vill do. Keep your eyes on de yoongle. Gani vas mitin an ace of running amok. He vould hafe cut us down von after anoder. I've seen a man go amok when less terrified dan he ish. Did you see de shnake-eadter?"
turning to Boy, still grasping Gani, who was fast recovering.

"No, Tuan. Gani see big flower. He call. I go. He cry 'Ular!' I run."

"A big flower!" cried Hertz; "a big flower Ach! I knew he had found somedings! Ve hafe dat big flower if all de shnake-eadters in Borneo bar de vay! Ashk him vas idt blue?"

But Gani had not recovered sufficiently to understand.

"A big flower!" Hertz repeated. "De 'blue' ash likely ash nodt. A big flower!—Boys, ve hafe got to kill dat shnake-eadter. Look you, now, ve hafe got idt to kill!"

"What is the snake-eater?" Harry ventured to ask. Hertz was strangely excited; his voice grating.

"Why, de terrible Ophiophagus!" he cried. "De Hamadryad Elaps, ash some gall idt. Idt's de most venomous shnake of all—de pluckiest, too. Idt attacks man mitout provocation, und follows him—shtalks him in de yoongle. I tell you you would be so good ash dead now, if de Ophiophagus had shtruck you! Gani knew de danger, und I nodt vonder dat he nearly vent amok. I nodt dink he vould make a mistake. Vhat vas idt like. Yack? You saw it."

"Greenish, I fancy, with white rings. I only saw it for a moment."

"Dat moment vas long enough. Idt's de Ophio, right enough. A man has budt a poor shance against him in de yoongle. He ish sometimes fourteen feet long, und actife ash a "Sunbeam."* Ach! In India I saw an elephant die in t'ree hours. Budt I hafe dat big flower! I have dose Anoectochili, too. Vhere are de dogs?"

* A tiny serpent.
"Why is it called the snake-eater?" Jack asked.

"Idt's a cannibal! Idt lifes on oder shnakes. Liddle or big—poisonous or harmless—idt's all von! If dey let Ophio gatch dem, und dey gan't very vell esheape, down dey go mit mitout salt! Idt vill shvallow a shnake nearly so big ash idtself. Where are de dogs?"

The dogs appeared to have gone hunting on their own account whilst their masters sought the "blue" orchid. Nyait emitted a peculiar melancholy hum, the Dyak dog-call, which will carry a very long way indeed. This brought up the dogs at a run—three sharp-nosed, bright-eyed tykes, with short velvet coats of the colour of a dead leaf.

Boy released Gani, who appeared scarcely conscious that he had caused alarm. He received and sheathed his parang without a word.

"Pudt dose rifles down, boys, if you value your lifes," Hertz exclaimed. "Take your shot guns. You gan't hit a snake mit a bullet. Are you ready?"

"Yes," Jack answered.

"Den follow me. Boy, send de Dyaks mit de dogs into de pat'. Tell dem to make dem vork towards de river. Vill you gome mit us, Boy?"

But the Malay hung back.

"Nefer mind. I know de danger. Und you hafe no gun."

The Collector had Jack's double-barrel; Harry carried his own, Jack had Bounce's musket, whilst the sailor had taken up Jack's rifle.

Hertz turned to him: "Are you going mit dat rifle?"

"Ay, ay, skipper; wheer you an' the young gen'lemen goes, I go. But, asking your pardon for saying so, I reck'n as it's a fool's errand."

"Dat may be. Idt would be a fool's errand to go look for de 'blue' orchid in dat yoongle mit de Ophiophagus nodt killed or drifen away. What, dink you, Misder
Rider would say if ve told him a Malay saw an orchid which might have been de 'blue,' but ve dare not go see because of a snake? Wo-Sing, dare you take dat gun und gome mit us?"

Boy laughed. He had better have restrained his sneer. Wo-Sing hesitated a moment; his yellow face took a waxen tint. Then he said, in a very low tone:

"If you order me to go, sir, I will go."

"Take de gun," said Hertz, briefly.

Wo-Sing picked up the rifle, cool enough, apparently, but quaking no doubt, and with good reason.

Meanwhile the Dyaks had taken their dogs down the path. The patch of jungle which harboured the Ophiophagus was triangular in shape. The stream touched two sides, with a sharp bend at the apex. The path leading to the Dyak bridge formed the base.

"Now Yack, now Harry, I dink ve are ready," said the Collector. "Boy, you had besser shtay by de bridge mit your fellows. It's a goodt vay of retreat," laughing.

"I dink Ophio vill notd follow you ofer de vasser. Any-vay, you vill get a goodt shtart, if you keep a sharp look-oudt. Gome along, boys, und mind what you are about, und vhere you shoot. Remember dis—if you shoot und miss, you perhaps vill nefer shoot again!"

Hertz led his party into the jungle without hesitation, halting in a clear space, not far from the durien, which however, the youths could not see. Here, for a few yards, ground ferns and low shrubs alone impeded the view. Beyond, on every side, rose a wall of almost impenetrable jungle. The Collector and Wo-Sing faced towards the path; Jack, Harry, and Bounce, the apex of the triangle, standing a few yards apart. Thus nothing could cross that clear space without being seen.

Nyait sent in the dogs; his voice could be heard urging them forward. Judging by the rustling and crackling, they hunted the ground carefully, but did not
give tongue. Like other half-wild breeds, they are unable to bark. However, they soon made their whereabouts known. Two crossed the open ground, looked at the Orchid Seekers, and disappeared in the bush between them and the river.

The youths' hearts beat fast; not a word was spoken. Wo-Sing's teeth chattered, but he stood erect with his rifle at the ready, and gave no other sign of fear. Ten minutes passed. Not a sound was heard save the rustling and crackling of the dogs in the brushwood. The Dyaks in the path were silent; likely enough they had fled to the bridge. Where was the *Ophiophagus*? A dog left the jungle hurriedly. Jack made a threatening gesture, and it disappeared.

Suddenly a loud, querulous whine rose from the bushes where the dog had disappeared, not six yards from Jack.

"Look oudt, boys!" Hertz whispered.

The Dyaks, sixty yards away, yelled something, probably equivalent to our "At him, dog! Fetch him out!"

The bushes parted, and the dog which had previously appeared staggered out, rolled over, and died. Hertz faced about.

"De *Ophiophagus* ish dere!" he said.

"I reck'n," Bounce muttered, without removing his eyes from the jungle wall, "that you young gen'lemen 'll be of opinion that theer is some dan——"

The sentence was not finished.

A greenish-black head protruded from the exact spot whence the dying dog had emerged, angry eyes glistening, forked tongue playing, hood expanded! A gleam of white behind it!

Bang! bang! Four shots that sounded like two greeted it. Wo-Sing did not fire; he was looking the other way.

The smoke lifted and cleared. No *Ophiophagus*, dead or alive, was to be seen! Jack had been nearest, but had changed his position.
“Loadt! Loadt! for life’s sake!” Hertz cried hoarsely. “Ve hafe all missed!”

The youths and Bounce were already ramming down fresh charges with nervous haste. Hertz had a barrel undischarged. So had Harry, but he loaded the other.

“Von dead dog?” Hertz muttered. “Where are de oders?”

A dog crept out of the bush with its tail between its legs, sniffed its dead companion, and whined. Hertz motioned it back, but the animal was cowed, and would not go.

“Ach!” cried the Collector, in bewilderment, “dis ish a mess! Ve don’t know if de shnake-eadter ish dead or alife!”

Stepping cautiously up to the bush, he opened it with his gun barrels, and peered in, whilst the youths marvelled at his daring.

“I see where de shot has cut de leafes all to pieces,” he said, coolly. “I wonder how he eshcape? Dere he vas, for I saw him. Ach! Vell! ve hafe got to kill dat shnake-eadter! Are you loaded, boys?”

“Yes,” Jack answered.

“Gome mit me. You mit rifles shtay where you are.”

Without more ado he parted the bushes and disappeared, followed by Jack and Harry, with their guns cocked, but with their hands between cock and nipple to prevent accident. Their faces were very pale be sure.

“Dere’s nodings here,” Hertz muttered. “De shnake-eadter must be gone. Be sure he ish on de move if he ish anyvheres about. Idt’s marfellous how he eshcape!”

“Ahoy, skipper!” Bounce suddenly hailed. “Ahoy theer!”

“What is it?” Jack cried.

“A snake’s head, as I’m no Dutchman!”

The Collector crashed back through the bushes, shout-
ing, "Don't touch idt—don't touch idt, or you are a dead man!"

"Not if I knows it, skipper," Bounce rejoined, jerking something out of a fern with his gun-barrel.

It was the head of the _Ophiophagus_, with part of the hood shot clean away from the body! Just beyond the position Jack had occupied, the ground fern grew stragglingly, extending to the bush whence the serpent had pushed out its head. Bounce had opened its fronds with his rifle. Hence the discovery. Hertz stuck his knife into the head and held it aloft. As he did so, the jaws closed viciously.

"You see!" he laughed, "de head ish shtill alife und deadly! Now, Yack, where did you shtand when you fired?"

Jack pointed out the exact spot. Hertz instantly stooped, and picked up the body of the serpent from where it lay hidden in the fern behind the position Jack had occupied!

"If ve had all missed, you would be a dead boy now," he said gravely. "De shnake-eadter leaped adt you mitout idts head! However vas idt you nodont see him goming, und you so near?"

"I jumped as soon as I pulled," Jack replied.

"De shnake must hafe yoomped ash far," the Collector rejoined, producing his tape-measure.

The _Ophiophagus_ was twelve feet two inches long, without its head! It was beautifully marked. Olive green above, the scales edged with black; from neck to tail numerous oblique alternate white and black bands, converging towards the head.

"Ve vill take de shkin home ash a memento mori," Hertz resumed. "Nodont of von of us, dough, luckily. Und now, boys, for Gani's big flower! Hi, Boy! De shnake-eadter ish dead!"
Hertz plunged into the dense jungle, calling loudly for Boy and Gani.

Some twenty yards from the open space Gani halted at the foot of a huge tree—the durien which the youths had reached—and pointed overhead. Hertz raised his glass. It fell from his hand!

"Erstaunlich!" he cried, "was ist das? Gome here, boys!—gome here!"

"He's found it!" cried Jack, crashing through the undergrowth to the spot where he had first seen the Ophiophagus, followed by Harry, Boy, Bounce, and Wo-Sing. "Is it the 'blue,' Mr. Hertz—is it the 'blue'?"

"That ain't the tree, nor nothing like it," said Bounce, without hesitation.

"Oh!" Jack gasped, looking upwards. "What! Is that one orchid?"

"Oh!" Harry echoed, "it'll fill a waggon! It can't—it can't be one plant!"

"Idt gan! Idt ish! Hi!—Nyait! Nyait! You, Boy, shout for de Dyaks! Where are dey? I gife a dollar for dat plant unbroken—yoost ash idt ish! I gife a dollar!"

Soon Nyait and his fellows were surveying the smooth trunk, whilst Hertz was backing into the creepers, here—there—everywhere, to get different points of view.
The Dyaks were now accustomed to Hertz when excited, and did not fear *antus*. Besides, the orchid was a giant—visible enough. It covered a huge branch where it joined the trunk, and extended twelve or fourteen feet in diameter.

In vain the youths asked, "What is it?" The Collector had no ears and no eyes for anything save the "plloonder" overhead.

At last, after having forced his way twice round the tree, tearing a passage with that useful hook of his, insensible to thorns, he condescended to open his lips.

"Idt's a *Grammatophyllum*," he said, as if speaking to himself. "Idt gan't be anydings else. So big—und mit shpikes, I dink, ash tall ash lamp-posts!"

"What!" cried Harry; from the position he occupied he could not see the spikes. "What! flower-spikes as tall as lamp-posts?"

"I dink two of dem—fery nearly. Budt ve vaste time! Here ish a task for hours. De tree must be glimbed. Boy!—gut bamboos und rattans, large und small!"

Dyaks and Malays dispersed in search of those useful jungle products. Hertz in his eagerness hurried away to assist them.

The orchid grew on the lowest branch; that, however, was sixty feet from the ground, and the trunk was smooth. Pressing back from the tree, the youths could see the tall spikes clearly, and could distinguish the colour of the flowers, yellow with purple blotches.

Soon the Dyaks returned with bamboos and rattans, and began to construct a ladder, boring holes in the trunk of the durien with a tool resembling a rude auger. A strong bamboo was planted some eighteen inches from the tree, the rungs fixed in the holes, and lashed with split rattans to the bamboo. Then Nyait himself commenced to ascend, building his ladder as he climbed—
boring holes in the tree and fixing rungs. The rungs, however, were not placed every foot or so, as in ladders, but at distances averaging about three feet. It was slow work. When at last Nyait reached the branch and sat astride it, Jack said:

"Harry, all the conceit is knocked out of me. I used to think something of my athletic performances, but I don't believe I could climb that ladder, and Nyait has actually built it as he climbed!"

He certainly could not have climbed it. Any attempt would have torn the rungs out of the holes and brought the entire affair crash to the ground. Nyait used his prehensile toes equally with his hands, and kept all his weight pressed against the trunk.

Three other Dyaks ascended with lengths of rattan to lower the plant to the ground, and the four set to work to tear the huge mass from the branch. Hertz plunged to and fro in great excitement, crashing backwards, now into a tree-fern, now a prickly shrub, uttering warnings and ejaculations in English, German, and Malay; driving Boy and Wo-Sing into a state bordering on distraction, as they vainly endeavoured to render some of them into Dyak.

"Potztausend!—dey vill smash idt to atoms! You—Boy!—tell dem what I say! Ach weh! Ach weh! Dey break idt—dey break idt! Da ist er—Schau! [There he is, look!] breaking idt! Ach! Nyait—what are you doing, you shkellum? Ach! he tear—he tear! Boy—tell him not to tear like an Eberschwein!" [wild boar].

At length he could bear the torture no longer. Off came his boots, and he rushed to the ladder. But he stood nearly two feet taller than Nyait, and weighed at least seventy pounds more. At the first strain the bamboo side-support creaked ominously. A rung flew out of its hole. Clearly the crazy affair would come down, and the Collector with it, if he ventured to climb.
"Ach!" he cried, "I gan't see dose fellows shmash dat glorious plant! Gome on, Yack—Harry, ve vill go und look for somedings else! I dink idt's not possible to get idt down intact, und when idt's down how vill ve transport idt? Ve vill hafe to cut idt oop—ve vill hafe to cut idt oop!"

The youths picked up their guns and followed the Collector, who led the way to the hollow where the *Anoectochilus* grew. Carefully he removed all the strongest plants, and, sending Wo-Sing for a *tambok*, as carefully packed them in it.

"Idt's heart-breaking," he said, "to dink what dose heafeny dings vill be like when dey get to England! I dink I vill send dem mit what ve hafe adt once to Sirambau. Den de *Grammatophyllum*? However vill ve get dat dere? Ach! if only idt grew by a navigable shstream ve could pudt idt in a boat und take idt shtraight to Kuching, yoost ash idt ish! Now, my inventive boys, dink you—solve dis problem—how vill ve get de giant to Sirambau mitout breaking idt oop?"

Jack and Harry tried hard to think of a plan, but the problem was too difficult for them.

"How many men will be required to carry it?" Harry asked.

"By Dyak pat'—twenty."

"Then we can't get it to Sirambau. There are not twenty of us, all told."

"No. Budt I nodt vant to go back. Idt's time ve vere adt Bau. De Rajah vill egspect to hear somedings, und ve must keep our wordts." He reflected a moment. *Ach! I hafe idt!* he resumed. "Ve vill send a messenger for Meta und all de males of his tribe! Ve vill leave idt here, und dey vill gome und fetch idt! When ve return to Sirambau ve dink how ve get idt to Kuching."
"But," said Jack, "how on earth will they carry it over the batangs?"

"We vill make a shtretcher mit long handles so dat men gan carry before und behind adt vonce. Dose liddle Dyaks are all Hercules for shtrengt'. Idt's vonderful what dey can garry."

No time was lost. Hertz found two tall, strong bamboos suitable for the purpose, and Wo-Sing cut them down with his parang, which is at once sword and chopper. A number of smaller bamboos and rattans were procured, and a framework built up on the handles of bamboo lashed with split rattans. This done, they returned to the durien tree. The Dyaks had loosened the Grammatophyllum from the branch, and fastened it to two bamboos. These were fixed to rattan ropes, the slack ends of which were held by the Dyaks, who had twisted them round the branch on which they squatted. The huge plant was then pushed off, and slowly and safely reached the ground.

A monster indeed! Hertz produced his tape and measured it. Diameter twelve feet six inches!! Average width at root nearly three feet. Nine enormous flower spikes — the tallest eight feet high! The flowers, bright yellow blotched with reddish purple, six inches across!* 

The aid of every individual of the party was required to lift it upon the framework and bear it to the edge of the jungle, where it was concealed with great fronds of tree fern and palm leaves. Then Nyait sent a Dyak to his father, the orang kaya of Sirambau, requesting him to come with all his available strength and fetch it.

This done, the Orchid Seekers crossed the Dyak bridge to search the jungle on the further side. One by one they traversed the fragile structure, balancing them-

* G. speciosum (Latin), "pretty."
selves by the aid of the handrails, which, designed to
give a mere feeling of security, will not bear the slightest
pull. In case of a slip they are useless; the unfort-
tunate passenger clutches them—they break away, and
he falls.

The bridge creaked ominously under Hertz's weight,
but all crossed without accident, though not without
fearsome tremors on the part of some. The Dyaks and
Malays stepped along as unconcernedly as if tight-rope
dancing were their everyday vocation.

Almost certain death would have followed a slip, for
far below the stream foamed among jagged, pointed
rocks, on which the luckless faller would have been
dashed to pieces.

"I reck'n," said Bounce to the youths, when all were
over, "that you'm convinced by this time about that
theer little matter o' danger as we spoke about in your
awkward house at home. What wi' Ophiophagum ses as
kills in two minutes or so, an' tight-rope bridges as kills
in ten seconds, I reck'n theer ain't room for much dis-
belief."

But Jack and Harry had long ago been convinced that
their home opinions were erroneous.

The jungle on this side resembled that previously
explored. Beautiful butterflies flitted about the open
ground, splendid creatures, rainbow-hued. Flowers
there were in plenty and numerous orchids, but the
famous "blue" was not among them. Hertz collected a
few specimens, but nothing of importance was found.

The youths, however, met with the usual surprises.
They found a pretty Cypripedium, not new however,
growing on a dead branch, easily accessible. Harry
clambered up to get it, but before he could touch it a
little snake of a brilliant green, not much thicker than a
pencil, but three feet long or more, uncoiled itself and
darted away between the branches and over the leaves
which hardly seemed to bend beneath its weight. Harry had scarcely uttered his exclamation of alarm before the tiny serpent had vanished. It had been coiled up in the crown of the orchid.

"You must be gareful," Hertz said when they told him. "Dere are two green shnakes dat lofe to gurl oop in orchids; von ish poisonous, de oder nodt. I gan't tell you what idt vas—probably a Dryadida or Dendrophida. In Siam dey gall von shpecies 'Sunbeam.' Idt mofes like lightning, und gifes no time to identify idt. In Brazil I hafe seen a tiny shnake, two feet long, dat lies easily in de palm of your hand. Idt’s all de colours of de rainbow—blue und crimson und bright green, und when idt’s frightened, ach! idt’s like a flash of prismatic light! Idt’s gone before you can say Yack Robinson!"

"I wish you would tell us something about that terrible Ophiophagus," said Harry. The skin, by the way, had been stripped off and packed in a tambok.

"I nodt see budt von before dis, und I nodt vant to see anoder. Dat time I vas lying down in de yoongle, und he nodt see me. A shnake game oudt, a venomous von. He gaught idt about a foot from de tail, und he vorked his mout’ oop to de head, nefer vonce letting go, de vigtim writ’ing und tying idtself in knots all de time. Vhen de Ophiophagus got to de head he vorked to de mout’ and shvallowed dat first. De vigtim coiled his tail round a branch, und pooll und pooll, und hang on—I dink he boorst himself in two! BuDt de shnake-eadter he nodt gare a shtraw. Inch by inch his hungry yaws grept oop de vigtim’s body—inch by inch de vigtim disappeared. Adt last Ophio gome to de tail, coiled round de shtick. Dat puzzled him—he nodt able to shvallow de shtick und de big tree idt vas attached to! Vell—he vait a minute poolling und poolling, buDt de vigtim hold tight. Den, all adt vonce, de shnake-eadter open vide his yaws! Oudt gome two
feet of de shnake dat vas eadten. No doubt he dink he disagree mit de gannibal, und he going to escape; he uncoil his tail to be ready. Ach! Ophio yerk him away from de branch where he gan’t coil round nodings, und eadt him oop again, tail und all, in no times!”

The Collector’s graphic description was received with roars of laughter. The youths rushed laughing into the jungle, where another surprise awaited them.

They were peering upwards at an orchid which they did not recognise, on a tree of unknown species, when two peculiar “leaves” came floating down; not, however, as leaves fall, with a flutter, but with an oblique sweep. This peculiarity attracted Harry’s attention.

“Gracious!” he cried. “They’re alive—they’re lizards!”

“What?” Jack cried.

Harry drew his attention to a reptile on the ground, green and grey mottled with brown, with its wings—really enlargements of the skin under the fore-arm—lying in folds, like crumpled whitish-grey parchment.

“What is this thing?” Harry asked Wo-Sing, who just then came up.

The Celestial took the lizard up without hesitation.

“It’s a flying dragon,” he said. “It’s harmless.”

“A flying dragon? It doesn’t answer to my idea of a dragon. Does it to yours?”

Wo-Sing exploded. As a Chinaman he was familiar with dragons of all shapes and sizes, pictorial, of course. This half-withered “leaf” resembled none of them, as he admitted, with many crackling laughs.

“Bring it along,” said Jack; “we’ll show it to Mr. Hertz.”

The Collector identified it as the *Draco volans*.

“Idt nodt egsactly fly,” he explained; “idt spreads idts wings und floats downwards.”

Having explored the jungle on both sides of the bridge
He sprang to his feet, and, with a word or two of apology, snatched the blossom.
without finding the "blue" orchid, Hertz ordered an advance towards Bau. An hour's uneventful march ensued, when the party struck the Siniawan road. Immediate evidence that the country was inhabited appeared. Since leaving Sirambau they had not seen a house or a human being. But while resting on the Chinese road a small party of Celestials tramped past going towards Bau. Half a dozen men, with three girls, evidently Dyaks—the wives, probably, of Chinamen.

They were dressed much smarter than are Dyak girls generally, very good evidence that they had married Chinamen. The Celestial loves to see his wife in rich attire, in fact, insists upon it whenever he can afford the cost. Her mission is to look as much like a butterfly as possible; his, to provide the means. He lights the fires, washes, does all the domestic work of the house, toils in the fields or the gold-working. She dresses her hair, paints her face, tries new fashions, and gossips with her like. When her lord comes home, he expects her to chat and look pleasant, whilst he gets dinner for both. But, let it be understood, the Chinese husband is a tyrant for all that. He rules with a firm hand, and when his bride does not please him he beats her!

The women carried flowers in their hands, and wore flowers—orchids—in their hair. Hertz noticed these rather than their wearers. One girl wore in her hair an orchid of unusual beauty which attracted the Collector's attention.

Uttering an exclamation of delight, he sprang to his feet, and, with a word or two of apology, snatched the blossom.

The girl screamed and trembled. The Chinamen turned and began to bluster and threaten in loud, boisterous tones. Perhaps it was well for Hertz that his party was strong and well armed; otherwise the lovely
flower might have cost him dear. But when the China-
men saw four guns and a dozen naked parangs they
moderated their anger and ceased to brandish their tools.
The odds were not on their side.

Wo-Sing explained that no insult was intended, and
Hertz recompensed the Dyak beauty for the loss of her
ornament, with which, by the way, he had no intention
of parting. Presently the Chinamen cooled down into a
more reasonable frame of mind, and began to chat. But
the Collector was not satisfied. He wished to know
where the orchid grew. Nay, he insisted, Probably he
would have tried to detain the Chinamen until they told
him had he been denied. There was, however, no neces-
sity for high-handed proceedings. So soon as the Dyak
girl comprehended what the orang putih desired, she gave
the information readily enough.

She got it from a log lying near the first stream on the
road to Siniawan, about a mile and a half from the place
where she had lost it. The log lay under a tapong tree
on the right-hand side of the path.

Such was the gist of her remarks, as interpreted by
Boy.

“Ach!” Hertz cried, “dat’s someding like definite. If
Bounce only knew ash vell where he saw de ‘blue’ orchid,
ve do. Gome along, boys; ve go for dat plant. You
gome, Wo-sing. Boy, you und de Dyaks shtay here till
ve come back.”

“Is it a new Cypripedium?” Harry asked, referring to
the stolen flower, of course. Neither he nor Jack needed
a second glance to determine its genus. It was a “slipper”
orchid, the largest they had ever seen, perhaps the most
beautiful as the most singular.* The flower was six
inches across, with broad white petals tinted with yellow

* C. Stonei platytcenium, a variety of C. Stonei. Probably the
most valuable of all orchids. But one plant has ever been discovered.
and blotched with purple; the dorsal sepal white with purple stripes; the slipper or pouch dull red with purple veins. This was very curious; it almost exactly resembled a Turkish slipper.

"Did you ever see it before?" Hertz returned, smiling.

"Never!" both answered. "But," Harry added, "it seems to me rather like Cypripedium Stonei."

"Brafo! I dink you're right, my boy! Idt looks to me moosh like a variety of Shtonei, butd vastly improved; radter, I should say, perhaps, vastly different. De petals of C. Shtonei are long, narrow, curved downwards, und twisted; dese are an inch broad. Dey are blotched mit purple und de sepals shtriped, whilst de sepals und petals of C. Shtonei are all shtriped. Dat you und I nefer saw idt before does nodt prove dat idt's new; butd idt's reasonable goodt evidence. I dink idt's new—glorious new! I don't dink adt all about idt's beaudty! idt's heafenly! I hafe no more adyectifes, I use dem all oop mit de Anoectochili und de Grammatophyllum. Butd do you dink I would be rude to a lady for a gommon ding? Do you dink dat I would shtean a gommon ding—take idt from a lady's hair mitout, almost, saying 'by your leave'? I dink dat proves what I dink about idt yoost ash well as if I use oop on idt all de praiseful adyectifes in de Englisch language!"

And so it did, for the Collector was nothing if not courteous, and he was more than careful to obey the Rajah's commands with regard to the good treatment of natives. His courtesy, however, and his sense of duty together were not proof against the blandishments of a new orchid.

Half an hour's walk took them to the stream spoken of by the Dyak girl. A brief search, and Hertz's keen eyes discovered the log, with the Cypripedium growing upon it. It was a large plant, some four feet thick, with
leathery, dark-green, shining leaves about a foot long; flower spikes two feet in length, each bearing three flowers.

Hertz did not go into ecstasies over it, beautiful as it was. As he had explained, he had used up all his adjectives. Not every day, nor every month, does it fall to the lot of a collector to discover four new species, and an orchid large enough to fill a waggon. Yet there was a striking feature about the *Cypripedium* which did not escape Harry.

"Why, it's a *Terrestrial* and an *Epiphyte* both!" he exclaimed. "It's growing partly on the log and partly on the ground!"

"Ja!" Hertz rejoined, carefully removing it. "Dere ish no end to de vagaries of orchids. Nobody tell what he do, or what he nodt do."

Wo-Sing shouldered the plant to carry it to the spot where they had left the Dyaks with their *tamboks*.

On the way Harry said:

"The smell of that terrible *Bulbophyllum* was so bad that I dared not look carefully at it, but I fancied it was an enormous size, much bigger than the giant *Grammatophyllum*. Was it so?"

"Vell, you see," Hertz replied, "de *Bulbophyllum* ish a creeper: idt gan hardly be gompared mit de mass of de *Grammatophyllum*, whish grows all togedder. Budt take idt from de tree und I dink idt woud prove a hoondred times more bulky."

"I shouldn't like to be obliged to weigh it," said Jack. "A diving suit would be required, with I don't know how many fathoms of pipes to bring air from a distance whilst the job was being done."

When they rejoined the Malays and Dyaks, Hertz packed the *Cypripedium* in a *tambok*, and the party proceeded.

The country passed through was more beautiful than
pen can picture. The path, perhaps the best in Sarawak, led through Chinese and Dyak clearings—shady forests—over pretty bridges, of the tight-rope order certainly, but all as picturesque as human things can be—along hill sides, and deep down in lovely valleys. In a charming glade Hertz called a halt, and the Dyaks constructed a *lang-kan*. All were too fatigued to proceed to Bau, some five miles distant, that day. Nor would it have been wise to do so. At Bau danger might await them—perils much greater than any to be encountered while seeking orchids. For at Bau they had a grave duty to perform—nothing less than to discover what the *Kunsi*, the Chinese Gold Company, was doing; the meaning of those purchases of arms and boats by Wang-lo; what Secret Society, if any, was stirring up the *Kunsi*. And Hertz knew well—none better—that he who meddles with Chinese Secret Societies courts death.

Therefore he preferred to approach the Chinese town in the early morning, when fresh and vigorous.
CHAPTER XV.

A PAKATAN FAMILY.

Soon after resuming their march, the Orchid Seekers passed a Chinese gold-working belonging to the company at Bau, the San-tei Kiu Kunsi, to give it its full title.

There were many such workings in the district, but the youths certainly would not have connected this one with gold. No sign of it was to be seen; no workmen either. Nothing but a large pond, of natural appearance, in a valley. However, Hertz said it was a gold working, and Wo-Sing corroborated.

"Idt's a reservoir," Hertz explained, "made by building a dam agross de valley. De Shinese do many dings like no oder peoples, und dey moosh too goncited to learn a besser vay. If you vas on de oder side you would see de dam und a long shluice about four feet vide. De shluice runs t'rough de land to be vorked. When enough vasser ish golllected, dey t'row de dirt mit de gold in idt into de schluice, und turn on de vasser, whish garry de eart' avay, und leafe de gold adt de bottom—some of idt; de most go avay mit de eart'! Idt's a bad, vasteful plan, budt de Shinaman shtoopid ash a pig; show him a besser, und he turn oop his nose und laugh sargastigally. His fore-fadters nodt invent dat besser plan, derefore idt's no good. All de same, I dink de Shinaman is de best agriculturist on eart'. He get as moosh produce from ten shquare yards of land ash a European from forty."
The path led along the side of a valley, by many reservoirs. At some, stalwart Celestials were throwing earth into the sluices; at others the water was rushing through well-constructed flood-gates, carrying the soil away.

The vale opened into another, that of Bau, flanked on two sides by black-looking hills, rising steeply, on which the jungle had been burnt. Here, prettily situated, and surrounded by numerous smaller buildings, stood the house of the Kunsis, the head-quarters, where any mischief which might be threatening Sarawak would probably be brewed.

The Kunsis are republics; the chief is elected by the members for his business ability; sometimes a mere coolie is the head. But, coolie or rich merchant, the chief of a Kunci is always a man of strong character. The mystery which envelops the Secret Societies also enwraps the Kunsis, and nobody knows the exact relationship which the former bear to the latter. The apparently poor coolie who sometimes controls the Kunci may be a high official of the T'ien-ti, or the "White Lily;" in which case a close connection may be taken for granted, and all is explained. But of this no European can speak with confidence.

The house itself was a substantial building, erected on ironwood posts,—which will last a century,—constructed of logs and roofed with ironwood shingles.

Hertz critically examined it at a distance.

"Idt's nodd etsactly a fort," he said, "budt I dink idt's able to shtand a long siege against soosh guns ash may be brought here. I dink idt's vell armed, too; dat ve hafe to find oudt."

The town was comparatively large and prosperous. It contained more than a hundred shops. The Chinamen in the streets stared insolently at the travellers, and uttered insulting exclamations, regardless of Wo-Sing, who, walking beside Hertz, interpreted in whispers.
“Glose oop,” said the Collector suddenly. “Dese fellows are fery brave in deir own estimations. Dey woudl attack us if dey dared. Ash dey dare nodt, dey gall us names.”

Boy spoke to the Malays and Dyaks, and the rather straggling party closed up into a solid, well-armed body. It was necessary, irrespective of the threatening aspect of the inhabitants. Scores of growling, ferocious dogs thronged the street, seemingly inclined to declare war at once and taste the strangers. But the Dyaks and Malays kept them off with their spears. The Chinamen were ugly and sullen; the women, however, mostly Dyaks, were pleasing, and appeared amiable. Some of the young girls were positively good looking; all were clean and neatly dressed. Their Chinese fathers apparently took great pride in their personal appearance.

Whilst on the way Hertz had frequently conversed with Wo-sing, and a course had been decided upon. But it was necessary first to know if Wang-lo had returned from Siniawan.

Wo-Sing asked an acquaintance he met, a trader who frequently visited Kuching. The man informed him that Wang-lo had returned on the day the Orchid Seekers left Siniawan.

“Soospicious,” was the Collector’s comment. “Wo-Sing,” he added, “you besser leafe us; find your friends und talk mit dem. Be gareful.”

Wo-Sing separated himself from the party. Hertz proceeded to the house of the Kunci. There he found Wang-lo.

The Celestial was oilily courteous. He invited the Europeans to his apartment in the Kunci house and offered them chairs. As Hertz spoke Malay, no interpreter was needed. Jack, Harry, and Bounce sat down, with their guns between their knees. To them the proceeding seemed very like bearding the Chinese lion in his den. The Collector, however, knew there was no danger.
“At Siniawan,” he said, in the Malay tongue, “I told you my object, also that I should probably visit Bau, where your influence is great. I am here. So far I have not been successful. I have not found the ‘blue’ orchid, but I have discovered many valuable plants, and I intend to search the neighbourhood thoroughly. Now, Wang-lo, you can help me. You have many men in this Kunsi—several thousands. Some of them may have seen the flower, or another of the same species. If at the next meeting of the Kunsi you will ask the question, I shall be much obliged.”

The burly Celestial promised without hesitation, adding that he did not know the date of the next meeting, which in any case would not be held for a long time. Then he asked several questions on his own account.

“Does the Rajah know of this visit to Bau?”
“He knew that I was going to Siniawan and Sirambau. He knows that I will seek until I find.”
“You dined with the Rajah at Kuching?”
“Yes. My companions are his countrymen.”
“When did you get to Sarawak?”
“On the day I dined with the Rajah.”
“Have you visited Kuching before?”
“Never. But I have been in Borneo.”

Hertz well knew the drift of Wang-lo’s questions. The Celestial was seeking evidence to connect the party with the Rajah’s government. But he had a cleverer man than himself to deal with.

“You have with you a Chinaman, Wo-Sing, a servant of the Rajah?” he continued.
“Wo-Sing is my personal servant and interpreter. He is with us, of course.”

Wang-lo frowned, but soon beamed more oilily than ever.

“I will do what the Rajah’s honoured friend wishes,” he said; adding, “when I am able.”
“I cannot call myself the Rajah’s honoured friend,” the Collector rejoined warily. “The Rajah received me courteously, as you have done. The stranger can always claim courtesy.”

And bowing to Wang-lo, who was evidently ill at ease, Hertz led the way from the room.

“Nodings to be learned in dat quarter;” he said outside, “egsept dat Wang-lo dinks he hafe goodt reason to be soospicious. So hafe I. Dere ish somedings in de vind; de man dinks ve are agents of de government; he’s right enough, but he gan’t be sure.”

Rejoining the Malays and Dyaks, he asked Boy if he had seen Paham or Wo-Sing.

Paham, it will be remembered, had been sent to Kuching with a letter for the Rajah, with orders to hasten back to Bau.

He had not arrived, and Boy had not seen Wo-Sing since the China “boy” left the party.

“Ve nodt shtay in dis town a minute longer dan ish necessary,” Hertz resumed. “I dink ve besser go now. Ve vork round idt, alvays looking for de ‘blue’ orchid, so ve moosh more likely to find oudt somedings.”

He ordered an advance westwards. Nyait took the lead along a good path over a dam, thence through numerous clearings and gardens to the jungle, where the Collector halted to await Wo-Sing and Paham.

Presently the former arrived, very downcast.

“What did you learn?” Hertz demanded.

“Wang-lo ordered me to be beaten!” Wo-Sing burst out.

“All likely. Vere you beaten?”

“I ran away. But I will borrow a gun and go back! I will shoot that bad man!”

Wo-Sing sprang up, glaring tragically, and eyeing the fire-arms.
"Don't bluster, und don't be blood't'irsty," said the Collector, quietly. "What did you learn?"

"The Kunsi meets to-morrow night."

"Wang-lo said idt would nodt meet for a long time."

"Wang-lo cannot speak the truth! He thinks you are a government agent. He came from Siniawan at once and called a meeting. He would kill us all if he dared."

"I don't doubt dat. Did Li-dah gome mit him?"

"She's here. I saw her and spoke a word. Wang-lo came up, and I had to run. I heard news before. Wang-lo has a lot of boats hidden in a mangrove swamp near Tudong. He has many new guns in the Kunsi house."

"What he do mit dem?"

"At Suñgei Tañgah and other places many Chinamen have gardens. Wang-lo says he will make them give up the gardens and join the Kunsi; he wants them to work for gold. So he gets the boats and guns to go and fetch them."

"Do you beliefe dat?"

"Yes. But I think he does not want them to work for gold."

"For what, den?"

"I cannot tell. I will find out."

"You must attend de meedting to-morrow night."

Wo-Sing's face paled.

"If Wang-lo catches me he will kill me," he muttered.

"Den de Rajah vill kill Wang-lo."

Wo-Sing was silent. Evidently the suggested *quid pro quo* was unsatisfactory. Besides, as he well knew, Wang-lo would have to be caught.

Hertz sent Gani back to Bau to wait for Paham, and ordered Boy to traverse the ground over which he had accompanied Bounce. The Malay at once took a south-eastern course, leaving the Chinese path and plunging into a jungle as dense as any the youths had seen. Here
the path had generally to be cleared; but where clearing was unnecessary, Boy blazed the tree trunks at short intervals to guide Paham and Gani.

Hertz, with the youths and Bounce, lingered behind, peering into and penetrating the living wall on either side whenever a break rendered it practicable, collecting what they considered worth carrying away. Whilst thus engaged, the extreme slowness of the march passed unheeded. They were not more than three miles from Bau as the crow flies, yet they had been walking four hours. Nor did they observe that Boy was constantly urging Nyait forward, with but poor success. The Dyak chief advanced most unwillingly, and his followers evidently shared his disinclination to increase the speed.

Presently Nyait squatted where a huge pointed limestone rock, forty feet high, blocked the path, which ran round it on either side. His tribesmen also squatted, encircling their knees with their arms. Boy urged them forward, but they would not budge.

When Hertz arrived, Boy and the Malays stood leaning on their spears, angrily remonstrating with the Dyaks, who answered not a word.

"What is de matter?" the Collector demanded.

"Nyait not want go," Boy answered. "He say come soon to jungle where antus be. No Dyak go this way. Dyaks all cowards. They fear antus—fool antus!"

Boy laughed scornfully.

"Dat vill do," said Hertz, checking the Malay's mirth. "Shpeak to him of Dyak bravery. Tell him de eyes of de orang putih are on him. Wo-Sing, you undershtand me—tell him what I say. Ashk him if I shall tell de Rajah dat Nyait, de son of de orang kaya of Sirambau, ish a goward?"

The China "boy" stepped forward and addressed the Dyak chief, with the result that Nyait rose shamefacedly
A PAKATAN FAMILY.

and disappeared behind the gloomy rock which towered over the dense vegetation, barring the path. The Dyaks and Malays followed quickly, as also did Hertz.

"Ve must nodt linger," he remarked, "or dose fellows may bolt. Dere may be nodings alarming in de vay, of course. All de same, I dink dere's somedings. Nyait probably nodt know what."

Behind the rock, the character of the jungle changed with unusual suddenness. It had been dense before, but not gloomy. Now it was old jungle, called campong—town—because comparatively easy to traverse. There was little undergrowth, but plenty of shrubs struggling upwards to reach the light, bare sticks, with only a sickly leaf here and there. Many ferns grew on the trees, but not a flower was to be seen, and no living thing besides insects. So dense was the foliage overhead that hardly a ray of sunlight penetrated it. An uncanny silence reigned. Path there was none, nor any sign of one. If one existed on this side of the sentinel rock Nyait had lost it. But a path was not needed. In campong jungle one can walk more easily than in an English wood.

Suddenly the silence was broken by loud voices. The Dyaks gathered round their leader, an excited group, naked parangs in hand.

Hertz and Boy hurried forward. Nyait held between his fingers a slender stick about ten inches long, not much thicker than a knitting needle.

"Ach!" cried the Collector, excited in his turn; "a sumpit arrow! Wo-Sing, my brandy flask! Ish anybody hit?"

"Tuans! Guns!" cried Boy, also alarmed. Jack and Harry hurriedly cocked their rifles. Bounce slapped the breech of his musket, and cocked it.

"Ashk if anybody ish hit?" Hertz went on, well aware of the deadly nature of the sumpit poison.
Boy put the question. Nyait answered.

"He say arrow not shot," said Boy immediately. "He find besticking through leaf. Poison is dry; arrow shot yesterday."

"Und de shooter?"

"A Pakatan, Tuan."

Nyait gave the arrow to Hertz.

"You see," the Collector said, "dis tiny ding makes a hole nodt moosh larger dan a pin; idt's hardly able to draw blood; budt when de poison ish fresh idt kills in half an hour."

The youths examined the sumpitan arrow with a respect induced by its terrible power. They had seen others in the Rajah's museum. The point appeared to have been rolled in some dark sticky liquid which had congealed.

"Do you think there are many Pakatans in this jungle?" Jack asked.

"No. Von family, or adt de most, two. Idt's too near a settlement. De Pakatans vander in families; dey hafe no houses—no home whatefer. Dey pick oop a living in de yoongle, und shleep oonder a tree, mit a fire burning, und so dey egsist, like vildt beasts."

"And as dangerous?"

"Dangerous because dey are hoonted like vildt beasts. I dink de Pakatan ish here to sell yoongle produce to de Shinamen—perhaps fruit or game—perhaps poison! Boy, what de Dyaks say?"

"Nyait say Pakatan must be killed, Tuan, or at night come and witch, and arrows shoot and kill. He say he back go if Pakatan no killed."

"Yoost ash I dinked. Ach! ve nodt kill de poor fellow oonless he try to kill us. Here are Paham und Gani!"

The Malays salaamed. Paham brought a letter of thanks from the Resident. The Rajah had left Kuching for Singapore, but the Collector's letter would be sent on if an opportunity offered. The Resident requested Hertz
to obtain confirmation of Li-dah’s casual statement, if possible. This had been done.

“Hafe you dinked ofer what I said about de Kunsi meedting?” said Hertz, addressing Wo-Sing.

“Yes, sir,” the China “boy” faltered. “If you order me to go, I will go.”

“I do order you. But I shall take gare you do nodt lose your life. You shall garry a pistol. If you are in danger, fire idt, und ve shall be mitin hearing. You know de hour de Kunsi meets?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Tuan,” Boy interrupted, “Nyait back go. No dare stay if you no let him kill Pakatan or drive away.”

“Let him drife de Pakatan avay by all means, if he’s able to find him. Shtay by de big rock, Wo-Sing. Gome along, Yack, Harry, und Boy. Ve go see fair play.”

The Dyaks had evidently resolved not to linger in the neighbourhood of a prowling Pakatan—a being, as they imagined, not human—a wild beast, but capable of witchcraft, and able to kill as silently as Death himself.

Perhaps nothing but the presence of the Pakatan would have induced them to push forward in that antu-haunted campong of their own free will; however, the hope of getting a “head” outweighed their fear of antus, and they stole on, followed closely for a short distance by Hertz, the youths, Bounce, and Boy.

The Dyaks led their dogs to the spot where Nyait had found the arrow, but the scent was dead. The dogs, however, hunted about, and their masters followed them. Presently they reached a belt of new jungle fringing the old, into which they entered, almost as noiselessly as the dogs. How they were able to force their way without using their parangs was a mystery to the youths, who, with the Collector and the sailor, found themselves unable to follow.

“Dyaks, Pakatans, and antus may do it,” Jack muttered,
in the embrace of a dozen different creepers; "I give it up."

Boy, who had stayed with the orang putih, led the way back to the old jungle, where walking was pleasant; and they skirted the belt of new, in which the Dyaks were hidden.

Suddenly Boy uttered an exclamation. He had discovered something under a tree. They ran to the Malay's side, and found him gazing at the ashes of a fire, and a heap of fern fronds and palm leaves only slightly withered.

"Pakatans here sleep last night, Tuans," said Boy. "Weh! I track them. I no want dogs; I no want Dyaks."

"Leadt de vay, den," said Hertz.

Boy marched off, bent nearly double, in the opposite direction to that taken by the Dyaks, his gaze fixed on the ground, watching for signs—a stick pressed into a dead leaf, the faint impression of a foot, a disarranged shrub.

After a while he moved more cautiously, slipping from tree to tree, reconnoitring from behind one shelter before venturing to another, avoiding every bit of difficult ground, advancing with serpent-like stillness.

The Europeans behind endeavoured to emulate their leader, but only partially succeeded. Did Jack step on a dry stick or Harry brush against a shrub, Boy heard the sound, and looked back beseechingly, lifting his hand in warning.

"This is exciting, anyway," Jack whispered to Harry. "It beats the deer-hunt hollow."

Faint as was the whisper, Boy heard it ten yards in advance, and waited till they came up, stealing from tree to tree, as he had done.

His lips moved. He could scarcely be said to whisper. "Pakatan hear enemy breathe," he murmured, and went forward.

Doubtless it was more exciting than the deer-hunt.
Man is the nobler game; and the hunters did not wish to slay, but to save the Pakatans from the Dyaks, whose longing for "heads" would be sure to lead them to murder the wild people, if they found them. Indeed, the Pakatan "heads" were in great danger of being hung in the pangeran house at Sirambau. Nyait and his fellows might hit upon the trail any moment, and they would follow it unerringly, even if unaided by their dogs.

Presently Boy dropped on his hands and knees, and crawled, looking back to see if his example were followed. It was, regardless of possible serpents and probable centipedes and scorpions. The reason for this move was evident. The old jungle had become more open, with less cover, and that near the ground—low scrub. Boy dared not rise to his feet. From some indication or other, invisible to the Europeans, he had concluded that the Pakatans were close at hand; and he was well aware that the Collector's giant form would tower three feet or more above that low scrub. At length he ceased to advance and held up his hand. Noiselessly the others gained his side, and peered through the bush which screened him and them. Harry almost uttered an exclamation, which would certainly have made the long stalk wasted labour.

Not thirty yards distant a tiny stream purled. On the near bank, with his back against the trunk of a tree, sat a man, naked save for a waist-cloth of bark, doing something with a long rod. A few yards from the man lay a woman and two children, apparently asleep. The youths saw that the adults were much tattooed, and that all were at least three shades lighter than Dyaks.

Boy neither moved nor spoke. He dared not ask for orders, and there were but few bushes to cover a further advance.

Suddenly, while they watched, the male Pakatan sprang to his feet and assumed a listening attitude. The sleeping woman and children rose hurriedly. Then the adults lay
down with their ears to the ground. In three seconds they were again on their feet. The man picked up his arms—two *sumpitans* and a spear—and rushed across the open space towards the ambushed party. Not ten yards distant they lay down flat on their stomachs behind a bush, intently watching the banks of the little stream, where instantly appeared a Dyak dog, undoubtedly Nyait’s!

The animal threw up its head and whined. An unmistakable Dyak yell followed, and Nyait and his fellows burst out of the jungle and bounded over the brook, with their naked *parangs* in their hands.

The Pakatans sprang up to flee, only to find themselves confronted by Hertz and his party, the like of whom they had never seen before. Hertz, a huge spirit in their terrified eyes, stood, waving his hook and shouting, in the only possible way of escape!

The woman and the children fell on their faces, awaiting death. The desperate man faced those foes whom he knew to be mortal—the Dyaks—trembling, with his deadly blow-pipe at his mouth, but too panic-stricken to insert an arrow.

“Back, Nyait—back!” Hertz shouted. Boy screamed something in Dyak, and Nyait and his fellows halted, irresolute, narrowly watching the Pakatan at bay, and ready to dodge the expected shower of poisoned arrows.

The irresolution was only momentary. Seeing that the blow-pipe was empty, Nyait uttered a yell and leaped forward, followed by his companions, bent on making an addition to the ghastly chandelier at Sirambau.
CHAPTER XVI.

A HAUNTED JUNGLE.

The Pakatan glanced wildly round, then faced his foes—a splendid figure, much taller than Malay or Dyak, finer of form, and more commanding.

The youths could only see his profile, but his hair bristled and moved as does the hair on the back of an angry hound. The savage was a man, and would die game!

Nyait leaped forward, but the wild man had a friend there equally quick. The parang, uplifted to strike, was caught by Hertz's hook and wrenched from the Dyak's grasp.

"Ach! would you?" cried the Collector, towering before the Pakatan, swinging the curved piece of iron which had disarmed Nyait. "Down mit your weapons! Down—I say!"

All this happened in a moment. The danger was over before Jack and Harry became alive to the situation; before the agile Malay could spring to Hertz's side.

Reluctantly the Dyaks lowered their parangs. Their leader set them a good example. Not a bit of malice did he bear the big orang putih, who, weaponless, had disarmed him. The ferocious glare vanished from his eyes, and, smiling with almost comic suddenness, he squatted on his haunches, like the amused spectator of a comedy rather than the foiled actor in what was nearly a tragedy.
His expression said pretty plainly: "Go on with the play; it doesn't concern me in the least. I'm only the audience."

"Make signs of peace!" roared the Collector.

Boy interpreted the order, and the Dyaks extended their right hands. The Pakatan glanced round fearfully. More extended hands, with smiling faces. He laid his sumpitan down, and squatted, violently trembling, his eyes, never still, like a monkey's, wandering restlessly from one to another of his captors, watching their every movement. The woman and the children—these naked as newly hatched sparrows—rose and squatted beside the head of the family, a woeful group!

The Dyaks retained their positions, squatting in a semi-circle. Hertz faced the poor captives, whilst the youths drew near.

"Ashk de Dyaks if dey gan shpeak to him," the Collector said.

Boy spoke to Nyait, who rose and addressed the Pakatan. An unintelligible gibberish, scarcely articulate, was the response.

"Nyait not know what he say," said Boy at once.

"How den do Pakatans und Dyaks shpeak mit von anoder?"

"Dyaks speak with parangs," said Boy, facetiously.

"No doubt. Budt dey shpeak oder vays sometimes."

"Weh! with fingers they talk, and signs. I know."

"Den talk."

Boy stepped forward, and pointed first to the captive's body, then to his eyes. "You see," he said, by way of explanation to the orang putih. Then, standing on tip-toes, and raising his hands as high as he could—"big;" pointing to the Collector and prostrating himself at his feet—"Tuan;" seizing the Pakatan's hand, holding it firmly clasped, and pretending to offer food—"friend."

"You see big lord, your friend."
This was the sentence; having signified which, the Malay proudly stood aside.

The Pakatan had followed every movement with his restless eyes—the eyes of a hunted animal, watching for an opportunity to escape, never still, but giving no sign that he understood. Yet he did understand, for he prostrated himself before Hertz, as the Malay had done, but with much less energy. Indeed, his gaze never ceased to wander.

"Gapital, Boy! Gapital!" the Collector cried. "Now ashk him what he's doing here?"

Instantly Boy wandered about as if seeking something in the jungle; then he pretended to light a fire, and lay down; rising, he again wandered, finally halting before the Pakatan, who had watched him narrowly.

The man put his hand to his mouth and moved his jaws; then took up the long rod, an unfinished sumpitan.

"He food look, and wood to sumpitan make," said Boy, promptly.

"Bravo! Yack — Harry — hafe you anydings for presents?"

The youths turned out their pockets. The tamboks had been left with Wo-Sing.

"I've a spare backy-box, skipper," said Bounce, producing it.

"I've a small clasp knife," said Harry.

"Give bot'. You gan't shpare hoonting knifes—more useful."

Hertz opened and shut the box and the clasp knife several times, then handed both to the Pakatan, who took them fearfully.

"He think they antus," said Boy; "I show. Tuan Bob, you tobacco have?"

Bounce fished another box from his pocket, containing pig-tail twist. Boy took knife and box from the Patakans,
and transferred the tobacco from Bounce's box to the one the sailor had given away.

"Here, stow that!" cried the old salt.

"It all right, Tuan Bob," Boy rejoined. Again removing the tobacco and cutting off a piece with the knife, he popped it in his mouth.

"Bravo!" cried Hertz, again.

But did the Pakatan understand that the box was to contain anything he might wish to put in it, and the knife to cut? Soon answered. The man took knife and box, picked up a twig, cut it in halves, put both in the box, and closed the lid.

"Lebe hoch!" cried the Collector. "Now tell him he ish free."

"It's odd," said Harry, the observant. "He did all that, but never seemed to look at knife or box. I think he would bolt if he had half a chance. See—his muscles are rigid, and he watches everybody, starting when anybody moves."

"Ja!" said Hertz. "Gatch a vildt rabbit. Hold idt in your arms und shtroke idt. Idt trembles a liddle, budit idt lies shtill,—idt not seem so fery moosh afraid. Budt puddt idt down—vill idt play round your lecks, dink you? Ach! no; idt's off like dat green shnake you find in de orchid, yoost like a flash of light. Dis man ish a vildt rabbit!"

Boy took the sumpitans and the spear, and trotted off through the squatting Dyaks. Returning, he repeated the action, then gave the weapons to their owner.

Curiously the youths waited to see what he would do. They were not long in doubt.

He rose to his feet, smiling anxiously, faintly, with a rapid glance at the "big Tuan," his eyebrows working up and down.

"Before he goes," said Jack, "I should like to see what he can do with that blow-pipe."
"Ach, ja! Boy, tell him to shoot."

Boy borrowed Jack's pith-hat, now considerably the worse for wear, and stuck it on a bush thirty yards distant. Then the Malay took a *sumpitan* and aimed with it, pretending to shoot. Then pointing first to the weapon, then to its owner, and last to the hat, the Malay returned the *sumpitan*.

The Pakatan appeared to comprehend what was required, but hesitated.

"He dinks idt's a ruse to disarm him of his arrows," said Hertz. "Sit down eferybody, und let him bolt if he vill."

Nothing escaped those restless eyes. Thus reassured, the man drew half a dozen arrows from the case at his side in one movement; holding them between the fingers of his left hand, he rested the long tube on the palm of the right. The Dyaks, who were beneath the line of fire, rolled out of the way with surprising quickness. The Pakatan inserted an arrow in the orifice, placed the latter to his mouth, drew in a deep inspiration, and puffed. The arrow transfixed the hat! In a few seconds three of the tiny things were sticking in it.

"Now I gan believe de yarns de Dyaks und Malays tell!" cried Hertz. "I gan believe dat t'irty or forty men gan go into a yoongle und nefer be seen alife any mores! When deir friends go look for dem, dey find dem all ashleep round heaps of ashes, vonce fires, long burned oudt—ashleep—de shleep from whish dey avaken no more! Every man killed mit *sumpît* arrows ash he lay! Boy, tell de fellow to go und nodt gome back. Tell him to go long vay, fast!"

"I would like to sketch that tattooing," Harry interjected, producing sketch-book and pencil.

"No—no!" cried Hertz, "you make de poor fellow miserable. De savage dinks you transfer part of him to de paper—dat he leafes behind, loses what you put dere. Tell him to go, Boy, where ve nodt go, or perhaps de
Dyaks take his head on de shly, mit his vife's und his children's too." 

The adult Pakatans were beautifully tattooed in blue scrolls. On the woman's hands and wrists was traced the semblance of lace mittens, exact, and of a charming pattern. Harry would have dearly liked to sketch them, but it was not to be.

Once more Boy took the *sumpitalans* and trotted off, crossing the brook this time, and entering the jungle.Returning, he repeated this action at the run.

The Pakatan took his weapons, and the hint, and spoke to his family. Then they hurried away at a quick walk, disappearing in the jungle. The Dyaks watched them go yearningly, evidently very loth to lose those "heads." It was so long since any new trophies had been added to the store. Could they have read the immediate future they would have been content.

"A gapital shpeccimen of de hooman vildt beast," Hertz remarked. "I moosh like to pack him oop mit de orchids ash ploonder, und take him to England."

"But," interjected Harry, always thoughtful, "this human wild beast is taller, fairer, and a finer man appa- rently, on the whole, than Dyaks or even Malays, who have left the savage state far behind. That is opposed to the theories commonly accepted, isn't it?"

"Idt ish indeed!" Hertz rarely passed by one of Harry's remarks. "Sit down again, all of you, und rest. Ash you know, dere are egseptions to ebery rule, budt dat magsim ought nodt to apply here. Idt ish a eery puzzling gase. Ofer all de gountries whish ve gall de Far East a race like de Pakatan ish found. Buut idt ish nodt de aboriginal race, whish also survives. Dat ish no doubt de same whish ve find in de Andaman Islands, where idt had nefer been disturbed oontil de English game—a eery shmall black people, mit voollly hair und flat nose. Dey
are galled 'Ujits' in Borneo, und dey are fery rare—dat ish, in de parts tolerably vell known. Defils dey are—real antus, who prowl around any intruders in deir distri-
tect, shooting shtragglers mit deir sumpits, und glosing in adt night to murder men ash dey shleep about de fires—yoost ash I tell you before. Dey are fery seldom seen efen when dey are egsterminating de party man by man. Dyaks hoont Pakatans; dey don't hoont 'Ujits,' no more ash a cat hoonts ferrets! Luckily, ash I said, dere are fery few of dem, und idt's a pity dey nodt fewer. Else-
where dese shmall black people are more gommon. De Malays gall dem shenerally 'orang utan'—men of de voods, de name Europeans, oddly enough, gife de mias dat you try to gatch, de great ape. More particularly dey are known ash Sekai, Kalantan, und endless names. Dese are de real aborigines, so far, dat ish, ash ve gan youdge; don't dink dat dese dvarfs, ash shtoopid ash dey are oogly in efery dings but voodcraft, could overcome soosh big fellows ash de Pakatans. Dese latter are found among dem in most parts, budt dey nefer associate. Nobody knows if dey fight mit von anoder, because dere are no var gorrespondents in dose yoongles, nor anybody else, to tell us vhat goes on. I dink idt certain dat dey don't marry. Dese Pakatans, ash ve may gall dem, dough dat name ish peculiar to Borneo, are alvays fine und tall, mit straight hair und a pale copper shkin. Some of de tribe galled Semang, in Kedah, shtand five feet eleven, many five feet ten—dink of dat! A Malay or a Dyak of five feet six ish fery big indeed. Und dese Semangs, I am told—I hafen't seen dem yet—are down-right handsome in face und models in figure. Budt dey life in de yoongle moosh ash our Pakatans do, on what dey gan pick oop, nefer cultivating de ground. If dere's anoder inshtance in de vorldt of human beings leading soosh a life, und keeping a physical type nodt only supe-
rior to de advanced races about dem, but equal to de European, I nefer heard of idt."

"Have many white men seen them at home? You say you haven't," Harry interjected.

"Dat's a shrewd question, my boy!" said the Collector, laughing. "Ja! trustvort'yi obserfers hafe visited de Semangs. De Rajah of Kedah protects dem, und de Chiefs shpeak Malay. I vill tell you vhy he protects dem—idt's curious. Dat ish de great camphor gountry, und de Semangs, like our Pakatans in deir vay, gollect a great deal of idt, which dey barter mit de Malays. Now de camphor tree ish fery shtrange in idts manner of production. Sometimes idt vill nodt yield a drop for mont's or years togedder; sometimes idt vill nodt yield ash long ash idt lifes! Ash yet ve do not oondershtand dis adt all, because ve gan trace no reason for soosh fluctuations. Budt de Semangs oondershtand idt! Dey know when idt ish vort' while to tap a tree, und when idt is nodt. So de Malays alvays take von or more Semangs mit dem vhen dey go to seek camphor. Und dey say dat oonless a man gan shpeak de Semang language idt ish no use for him to go looking for camphor. Dey gall dat language de Bhasa Kapor—de camphor shpeech. Dey believe dat if a vordt of Malay ish pronounced in de neighbourhood of a tree idt vill vanish, or else deir eyes von't be able to see idt—deir are two opinions on de point, budt dey gone to moosh the same. Dat's vhy de Rajah of Kedah protects de Semangs. Und let me point oudt a moral vort' remembering, my boys. How desperately shtoopid idt sounds to believe dat a man must talk a certain barbarous language or he nodt be able to find camphor! What a ridiculous superstition, and what miserable creatures dey must be dat credit it! Und foolish white people dismiss de matter mit contempt. Ridiculous idt ish, budt dose dat inquire find idt nodt mitout meaning. De quick fancy of dese people has pult
a droll interpretation oopen facts real enough. Dey gannot be sure of getting camphor mitout dey hafe a Semang to direct dem. Und so, mit vhat ve gall poetic license, dey build oop a fanciful shtory to egxplain de case. Remember dat liddle shtory alvays when you hear talk of savages' supershtitions." *

"Mr. Hertz," said Harry, earnestly, "it's an education to be with you."

"Dat depends on de shtoodent. Look adt de Dyaks! Dey listen to efery vordt most earnestly. Egsamine dem —dey nodt know von sentence. Budt dat's nodt deir fault. I hafe talked mit Europeans dat knew no more ash de Dyaks vhen I had done. Ve rest a liddle while longer. Boy, send a Dyak for Wo-Sing und de Malays."

Boy despatched a messenger, and again sat down.

"You heard what I say of 'Ujits,' Boy?" Hertz resumed. "Did you efer see von?"

"No, Tuan."

"Budt you hear of dem?"

"Woh! I see men killed. I hear much."

"Gan you tell us a short shtory while ve rest?"

"Yes, Tuan. I up Rejang go to Kennowit. I was Rajah's soldier. We go to Kayan country; ten of us there be. We see no Kayans, and six go hunting. I not go. My friends not come back; we four go look in very bad jungle. I go last. One man call, and run back. He say he see little man not much more big as Wah-wah (a small monkey) hide a tree behind. He think him 'Ujit.' We run. One say he killed. He pull sumpit arrow from breast. He run no more. He know he die. But we run. Arrows come 'piff-piff.' Another man say he hit. He lie down and die. What use he run? But I run; I lose the last man. He lie down. Nine men never come from jungle. 'Ujits' kill all!"

* We hope it is needless to observe that all this is matter of fact.
"Dat vill do, Boy. I dinked you would know."
"Worse nor pirates! Worse nor them Lanuns!"
Bounce exclaimed, pausing in the very act of transferring a chunk of tobacco from box to mouth: "Young gen’lemen, I reckon you'll be of opeenion——"

But they would not let him finish the speech.

When Wo-Sing and his companions came up, Hertz ordered an advance. The Dyaks led the way towards the big rock.

"What dis mean?" Hertz cried. "We go forwardts, nodt back."

"He say that way to antus," said the Malay, scornfully, pointing towards the brook. The Collector nearly lost his temper.

"What nonsense! Ve have gaught de only antu in dis yoongle, and let him go. He ish a besser man dan Nyait. Lead de vay oop shstream, Boy. If dey nodt like to gome, let dem shhtay behind, or go to Bau, or Sirambau, or anyvheres. I am tired of deir invisible antus. I dink dey want to gatch dat poor Pakatan und take his head."

But Nyait denied this. Asked what he knew of the jungle, he said, in effect, that all Dyaks shunned it; that it was a very bad place whence no Dyak had ever returned. He feared he had already penetrated it too far, and would never get back to Sirambau.

"Too indefinite," Hertz muttered. "Lead on, Boy."

Boy obeyed, and marched off with his Malays, followed by the Europeans, leaving the rebellious Dyaks squatting in the open. But they soon changed their minds and came on behind, perhaps thinking that safety lay in numbers.

The jungle was very gloomy—bare trunks before, behind, on all sides. Far overhead an opaque mass of vegetation, letting through so little light that the shallow rapid stream looked deep and sullen.

Bounce grumbled continually.
“Look here, skipper,” he cried at length, “I’ll take me haffidavy I never came this way. I don’t care what Boy says; I’ve never been here before. Why, there ain’t no path o’ no sort, an’ we ain’t seen a ghost o’ one since we left that rock, which I don’t remember any more than the dead.”

“Ghosts of pat’s und remembrance of de dead!” Hertz exclaimed—he was not in the best of humours—“what you talking about? Boy has nodt said dish is de way you came. Ve lose de pat’ long before ve get to de rock. Budt don’t dink dere nodings to find only where you hafe been. Use your eyes more and your tongue less.”

Bounce stopped his mouth with a piece of tobacco.

Presently Boy, some forty yards in advance, called out:

“Tuans! More antu flowers!”


He rushed forward, stumbling over roots, colliding with trees. Jack and Harry followed in like breakneck fashion. A strong odour was distinctly perceptible, different, however, from the Bulbophyllum’s. Whence did it arise? The Malays moved on ahead. Hertz ran to the right, the youths to the left. The smell was everywhere! Bounce and Wo-Sing sat down on a root. Both disliked exertion. Threading their way in and out and round the trunks, descending into hollows, often swampy, peering here and there, the youths eagerly sought the unknown plant or flower, excited, hoping they would be the first to discover something new and wonderful.

A dead tree attracted Jack’s attention—a black, blasted forest wreck, extending its dead branches—lifeless arms—over what? Jack looked and started back.

“It’s a nightmare!” he muttered. “Marvellous! Can that thing be natural?”
Jack disbelieved his own eyes for a moment.

"Harry—Harry!" he cried at length in a smothered voice.

"What's the matter? What is it?"

Harry ran up quickly—and stood speechless, like his brother, staring at the monstrous sight before them. Then the lads looked at each other.

"Is it an idol?" Jack whispered.

"None of these people could make such an idol!" Harry replied in the same awestruck, low tone. "Wax would melt! It must be a flower!—but what a marvellous, horrible thing! Mr. Hertz! Mr. Hertz!" he cried, recovering his voice, "oh, come here!"

"Quick—quick!" Jack added. "We must be dreaming; it can't be real—a flower!"

Hertz ran towards them in all haste, crashing through the brushwood.

"I'm here! Vat ish idt?" he exclaimed breathlessly. But there was no need to answer. His eyes fell upon the object some yards away, and he also stood speechless in amaze.

"Can it possibly be a flower?" Jack whispered.

"T'ank Heafen! I hafe almost prayed for dis sight!" Hertz cried. "A flower idt ish!—de biggest on eart'! Ach! dis ish a day to mark mit de whitest shalk!—a heafenly day! Get oudt your paintbox, Harry! Fetch some vasser. Take pains! Nefer mind de shmell! Your fadter vill be a happy man vhen he sees de sketch!"

He approached, drawing a measure from his pocket.

"Note de dimensions, Yack! T'ree feet t'ree inches agross! Yoost ten feet circumference round de petals! Sefen inches high on de oudtside, measuring from de root of de tree. Elefen inches deep adt de central boss, vhish ish fourteen in diameter! Ach! dis ish vort' a year of ordinary life, only to see!"

"Then it's new?" asked Harry, sketching away.
"New in Borneo—von mortal of white shkin has seen idt before—in Sumatra."

Hertz produced his note-book and made careful entries therein, too busy to talk.

Those readers who visit Kew will find a model of this incredible object in the Museum. It stands there, in wax, just as the boys saw it, a flower and nothing else, for the trailing vine on which it grows is so inconspicuous as to escape notice; and the leaves die down, trailing in shreds beneath the five large petals of dull pinkish tint. The size has been mentioned—briefly, it is about as large as a tea table. In the centre is an oval rim, enclosing a pink-tinted substance somewhat resembling the cushion in the middle of a daisy. The whole colouring is livid, almost ghastly, which heightens the weird effect of a monster so unnatural in that gloomy wood. Such is the *Rafflesia Arnoldii*.

Jack withdrew after a time, unable to bear the vile effluvium. The others worked on until they had finished, though Harry felt sick. Hertz did not pretend to be comfortable, but he never thought of giving in, and withdrew at length regretfully, muttering to himself several times as he stood ready to go, "I overlook nodings, eh? Got idt all down?" And then he compared Harry's sketch with the original. Finally, he tore himself away.

Boy had been standing at a distance all the time, not frightened at a spectacle of which he had heard, but unwilling to approach it. The smell, indeed, was excuse enough.

"I daresay," said Hertz, as they resumed their march, "dis flower ish de *antu* vish de Dyaks dread. Don't talk to dem about it, Boy."

In silence they rejoined their followers. The Dyaks had caught up with the Malays, and the party slowly proceeded, Nyait and his fellows still in the rear. From
time to time they halted and gathered in a group, evidently discussing the advisability of returning. Some, apparently, were for going back, but Nyait seemed loth to abandon the *orang putih*, perhaps thinking, as they had penetrated the *antu*-haunted jungle so far, it would be as dangerous to retreat as to advance.

“What dose fellows doing?” Hertz asked of Boy.

The Malay laughed scornfully, but less boisterously than usual.

“They listen for birds, *Tuan,*” he said. “No birds here, good or bad.”

Boy’s laughter was derisive enough, but it lacked the ring of hilarity. It was easy to see that the Malay leader was ill at ease. Even Paham, Gani, and the others, usually ready enough to echo Boy’s laughter, particularly when derisive of the Dyaks or the despised Wo-Sing, were silent; and they had not seen the huge *antu* flower.

It was indeed singular that, save the wandering Pakatan family, and insects—almost every other tree had an ants’ nest at its roots or wasps’ nests on its branches—no living thing had been seen since the gloomy sentinel rock was left behind—neither animal, nor bird, nor reptile. When the Orchid Seekers halted and remained still, not a sound broke the solemn quiet—not even a leaf rustled. The atmosphere was heavy laden with the odour of decaying vegetation. In these regions there is no real twilight, but here reigned a twilight that never ended except when black darkness took its place. Far beyond the veil of dank greenery overhead, the tropical sun shone with scorching power; hardly a ray penetrated to the feet of the damp trunks—here and there fungus-covered—springing from the moist, leaf-covered earth. The prevailing hue of the living leaves and plants and creepers near the ground was almost yellow, the colour of vegetation reared in a cellar. The creepers, peculiarly strong and big in this old jungle, where they had never been
disturbed, bore hardly any foliage; vast lengths there were without a leaf, as though too exhausted by their endeavours to reach the light of the sun to bear them.

Hertz detected the false ring in Boy's laugh, and suspected that the Dyaks had infected him with their vague fears. It could hardly be the Rafflesia Arnoldii.

"Are you alarmed, Boy?" he asked.

"No, Tuan. Nyait say to me something. I not this place like."

"I dinked so. You would like to see de sunshine und hear de birds sing und gall?"

"No birds here, Tuan," Boy repeated.

Even as he spoke the silence was broken. A clear, metallic, musical note rang out "clang," and again "clang"—"clang," well apart, sounding with strange resonance in the heavy air, making the silence felt.

"That's a bird," said the Collector; "the jungle crow."

"Sounds ominous," Jack muttered, "that clanging toll. There's something uncanny about this place. I am getting downright low-spirited; more than half inclined to believe that Nyait's antus don't spring entirely from his imagination."

"I wish we could hit on a path," Harry rejoined. "It strikes me we're lost, and I wouldn't like to spend a night here."

Even Hertz fingered his pocket-compass anxiously, whilst Bounce groaned aloud.

"Blue awkward!—as if a awkward or anything else blue were likely to be found in this 'ere hole! I reck'n I've got my share of the 'blues' already. Feels like as if I were in a diving bell at the bottom o' the sea among them 'ere coral islands."

"What has Nyait told you?" Hertz asked of Boy.

"He say year ago some Dyaks and Orang Kina [Chinamen] go Bidi this way. They see big rock; Orang Kina frightened. They back go. Two Orang Kina—half
Dyaks—they not frightened; they go into jungle. Four Dyaks with them go. They never go back to Bombok, and Orang Kina never again seen."

"'Why vere de Shinamen frightened?"

"They antu sign see on big rock."

"Alvays antus! Bah! Gome along, boys; gome along, Wo-Sing."

But Wo-Sing lagged. Something in Boy's story had alarmed him. However, he eventually recovered his courage, and followed close behind Jack and Harry.

New jungle now, and swampy ground, in which the travellers often sank over boot tops. So dense were the shrubs and creepers that the parangs were almost useless—there was no room to wield them. Twining, writhing arms seemed to grasp the weapons. Hertz took the lead, tearing a passage with his hook, with Jack, Harry, and Wo-Sing close behind.

"Oh, Mr. Hertz!" Harry cried, "shall we never find a path?"

"I see more light ahead!" the Collector answered joyfully. "I dink a pat' or gleareng ish yoost before us."

He pushed forward eagerly, but suddenly stopped, with a cry of alarm half smothered.

The youths and Wo-Sing hurried after him. They found themselves in a clearing.

The Collector turned, his face very pale.

"Back!—back! For your lifes," he whispered hoarsely. Wo-Sing fell on his face without a word. Jack saw his complexion turn almost blue ere he fell.

Hertz seized the prone Celestial by the shoulders, and dragged him back into the jungle, on the edge of which the youths remained, gazing at a lofty wooden gateway with flags of silk above it drooping in the still air, and a number of inscriptions upon white and coloured silks, in the Chinese character, hanging in frames about the portal. A wooden tower flanked it on each side.
The *Aug* Gate, or Gate of Execution.
One glance they had, and then the Collector, dropping Wo-Sing, seized them from behind, and unceremoniously hauled them away.

"Do you vant to die like de Dyaks und Shinamen Nyait told Boy about?" he whispered hoarsely. "T'ank Gott, Harry, ve did miss de pat'! Nyait ish right. Dis yoongle ish haunted mit antus—flesh und blood antus, blood'tirsty, pitiless murderers!"

"Who—who are they?" Jack faltered.

"What is it? Harry gasped.

"Idt ish de Ang gate of de Lodge—de gate of Egsecu-
tion! Get on—get on, for your lifes!"
CHAPTER XVII.

THE LODGE OF THE T'ien-ti HUE.

Not a word of explanation could be extracted from Hertz. “Send de Dyaks ahead, Boy!” he whispered, “tell dem to go shlow towards de big rock, looking oudt for traps—pits especially! If dey gome agross a pat’ dey don’t know, let dem halt und report. You follow de Dyaks mit de young Englisch Tuan. Gife me a gun. I bring oop de rear.”

He took the rifle generally carried by Wo-Sing, and allowed everybody to precede him.

“Ach!” he muttered, as they emerged from the belt of new jungle into the old campong, “a blessing on dis old yoongle after all! Here ve gan see, adt least!”

So they moved on cautiously, the youths exchanging puzzled remarks; but it is difficult to converse in whispers when marching in single file. It struck them that the Dyaks did not understand better than themselves.

“What is it all about?” Jack asked of Boy, who walked before him. “What was that extraordinary building?”

“I not know—heard of it never!” Boy answered. “Tuan Besar”—big master, or lord—so he called Hertz—“he wise man! Devil work, he think! I same!”

“Do you understand?” Harry asked of Wo-Sing, over his shoulder. But there was no reply. Glancing round, he saw that the China “boy” was livid with fear.
"Silence!" Hertz whispered sternly.

After giving the Pakatan his liberty, they had travelled some three miles in a circular direction, keeping near the little stream. Leaving it in the old jungle, they had gone straight ahead until stopped. Hertz, who had frequently consulted his compass, knew that the big sentinel rock stood between them and the place where they had found the wild man.

The Dyaks worked through that trackless forest with an instinct that never erred. Hertz glanced at his compass from time to time, but there was no need to direct them. As the bee flies they marched on; though often compelled to turn aside to encircle some swampy hollow or avoid some impenetrable thicket, they took up the line with never a fault on the further edge.

No path was found. Now and then Hertz halted, turned, and listened, as if he feared they might be followed; and he carried his rifle cocked—as, indeed, did the others—but after commanding them to keep silent he never spoke until they reached the rock; where all, save himself, flung themselves down, tired out, Dyaks, Malays, English alike. Here he gave a great sigh of relief.

"Ach!" he exclaimed, in a tone that implied the removal of a heavy weight from his mind. "You hafe seen a sight, boys, whish no man perhaps has efer lived to deshribe!"

"At last!" thought the youths, "we shall learn what it means."

But no. Before they could question him he turned to Wo-Sing, lying with his face hidden in his arms.

"Wo-Sing, I vant you."

The China "boy," still trembling, still livid, arose.

"Gome mit me."

The Collector led the way round the rock beneath whose frowning side the others lay.

"You heard de tale Nyait told Boy, of de Shinamen
und Dyaks dat gome here und see an antu sign—ash dey call idt—on dis rock? Ve find dat antu sign.”

Poor Wo-Sing seemed hardly able to stand; nevertheless he carefully examined the face of the limestone crag, its base covering perhaps an acre of ground.

Slowly they walked round it, forcing aside shrubs and creepers.

“Ach!” Hertz exclaimed, half the circuit completed. “Here is a goodt pat’, vide und glear! Idt leads to de rock; budt where idt go, now?”

No sign of a continuation was to be seen; the path was barred by the crag as by a wall. And just there the jungle growths were matted together, thick against the face of the rock. Hertz took out his compass.

“Looking down dat goodt pat’, Wo-Sing,” he said, “ve are looking away from de Lodge. So idt leads to idt, past dis rock; budt where?” A jutting stone, a rude step, caught his eye. It was smooth, as if polished by frequent feet. Hertz had eyes like Dyaks’, with a brain to understand what he saw. Those hounds of the jungle would hardly have failed to observe the step, but seeing no reason why it should be smoother than the rest of the crag, would have passed on. Not so the Collector. “Oop de face of de rock!” he exclaimed. “Oop de face of de rock!”

“What is it?” asked Harry, crushing through the bushes.

“A pat’ ve hafe found.”

“A good one, too: very much used; but, Mr. Hertz, where in the world does it go? Is there a stone door in this rock?”

“No. Don’t you see where idt go? De cunning shkellums!”

“Indeed I don’t.”

“Look adt dat shmoot’ shtone, und above.”

“Hullo! It’s a step! And there’s another above, and another.”
"Ja! und anoder. Dere are four."

Hertz examined the face of the rock above the steps with his field-glass.

"Only four!" Harry cried. 'That's odd! I can see the last step. Above it the rock is precipitous—there is no foothold. Where do they go?"

"Into dat tree! See! dere ish de pat'!"

He pointed to a stout branch, just above the fourth and last step. The rock had compelled it to turn upwards; the elbow formed a fifth step. Above the bend was a small bare branch, a smooth peg, barkless. Aided by this, climbers could mount on the big branch with ease.

"De pat' go along dat bransh to de troonk, und de troonk ish hollow—I gan see de hole. Idt go down dat hole, und probably into de ground—a tunnel—goming oop in impenetrable yoongle. Dose dead Dyaks und Shina-men—dey must de dead—found dis pat', eider here, down de tree, or in de bush beyond. Dey go along idt, und idt lead to deat'? Dank Gott ve missed idt! Und dis goodt pat' too! Ish dere a sign, Wo-Sing?"

For answer Wo-Sing pointed to the rock, above the last step, above the elbow in the branch, his eyes averted. Hertz and Harry saw a Chinese character, scratched in the stone.

"What idt mean?" the Collector demanded. It was but just visible from where they stood, and evidently not intended to be seen by other than rock-climbers, discoverers of the steps.

Wo-Sing glanced furtively into the bush on each side before going close to Hertz and whispering:

"I don't know for certain, sir. I never saw that sign before; but I have heard of it. It is used by the T'ien-ti, as a warning to wandering strangers. I think it means 'The way to Death!'"

"A warning to wandering members of de Hué, perhaps; idt tells strangers, soosh ash me, nodings. I dink you are
right. Dose Shinamen dat turned back must hafe glimbed de shteps. Dey oondershtood idt, budt dared nodt egplain to dose dat would go forvardts. Ve nodt shtay here. Efen now ve may be being vatched. Ve go avay adt vonce.”

Wo-Sing clasped his hands in an agony of fear.

“Watched?” he muttered, “watched?”

Poor fellow! He knew that if this were so he would be a marked man. The word meant “death”—assassination. His companions might return to Europe. He, even if he reached Kuching safe, would have to remain in Sarawak at the mercy of the T’ien-ti. And the only mercy the T’ien-ti Hué ever exercised upon its foes was death without torture.

Returning to his wearied party, Hertz ordered the Dyaks forward to the stream where they had surprised the Pakatan.

“Build lang-kans,” he said. “Dere ve gamp.”

Very thoughtful he was, and abrupt in his replies, but not too preoccupied to keep a sharp watch. His eyes were nearly as restless as the Pakatan’s.

“Won’t you tell us what it all means?” said Harry, while on the march. “That mysterious building—the path leading into a hollow tree?”

“Presently. Idt’s late—und a long marsch yet to de gamping place. De efening draws on.”

When, eventually, they reached the stream, the youths were too tired to ask questions. But refreshed by dinner and a long rest, they again urged the Collector to explain. It was now dusk. In a few minutes it would be dark. The huts were ready for habitation; and Hertz consented.

“Boy, post sentries,” he said. “See dey are relieved efery two hours. Let Paham und Gani take de first vatch. Do mitout Wo-Sing; let him shleep, if he vill.”

Turning to the youths, he added, “If dey saw us, dey vill shtrike adt Wo-Sing first. If he shtood sentry, perhaps
he nefer shtand sentry more. Hafe your guns in order. Before de moon rises, idt vill be dark—de dangerous time.”

Sentries posted, Hertz resumed:

“Ve hafe seen,” he said, “ash I told you, a shpegtacle whish no European has beheld, perhaps—von of de gates of a T’ien-ti Lodge!

“I know vhat you are going to say, Harry,” smiling—

the youth’s countenance wore a note of interrogation, visible even in the dull light. “If no one has seen idt, how did I regocknize idt? I tell you. T’rough de drawings und reports collected by my friend Gustav Schlegel, whish I hope he vill pooblish shortly. Schlegel ish Shinese Interpreter to de Dootch Government in Yava und Malacca. He has been making a shtoody of de T’ien-ti for years, assisted by all de documents und efidence whish de Government has seized adt different times.

“A Segret Society Lodge is alvays built in some vildt shpot vhere intruders are nodt likely to gome opon idt: I daresay efen dese brutes don’t vish to murder more innocent people dan ish necessary. Ven I saw what a forest dat vas, so near to Bau, und heard dat Dyaks had vanished in de neighbourhood, idt ogeurred to me dat a Lodge might be dereabouts, if de gold-diggers had von of de gorrect pattern.

“De first ding dey do ish to surround de shpot mit traps und pitfalls. Dis seems to hafe been a liddle neglected—probably because dey trusted to de superstitious terrors of de Dyaks, und nobody else would be likely to approach. Ash soon ash de traps und pitfalls are ready, dey build de ‘Egsecution Gate,’ whish ve saw. Dis gommands de only pat’ nodt defended by von blood-t’irsty contrivance or anoder—I dink I may say half-a-dozen. If you gan remember our marsch, you vill see dat de gate does nodt front towards de big rock, budt de
opposite way. Dese contrivances in de pat’s are to gatch und kill shpies und vandering trafellers; budt when a lodge ish open, gompanies of men are posted in gonceal-ment all along de von pat’ dat ish nodt defended by traps und pitfalls. Dey let a stranger pass—to deat’ at de gate; budt dey shpring fort’ und cut him down if he try to retrace his shteps.

“‘Vell, den dey build de East gate, perhaps a quarter of a mile away, on de same pat’; afterwards de Nort’, Sout’, und Vest. Dese four gates englose a shquare, und idt ish actuly impossible to approach dem egsept by dat pat’. Eash has idts armed garrison nevertheless, vhen de ceremonies are going on, und a sheneral in gommand. Inside de shquare shtand a number of buildings und arrangements. Idt ish galled de ‘City of Willows’ proper-ly, budt in Yava de ‘Peach Garden,’ in de Shtraits Settlements de ‘Pear Garden.’ Dose dat pass de ‘Egsecution Gate’ alife, dat ish, members of de Lodge, reash de ‘Red Flowery Pavilion,’ vhere dey vash deir hands in holy vasser. Dere dey pass de ‘Grand Altar,’ vhere sits aloft de ‘Master of de Lodge,’ mit his fourteen councillors shtanding on eash side mit deir swords drawn, und before him dey prostrate demselves. Going on, dey traverse de ‘Circle of Heafen und Eart’; a round enclosure; beyond idt ish a deep ditch, mit a bridge of two planks agross idt. Dey den gome to de ‘Fiery Valley,’ vhere sits anoder egsecutioner, galled de ‘Red Youth.’ Idt ish his duty to egsmine de hearts of members, und if he per-ceifes a traitor among dem, to run him t’rough oopon de shpot. A terrible being, dis! He ish supposed to have supernatural powers whish enable him to detect a false brodher adt sight; budt, doubtless, he has segret in-shtructions from de gouncil. Anyhow, he often uses his shpear. Nodt a vordt ish said. De body of de murdered man lies in de ditch oontil de Lodge ish glosed, und all dose passing de bridge see idt. Den idt ish buried vhere idt lies!”
“Is this possible?” cried Jack and Harry together.

“Nodt only possible, budt frequent. De ‘Red Youth’ und de ‘Warden of de Gate’ kill hoondreds of men year by year—perhaps t’ousands—nobody knows! From de Nort’ern frontier of Shina to de Sout’ Cape of Yava, Lodges are eshtablished, und in efery von of dem dese villainies go on.

“Vell, if a member ish pronounded fait’f’ul, ash gommonly happens, of course, he passes into de ‘Market of Universal Peace,’ und burns an offering of gilt paper in de ‘Temple of Virtue.’ After dat he may return to de ‘Flowery Pavilion’ und take part in de business of de meeting.”

“And what is the business?” asked Harry.

“I am tempted to say—criminal gonshpiracy. Budt dat ish nodt really all. De master und gouncil settle disputes among de members, look after deir interests, provide for vidows und orphans, und so fort’. I dink I tell you dis adt Sirambau?”

“Yes,” said Harry, “about the widows and orphans.”

“I dinked so. Vell, then dese matters are attended to, dey goncert shchemes for ploonder, vengeance, und, in short, murderous mischief.”

“What an astounding revelation! Are these things known?”

“Too vell, by dose intelligent enough to use deir eyes! In Shina, in de Dootch Golonies, in de Shpanish—dis I dink I tell you—idt ish deat’ to belong to de T’ien-ti. Budt de Golonial Office in England refuses to believe; dough de inhabitants of Singapore und Penang hafe petitioned again und again, idt vill nodt protect dem nor allow dem to protect demselves. Dat’s what I hafe urged especially on my friendt Gustav Schlegel! As de only man dat gan prove dat idt ish de T’ien-ti Hué whish gommits dese innumerable grimes undetected in de Britisch Settlements, idt ish his duty to publish de
evidence. And I am sure he will—if he lives, wish Heaven grant!"*

"Then," said Harry, after a pause, "if we had struck the road—if we had found that mysterious path when we first got to the rock, and gone up it—"

"Some of us would be dead men now, saving God's mercy!"

"The gate seemed to be deserted," Jack remarked.

"We may hope it was. There is always a guard on the gate, but the men may have been asleep, or smoking opium, or they may have wandered into the Lodge. Perhaps we were not near them at any time. The gate itself is not garrisoned, I believe, unless the Lodge is sitting. Den—you saw the watch tower on either side? Each has forty armed men; and the Ang-Kuang, the executioner, has forty more inside the gate. I suppose no stranger has ever escaped, unless by miracle, for the ruffians on the road close in behind, and on each hand is a deep pitfall."

"What an escape!" cried Jack. "But what a grand

* Eight years afterwards Gustav Schlegel did publish the evidence, in a most striking book, "The Thian-ti Hue," as it was then spelt. By these revelations, and the indignant protests of the Bench, the Executive, and the respectable population of the Straits Settlements—accentuated by the terrible riots of Penang—our Colonial Office was compelled to do something. It decreed that all Secret Societies should be registered, with their lists of members; a very feeble measure, but it revealed the incredible fact that no less than 156,440 adult Chinamen were enrolled in various branches, known by various names, and often hostile, of the T'ien-ti, in Singapore and Penang alone; a greater number than the census returned for the whole Chinese population, men, women, and children, at the date, which was 153,332! This step proving ineffectual, as all upon the spot foresaw, the societies were suppressed in 1888, as they had been in all other parts of the East fifty years before. What will come of this remains to be seen. Suppression has failed entirely elsewhere up to the present. But the last official report of the "Protector of the Chinese" at Singapore alleges that the societies are dissolving.
thing to have seen with one's own eyes an Execution gate of the T'ien-ti Hué!"

"How did you know it was that gate, Mr. Hertz, and not one of the others?" asked Harry.

"By de flags. You noticed dem? All de gates hafe flags, but de 'Ang' alone shows de Golden Orchid, de Triangle, und de Red Baton—de symbols of de Hung League, ash dey gall idt, und his, de egsecutioner's, own sttaff of office."

"Golden Orchid? How very shtrange!"

"My boy," said Hertz, rising, "dere is so moosh dat ish fery shtrange about de T'ien-ti Hué, dat if I sat here for a mont' I could shcarcely tell you all. Idt's time you turned in. I shall vatch. Goodt night!"
CHAPTER XVIII.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

When Hertz concluded his description of a T'ien-ti Lodge, Jack and Harry retired to the lang-kan and lay down. But sleep was far from the thoughts of either.

The Collector took up Jack's rifle, recapped it, and threw it across his shoulder. Walking past Gani, leaning on his spear on the left of the hut, he disappeared in the gloom.

Returning shortly from the opposite direction, he ordered out two other sentries, posting them some fifty yards from the camp, within the jungle. These Dyaks took their dogs for company, in leash. Sentries now stood north, south, east, and west. Heavy, clumsy Chinamen would be unable to approach. Dyaks, even, could not have traversed that jungle at night without being heard.

Hertz sat at the foot of a tree, with his back against it, and his rifle between his knees. Jack and Harry watched him until dark, conversing in whispers of the mysterious buildings erected by the T'ien-ti Hué, of the cruel wretches who rule or serve therein, and their strange proceedings. Sleep they could not. Indeed, they dared not. Hertz's precautions alone, the posting of four sentries, would have kept them awake.

But Bounce slept and snored, as he had snored through many a storm, and probably would through an earth-
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quake. Wo-Sing lay huddled in a corner. Some of the Malays and Dyaks slept; others silently chewed penang round the fire.

The moon rose and poured a flood of silvery light on the tree-tops. Here and there faint beams fell on the bushes beneath, thinly filtered through that verdant canopy. Tiny pencils of light even reached the murmuring stream, making its ripples visible. One beam fell on Hertz, and showed him awake and watchful.

Save the ceaseless rippling of the stream all was strangely still. A tropic jungle is full of murmurs commonly after the sun goes down, when animals creep out to feed, and nocturnal insects wake. But it was not so here. No buck roused the echoes with its gong-like note. Scarcely a frog croaked. But great bats fluttered by on silent wing—a silver gleam when obliquely turned towards the moon, black beneath.

Said Jack in an awed whisper: "I never felt less like sleeping in my life, though I'm as tired as I can be. I can't help fancying those T'ien-ti fiends are on our track! Look at that poor fellow there," motioning towards Wo-Sing; "if anybody moves he starts and shivers, and he's no coward. We don't want any other evidence that we're in danger. Then there's Mr. Hertz, on sentry duty, with four others out! I can't stay here. I must go and talk to him."

He rose and left the lang-kan, taking his gun.

"Vell!" said the Collector, "gan't you shleep?"

"I can't even lie down. Do you think we have been followed?"

"Ve may hafe been. Budt I don't dink ve shall be attacked."

"I imagined you thought the contrary."

"From de precautions? Ach! dose are to prevent attack. Dey nodt try to kill us oonless sure of killing us all. If dey gaught us all ashleep dey vould be pretty sure to try."
"To surround and surprise us?"

"Exactly. I tell you why. Wang-lo, the chief of de Kunsi, is probably Master of de T'ien-ti in these parts. His suspicions were aroused at Siniawan. Again at Bau. I think he's sure to have us watched. I think he may know by this time that we have seen de Ang gate of de Lodge; and look you, he would know that we recognized it, or why did we hurry away instead of examining soosh a marvellous ding? Gates mit towers und flags are nodt gommen yongle products, to be met efery day! Of course he would dink our knowledge game from Wo-Sing. He would laugh atd de idea of a European knowing about T'ien-ti Lodges.

"Here is de position: Wang-lo ish brewing mischief. He dinks de Rajah soospects und sends us ash shpies. Idt ish de duty of shpies to report to deir superiors, und Wang-lo vill prefent dat report if he gan. He vill kill us all if he gets de chance; but he nodt kill von or two of us—egsept Wo-Sing perhaps.

"Then you won't send Wo-Sing to the Kunsi meeting?"

"Wo-Sing ish de Rajah's trusted servant. He ish de real shpy. De servant must obey, efen if he go to deat'. Does de soldier refuse to marsch to battle because he may be killed?"

"But Wo-Sing is shivering with fear at this moment!"

"Fery likely. But nodt altogedder because he saw de gate. Idt ish because dat sight told him he would hafe to brave de T'ien-ti ash vell ash de Kunsi. He fears de future, nodt de past. He vill tremble—his yellow face vill be blue—budt he vill go mitout a murmur, or I hafe nodt read his charagter right."

"Is it necessary to send him?"

"I dink so. Many t'ousand lifes are adt shtake und de peace of dis oonfortunate country, whish de Rajah has yoost esablished. Budt I hope und believe dere ish nodt so moosh danger—Wang-lo ish too cautious to harm
our servant when we are close by, and bring on a crisis before his preparations are completed. I would like to go mit Wo-Sing."

"You!" cried Jack, astonished. "You go among those fiends?"

"Why not? I told de Rajah I would do all I could."

"Then you will not go alone, unless you wish to provoke a rebellion among your followers."

"I shall expect my followers to obey orders," returned Hertz, gravely.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Hertz."

"There's something very puzzling about all this," Jack resumed, after a thoughtful pause. "You have said that you think Wang-lo would kill us all if he got the chance, but would not kill one or two of us; I presume, because he knows those he left alive would call on the Rajah to punish the murderers, which he would certainly do, if he could catch them. But if the chief of the Kunsi killed us all, the Rajah would be just as sure to hear of it. Why do you think Wang-lo is more afraid to kill one or two than all?"

Hertz laughed. "Dat question ish more like Harry Rider dan Yack," he said. "Budt idt looks more difficult dan idt really ish. De Shinaman ish vanting in brain-­vision. He ish short-sighted—you oondershtand? He gannot look into de future beyond a certain point. He sees plainly enough de danger of killing von or two; beyond dat ish a blank. Or if nodt a blank, his sanguine temperament makes him dink dere ish no danger, because de danger vould nodt be so imminent."

Suddenly a "tap-tap" sounded in the jungle, where the Dyaks had gone, like iron on wood. Hertz started to his feet.

"Ach! Dat's de sentries' signal!"

A dog whined. Gani, not ten yards to the left, flicked his spear-shaft with his thumb-nail in answer to the
signal, assuming a listening attitude. Hertz hurried to his side, speaking in Malay, in a low tone. Gani returned to the lang-kan. Hertz called Boy, and together they entered the bush, re-appearing almost immediately with a Dyak.

“What is it?” Jack asked. He had listened, but could hear nothing.

“De enemy ish approaching from de East und Vest. Ve vere vatched! Boy, send Nyait und anoder Dyak to see how many; den garry de tamboks ofer de brook. Ambush de men ash near de bank ash you gan.”

Hertz’s orders were obeyed with celerity, and the party retreated to the south, over the stream, leaving a blazing fire before the hut.

Boy placed his men on the very bank of the stream, overlooking the lang-kan, and not thirty yards distant. Here they lay hidden in the jungle.

“Nodt a shot, remember,” the Collector resumed. “Nodt a shot oonless I gife de vordt. Lie shtill, und let dem go away if dey vill. Boy, see dose dogs don’t vhine.”

“Isn’t this rather daring?” Jack whispered, naturally thinking greater safety would be found in a greater distance. “With that big fire burning they’ll know we are not far away.”

“Hush! Hafe you forgotten de pirates? When you gan’t run, be bold. Ve gan’t run dis time—in de joongle by night. Und ve gan’t put oudt de fire mitout leafing a shmoulder. Be shtill now.”

Listening intently, the youths heard a faint noise resembling the soughing of wind in the trees.

The Dyak scouts returned, creeping like snakes through the misty brushwood. Noiselessly they came, and as noiselessly lay down.

“How many?” Hertz whispered to Boy. The Malay conferred with Nyait, and answered promptly:

“Twenty one way come, Tuan. More than twenty come other. So Dyak men say.”
Every face and every movement were visible in the bright glow.

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“Ay, ay,” Hertz muttered, “dey gan’t reckon quick beyond twenty—dat ish de number of deir fingers und toes. Nyait means yoost a great many von vay, und more de oder. Dose shtoopid Shinamen hafe forgotten dat ve hafe dogs—and, I dink, also Dyaks,” he added.

Yet the youths could hear nothing beyond a subdued rustling of the bushes, and an occasional crack, as of a breaking stick, in the direction of the lang-kan.

Suddenly, however, they heard a stick snap close to the brook, on the further side, making their hearts beat fast. Presently the bushes moved, and they saw the bare shaven head of a Chinaman gleaming in the firelight. He peered around, and threw up his arm as a signal to those behind—the sword in his right hand flashed red. Then he came on, stealing noiselessly across the open ground, with head and shoulders bent. Another and another followed, mostly naked to the waist, their skins glistening with perspiration, and their wide blue trousers tucked up above the knee. Every face and every movement were visible in the bright glow, against the shadowy underwood; and villainous-looking ruffians they were, the youths thought. Some had guns, some Chinese swords, some knives. In a long line the stooping figures crept on, and a movement in the brushwood behind the lang-kan showed that another party was stealing round on that side.

Suddenly Hertz whispered, “Lie flat!”

The youths pressed themselves against the ground. A hoarse mutter passed along the line. The Chinamen halted and stood erect. Another mutter! Those who had guns brought them to the present—no more need for caution! The order “Fire!”—beyond mistake, though in an unknown tongue—was roared by one conspicuous for his white bajo, and a volley followed—two volleys, for the men in rear of the lang-kan revealed themselves by a burst of flame. Then the cowardly assailants rushed in with a shout, their weapons gleaming.
But not all. Amidst that uproar, unheeded for a second, rose yells of pain. Several dropped—others drew aside, stopping their wounds with their hands. The Chinamen had fired into one another! But this was unperceived at first. The main body rushed through the lang-kan, slashing right and left, wounding one another in their blindness. For several minutes all was noise and confusion, triumphant roaring and savage laughter. Then they sought the slain—and found none, except their own comrades outside.

Hertz laughed silently. "Dat de Shinaman all ofer," he whispered. But the youths scarcely heard. Every sense was concentrated on the tragedy before them.

The tumult changed its tone. Men straggled back towards the fire, all talking in their loudest voice; and then they saw the dead and wounded scattered round! Such uproar broke out, such hurrying to and fro, and panic-stricken raving, that the earlier turmoil seemed insignificant.

"What dey say, Wo-Sing?" Hertz asked. He might safely have shouted.

"They have found out that some are killed—some wounded. They are frightened—I hear Wang-lo's voice—he is in command—they won't listen to him! They think we did it—they are going to run away!"

Small bodies of men rushed about with brands from the fire, seeking for dead and wounded in the underwood. In a few minutes not a Chinaman remained. But they could be heard calling to each other in the jungle, crashing through the bushes, panic-stricken, for a quarter of an hour.

"We nodt go back yoost yet," said Hertz. "Some of dose fine fellows vill lose demselfes, I dink; dey may vander dis vay again."

"I heard one shout that we had sunk into the earth, sir," said Wo-Sing. "Another said we had gone over the
trees—he said he saw us float away with the smoke! They were sure we were asleep in the lang-kan."

"Und nodt finding us, und de shlaughter, sheared dem beyond recovery?"

"Yes, sir."

When the retreating Chinamen had ceased to shout, or were too distant to be heard—when all was still, Hertz led his party back to the hut, posting sentries as before. Sleep, naturally, was long in coming. The youths lay talking with Hertz—no longer on sentry duty.

"De Shinamen certainly are de greatest blunderers on ear't," the Collector remarked. "Dey begin a ding ash if dey woulv garry eferydings before dem ; den somedings goes wrong—de oonegspected happens, und dey gife idt oop."

"I hope no English general would dispose his troops so as to shoot one another," said Jack.

"Oldt soldiers vill tell you idt has happened, dough! Budt if Wang-lo dink of idt, he nodt gare."

"Do you mean that he could sacrifice the lives of his own men to make the massacre more sure?" asked Harry.

"Ja! De Shinaman very reckless of life—oders' lifes. Friend or foe, idt moosh de same, so idt nodt himself."

They rose with the dawn and breakfasted. Nyait, wandering in the jungle, returned with two spears and a long knife. Hertz at once ordered a search, in which the youths joined. They found two muskets, three rifles, and an armful of spears and knives.

Boy, searching a thicket alone, seeing Jack near, called to him in a low tone.

"Not speak, Tuan," he said. "Look!"

Jack crushed through the brushwood and saw the body of a Chinaman, shot through the head.

"We go, Tuan," Boy resumed. "Nyait him see he take his head, and carry where he go. Tuan Besar that not like."
Jack shuddered and withdrew.

"Rifles!" cried Hertz, when they returned. "I wonder where Wang-lo got dem? Yack, Harry, see if de bore ish de same ash yours."

It proved to be a little larger; the nipples were of the same size.


He sat down and wrote a letter to the Resident at Kuching, giving particulars of the Lodge and the attack, and confirming Li-dah's statement concerning the boats and arms collected by Wang-lo. He also mentioned his intention of sending Wo-Sing to the meeting of the Kunsi that evening. This done, he called Paham, and addressed him in Malay:

"I want you, Paham, to take this letter to the Resident. You must allow no Chinaman to approach you. It will not be safe for you to go to Siniawan. We made a mistake in leaving our boats in Wang-lo's care—that cannot be helped. You must go by Sirambau; there ask Meta for a Dyak escort—he will have returned with the big flower. Strike the river near the junction of the right- and left-hand branches, and travel with all speed. You will want a boat. You are on the Rajah's service, and Meta will procure one. Return to Sirambau and wait there. On no account try to reach Bau. Be careful of the despatch. If you are attacked and see little chance of escape, destroy it; if surprised, swallow it.

Paham salaamed, took the letter, a rifle, and a supply of ammunition, and plunged into the jungle. Hertz watched him go, with much concern.

"I hope he will get to Kuching," he said. "If he does, dat letter ought to cause a shtir in de government of Sarawak. Idt's a great pity de Rajah ish away adt Singapore. I dink if he vas adt home he woud nodd shleep
oontil de Lodge of de T'ien-ti Hué vas burned, und Wang-lo und his ruffians drifen ofer de border into de Dootch territory. Budt I fear dese Malays despise Shinamen too moosh. Because dey blunder now und again, ash last night, dey dink dey nefer sugseed in anydings. I am moosh afraid Paham vill be too rash. He may run into danger vhish, if he despised Shinamen less, he vould avoid. Boy, ve return to Bau by some oder vay. Arrange de roadt mit Nyait. Ve hafe a long journey before us. I vant to approach Bau from de vest, und dere ish no time to shpare."

Jack and Harry tramped on through the old campong after the Malays and Dyaks. They did not seek for orchids. These were at the tops of the trees, and not readily seen from below. Besides, they had something more exciting to think about.

But Hertz took his field-glass from its case, and used it incessantly. After an hour's march, he hurried after the youths and said:

"Don't be afraid to find dings; you nodt find dem mitout looking. If you gould contrife to be very angrious to find somedings so moosh de besser."

"But, Mr. Hertz," said Jack, looking round among the bare trunks, "there's really nothing to find here."

"Hush! Look—look adt de tree tops! Nobody knows what you find. Wo-Sing, keep close beside me, und garry dat rifle cocked."

Something in Hertz's tone, and the allusion to the rifle, revealed his suspicions. Not a word did the youths answer, but they sought the "blue" orchid most energetically, though with small hope of finding it at a height of a hundred feet or more from the ground. Nevertheless, they constantly examined the trees, and penetrated the few thickets, but never alone. They collected a flowerless plant or two of no particular value, but Hertz had them carefully packed in a tambok. At length Harry found a
common *Vanda*, a lovely flower, but worthless from a Collector’s point of view. He removed it from the log on which it grew, and carried it to Hertz, who ran to meet him in great excitement.

“It’s heafeenly!” he cried, snatching the plant. “Where did you get it? Are dere more?”

“I only saw this one,” said Harry, astonished. “But, Mr. Hertz, it isn’t worth anything, is it? I only brought it because——”

“Hush! Idt ish nodt new, budt nodings is vort’less to-day. Garry idt to de *tambah*, und don’t look back!” Then, whispering: “I heard a mofigment yoost ash you game oop.”

Harry did not glance back, but he looked at Wo-Sing—his face was livid; his forefinger on the trigger of his rifle. After this the youths sought the “blue” orchid more earnestly than ever, with their rifles at the ready.

Presently Nyait halted and conferred with Boy. Then the Malay returned to the *Tuan Besar* with a long face.

“*Tuan,*” he began, “*Nyait,* he say——.” But Hertz cut him short.

“Dere are *antu*s, eh? Tell *Nyait* nodt to bodder me mit his *antu*s. I know all about dem, and I care nodings for dem.”

Boy rejoined the Dyak and they marched on. But he soon came back, his face even graver than before.

“*Tuan,* *Nyait* say no *antu*s he——”

“Ach! vell! perhaps dey are *Ujits,* or dat Pakatan gone back?”

“No, *Tuan*; no *Ujits,* no Pakatan. *Nyait* he say, and I think same, that——”

“Get on, Boy—get on!” Hertz interrupted sharply, adding in a whisper, while intently studying a tree overhead. “I know ve are followed by *Orang Kina* shpies. Get on! Vevant no trouble mit dem. Ve nodt vant dem to know dat ve are aware of dem.”
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Wonderful is the instinct or woodcraft of savage and semi-savage races. Nyait was many yards ahead of Hertz, yet he had become aware, in some mysterious manner, that enemies lurked in the Collector's rear. Hertz had long known it, and suspected it longer. Apparently the T'ien-ti emissaries—such Hertz felt sure the spies were—were less cautious than they would have been had they known that the Collector was a match for Dyaks almost in woodcraft, with eyes as sharp and ears as quick. Of course Nyait may also have heard sticks crack and bushes rustle, but it is hardly likely that the Chinamen would attempt to move on a parallel line with Dyaks. They know them better.

Boy understood and pushed ahead. Hertz placed Wo-Sing, on whose account he was most anxious, between Jack and Harry, himself and Bounce forming the rearguard.

Very earnestly they all longed to get out of that campong, where it was so easy for an enemy to follow them, moving from tree to tree, himself unseen. In new jungle the spy or spies would be compelled to take the same path; and they would not dare to approach closely, for fear those followed, unseen, should suddenly stop, when an encounter would be inevitable. A parallel course through the bush would be practically impossible—certain not to be attempted.

Such a jungle they reached after two hours' tramp through the pathless campong, and very glad they were. Nyait hesitated a moment, then struck into the comparatively thin brushwood that fringed the campong.

Hertz halted and crouched behind a bush with Jack and Wo-sing, looking back, an angry glitter in his eyes.

"I haf a great mind to gif dem shkellums a lesson," he said. "I obyect to be shtalked as if I vere a pig or a deer. Ye Gould shoot dem down ash dey leave de campong."

He waited a minute or two, but no Chinaman appeared.
"Forvardts!" he cried, rising to his feet. "Ve are on poodlic service. Gollect no more vort'less plants, boys! de shkellums can't see you do it here, und de labour vould be vasted. All de same, don't forget vhy ve game to Sarawak."

The spies, apparently, had turned back. At any rate, neither Hertz nor Nyait heard any more suspicious sounds. Presently the Dyak chief found the *batang* path he sought, and mounted it. This continued for a couple of miles, quite long enough for the youths — terminating in a Chinese road that led from Bau to Bidi. Following it towards Bau the travellers eventually got to the west of the Chinese town, where Hertz halted.

After dinner he addressed Wo-Sing, standing with clasped hands, pale and restless.

"Wo-Sing," he said, "you know ash vell, perhaps better dan I, dat you vill garry your life in your hands if you go to dis meeting. Shtill, I dink you are bound to go. I hafe written dat you are going, und de Rajah would never trust you again if you turned goward. Budt I shall nodt desert you. Yack, your revolver, mit powder und ball. Ish idt loaded?"

"Yes, Mr. Hertz."

"Gife idt to Wo-Sing." The Collector looked at his watch. "You hafe yoost an hour. You had besser go now."

Wo-Sing took the revolver, and rolled it in the waist-band of his trousers, girt up for travel. His face was almost blue, as Hertz had said it would be, but he did not utter a word of protest. Bowing low, he turned to walk away. Hertz stopped him.

"Wo-Sing," he said, very earnestly, "if you hafe to run for your life, go to Wang-lo's house! Dere you vill be protected—dere you vill find us!"

The China-"boy" again bowed, and went his way. His was not the only changed countenance. The Collector's last words had startled both Jack and Harry.
CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE LION'S DEN.

Hertz's astounding announcement was received in silence. "Dere you vill find us!" At the house of Wang-lo, chief of the Kunsi, suspected Provincial Grand Master of the bloody Tien-ti Hué, undoubted commander of its soldiers—the man who, whilst professing friendship, had attempted a massacre which, but for the Collector's extraordinary knowledge of Hué methods, and prudence, would probably have been successful! Hertz resumed:

"You dink I am rash? My boys, I know dese Shinese. I vill not say dere ish no danger; it vould be far from true. Dink now, what does the Rajah fear? A rebellion? He vould laugh mit shcorn adt de suggestion. What!—a few t'ousand Shinese rebel against de Saravak Government, dat gould hurl a hundred t'ousand Malays and Dyaks adt dem? Be sure he dinks nodings vorse dan a trumpery revolt, mit permission to vork for gold mitout paying anydings in view—an agitation against tags paying, mit a liddle agcompaniment of murder. Budt de Rajah notd know dese arrogant, shtoopid Shinese; he notd avare dat de Tient-ti Hué hafe a Lodge in his dominions! What I told him he has notd digested yet. Idt ish bad to prophesy, vorse to prophesy evil, budt I dink dese fellows mean nodings less dan de overt'row of de Government; I vill say no more—I may be wrong. All de same, I dink I am right; und dat Wang-lo, hafing
so mooch at shtake, vill nodt attack us in daylight for fear of alarming de Rajah's officers. Budt if he get anoder shance to kill us segrly, when nobody see und nobody hear, und not von of us vill live to tell de tale adt Kuching, be sure dat he vill take idt. Ve go to his house, budt remember dis—you are deaf and you are dumb.—Boy, I hafe somedings to say to you.”

The Malay approached and salaamed.

“You are loyal to de Rajah, I dink, und vill fight if necessary?”

“In Sarawak, Tuan, every orang laūt will for Rajah die,” proudly answered Boy, throwing up his head and distending his nostrils, his hand on the hilt of his kris, half concealed in the folds of his sarong. Finely dramatic were words and gestures. The youths saw the Malay leader in a new light.

“But for Rajah Brooke this man might have been a pirate,” Harry whispered.

“Und de Dyaks?” Hertz continued.

“They antus fear, not Orang Kina. Sirambau men faithful to Rajah be. Rajah know them. A house have on Sirambau, Peninjow” [The Look-out.]

“Goodt! Call dem here, und de Malays also.”

Boy summoned the men, who stood before Hertz erect and attentive, the Dyaks grinning and curious as usual. Nyait and three of his tribesmen—one had returned to Sirambau to ask Meta to fetch the Grammatophyllum; six Malays, including Boy and Gani, the cook—Paham was absent; in all, ten, or, with the Europeans fourteen. Hertz addressed them in Malay, which Boy interpreted for the Dyaks.

“Orang laūt, and men of Sirambau,” said the Collector, “we are now going to Bau. As you know, the Orang Kina fired on our hut last night, and we may have more trouble with them. But I am sure you will stand by the Rajah’s friend and keep together and obey orders. That
is all—Yack, Harry, Bounce, follow Wo-Sing. Boy, I vant you.”

The youths and the sailor marched on. Hertz took the Malay aside.

“Look adt me,” he said, “und don’t turn round. Behind you, nödt t’irty yards away, ish a tapong tree. While I vas shpeaking I saw an Orang Kina shteal to idt. I dink he may hafe heard what I said to Wo-Sing und to you. He is a shpy of Wang-lo’s. I leave him mit you.”

Boy salaamed, and returned to his men. Hertz walked on at a quick pace, and soon overtook the youths and Bounce. The Malays and Dyaks had stolen into the jungle.

Presently a scream of fear rang out, followed by a Dyak yell. Then all was still. But Jack and Harry started, stopped, and looked back, much alarmed.

“What was that?” Jack cried. “Somebody’s hurt, I am sure. Where’s Boy—and the Dyaks?”

Hertz walked on, taking no notice. Jack turned to Harry, equally alarmed. “Something’s afloat. Did you see the Dyaks and Malays go?”

“No,” Harry answered; adding, “Oh, here they are!”

They came on at a quick pace, laughing among themselves; the Dyaks boisterously. All looked excited. Nyait hurried to the front, sheathing his parang as he passed. He carried a blue bundle, which Jack saw him put in a tambok borne on the back of one of his men. Boy lingered near the Collector.

“Vell?” said the latter, moving aside.

“Orang Kina he dead, Tuan,” the Malay whispered.

“Den follow Nyait.”

“Did you see that blue bundle?” Jack whispered.

“No,” Harry answered. “What was it?”

“I can’t say for certain, but I really fancied—I’m almost sure—I saw the end of a Chinaman’s pig-tail hanging out. It was something black, like plaited hair,
certainly, with a sort of tassel at the end. And the blue stuff was all bloody. I saw that quite plain."

"What? Oh, I say! Do you think they've killed a spy and taken his head?"

"I do."

Harry marched straight up to the Collector. "Is it true that the Dyaks have got a head?" he asked.

"I have not seen it," was the answer.

"But Jack thinks he saw it, wrapped up in a blue garment of some sort."

"Yack's eyes may have deceived him."

"I don't think they did, Mr. Hertz," said Jack, walking up. "Look there!" He pointed to a spot of blood on the path.

Hertz trod it into the leaves. "Get on—get on!" he said sharply; and the youths let the matter drop. Evidently the Collector did not care to be questioned about it.

Hardly half an hour had passed since Wo-Sing left on his perilous mission. Hertz followed quickly, taking the lead, but did not overtake or see him. As they approached the town they saw many Chinamen with stained clothes, gold workers apparently, going to the meeting. They passed several parties, but did not speak to any. Some of the Chinese coming from the east glared ferociously, muttering threats. But the Collector took no notice, marching in front between Jack and Harry, with their guns on their shoulders; the Malays and Dyaks in a body, close behind, their weapons ready.

"I dink some of dese fellows vere mit Wang-lo lastnight," commented Hertz. "Idt's daylight now, my friends!"

Straight through the town they marched without a halt to the headquarters of the Kunsí, into which numbers of Chinamen were pouring.

"Where does Wang-lo live?" Hertz asked one of these in Malay.
The man stared, and pointed to a house close at hand with a large verandah in front.

"Wang-lo lives there, foreign devil," he said, and went on.

"Dere ve go," said Hertz, "buds I dink Wang-lo ish in de Kunsi house now."

At the foot of the steps leading to the verandah he halted his men.

"Shtay here, Boy, und be gareful. Yack, Harry, Bounce, gome mit me."

Without the slightest hesitation he climbed to the verandah. A door suddenly opened, and Wang-lo himself appeared, meeting his visitors face to face.

His complexion changed; his burly frame shook. But only for an instant. He was himself, smiling and bowing, before Hertz could address him.

"I have to thank you, Wang-lo," said the Collector in Malay, "for your kindness in so promptly calling a meeting of the Kunsi. I hope you will make every inquiry concerning the 'blue' orchid that you can. If you will permit us, we will await the result of your questions in your house."

"The Rajah's honoured friend is welcome," Wang-lo said, with a sidelong, downward glance at Boy and his men standing erect and soldier-like before the verandah.

"I will myself ask the question you wish, and I will tell you the result immediately after the meeting. Will the Rajah's friend condescend to rest in his servant's chamber?"

"Wang-lo, I thank you for your hospitality."

The big Chinaman led the way into a room, and summoned a servant, who brought chairs and refreshments—which, however remained untouched on the table.

"The Rajah's honoured friend will pardon his servant for leaving him for a short time," Wang-lo continued; "they wait for me at the Kunsi house."

"Where is Wo-Sing?"

"The Tuan Besar knows. Ask him."

Wang-lo waddled away. The Collector smiled, and returned to his companions.

"Don’t touch dat food," he said; "idt’s probably poisoned."

"Whatever did you say to him?" Harry asked. "I never saw a man look so surprised.

"I t’anked him for being so goodt ash to call a meeting to ashk about de ‘blue’ orchid. He ashk right enough; so ve do two dings adt vonce, protect Wo-Sing, und learn if any Shinamen hafe seen de orchid."

"But he didn’t—how stupid I am!—of course he didn’t call the meeting to ask about the ‘blue’ orchid."

"Nein! He probably galled de meeting to varn de Kunsi dat Government shpies are about."

"Well," said Jack, "if anybody had told me last night that to day we would be enjoying the hospitality, such as it is, of the leader of those men who fired—"

"Hush!" Hertz interrupted; "de valls are t’in bamboo."

The door opened, and a girl entered. Harry recognised her at once. Li-dah! Her face was pale; her eyes swollen. She glanced round the room, and then clasped her hands.

"Wo-Sing!" she cried. "Is he dead?"

"No, my dear," said Hertz kindly. "He ish safe und vell, und fery near."

"Where? Oh, he must go; he will be killed if he stay! Father will kill him! Tell me where he is that I may warn him?"

"You gould not tell him more of de danger dan he knows. Wo-Sing ish a brafe man; he ish doing his duty now."
"In the Kunsi house?" almost screamed the girl. "Oh—he will be killed—he will be killed!"

She sprang towards the door, but Hertz was too quick. He reached it first, and placed his back against it.

Li-dah fell on her knees, and clasped her hands beseechingly.

"Let me go to him, I beg you!" she pleaded. "Father will not kill him with me by his side—I will plead for his life."

"No," said Hertz, not unkindly. The girl sprang up like a little tigress.

"Stand aside, you foreign devil!" she cried passionately; "I'll see if your heart is stone!"

Swiftly she drew a knife from the bosom of her dress, a pretty toy, the hilt of gold, jewelled, with a bright, keen blade. Hertz extended a long arm, caught her wrist, and wrested the dangerous plaything from her.

Then, woman-like, she wept! Hertz spoke soothingly, in simple language such as he would have used to a child, which, indeed, she was.

"Li-dah, my poor liddle girl, you must be goodt, or you vill hurt Wo-Sing. I would let you go if for his goodt. Budt idt's noddt so. He ish in de Kunsi house—true, budt he is vell armed, und he knows ve are here. Outside ve hafe soldiers dat vill die for him if I order it. Wang-lo knows idt, und he dare not kill Wo-Sing."

The girl looked up quickly, appeased, but not less alarmed.

"Ah, you do not know—you do not know! Father dare kill you all! You do not know him."

A keen expression came into the Collector's eyes.

"I do know him," he said, sternly. "He ish Wang-lo, Chief of de Kunsi, Master of de T'ien-ti Hué in dese parts"—this was a bold guess—"gonshpirator und traitor! Ja! I know him. Let him bevare how he meddles mit me or mine!"
As Hertz mentioned the T’ien-ti, the girl hid her face in her hands, trembling violently. Presently she glanced up, a scared look in her eyes.

“How do you know that?” she gasped. “Wo-Sing does not know that.”

“Idt ish enough. I do know idt. Wo-Sing knows idt. Und Li-dah, you know idt also!”

The girl shivered, and again hid her face. Hertz was now sure that Wang-lo was the head of the T’ien-ti in Sarawak.

“Li-dah,” he went on, “you lofe Wo-Sing, und he lofes you. Your heart ish nodt here, budt mit dose who taught und lofed you when a shild. You know de Rajah ish in danger, und dose kind friends also. You gannot influence Wang-lo to make him gife oop his design, budt you must be sure idt gannot sugseed—that he vill lose his life und all dose mit him.”

Li-dah listened, sobbing. Hertz continued:

“De Rajah egpects you to varn him when de danger ish near.”

“The Rajah is at Singapore,” sobbed the girl, “how can I warn him?”

“You know dat, den? Vell—he vill return. If de Rajah ish killed, be sure Wo-Sing vill nodt life. You must save your lover, or Wang-lo vill make you marry Inchi Ch’en. You see I know dat. Ve go to Bidi, I dink, negst; den back to Sirambau. Ven de danger ish immi-nent you must varn Wo-Sing. Dere are alvays Dyaks adt Bau, und you have money to pay a messenger. Go now, und dink of what I hafe said. Do nodt try to see Wo-Sing; und be segret. If Wang-lo hears dat you hafe talked mit me he vill dink nodings of killing you!”

The girl hurried from the room in an agony of fear. Her concern for Wo-Sing had evidently blinded her to her own danger.

“Li-dah has pluck,” said Hertz, quietly. “I dink she
would have stabbed me if she could—de liddle tigress! Well, she vill, I dink, hafe de chance to do great dings. I hope she vill have pluck enough when de time comes to do dem. Lofe for dat blood'tirsty shkellum, Wang-lo, vill nodt prevent her."

He passed out to the verandah, and remained there. The others followed him with their chairs.

"Hafe you heard anydings?" he called to Boy.

"No, Tuan."

"Be silent. Listen for a pistol-shot."

The Kunsi house was not more than fifty yards distant. Any uproar, even, would be heard distinctly. A loud voice speaking was now and then audible. Nothing more.

Presently, the gold-workers began to leave in twos and threes, then in groups of a dozen or more, talking quietly together. They did not come to stare, sneer, and threaten; they scarcely looked at the strangers. Hertz remarked their good behaviour. It was unusual.

"Dese fellows must hafe had soot'ing syrup gifen dem," he said. "Wang-lo ish nodt altogedder a bad hoonter. He knows besser dan to frighten de deer he vants to gatch."

But where was Wo-Sing? Some hundreds of Chinamen had emerged and walked quietly away. The numbers leaving diminished. Soon they were coming out in twos and threes again. No Wo-Sing was among them, and no Wang-lo either.

"Gan he hafe turned goward," Hertz murmured, "or vas he murdered on de vay?"

Neither. Hertz had but just asked those questions when Wo-Sing appeared, walking between Wang-lo and another Chinaman. Hertz, very much surprised, descended from the verandah to meet the party. Wo-Sing's face was very pale; his right hand was hidden in his waistband. He removed it when he saw his friends, and
his face lit up. Wang-lo stopped, smiled pleasantly, and bowed.

"I have asked the Kunsi assembled the question which the Rajah’s honoured friend wished," he said. "The blue orchid has been seen in the neighbourhood of Bidi. The Rajah’s servant, Wo-Sing, heard the answer, and will give you all particulars. I thought well to take Wo-Sing under my care. Not being a member of the Kunsi, he was in some danger."

"Wang-lo, I thank you for your valuable information," said Hertz, bowing. "I thank you again for your care of my servant. If we find the blue orchid at Bidi, and I do not again meet you, the Rajah will reward you. Boy, to Bidi—marsch!"

Wang-lo stood bowing and smiling as they passed. Hertz turned suddenly, saw the smile change to a look of black malignancy, and laughed silently. Then he stepped up to Wo-Sing.

"Sheer oop, my brafe boy," he said. "You knew all dey hafe told you before. I don’t mean about de orchid—you oondershtand?"

"Yes, sir," faltered the China "boy."

"Vell, idt being no news, idt ish nodings to trouble ofer. Ve hear your shtory adt de first halt. Meanwhile, here ish comfort; I hafe seen Li-dah, und talked mit her. Šhe lofes you so vell dat I had to prevent her from rushing to de Kunsi house to protect you from her fadter. Šhe drew a dagger on me because I vould nodt let her go. Ncfer fear dat she vill marry Inchi Ch’en."

Wo-Sing drew his sleeve across his eyes.

"That man with Wang-lo was Inchi Ch’en," he said. "But I don’t care now, sir. The T’ien-ti can do all Wang-lo threatened—skin me alive, boil me in oil, in molten lead, I don’t care."
CHAPTER XX.

WO-SING'S STORY.

First by Chinese road, then batang path, the Orchid-Seekers tramped towards Bidi, glad to get away from the neighbourhood of the T'ien-ti lodge. Soon after leaving Bau, Hertz changed the order of march, sending Nyait and two other Dyaks to the rear, with instructions to prevent the espionage to which they had been subjected. The Dyaks were ordered to capture and bring before the Collector any suspected spy, but not to interfere with inoffensive Chinamen who might be on the road.

Nyait and his men prowled about beside the various paths, and lay in ambush at corners and difficult places, very energetic in the service of the orang putih. Suddenly appearing where least expected, their lithe forms creeping here, bending there, examining every hollow and thicket, moving through the scrub almost as noiselessly as serpents, they caused the youths much amusement, and, doubtless, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Rarely were they able to indulge in their peculiar cat-like warfare now. But as they caught nobody, and saw nobody, suspicious or otherwise, Hertz formed the opinion that Wang-lo, for some reason or other, had withdrawn his emissaries. Had any spies followed from Bau, their heads would have been in danger.

They started too late to travel far that day, but Hertz
kept on until dark, to put as great a distance as possible between his party and the Chinese town; finally halting in dense jungle. Here, with sentries barring the path on each side of the camp, they could not be surprised. A space cleared, *lang-kan* built, and fire lit, with Gani preparing supper, Hertz called on Wo-Sing for his adventures in the house of the *Kunsi*.

"When I got to Bau," said the China 'boy,' "there was a crowd round the *Kunsi* House, and a few people going in. Nobody spoke to me, and I entered and sat in a corner, listening to the talk. There was much whispering—I could only catch a word now and then—but I heard them speak of capturing Government House and the Treasury, and of killing his Highness the Rajah."

"Yoost ash I dinked," interjected the Collector. "Go on!"

"I heard the *T'ien-ti* spoken of often, the attack last night, and my name. A man near me told another that the English must have seen the *Ang* gate, as their tracks had been followed from the jungle into the clearing. He was one of those who fired at the *lang-kan*. He knew that they shot one another. He said they wouldn't have done it but for the big fire burning. That blinded their eyes, and they couldn't see whether anybody was in the hut. He did not think we went over the tree-tops in the smoke. It was the Chinamen with Dyak mothers that got frightened and would go back. He said Wo-Sing must be killed. Then he said Wang-lo meant to kill us all if he could do it so that nobody would know, or we would be sure to find something out, and send word to Kuching—"

"What did I tell you, boys?" Hertz exclaimed; adding, "Don't shtop, Wo-Sing—don't shtop!"

"He said a Malay had already been sent back, and had seen Mr. Crookshank (the Resident), and joined us again. Then Inchi Ch'en and the *Kunsi* writers [secretaries] came
Wo-Sing tells his Story.
in; and Inchi Ch’en got up to speak. He told those Chinamen who had married Dyak women not to talk at home of what the Kunsi was going to do. Then I heard Wang-lo’s voice near the door. He shouted to Inchi Ch’en to be silent. I was very frightened, and I got behind some men and worked towards the door. But Wang-lo had put a guard there. I guessed why, and I trembled. Wang-lo looked about among the people a long time before he saw me. I was in a corner; but his eyes met mine at last. I thought my hour had come, but he only said: ‘Wo-Sing, your master is at my house. Come here!’ I was less afraid then, and I went to him. I knew he hadn’t lied, because I was sure you would keep your word and come. Some of the people, when they heard my name, shouted and struck at me. But Wang-lo told them to be quiet. He said the flower-gatherer was his friend, and they were to be very civil to him while he was at Bau. They laughed. They understood. Wang-lo asked me how long I had been in the room. I was silent. He spoke to the writers, then told the people about the blue orchid, asking if anybody had seen such a thing. Two men answered. They said they had seen a blue flower on a tapong tree near the antimony mines at Bidi—”

“Boy,” Hertz interjected. “Did you go to Bidi mit Bounce?”

“Yes, Tuan,” the Malay answered.

“Go on, Wo-Sing.”

“They could not remember the place; they noticed the flower, because they had never seen anything like it. They did not know that it was worth anything.”

“I would brave de T’ien-ti und all idts men to get shpeesh mit dose fellows!” Hertz exclaimed. “Gon- tinue!”

“Wang-lo asked many questions; I thought he wished to know just where you would go; I have told you all
the men said. Then Wang-lo spoke about the goldworkings—new ones he wished to be flushed. Very soon he said that was all the business; and the people began to go out."

Wo-Sing paused.

"You have more to tell," said Hertz; "go on."

"Yes, sir." Wo-Sing shivered; his voice was tremulous.

"Wang-lo, Inchi Ch'en, and the writers took me into a small dark room. Wang-lo opened a shutter and let in the sunlight on my face. They stood in the dark and watched me. Then Inchi Ch'en asked if I had seen the abode of the Hung. [The Tien-ti Hué!] I refused to answer. Then Wang-lo said some of the members of the Hung League could read the thoughts and the hearts of men; he said he knew that I had seen the Ang gate, and that I was going to tell the Rajah; but the Hung had power to make the tongue rot before it could speak the words.

"I said I knew nothing of the secrets of the Hung.

"Wang-lo called me a liar. He said the 'Red Youth' had killed those who should have prevented us from looking at the Ang gate; that the Hung knew how to make the life leave the body as the water falls from a leaky roof—drop by drop.

"I trembled. I dared not answer him. He told me how the Hung killed traitors; spake of a vermilion pencil marking shapes on the skin like a triangle, and each being torn away. I said again that I didn't know any of the Hung secrets. Then he got very angry and kicked me, and called me a liar many times more. He spake of fire—of molten lead dropping from above—of oil. I heard without sense. I don't know what he said. I was so frightened."

"Ach! I don't vonder!" Hertz interjected.

"I asked him what he wished me to do. He told me that I must become a member of the Hué, and wash my
hands clean in holy water in the Red Flowery Pavilion, then I would be able to cross the circle of Heaven and Earth, pass safely through the Fiery Valley into the Market of Universal Peace, and burn my offering in the Temple of Virtue.

"I told him that I didn’t know anything of those things—I don’t of my own knowledge, sir; only what I have heard whispered by Chinamen, and what you have told me.

"Wang-lo said what I was blind now, and that my eyes should be opened. He said I couldn’t understand the mysteries of the Hung, but he would tell me something that wouldn’t be strange. He said he was rich, and had only one child, Li-dah, who would have all his money.

"My heart leaped then, sir; but Inchi Ch’en smiled, and I thought Wang-lo was fooling me. He said he would give Li-dah to me if I would join the Hung and leave the Rajah’s service."

Again Wo-Sing paused.

"Go on," said Hertz.

"Wang-lo sent the writers out of the room, and told me there was something to be done. I asked what; he said the Rajah was at Singapore; that he must never return to Sarawak; and that I was the Rajah’s trusted servant, and could easily see him alone. He said he would give me a letter to the T’ien-ti at Singapore; and I think he was going to tell me how I could kill the Rajah, when Inchi Ch’en called him a fool, and told him the Rajah’s pig was laughing at him.

"Wang-lo said no more about the Rajah, but he told Inchi Ch’en that I understood, and if I betrayed the Hung, and refused to do what he wished, I should die the death of the drops of lead, and he, Inchi, should marry Li-dah before my eyes.

"Inchi Ch’en told him that I was sure to betray the
Hung. He wanted to kill me then, and took a sword down from the wall.

"I put my hand in my waistband where I carried the revolver, and Wang-lo saw that I was armed, and would fight for my life. Then he called Inchi Ch'en a fool, and said the flower-gatherers were outside waiting for me. No more was said. They led me out."

"My boy," said Hertz, "you hafe been t'rough de Fiery Valley! So if you will join de Hung und kill de Rajah, you may marry Li-dah, und become a rich und great man? You are a brave fellow und you have done vell. Ve must send Gani mit de news of all dis to de Rajah. He vill not forget your service. Now I dink ve hafe done all ve gan, und ve seek de 'blue' orchid, if dose shkellums vill let us. Do you dink dey vill?"

"No, sir."

"Vell, Gani must shtart mit de daylight. I fear he won't get t'rough."

Hertz wrote the dispatch at once, and gave the Malay cook his instructions. Nothing transpired during the night. Hertz felt sure that there would be no attack; that Wang-lo would not move until convinced that Wo-Sing did not intend to swallow the very tempting bait.

In the morning Hertz renewed his precautions. But he kept Nyait in front, four of the Malays acting as rearguard. One or two Chinamen had been seen, tramping from Bau to Bidi; and Boy had warned the Tuan Besar that Nyait would rather return to Sirambau with two heads than one. The road was very good for Sarawak, being frequently used. Hertz, who had many times regretted that he dared not weaken his force by sending men to Siniawan for the boats, so as to get to Bidi by water, now felt sufficiently easy in his mind to use the field-glass incessantly. The youths assisted him to the best of their ability, penetrating the jungle wherever
possible. Wo-Sing never left the Collector's side. He was very quiet; the boisterousness which had excited the Malay's derision seemed to have gone for ever. Wo-Sing was years older than when he had fallen down prone before the Ang gate of the T'ien-ti lodge.

In the valley of Bidi all but he forgot their fears. There are few more lovely spots on this earth. One who visited it in 1863, and whose pen has described most of the places mentioned in this story from personal knowledge, thus pictures a road in this beautiful vale at noon-day in the record of his travels:—

"Bright flowers, rich tints, all shapes of vegetation, form a long vista of dreamy beauty. Vast trees, the like of which were never dreamed of in temperate zones, throw a world of green shadow round their trunks; thousands of brilliant butterflies flutter to and fro in the silent heat; all is grand and lovely and noiseless. No note of bird or rustle of wing breaks the silence. . . . The crash of some giant branch yielding to the weight of centuries resounds distantly through the forest, re-echoes widely for the moment, then all is once more hot, and dreamy, and silent."

Bidi is the orchid-seeker's paradise in Borneo, and in '56 its treasures had never been rifled. No wonder the youths forgot the horrors they had so recently listened to; that the sense of danger was lost in the beauty around them. Rarely, if ever, had Hertz been so excited—not even when he found the huge Grammato-phyllum, or the lovely little Anoectochili; for here the orchids were countless, and many of surpassing beauty.

They entered the charming valley rather suddenly, emerging from a jungle path, in sight of a clearing of some fifty acres, surrounded by precipitous mountains covered with verdure; beyond were the deep blue tops of a loftier chain. Innumerable butterflies fluttered about, of superb size and colour, many of eccentric
shape. As the Collector looked round, his blue eyes beamed with delight.

"Here," he cried, with a comprehensive wave of his hook, "here ve shtay till ve've hoonted de valley all ofer, in shpite of all de Shinamen in Saravak!"

"Tuan," said Boy, at his side, "Bidi bad place for snakes."

"You raven! You yoongle crow!" laughed Hertz. "Croak to Nyait. I gare nodt for shnakes! Now, boys, you'll nefer have soosh a shance again, I dink."

The youths needed no urging. Just where they entered the valley, the jungle grew in clumps, interspersed with trees of all sizes. Among clumps and trees they rambled, peering everywhere, passing dozens of orchids which they recognised, in the hope of discovering something new. Harry examined all carefully; Jack, always eager, pressed on, contenting himself with a glance at a known flower. He stopped at length before an unknown one.

"Here—Harry! Quick!" he cried. "Here's some plunder, and no mistake!"

"I'm coming," Harry answered; but just at that moment Hertz's voice was heard.

"Hi! Yack, Harry!"

Harry paused, irresolute.

"Are you coming?" cried Jack.

"Are you goming?" echoed the Collector, behind.

Harry hesitated which way to turn. Jack was fifty yards before him. Hertz a like distance behind. Whose discovery should he first visit?

"What have you found, Jack?" he cried.

"I don't know; but it's wonderful," was the answer.

"Mr. Hertz, what have you found?"

"I gan't tell you. Gome und see."

Then reflected Harry: "If Mr. Hertz doesn't know what he's discovered it must be more than wonderful."
And he ran back. He found the Collector with his arms extended, holding aside two masses of fern-fronds that obstructed his view, parted curtains of vivid green. Harry glanced through the aperture.

"Oh!" he cried.

"What dink you of dat marfel? Ish nodt dat sight vort' all de trouble und all de danger? Hafe you ever seen anydings like dat?"

"Never!"

"Nor have I."

"Why, it's a flower cascade! It's the flowing hair of a goddess, reaching to the ground, every inch flower-adorned!" *

"Mit tangled, shnaky locks twelve feet long!" exclaimed the Collector, measuring the mass with his eye.

"Oh, this is marvellous! Whatever can it be? Oh, look—look where the drooping spikes leave the stems! The flowers are of a different colour! I believe there are two distinct flowers on every spike!"

"Dere are—dere are!" cried Hertz with emotion; then his restrained delight burst forth. Gripping Harry's arm, he hauled the youth through the ferns, halting within a foot of the beautiful plant.

"Many glorious heafenly plants hafe I seen!" he cried.

"Many times hafe I said to meinself, 'Dish is de heafenliest—dis ish de gloriousest!' und now I say—dis ish more glorious of all! Ach! Idt's unaussprechlich heafenly! Idt's erstaunlich-wundervoll! Budt dere! idt's folly—all folly! I say de same dings about somedings else to-morrow, ash I hafe many times in de past. Gott's world ish full of glory! Don't shpeak now; let me egamine idt. Feast your eyes! Don't shpeak—don't shpeak!"

* Renanthera Lowii, named after Messrs. Low. It is still commonly called Vanda Lowii.
He took in his hand a flower spike that touched the ground—lifted it from the earth; shook it free from its fellows, and regarded it earnestly, his eye travelling along its twelve feet of length to the stem whence it sprang, six feet above his head, four feet above his reach. Then he dropped it and stepped back to inspect the whole!

The plant, a number of tall stems, bearing dark green leaves three feet long, grew on the lowest branch of a large tree, some twelve feet from the ground. Drooping from this were at least thirty wavy flower-spikes, hairy, here and there tangled together, none less than six feet long. At the base of each snaky spike, where it left the stem, were two tawny-yellow blossoms dotted with crimson, two inches in diameter. Below, at intervals of about two inches throughout the entire length of every spike, grew flowers of pale yellowish-green, blotched with rich reddish brown. On one drooping spike alone Harry counted fifty-four blossoms! And there were thirty spikes! Not less than a thousand flowers bloomed there, jewels, thick gleaming as in the hair of a forest nymph! Some of the lovely things trailed on the ground. It was a veritable flower cascade, twelve feet deep!

Five minutes were passed in silent contemplation. Then Hertz spoke:

"I don't know idt—I don't know what idt ish. Adt first I dinked idt vas a Vanda——"

"Aren't you coming to see what I've found?" interrupted Jack, bursting through the veil of ferns. "Good gracious!" Jack had no more to say. His discovery was eclipsed.

"Does your find beat dat?" Hertz asked.

"No."

"Vell—we'll leave idt. I dink idt von't run away. Look you, boys, ve shtay here if ve hafe to send for all
Meta's tribe to protect us! Lead de vay to your flower, Yack; let us look adt idt.”

“I'm ashamed, now. But come along; it's pretty, anyway.”

Jack marched off, followed by Hertz and Harry, halt-
ing in a glade, unshaded from the sun.

“There!” he cried, pointing to his find. “It doesn’t touch yours, but I think it's new.”

Hertz laughed.

“It's new in Borneo,” he said, “bdt idt's nodt new adt Drayt'orpe. Misder Rider knows idt vell—too vell. Ve take idt, all de same. Perhaps he hafe besser luck mit dis.”

“Why,” said Jack, astonished. “I'm sure I've never seen it before.”

“Neither have I,” added Harry. “I think it's splendid!”

“Really,” returned Hertz, quizzically. “You hafe nodt seen idt? Now dat's fery odd. I sent Misder Rider von like dis from Burmah five years ago. I'fe seen idt efery time I'fe been at Drayt'orpe efer since.”

“Perhaps father's hasn't flowered,” Harry went on. “I'm sure I've never seen these lovely blossoms. I'm surprised you don't think them handsome.”

It would have been surprising. The plant was a climber, with dark green, rounded stems, and rigid, cylindrical leaves. From the mass sprang half a dozen spikes, each with three to six flowers—the sepals white tinged with rose; the petals deep rose; the front of the lip deep rose veined with yellow; the throat orange striped and spotted with crimson.

“I nodt dink dem handsome?” cried Hertz. “Vhy, dey're heafenly! Bdt alas! I don't dink anybody in Europe has sugseeded in flowering idt. Look in de Vanda house adt Drayt'orpe, de right-hand pat'; shut your eyes to dose beautiful blossoms, und dink.”
“I remember,” cried Harry, almost immediately. “The flowers confused me. It’s Vanda teres!”

“Goodt boy! Dat’s idt—Vanda teres. Ve take idt, Yack, und all you gan find like idt.” Then, after a pause, “I remember I shpoke to Misder Rider about dat fery Vanda teres nodt long ago. I said de day vould gome ven idt vould be flowered mit ease. Und idt vill—idt vill! I’ve been dinking about de grand von, yonder. Idt’s nodt a Vanda. I dink idt’s a Renanf’era. Budt I’ll egsamine idt more garefully.”

Presently Boy, who had been with the Malay rear-guard, looking out for possible spies, walked up with Nyait.

“Anybody followed us, dink you?” Hertz asked.

“I not see, Tuan,” was the reply.

“Goodt! Now, Boy, ve have mooch to do here. You und Nyait go look for a gamping place among de rocks—von dat gan be defended.”

“Tuan,” Boy rejoined, “not far cave be where Dyaks get birds’ nests to sell Orang Kina. A way in and out. A man near go, you him see.”

“Dat sounds like de very place. Forwardts! Ve go look adt idt.”

* V. teres (Latin), “round and tapering.” Its leaves resemble rushes. The difficulty of flowering this lovely plant has been overcome. Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild devotes the whole of a large conservatory to it, and when the Queen visited him at Waddesdon Manor, on May 14th, 1890, the room where she took lunch was decorated throughout with sprays of V. teres.
CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE VALLEY OF BIDI.

At this period the Borneo Company had not established itself in the most lovely valley in Sarawak. Indeed, the antimony mines were really not mines at all. A few Chinese worked at the face of the cliffs in out-of-the-way places, picking lumps of ore from crevices, or wherever it was easy to procure. But when the Orchid Seekers reached the spot they found it deserted, though Chinese had been seen on the road. A few empty huts, hardly distinguishable among the scattered grey rocks, were the only signs that the *Orang Kina* had been there.

Said Boy as they crossed the valley towards the edible birds’-nest cave: "Fifty *Orang Kina* here lived, Tuan. Not one now."

Hertz turned to Wo-Sing, always close beside him. "Dese antimony miners would nodd belong to de Kuni?"

"No, sir; they might be members of the *T’ien-ti’.*"

"Ja! Wang-lo has probably sent for dem. Dose fellows ve saw vere de messengers. Dey on de road to Bau now by anoder vay."

Passing the huts, winding in and out among huge grey blocks of stone, Boy led the way to a *batang* path, which he mounted. Here the youths had, as usual, to remove their boots and walk barefoot.

The *batang* path terminated on the banks of a stream,
its bed plentifully besprinkled with rocks of all sizes. Boy at once took to the water, fortunately shallow. Aided by bamboo leaping poles, cut in the jungle, the youths avoided the deeper pools. Their progress was slow. Malays and Dyaks, and even the Collector, halted every now and again to examine curious holes in the rocks formed by the attrition of pebbles in the rainy season, when the stream was high.

“What are you looking for?” Harry asked of Hertz, who was on his knees, scooping the dirt out of a hole.

For answer the Collector held up a tiny stone, dull, and much scratched. Harry did not recognise it.

“Is it a bit of glass?” he asked.

“Glass!” laughed Hertz, much amused. “Dink you I dirty my hands und make my knees ache for bits of glass? You vould hafe to look a long time before you find glass here. It’s a diamond. Nodt fery valuable, perhaps, budt a diamond all de same! Ach! dere are many pretty dings to be found by dose dat use deir eyes.”

Thenceforth Jack, Harry, and even Bounce diligently sought those odd little pockets in the rocks. They found none unrifled. The keen-sighted Malays and Dyaks who preceded them were perfectly well aware that in such places diamonds might be looked for. They raked out the contents of every hole they saw.

Leaving the stream at length, Boy struck along the fern and shrub-covered foot of a limestone precipice, 150 feet high, its face almost perpendicular, halting before a broad dark opening in the cliff, with fantastic stalactites hanging down at the extreme edge.

“Here cave, Tuan,” he said.

“Budt, Boy,” exclaimed Hertz, “if de Orang Kina gatch us in dere, dey vill nefer let us gome ouldt.”

The Malay laughed, showing all his jetty teeth; his eyes twinkled.
"A road to top, Tuan," he said. "Orang Kina not know. If him did, him not dare go. Nyait he know, but Dyaks not many."

"Goodt! Ve make sure dat de road ish dere." Turning to the youths, he added, "Nefer get into any sort of hole mitout being sure dat you gan get oudt first. De prudent commander alvays sees dat retreat ish possible."

The Dyaks plunged into the jungle, seeking resinous wood. They returned with a number of rude torches, split at the top, like a ragged, stubbly paint-brush. These were lit, and Nyait led the way into the cave, some sixty feet high beyond the low-browed entrance, its roof supported by huge natural pillars. The floor at first was firm and dry, trodden hard by various animals, but it soon became damp and slippery, then muddy; water dripped and splashed from the roof, gathering in pools. The youths could not see the roof, the smoke of the torches was too dense. Very cold was the air, making their naked leaders shiver.

"Where are the swallows and their nests?" Jack asked. Not a bird could be seen; not a flutter heard.

"De birds are migratory," Hertz answered. "Only Gott dat guides deir flight knows where dey are now. De Dyaks probably hafe taken deir nests."

Presently they heard the splashing of a larger body of water. Boy held up his torch and dimly revealed a cascade. From an aperture some nine feet from the floor a stream of water poured, losing itself among the rocks below; it did not flow through the cave.

Nyait left the group, but soon returned with a notched pole, which he leant against the wall. A Dyak climbed up with a torch, and disappeared in the water-channel.

"Gracious!" cried Jack, "is that the way?"

"Idt appears so," said Hertz.
"Why, it's up a drain!" cried Harry; and Bounce groaned aloud.

Ascending the pole one by one, they found the "drain" to be seven or eight feet wide and about ten high. It led in an upward direction, a very gentle slope. Boy carried his torch near the ground, as also did the Dyaks, advancing cautiously.

"Dyaks stick ranjows, Tuans," Boy explained.

"Bamboo shpikes to lame t'ieves," said Hertz. "Mind where you put your feet."

So they went on very carefully. A rapid stream ran down the passage; on the left, generally, but sometimes in the middle, sometimes on the right. In places it spread all over the path, with here and there deep pools in the rock.

"Blind fish here, Tuans," said the guide, extending his torch over a pool. The youths looked, but saw no fish, blind or otherwise.

Soon the height of the passage diminished to six feet, then to five. Hertz and Jack, the tallest of the party, had to bend. For a short distance it was a hole not more than four feet high; then again it became lofty and fairly wide. Fifty yards of this, and it narrowed to a mere crevice, not two feet across, through which Hertz had some difficulty in squeezing his big frame sideways. Bounce grumbled loudly, but nobody took any notice. Suddenly, however, they emerged into a lofty hall, nearly oval. The Dyaks and Malays held up their torches and revealed a huge column, very nearly in the centre, supporting the roof, its top lost in the gloom. Looking round, Jack failed to see the narrow slit in the wall through which they had entered

"This is grand!" he exclaimed; "but where are the nests? They must be here."

The floor was covered with guano, a foot deep, but in-odorous. The drip-drip of water was continuous. Here
and there a stalactite could be seen hanging from the invisible roof, fantastic in the torch-light.

"Nests up top," Boy replied, pointing to the roof with his torch.

"Ninety feet high, perhaps," said Hertz. "De Dyaks fasten long poles togedder, und so reach dem. Idt's fery dangerous vork."

"But surely the birds don't fly along that dreadful passage?" interjected Harry.

"No, Tuan," said Boy. "Birds come way we be go now."

"Can't we get a nest?" said Jack, thinking of the days when he rambled through pleasant English woods, birds-nesting.


A diligent search of the guano-covered floor resulted in the discovery of two. They resembled the sectional half of a dirty glue cup, measured about four inches round the upper rim, and looked anything but a gastronomic delicacy. Jack carefully stowed them away in his knapsack.

"Dere are two kinds of shvallows whose nests are eadten," said Hertz. "Dese are efidently de inferior. I hafe seen de nests almost white, like pure isinglass."

Leaving the hall they entered another long sloping gallery, drier beneath the foot, and loftier, finally emerging in dense jungle on the hillside opposite to where they had entered. Hertz looked around.

"Are you sure de Orang Kina don't know dis vay?" he asked of Boy.

The Malay conferred with Nyait and answered:

"Dyaks know; two—three—Orang laït know, Tuan. No Orang Kina."

"Den ve'll garrison de cave, und make idt our head-quarters."
They did not return by the unpleasant way they came. Boy led them by a Dyak path, overgrown with jungle, reaching the valley through a gap in the limestone cliff. In the cave the Collector placed the baggage, emptying the *tamboks*, which would be required for orchids. He left three well-armed Malays in charge, with orders to construct a breastwork of the rocks scattered about in every direction.

"Now, my boys, for de orchids, blue und odervise!" he cried gleefully. "If Wang-lo sends his shkellums here, he nodt gatch us unprepared."

Back down the stream, along the *batangs*, and across the valley to the lovely *Renanthera* and the *Vanda teres*. These secured and safely stowed away in *tamboks*, the search was renewed. Hertz desired to work round to the cave, carefully examining every likely spot, and, of course, every *tapong* tree, for on one of these the Chinamen had seen the famous blue orchid, and Bounce, when questioned, had corroborated to the best of his memory. The Collector had no doubt that the long-sought flower, if found at all, would be discovered on a *tapong*.

They took precautions against surprise. Jack and Harry had their double-barrels slung on their backs. Hertz, Wo-Sing, and Boy each carried a rifle. Bounce bore his musket. Si Buntak, which may be translated "Mr. Short," the only Malay who remained with Boy, and a very little fellow, had a gun. The Dyaks scouted about, searching each patch of jungle before the Orchid Seekers entered it, sending their dogs where they could not easily penetrate.

Many were the orchids found and deemed worthy to be taken as "ploonder"—*Vandas, Phalanopsis, Cypripediums, Coelogenes, Dendrobiums*—but even at Bidi, then almost unknown as an orchid ground, real prizes, new flowers of exceptional beauty, were not to be discovered every five minutes, or even every day. The first that excited Hertz's
enthusiasm was found by Harry. He had climbed a tree for a *Phalaenopsis* growing on a low branch, when chancing to look up he saw, a few feet above his head, a flower the like of which he had never before looked upon.

"Oh!" he cried, letting the *Phalaenopsis* fall to the ground, and with difficulty preventing himself from following it, "if that isn't a prize I never saw one!"

Careful to avoid attracting the attention of those beneath—Hertz was not far away—he climbed higher, and got on the branch bearing the treasure, very nearly at the top of the tree.

"Oh, you beauty—you beauty!" he cried; nobody could hear him up there, fifty feet from the ground. "What *genus* do you belong to? Are you an orchid? If not, what are you?"

The plant comprised only three stems, each bearing two rows of arching, channelled leaves, bright green, with darker markings. But from the stems drooped no less than fifteen flower-spikes, some two feet long; not with blossoms here and there only, or in a spray at the end, but completely clothed with lovely pure white flowers an inch broad, massed all round the cylindrical spike as close as they could be, each with a pouchéd lip! Imagine fifteen swarms of white butterflies covering and hiding a like number of drooping rods two feet long!—these butterflies emitting a delightful fragrance! Beside such an object Harry sat in bewildered admiration.

A brief examination of a flower told him that the plant was an orchid; but how to get it down to the ground? He wished to surprise those below. Carefully loosening the roots from the branch, he cut a stout stick, which he slipped beneath the plant, tying it with string. Then, having tightened his belt, he removed his braces, and suspended the stick and its burden round his neck, resting it on his bent back, and so reached the ground.

The Collector was scrutinising the top of a lofty tree
through his field-glass when Harry walked up with the treasure, and said in a tone meant to be indifferent, but which failed to conceal his pride and delight:

"I think this thing is new, isn't it, Mr. Hertz?"

The Collector looked, dropped the glass, and leaped on the lovely "thing"—well—as a panther might spring on its prey, but with no intention of rending it indeed!

"New—new!" he cried; "dis ding new!"

He put the plant on the ground and squatted before it like a Dyak.

"New! you young shkellum! How dare you bring me soosh a flower mit a sober face und ashk—yoost as if you dinked idt vort noding adt all—if dis ding's new? New! Idt's heafenly—heafenly! Bah! Your Englisch von't egspress idts heafenliness!"

And then he apostrophised the flower in his native tongue, applying to it a string of compound words of astonishing length, which Harry, never having learned German, did not understand—probably would not if he had.

"But what is it, Mr. Hertz?" the youth asked, when the Collector stopped for want of breath, and not because he had used up all the German compound nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

"What idt ish?" Hertz chuckled, catching his breath. "Idt's a Saccolabium,* sir, a new Saccolabium, nefer, I dink, seen before by white man on dis eart'! Ve gife idt a name dis minute. 'Saccolabium Harryanum.' See now dat nobody else has a besser right to ghristen idt somedings else; und don't gome to me mit your 'I dink dis ding ish new, ishn't idt?'"

Be sure Harry was a proud lad then.

Hertz packed the plant with his own hands, and

* S. Heathii, a variety of S. Blumei; named after Mr. Heath and Dr. Blume.
accompanied Harry to the tree on which he had found it. While they were earnestly seeking more treasures a shot rang out followed by two more.

“Ach! what's dat?” cried Hertz, promptly springing behind a tree trunk, and cocking his rifle. Before Harry could join him Jack’s voice was heard:

“I’ve got him, Boy! Hurrah!”

“Got what?” Hertz shouted.

“I don’t exactly know,” said Jack, walking up, carrying a tiny animal by the legs. “The Dyak dogs put up this. Boy shot at it and missed. Then it came by me, and I rolled it over with the second barrel. What is it? It’s very pretty—not unlike a gazelle.”

The animal was only some eight inches high. Hertz recognised it at once.

“Idt’s a doe palandok,” he said, “a mousedeer. Idt’s a pity to kill soosh a lofely liddle animal. I dought de Shinese vere on us!”

So apparently did the Dyaks. They rushed up in a great hurry, and seemed relieved to find that a deer no bigger than a rabbit had provoked the firing. Soon afterwards Hertz halted for luncheon. While Wo Sing, in the absence of Gani, prepared it, the youths rambled away with Boy, ostensibly seeking orchids, but really looking for game. The unlucky palandok had awakened the desire to “go and kill something.”

Pushing through a patch of jungle, Harry noticed a fine bunch of fruit, not unlike grapes, a few feet above his reach.

“They look delicious, don’t they?” he remarked to Jack. Then, turning to Boy, “Are they good to eat?”

Boy looked, and instantly shouted: “Ular!”

Jack threw up his gun and fired both barrels, apparently at the fruit. Down came the bunch, and with it a snake—a cobra, writhing, but nearly dead. Its head was smashed.
"Bidi very bad place for snakes, Tuans," repeated Boy. "I many see, but nothing say." Then remembering that Hertz had called him a jungle crow, he added with a sly twinkle of the eyes, "Tuan Besar him no afraid of snakes, so it no use to shout when him by."

"What was it doing?" Jack asked; "going to eat that fruit? Its head lay on the bunch."

"Snake wait for bird come eat fruit. When bird he come, he eat bird," laughed Boy.

They returned to the Collector. The cobra and the many serpents Boy said he had seen diminished their ardour for sport. Bidi, apparently, was a bad place for snakes.

Hertz grumbled at the firing, pointing out that it would save Wang-lo much trouble, if the Chinamen had followed them, by telling exactly their position. He observed that it would be a great pity if they had to leave such a splendid orchid ground before it was half searched.

After luncheon the quest was resumed in the direction of the cave. One pretty flower was found which Hertz called "new," a Cypripedium, C. Fairieanum, with only two blossoms on the plant. The petals were curved like rams' horns, white and yellowish green, streaked with brownish purple, and fringed with black hairs; the pouch dull purple veined with green.

About four o'clock a very heavy shower of rain drove the Orchid Seekers to the cave. The Malays left as a garrison had been very industrious for orang laüt, not great lovers of work as a rule. They had blocked the mouth of the cave with rocks to the height of a man's waist, collected a great heap of firewood, stripped the leaves from a number of boughs for couches, and caught a dozen fish from the stream near by. One leant on his gun outside the cave, on sentry duty. Born soldiers all of them, as they are also born sailors.

Very soon Wo-Sing was cooking fish for the orang
putih. The smell was most appetising; and the youths were curious to know how they had been caught, as none of the men had nets or fishing tackle of any kind. Boy explained that his fellows had poisoned the stream with "tuba," a narcotic root found in the jungle. This they had pounded in water with stones in a large jar found in a deserted hut of the Orang Kina, afterwards pouring the water into one of the largest pools, when the fish came to the surface. He further informed them that the orang latiit tied "tuba" roots to their feet before swimming in water infested by sharks. No shark, he said, would attack a man so protected, and Hertz confirmed the statement.

At dusk the Collector posted two sentries, spread his rug on boughs, and went to sleep. The youths followed his example, and got a good night's rest. Awaking soon after dawn, they found breakfast nearly ready. Wo-Sing had scarcely dared to sleep; Boy was taking his turn as sentry; Nyait and his fellows had gone "tuba" fishing. They returned loaded, and were soon feasting on their easily taken captives.

Hertz got to work early. He had noticed a number of giant tapongs near the stream when hurrying to escape the rain, and wished to examine them the first thing. So, leaving the three Malays in charge of the cave, he set out with the others as soon as the Dyaks had eaten as much fish as they could conveniently carry. The Dyaks scouted about as before, making a circuit of the jungle containing the tapongs before Hertz led his party into it.

Bounce remembered that he had rested near the Chinese huts; and Boy was sure that they had gone up the stream towards Sirambau. All the evidence pointed to those identical tapongs as being the home of the "blue" orchid. The Chinaman at Bau said they saw it near the antimony mines. The so-called mines were not more than half a mile distant. Nevertheless, Hertz was
not by any means sanguine that the long search would be rewarded with success; the plant might not be in blossom. He knew so well the difficulty of finding a definite plant in the jungle, even when certain that it was there, and in flower. And he was not certain that the "blue" orchid was there, though the evidence was strong. Indeed, the difficulty can hardly be conceived by those unacquainted with the tropics. A thousand pretty things may be found, the collector may come across a treasure within a dozen feet of the particular object sought, stay there half an hour, and yet miss it. The proverbial phrase, "looking for a needle in a bottle of hay," hardly fits; the collector is in the bottle, mixed up with the hay in which he is seeking, not outside it, examining it with a magnifying glass.

In Borneo, orchid collectors generally keep to their boats, paddle up or down the scores of rivers, and search the banks with their glasses. Rarely do they traverse the difficult jungle paths. But the "blue" orchid had been seen during a land journey, near the foot of a mountain, or on its slope. Bounce's ideas hitherto had been very indefinite. No navigable streams ran by Sirambau except the Sarawak river, and the boats, if not left at Siniawan, would have been comparatively useless, unless to bring the Orchid Seekers to Bidi.

Hertz led his party into the jungle in which the lofty tapongs showed so conspicuously from the high ground near the cave. Every tree they approached, not tapongs alone, they endeavoured to examine from each point of the compass, crushing through shrubs and creepers, risking the serpents and ants. Scarcely one but what was surrounded by a close-woven veil of vegetation, perhaps a hundred feet above. It was possible, as Hertz well knew, to examine a tree from two or even three points of view, and yet leave the "blue" orchid on a branch visible from the point not occupied. And when
trees grow so closely together, the eye and brain get confused, so that many are passed without being examined at all.

Flowers they saw numberless, orchids, *nepenthes*, rhododendrons, blossoming creepers, fragrant shrubs; passing by, without a second look, countless treasures, any one of which in an ordinary hot-house would be looked upon as a marvel.

Here, too, they became convinced of the truth of Boy's reiterated remark concerning serpents at Bidi. "Sun" and "Flower" snakes glided swiftly over the blossoms in search of insects. Boy cut in two with his *parang* a beautiful golden-ring ed viper not three yards from Hertz's feet. Harry fled in terror from a boa which he declared to be thirty feet long! Nyait and his fellows went in search of it and killed it. It proved a monster, measuring twenty-six feet! Land tortoises dropped from the trees; grey frogs as large as a dinner plate hopped clumsily out of the way, each a meal for a boa with a moderate appetite.

Shortly after Nyait killed the huge serpent Jack rushed up to the Collector with a scared face.

"I nearly trod on an alligator!" he cried. "It's over there!"

"An alligator!" exclaimed Hertz, incredulously. "What's he doing here? I don't dink an alligator would get into soosh a place ash dis."

"But I'm sure I saw it. Look—look! There it goes!"

Some large body was retreating through the brushwood. Hertz pushed his way after it, laughed, and shouted for Nyait. The Dyaks came up with their dogs, soon on the scent of the reptile, followed by their masters. They caught it, and dragged it to the Collector, laughing in anticipation of a feast; not an alligator, but a lizard six feet long, a biawak, or iguana, which they quickly cut up into portable pieces.
"What will they do with it?" Harry asked.
"Eadt idt, to be sure," was the reply. And the search was resumed.
Suddenly a pleasant gurgling sound was heard close at hand, like water being poured from a bottle—a very large bottle.
"What on earth is that?" cried Jack, alarmed, hurriedly cocking his gun.
"Wah, wah—monkey, Tuan," Boy answered. And everybody laughed at Jack, who walked away, vexed. But he had his revenge shortly. Observing a tree pretty free from creepers he examined it carefully, and saw, very near the top, a distinct gleam of blue! Unlike Harry, he hastened to make his discovery known.
"The blue—the blue orchid!" he shouted, at the very top of his voice, without looking twice.
Ah, then there was a stir in the jungle! Hertz, Harry, Bounce, Wo-Sing, Boy, even the Dyaks, rushed up, breathless. Nyait did not, of course, understand the orang putiti's cry, but knew from the tone that a great discovery had been made.
"Where, where?" cried Hertz, field-glass in hand.
"Where?" echoed Harry.
"There!" answered Jack, proudly pointing upwards.
Hertz levelled his glass; not ten seconds did he look through it.
"I'm sorry to disappont you," he said, "more sorry to disappont meinself. Idt ish a 'blue' orchid, Yack, und a prize, or I'm moosh mishtaken, budt idt's nond de 'blue.' Boy, send a Dyak oop de tree."
In a very few minutes the agile little fellow was seated astride the branch on which the plant grew.
"Boy, tell him to be gareful und nondt drop idt," Hertz resumed. "I dink idt's a treasure."
The Dyak carried it safely in his arms. Soon he stood on the ground.
"Why, it must be another Saccolabium!" cried Harry, "but how different!—how lovely!

"Idt ish a Saccolabium," said Hertz, "prettier dan yours, budt nodt nearly so grand."

The plant was small, not more than a foot high, with deep green curved leaves, and erect densely flowered spikes, six in number, each completely clothed with white flowers tipped with sky-blue, and a sky-blue pouch. It was a blue-and-white orchid, but not, as Hertz had said, the blue, or anything like it, as described by Bounce.

"I dink ve gall dis Saccolabium Yackii, eh?" Hertz went on.

"Wouldn't Saccolabium Johnii sound better?" suggested Harry.

Hardly had he spoken when a shot rang out from the direction of the cave, followed by another—then a volley!

"De Shinese shkellums are on us!" cried Hertz. "Dey attack de cave! Dis vay, eferybodies!—dis vay!"

As they crashed through the jungle in the direction of the cave the firing was continuous. Then, as suddenly as it began, it ceased. Hertz uttered a cry of despair.

"De bloodt'irsty shkellums! Ve are too late! Boy, lead de vay to de gap in de cliff. Ve enter de cave on de oder side und avenge dose poor fellows!"

* Saccolabium oëleste (Latin), "heavenly."
CHAPTER XXII.

A SURPRISE IN THE CAVE.

Throughout that desperate rush to reach the cave in time to save the garrison, Hertz kept firm hold of the blue and white Saccolabium. It was a matter of instinct; he was not aware that he carried it.

When about half-way to the gap in the cliff, they heard two smothered booms, immediately followed by another echoing volley. It was certain that the first shots had been fired within the cavern, some distance from the mouth; the volley from the entrance. Welcome sounds! They told that two, at least, of the Malays lived. But Hertz suddenly remembered another danger.

"De poor fellows vill bring down de shtalactites on deir heads!" he cried. "Get on—get on!"

All strove their utmost. Even the laggard and grumbler, Bounce, showed his sailor's training by keeping very near Jack, the athlete, who was not far behind the Dyaks.

Fortunately the jungle extended up to, and through, the break in the cliff, which they were able to pass without being seen by the Chinese, themselves invisible.

Hertz entered the cave first, and listened. All was still. Then he gave place to the Dyaks, who stepped carefully, each with his left hand upon the shoulder of
the comrade in front, to avoid possible ranjows; they had no torches now.

Boy and Si Buntak followed, then Hertz, the youths, and Bounce, with Wo-Sing last—groping their way in the pitchy darkness, stumbling over stones and inequalities, knocking their heads against jutting rocks. In the large hall, where the birds built their nests, they halted, whilst Nyait felt round the wall for the narrow aperture. When he had found it he uttered an exclamation. Instantly a voice near the huge pillar asked in Malay:

"Is it the Tuans?"

Boy recognised the voice and answered. The man came forward. He had remained silent until Nyait spoke, fearing the comers were Chinese.

He told how the Orang Kina—forty or more, he had not counted them—had crept towards the cave—how the sentry had seen them, and fired. In the volleys returned one Malay had been shot dead, another wounded. He himself had retreated with his gun and that of the dead man, fired both from the interior, and climbed into the passage over the fall, pulling up the notched pole after him. He had been followed until the light failed, when the Chinese returned to the mouth, he thought, for torches.

Hertz instantly ordered an advance.

Great caution was now necessary. The enemy might have discovered the passage through which the Malay had escaped—difficult with torches to light the way, now both difficult and dangerous. Slipping on the slimy path, falling into the pools, crawling on hands and knees where the roof was lowest, they hurried forward as fast as they dared, and reached the outlet. Nyait listened, but the noise of the tumbling water drowned every other sound. The Dyak chief slid down the notched pole, and soon all stood beside him in the great cave. From this
point the many huge pillars supporting the roof obstructed the view of the mouth, and they stole forward noiselessly until they could see it distinctly, themselves invisible in the gloom.

Two Chinamen crouched at the breastwork, watching, apparently, for the expected Orchid Seekers. Well within the cave, near the side, at a bend hidden from persons entering, were between forty and fifty more ruffians, naked, except for the usual blue trousers, well armed, and with their pigtails coiled round their heads. The dead Malay lay beside a pillar some distance from the mouth of the cavern; near the body the wounded prisoner sat, bound and gagged. The enemy's intention was obvious—to lie concealed until the expected victims came, then to spring upon them.

As Hertz watched, he saw a Chinaman approach the orchids, carefully placed in a corner. The Collector intended to fix them on branches that night. The fellow pulled the lovely things from their hiding place, and kicked them savagely. Hertz saw that his foot struck the beautiful Renanthera. His blood boiled. Another ruffian went to help the first to destroy them.

"Are dere shtalactites oferhead?" the Collector whispered to Boy. The Malay did not, of course, understand. Hertz explained. Boy took a spear and examined the roof, there fortunately within reach.

"No, Tuan," he whispered. "They near mouth."

"Make ready!" Hertz signalled, levelling his own rifle. Cautiously the others got into line as well as they could.

All except the Dyaks had firearms. The escaped Malay had carried off his gun. Eight guns and rifles, two double-barrels, in all ten shots. Very cautiously they cocked them. Yet two or three of the Chinamen started and turned; they were only some sixty yards distant.
As Hertz watched, he saw a Chinaman approach the orchids.

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The ruffians kicked the orchids again and again; each blow struck the Collector. They drew their swords to cut them to pieces.

"Fire!" Hertz shouted.

Eight distinct flashes, followed by two more. Simultaneously a roar as of thunder—rolling, reverberating in the galleries and among the pillars, rumbling like an earthquake! The smoke hid the mouth of the cavern, but the crash of falling stalactites could be heard, with shrieks and yells. Harry and Wo-Sing added to the awful din with their revolvers, firing at random.

"Loadt!" cried the Collector, setting the example.

The smoke lifted slowly in that heavy atmosphere. Two Chinamen lay still—dead—one crushed by falls from the roof; two writhed on the ground, badly wounded. The rest had fled. That sudden discharge from the darkness and thundering roar would have put braver foes than Chinamen to flight.

The Dyaks rushed forward, yelling and brandishing their parangs. They gave no quarter to the wounded. The youths averted their eyes, but scarcely pitied the wretches who had so richly deserved their terrible fate. In two minutes all was over. Hertz covered his face and turned away.

"Ish efery flower ve get to be bat’ed in blood?" he cried despairingly.

He walked to the breastwork, and looked over it cautiously, lest the enemy should be lurking in the jungle near. He saw another wounded Chinaman crawling towards the bushes, seeking shelter. No exclamation was uttered by the Collector. The man had been left behind by his companions, who had hurried from the neighbourhood. Hertz heard them shouting a quarter of a mile away, on the road to Bau.

"Dis ish terrible!" he resumed, returning, his bronzed face pale. "I hate to hafe to shed blood." After a
thoughtful pause, he added, "I will send Boy und Nyait to Meta for fifty Dyaks; when they go, I will go myself to Kuching. I must see Misder Crookshank myself—I must write to de Rajah. Dere is a rebellion going on, noddings less. De shkellums woude nefer dare to do dis odervise. Und de Rajah is miles away! He must go back; if he nodt go for a letter, he must be fetched, or perhaps he vill find his capital burned to de ground. Dose shkellum Shinese—dose shkellum Shinese!"

He took Boy and Nyait aside, and spoke to them earnestly. The Malay shouldered his gun, the Dyak took up his spear. In a moment they had disappeared in the jungle.

"Ye vill stay in de cave until Meta sends his men," Hertz went on. "De Dyaks shall cut bamboos, und ve vill make platforms to dry de orchids on. Wo-Sing, send de Dyaks for de tamboks dey putd down, und dat flower I had. Tell dem to go t'rough de cave"—he did not wish them to see the track of the wounded man at present, knowing well what would happen.

He attended to the wounded Malay. His hurts bound up, the orchids were examined. They were not damaged beyond recovery. Si Buntak buried the dead Malay and the headless trunks of the Chinese outside the cavern. The bodies of the infidel Orang Kina were not allowed to rest near the Moslem.

Presently the Dyaks arrived outside the cavern with the flower baskets, and put them down. They had been unable to carry them through the narrow passage. One uttered a cry. His restless eyes had seen the spots of blood across the open. Yelling loudly he dashed off on the trail, followed by the others. Hertz shouted—Wo-Sing shouted—it was of no use. Had they been Sea Dyaks few of the retreating Chinamen would have carried their heads to Bau. The Sea Dyaks would have hung on their flanks all the way, picking off every straggler.
"Well, young gen'lemen," said Bounce, as the Dyaks disappeared, "does you still think as theer ain't no danger in these 'ere parts?"

"Hush—hush!" exclaimed Harry. The half jocular question of the old sailor, used to scenes of violence, jarred upon both him and Jack. They imagined themselves in a dream, from which they would awake shortly. Still, every now and again, the appalling roar of the guns, the cries of the panic-stricken Chinamen, and the mad shouting of the Dyaks repeated itself in their ears.

The pursuers soon returned, laughing and chattering with excitement. Never before, perhaps, in the unwritten records of the tribe had four warriors taken six adult heads in an expedition! They anticipated a glorious reception and head-feast at home.

The Orchid Seekers did not leave the recaptured stronghold that day. But the Dyaks went into the jungle and cut a large number of bamboos and rattans to make platforms or stages, which, on the morrow, were erected in the airy shade without.

Towards mid-day Boy and Nyait, with Meta himself, emerged from the jungle, followed by a long line of Dyaks, sixty in all. Hertz and the youths ran out and met them, shaking hands heartily with the orang kaya, and thanking him for having so promptly responded to the summons. Hertz told him that he was going to Kuching, and that he left the young Tuans in his care. Further, that he was to consider himself in the service of the Rajah, as it was Government business that took him, Hertz, away.

Meta replied that he would protect the orang putih. He laughed at the idea of another attack.

The Collector chose a Dyak guide, and prepared to set out.

"Searsh for de 'blue,'" he said to the youths, "und
collect all you can. Leave a strong garrison in de cave always to be on de safe side, but de shkellum Shinese nodt soosh fools ash to attack a strong Dyak force, or any Dyaks. Dey are nodt altogedder idiots."

He gave the youths a few more instructions and much advice, shouldered his rifle, summoned his guide, and left for the capital, promising to return as soon as possible.

The orang kaya went off to inspect the ghastly trophies. For half an hour the Dyaks laughed and yelled with delight. Then Meta sent the heads to Sirambau in charge of half a dozen of his men. This done, he bethought himself that the orang putih were flower-seekers, not head-hunters. He at once offered to garrison the cavern with one half of his men, whilst the other, under his son Nyait, accompanied the youths into the jungle to assist and guard them. Jack promptly accepted the offer, and the party set out forty strong.

Naturally, feeling themselves secure, as indeed they might with a small army of Dyaks to guard them, gloom and depression soon left the youths' minds. In Hertz's presence they had been cautious in expressing their opinion. The Collector was not often sarcastic, but he could be—very. In his absence their remarks were of a free-and-easy character.

They resumed the search at the tapong jungle, going over the ground previously explored, in accordance with the Collector's advice. The new Dyaks were very curious, watching every action of the mysterious orang putih. Nyait and his three men were bursting with importance, swelling and strutting like so many plucked turkey-cocks. Harry, the observant, was much amused by their airs and assumption of superior knowledge. When the new Dyaks looked serious at some incomprehensible action the old ones grinned. When the new ones laughed boisterously at something which they fancied
they comprehended, and probably did, Nyait and his men looked as grave as owls. As much as to say: "What do you know about it? You, who have been at Sirambau while we have accompanied the orang putih through all sorts of dangers, have no right to laugh or to look grave; you can't possibly understand, and your pretence of doing so is nothing less than an impertinence."

Presently Jack, who, as leader and chief, carried Hertz's field-glass, saw a pretty Cypripedium growing on a dead, low branch.

"That's new, I'm almost sure," he cried. "Boy, send a Dyak up the tree."

Jack stepped back to get a better view, whilst the Malay instructed the nearest Dyak, who happened to be one of Meta's men. The man hesitated a moment, then stepped forward and began to climb. Nyait rushed up, took in the position at a glance, and instantly seized the climbing Dyak by the ankle, hauling him down. The climber fell on his back. Nyait scolded him, and took his place, while the youths roared. Nyait pulled himself up the tree like a monkey, swinging from creeper to creeper. Every movement said: "I'll show you how to do it. I know what the orang putih want." In a moment the agile fellow was on the dead branch, approaching the orchid, which grew some distance from the trunk. An ominous crack—the branch snapped in two, and down came the plant. But Nyait clutched a creeper and hung in the air, kicking and struggling. The creeper was strong, but the branch above, to which it clung, was also rotten. It snapped under the strain, and Nyait crashed through the mass of vegetation, falling on his back. He got up, looking very sheepish, while every Dyak yelled with delight at his discomfiture. Even the Malays laughed boisterously. The youths and Bounce roared again. Wo-Sing, who had not laughed much latterly, exploded.

But Nyait was too good a fellow and had been too useful
to be allowed to sulk. While watching him, Jack had seen another flower. He now pointed it out to Boy.

"Tell Nyait," he said, "that even Dyaks must fall when the branches break. Ask him to get that."

Eagerly the orang kaya's son seized the opportunity to redeem his character and recover his self-respect. He dashed at the tree, and went up it hand over hand. Bounce stared open-mouthed in admiration.

"After all's said an' done, Master Jack," he muttered, "that's the chap to send aloft in a gale o' wind. He'd take the shine out of a first-class, four-handed, long-tailed monkey as had stole a nut from another twice his size, he would."

Nyait tore the plant from the branch, seized the roots with his teeth, and descended with almost incredible speed. Smiling all over his face, and with the self-satisfied look of the acrobat who has performed a difficult feat to everybody's satisfaction, he stepped jauntily up to Jack and gave him the flower.

Jack shook the Dyak's hand by way of expressing the thanks he could not utter, except through Boy, and examined the flower—a *Cypripedium*—a great blossom six inches across, with heavily-margined, wavy, purple and green petals and sepals, the back of the latter densely covered with soft black hairs, and a helmet-shaped pouch or "slipper," of green shaded with purple.

"This is new, or I'm much mistaken," he cried to Harry, who was carefully removing the first plant from the broken branch. "Look at it, and give it a name."

"It's got a beard," said Bounce, who was fast becoming a botanist; he could recognise a *Cypripedium* at a glance. So, however, could anybody who had seen one or two, and been told the name; the pouch or "slipper," the

* *O. hirsutissimum* (Latin), "very hairy."
distinctive feature of the genus, making it difficult to err.

"How would C. Whiskerandos do?" Jack went on.

"Not at all for Mr. Hertz," Harry rejoined. "But just look at this beauty! Give this a name."

"C. ploonder," laughed Jack. "That's what Mr. Hertz would be sure to call it."

The flower of the first *Cypripedium* was four inches across, variously shaded with green, yellow, and violet, spotted with black and deep purple: the pouch purplish green.

The plants were packed in a *tambok*, and the search continued. With such a large force of keen-eyed Dyaks, every man eager to distinguish himself, it may be easily understood that the youths were kept moving briskly. Calls of "Tuan!" on the right, the left, before, behind, were almost incessant. The new Dyaks were particularly anxious for the *orang putih* to inspect their discoveries, standing with spear or index finger pointed, anxiously grinning. Rarely was the discovery "plunder," not often an orchid; but the youths did not like to disappoint such willing seekers. A nod of the head and a gesture were sufficient to send a Dyak up a tree at a speed almost equal to Nyait's. The *orang kayal's* son, however, had no match. The tallest and finest formed man in the tribe, he was also the most agile.

Now and again a real prize was found. Boy, who disdained to emulate the boisterous excitement of the Dyaks, discovered a marvel, and quietly called Jack's attention to it.

"Tuan," he said, "here flower I no see before."

Jack looked through his glass, and shouted:

"Harry! Harry! here's a what-is-it! Look sharp!"

Harry ran up at the head of the almost naked regiment

* C. Lowii, named after Messrs. Low.
which followed and sought orchids for him. Soon two of the Dyaks were clambering up the tree, laughing and chattering. The mystery had vanished from the proceedings of the *orang putih*, therefore the Dyaks did not now fear *antus*. They brought down the plant and set it on the ground.

"What do you think of it?" cried Jack, in great delight.

"It looks like a sort of superfine deck mop," muttered Bounce, cutting a huge chunk of tobacco from the roll he was never without.

"Did you ever see a flower more like a touzled head of yellow hair?"

"Say ambrosial locks, and I am with you."

"Ambrosial fiddlesticks! You mean hyacinthine. What in the name of wonder is it?"

"A *Cirrhopetalum*, I believe," said Harry, promptly. "I don't think it's new—I've seen a drawing very like it. But it's grand and singular, and I think we may safely call it a treasure."

A very odd-looking plant indeed! The fleshy, deep-green leaves grew singly, each springing from a four-angled pseudo-bulb. On the erect flower spike was a dense head of straw-coloured blossoms, spotted with pink. Most of the sepals were thread-like, and five or six inches long. These gave the flower-head a curious dishevelled appearance.

Having searched the *tapong* jungle for the second time without finding the "blue" orchid, the youths tried new ground, whence the Bidi serpents had not been scared.

The Dyaks soon halted before a tree loaded with fruit, which grew, not on the tree itself, but on a huge creeper which had climbed forty feet up the trunk of the forest.

* *C. Medusa*, so called from a fanciful resemblance to the snaky tresses of Medusa.
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giant and covered its lower branches. A Dyak climbed up and threw a quantity of the fruit down. It was orange-coloured, the size and shape of a large pear. The youths forced open the rather thick rind and found within a substance like gutta-percha, surrounding some pulp-covered seeds, the pulp pleasantly acid.

“What do you call this?” Jack asked of Boy.


“Who’d ha’ thought as india-rubber grew on a tree, like yellow pears?” muttered Bounce.

“Who would?” echoed Jack, equally surprised.

Refreshed by the odd fruit, they moved on, but Jack soon came to a standstill before a prone trunk, beside which no less than twenty Dyaks had gathered, conscious that here was a prize indeed! Every man stood pointing with his spear, grinning. When Jack halted, then dashed forward, every Dyak laughed with pleasure.

“Oh—oh!” cried the youth, “here’s another acrobat—another Bulbophyllum! Mr. Hertz will go wild with delight when he sees this,” he added, as Harry joined them. “It’s ‘ploonder’ with a capital ‘P,’ and no mistake!”

It was indeed beautiful. Old gold crimson-striped flowers two inches across, the dorsal sepal transparent, showing the membrane, the effect silver embroidery on gold.

Harry stepped forward and touched a lip. Over it went!

“You are right, Jack,” he said; “I’m not sure if Mr. Hertz won’t think this a match for the Renanthera.”

Reverently they removed the lovely thing from the log on which it grew, Bounce assisting them. Even he was struck by its beauty.

* B. Godseffianum, named after Mr. Godseff
"Can't you give it a name, young gen’lemen?" he said; "I reck'n as it's a fly-catcher."

Jack opened his mouth, laughing.

"No—no!" cried Harry. "No desecration! A flower angel never turns somersaults!"

Soon afterwards they returned to the cave with their treasures, more than satisfied, though the "blue" orchid was still undiscovered.
CHAPTER XXIII.

META FINDS A PRIZE, AND LOSES ONE.

Seated round a great fire within a few feet of the mouth of the cave, Harry entered into conversation with Meta and Nyait, through Boy. He told the Dyaks of many marvels to be seen in England, the accounts of which, by the way, were not received with open-mouthed credulity. Very shrewd, indeed, were some of the old orang kayo's comments, as he squatted on his haunches, with his skinny yellow arms twined round his bony yellow knees, the brick-red penang juice staining lips and chin,—the jaws moving mechanically even when silent.

"Wonderful things in the Tuan's country," he said. "I have seen the big boats that want no sails. I have seen the guns that kill almost as far as the eye can see. I have not seen the snakes that run as fast as a bird flies and carry men on their backs"—Harry had tried to describe a railway train—"I can believe that; but the orang putih are men, they eat as the Dyak does. How then do they exist when they have no rice—no rice?"

Meta glanced round his audience—whilst Boy interpreted—with the air of a man who has propounded a poser, which indeed it was, to a Dyak. Without rice they would die of starvation, probably. But Harry was not beaten.

"We have much money, as Meta knows. Though rice
will not grow in England, we buy much, and give cloth for it. Rice is a white grain; we grow a yellow grain. It is not rice, but it is good, and we eat it."

When Harry had described all the wonders which he thought the Dyaks could comprehend, or Boy could describe in translation, Meta, in his turn, endeavoured to astonish the orang putih. Inggrisland had not a monopoly of wonders. The orang kaya in his youth—it was very long ago—had been a great traveller and head-hunter, and had a lot of strange stories at his tongue's end, most of them with a strong supernatural element. These Boy heard with quiet scorn, often omitting the supernatural altogether. He naturally supposed that the Christians would despise Dyak legends, knowing that they, like the Moslem, are "people of the Book," as he expressed it—that is, possessed of a Revelation from on High, which forbade them to believe in the magic and evil spirits of the Kaffirs, "people without a Book." But it was this fact alone, the possession of a Sacred Book, though imperfect, which caused Boy to scorn the Dyak legends. He put implicit faith in numberless evil spirits and stories of magic art which are sanctioned by his own creed, and he did not doubt that the Christians did the same. Of course he was unable to comprehend the student's love of knowledge for its own sake, therefore was unaware that the most absurd tale of them all had an interest for Harry, if not for Jack, as tending to comprehension of Dyak thought and mythology. But though the Malay was scornful in a quiet way, he was too well bred to laugh in the wrong place, or otherwise make his contempt very apparent. It rather showed itself in an interpretation of the supernatural passages in words so few as to be comical.

Meta, in describing a head-hunting expedition, told, in flowery language and at great length, how Singalang Burong—the Dyak Mars—descended from heaven to
sharpen some tribal hero’s *parang*, strengthen his arm, and at the same time blunt the edge of his adversary’s weapon. Boy let him go on to the end—the usual decapitation—and thus disposed of the episode.

“He say *antu* help. He enemy kill; take head.”

Soon afterwards the *orang kaya* alluded again and again to *orang boentoet*. Boy, in interpreting, used the same words, the first of which the youths, of course, understood to mean “man.” At length Harry said:

“What is the meaning of *boentoet*?”

Boy’s deep-set eyes twinkled; he showed all his jetty teeth in a broad smile. Wo-Sing’s face was very grave, but he appeared to be struggling hard to avert an explosion, watching Boy narrowly, as if waiting for the cue.

“*Orang boentoet* man with tail,” the Malay answered.

“I’ve heard of tailed men before,” cried Jack, suddenly becoming alive to the conversation. “Has Meta seen them?”

“He say so, *Tuan*.”

“Have you?”

“No, *Tuan*.”

“Do you believe there are such men?”

But Boy did not care to reply positively either way. He was not sure that the *orang boentoet* had no existence, but perfectly well aware that the Inggris *Tuans* at Kuching generally—not always—laughed when they were mentioned. Therefore he would not commit himself.

“Dyaks believe, *Tuan,*” he said. “Many *orang laüit* same.”

“Ask Meta where he saw them, and what they are like.”

Boy asked the questions. The *orang kaya* answered at great length. The Malay briefly interpreted. As a condenser of verbose speech he was admirable.

“Meta say go long journey many years ago. Far
away from Sarawak go, where sun soon after mid-day [south-west]. Orang boentoet many see. Tails he feel. Stiff as stick be; long as my hand. Orang boentoet sit down, tail he go in round hole in seat. He not break then."

The youths laughed heartily. Boy and Bounce joined in. Wo-Sing allowed his gradually accumulated hilarity to escape—it exploded with the usual sharp crack. Every curious listening Dyak within hearing, including Meta himself, also laughed, simply because the orang putih set the example.*

At an early hour in the morning the youths went out with their strong body-guard of Dyaks. Both Meta and Nyait accompanied them.

"Tapongs again, Jack?" said Harry, as they entered the jungle.

"By all means. You remember when we saw the Ophiophagus Mr. Hertz said: 'Boys, we've got to kill that snake-eater.' Now we've got to find that 'blue' orchid. There's no 'if' in it; we've got to do it."

* The Dyaks, Malays, and some Europeans in the Far East, firmly believe in the existence of the men with tails, a missing link of the Darwinian theory. Carl Bock, a recent Bornean traveller, heard of them so frequently that he endeavoured to find them. Having been informed that they lived in the dominions of the Sultan of Passir near Banjermassin, on the south-west coast, he sent an embassy to the monarch with a request to forward two or three of his orang boentoet for the traveller's inspection. The Sultan was greatly enraged; the messenger had to flee for his life. The only orang boentoet the monarch was acquainted with were his own personal attendants—his followers, literally his "tail-men." To demand these was a gross insult.

It has been suggested that the belief had its foundation in the custom of wearing jackets of tiger cat's skin, with the tail hanging down behind, which several of the interior tribes practice when on warlike expeditions. But it is not worth while to seek the explanation of a fanciful notion which has prevailed, at one time or another, amongst every race of mankind probably—our own included.
"I hope there mayn't be," said Harry, dryly.
"When the cap'n sings out 'Aloft! Furl all!'" said Bounce, "it's got to be done, if the wind's blowin' great guns. Now this 'ere place gets familiar like. I can a'most see the worry tree as the blue awkward were a-growing on——"

"Where—where?" interrupted Jack.

"In me eye, Master Jack; in me eye. It were a big slick stem with no monkey swings about it"—Bounce meant creepers. "Thinks I to meself, 'What a capital mainmast you'd make, pared down a bit!'—a goodish bit, of course. I measures it with my eye, an' theer, on a branch, about the first branch on the tree, I sees the awkward with the blue flowers all a-hanging down. If I'd only known as it was a awkward an' worth a heap o' money—if I'd only known o' this 'ere jaunt," bobbing his head to give point to his words, "I'd a chipped a bit off a tree every twenty yards or so betwixt here an' Sirambow! Why, I'd me cutlass at me side as handy as could be."

"If," laughed Harry, "we could only see that capital mainmast, we'd have it rigged with a bamboo ladder very soon, wouldn't we, Jack?"

"We would. Fire away! Boy, look for a smooth tapong, with no monkey swings about it."

Ah, the thousands of trees that answered more or less to that description! The tapongs, perhaps by reason of their great height without a branch, are more free from creepers than any other forest giant.

Meta's presence with the Orchid Seekers was apparently owing to a little jealousy. Orang kaya of Sirambau though he was, he seemed envious of Nyait. Probably the latter had been boasting of the flowers he had found for the orang putih, and Meta thought, having good eyesight, that he might be equally useful.

He peered about, poking his withered face into all
sorts of odd corners—likely spots for orchids all the same—parting bushes with his skinny arms, and crying "Tuan!" in a cracked voice on the slightest provocation. Colour of any kind set his tongue wagging; and one may imagine how often it wagged when flowers grew and bloomed in the clearings of that Bidi jungle much as they do in a hothouse here. Jack got rather tired of answering Meta's call, running up in haste to find—not nothing, a beautiful flower almost always, but far, very far from "ploonder" often.

Presently Meta called "Tuan! Tuan! Tuan!" three times, and again "Tuan!"

"Shan't go," said Jack, bluntly. "It's another case of 'Wolf.'"

"I shall," said Harry; "he's found something this time."

"Oh, yes, he always has. It would be difficult not to find something here."

But Harry turned and walked back quickly. Meta, forgetful of his dignity, skipped to meet him, cutting extraordinary capers in his excitement, hopping first on one yellow leg, then on the other, while the brass anklets and bracelets clashed and tinkled, and the blade of the spear he carried bobbed up and down like that of a lancer trotting. Clutching Harry's arm with his bony fingers he hauled the youth—willing enough—through a huge rhododendron one mass of crimson blossoms, halting before an orchid. Down went the spear-head horizontally, pointing towards the plant.

"Grand!" cried Harry, "lovely! 'Heavenly!'—as Mr. Hertz would say." Then to show that he appreciated the "find," he also began to dance and cut odd capers. Well, if Mrs. Rider could have been spirited to that jungle to see that witch-like old chief and her younger son jigging and capering opposite to each other, with the sharp spear in apparently dangerous proximity
to the youth's chest, she would have thought both had temporarily lost their senses, if she had not imagined something infinitely more dreadful. Meta was decidedly uncanny-looking, and one might easily have supposed that a humorous old cannibal was amusing himself by prodding a prisoner with a spear to make him dance—and tender.

The *orang kaya*'s comical aspect sent Harry into a fit of laughter, in which Meta joined.

"Hullo!" cried Jack, at a distance. "What has he found?"

"Ploonder, this time," Harry answered, bursting out anew.

Jack ran up, crashing through the rhododendron. "Why—why—surely you're not laughing at that? It's lovely!"

"Indeed we are not," answered Harry, checking his mirth. "I was laughing at Meta. Meta was laughing at me. Isn't that so, you jolly old brick?"

The *orang kaya* grinned, and immediately assumed his most dignified aspect. He had never been called a "jolly old brick" before. That, however, which he certainly did not understand, had not caused the sudden assumption of dignity. A dozen curious Dyaks had followed Jack, and Meta was too wise to act the buffoon before his clansmen.

"What do you call it?" Jack asked.

"A *Phalanopsis*. Isn't it a beauty? Look at the purple and white petals, and the violet-purple three-lobed lip. And look at the pale purple column! What do you think it's like?"

"An elephant's trunk. The leaves are very pretty, too. More excitement for Mr. Hertz."

The plant (*Phal. Lowii*) grew on a low branch, close to the trunk; indeed, it grew partly on the trunk—a tuft of five dark green leaves, spotted and blotched with purple
From the tuft rose a slender purple flower-spike, bearing sixteen blossoms, an inch and a half across. Sepals and petals white, flushed with purple; three-lobed lip, rich violet-purple, the centre lobe darker than the others. The apex of the column pale purple, shaped like an elephant’s trunk; as Jack had remarked, “ploonder” indeed!

“Ask Meta what he thinks of his find? Where’s Boy?” the youth went on.

Boy came up at that moment, and asked the question. “He say good, Tuan—heavenly!” Boy had borrowed the word, pronunciation and all, from the Collector. The youths laughed again. “He say find plenty—more you carry—more all Dyaks carry.”

“Tell him to fire away, then,” said Jack, removing the _Phalaenopsis_ from the tree.

Very soon Meta was poking and prying about again. When next he called “Tuan!” Jack did not ignore him. The _orang kaya_ was very successful that day. He discovered two lovely _Cælogenæs_ and a splendid _Calanthe_, which, with other pretty things, were safely borne to the cavern.

Day after day the youths went out, generally accompanied by both the _orang kaya_ and his agile son, who thoroughly enjoyed the occupation, as, indeed, did everybody. They left the cavern early in the morning, returning about four in the afternoon. After that hour it frequently rained. They found much “ploonder,” amid great excitement, of course. Like the Collector, the youths were able to go into ecstasies half a dozen times a day over every grand plant they discovered—_Aërides_, _Dendrobiums_, _Phalaenopsis_, _Cymbidiums_, _Cypripediums_, specimens of all of which were added to the store. Be sure no _tapong_ tree, whether free from “monkey swings” or clothed with creepers to the branches, escaped scrutiny when they came across it, but day after day passed
META FINDS A PRIZE, AND LOSES ONE.

without the discovery of the chief object sought. That would have driven them wild with delight.

As no Chinamen appeared in the beautiful valley of Bidi, the youths began to hope that danger was past. Anxiety there was, but chiefly on the Collector's account. Still, they had such faith in his courage and resource, that they felt almost sure no harm would befall him. For themselves they had no fear, they were well protected; but they never left the cavern without a strong garrison. On dry evenings they went hunting; the wet one's were passed in pleasant conversation with the Dyaks. Strange indeed was some of the information they gleaned, especially when they conversed on natural history. Meta, in his jungle rambles, had seen the most extraordinary creatures, at least the descriptions were extraordinary. He spoke of scarlet monkeys, of a rat with a feathery tail—this queer animal amused them very much: they imagined that Meta had devised it as a "set off" against the railway train, until Wo-Sing assured them that the Rajah had a stuffed one. The China "boy" declared that it was very like a rat, with a curled-back tail of feathers.

On the sixth day after the Collector's departure, the youths went out as usual with their body-guard, crossing the valley in the direction of Sirambau. Meta was as anxious as ever to distinguish himself, but seemed unlucky. He found nothing of value. At lunch-time, however, while the youths and Bounce were eating their rice puddings, with a nice fish provided by Wo-Sing as a treat, the orang kaya stole away, on discovery bent. Nyait waited a moment, then slowly rose and followed him.

Presently Meta ran back, crying, "Tuans! Tuans!"

"More plunder," said Jack, rising at once.

Hurriedly the Orchid Seekers followed the old chief, crashing through the undergrowth until they came to a
huge trunk on the ground, crumbling to decay. On such logs orchids love to grow, as the youths were well aware. Many a grand plant had they rifled from a prone monarch of the forest. But here was none. The trunk was not bare—indeed, it was completely clothed with creeping and climbing things innumerable. But the youths expected to find an orchid. So, apparently, did Meta. He stared, and rubbed his eyes, and stared again. Then he talked volubly in Dyak, staring harder than ever. Boy laughed. So did Wo-Sing. They understood the old chief's rather angry remarks.

"What is it, Boy?" Jack asked.

"He say pretty flower grow; no grow now. Antu took it."

The orang kaya peered about as if he fancied he had brought the youths to the wrong spot. Then he again approached the log, examining it closely. Suddenly he uttered a loud cry, pointing to a particular place with his spear.

It was evident that an orchid had been torn away very recently. The place was bare, except for a few broken roots. Boy laughed louder than ever, and glanced overhead. Jack saw the momentary glance, and also looked up. On a low branch sat Nyait, nursing an orchid. The joker had followed his father into the jungle, and when the old man's back was turned, had stolen the prize!

Everybody laughed except Meta. In the midst of the uproar a voice hailed them in Dyak. In the silence that followed, the approach of several persons could be heard. The Dyaks rushed away at once to meet them. Hurrying forward, the youths found their body-guard gathered round the man who had accompanied the Collector, talking excitedly.

"Boy, ask what news of the Tuan Besar?" cried Jack.
Boy stepped forward, but before he could utter a word the bushes beyond parted, and Paham appeared, with his rifle on his shoulder. A word in Malay, and Boy joyfully shouted:

"Tuan Besar here!"

The Dyaks fell back right and left as the Collector emerged from the jungle, looking tired, but apparently in the best of health.
"Ach! boys, I'm glad to see you!" cried the Collector, hurrying forward and shaking hands with everybody—Bounce, Wo-Sing, Boy, Meta, Nyait, and every Dyak on the spot. "Dish ish glorious! I vould ratder find you vell like dis, laughing und yoking, dan discofer de heafenliest flower on eart'! What news of de shkellum Shinese? Vhat luck? You must hafe had a grand time in dis eart'ly Paradise. Hafe you got de 'blue' orchid?"

"No," Harry answered, shaking his head. "We haven't found the blue, but Mr. Hertz, we've got a lot of grand plunder. As for the Chinese, there might not be a Chinaman in Sarawak."

They talked on eagerlly for a few minutes, then Harry suddenly said:

"Where's Gani?"

"De poor fellow nefer reashed Kuching," Hertz replied. "I dink he vas gaught und killed by de Shinese soon after he left us, und de letter read. Dat vas vhy dey attacked de cave. He might hafe deshtroyed de despatch, of gourse, but I dink he vas surprised."

"Did you see the Rajah?" Jack asked.

"No. He ish adt Singapore. I saw de Resident,
Misder Crookshank, und Misder Merriman. I stayed mit de Resident a day and two nights, und talked mit him seriously. A shteamer vas adt de capital; idt sails for Singapore to-day. I wrote a shtrong letter, und de Resident wrote anoder. De Rajah vill get dem—he vill gone back adt vonce, und all, I hope, vill be vell. Now, boys, for de cave, to see what you’ve found!"

They returned at a rapid pace, laughing and talking, the youths glad to have the Collector once more with them. Proudly they showed him the plants they had discovered; eagerly they awaited his opinion of each. The dishevelled Cirrhopetalum enraptured him.

"Idt’s nocht new," he cried, "budt idt’s fery rare, und idt’s heafenly—heafenly!"

One plant they carefully concealed until he had examined everything else. It was the new Bulbophyllum, with its lovely flowers of old-gold, crimson-striped, the dorsal-sepal of each embroidered with silver. This, they imagined, would arouse his enthusiasm to a high pitch, and they were right.

"What haf you dere?" he cried, as Jack smilingly removed the tambok which had hidden it. "So—so—Ach! you young shkellum!—So you hide dat oontil I’ve seen all de oders! You dink idt would t’row dem into de shadow, und dey disappear entirely? Pooll idt oudt—be gareful! Dere—pudt idt dere—right before my eyes! Dat vill do. Now shtand aside, und don’t shpeak!"

They gave him room to feast his eyes, which he did in silence for at least five minutes. At length he said, while the satisfied eyes twinkled:

"Now you egspext me to go into—what is dat for a vordt? — egstacies, don’t you? You shan’t be disappointed. I vill—in Greek! Dat’s a language you don’t oondershtand, eh, Harry?"

"Spare us the Greek, Mr. Hertz!" cried Jack; "you can do it justice in English."
“Ja! Budt a shange ish beneficial!”

He uttered rapidly a string of sentences, laughing all the time.

“Happy dought!” he cried, after a pause. “I hafe seen you shmile when I hafe let meinself go in what ought to be Englisch. Bounce, here, has laughed many times. In future I blow off shteam in Greek! If you shmile den, idt vill be adt your—finish idt, Harry.”

“At our own ignorance?”

“Of Greek. Yoost so. Take gare of dat Bulbophyllum; idt’s a heafenly treasure!”

They did not again leave the cave that day, but passed the time attending to the plants on the drying stages. On the morrow the search was resumed under Hertz’s supervision. Day after day passed, a week, two weeks, three, and the “blue” orchid was still undiscovered. But the Collector did not cease to hope. He knew that an army could not have examined the thousands of trees in the vale of Bidi in the time. At the end of the third week Meta said that he must return to Sirambau. Hertz pressed him to stay, but the orang kaya sulked. At length he said he had business to attend to—friends coming to see him.

That gave the Collector the clue.

“I dink,” he said to Boy, “Meta vants to go home to give a head-feast.”

“Yes, Tuan,” the Malay answered.

“A head-feast!” cried Jack; “I should like to be present.”

“So would I,” added Harry. “I find the Dyaks most interesting people.”

Hertz demurred. “Ve hafe nodt found de ‘blue’ orchid,” he urged. “I don’t like to go avay mitout de ‘blue.’ Dough ve hafe nodt been sugessful, somedings tells me idt’s here, where ve hafe found so many grand dings.”
"Mr. Hertz," said Harry, "when you described the new *Bulbophyllum* in Greek, you said a change was beneficial. I am of the same opinion now. Our clothes are in shreds, our boots worn out." The youths were as ragged as scarecrows. "At Sirambau we have new clothes and new boots. Now don't you think another change will be beneficial?"

"We can return, you know," Jack added.

Hertz laughed. "Ach! Ja! Fery beneficial. Budt Meta has nodt invited us to his head-feast."

"Would a hint be contrary to Dyak etiquette?" Harry asked; adding, "I think Boy will be able to do it very politely."

"I nodt doubt idt. Well, suggest idt."

Harry did so, with the result that a hearty invitation was promptly given them. Hertz prevailed on the *orang kaya* to remain another week, promising that if the "blue" orchid were not then found he would let him go willingly. The week passed like the others, not fruitless, much plunder was secured, but, alas! the chief object was not with it. Then Meta prepared to return home.

"Pack oop!" said Hertz, "ve go mit Meta for a rest. But ve gan und ve vill return, please Gott!"

The *orang kaya* lost no time. A score of new *tamboks* were made, no long task, with bamboos and rattans plentiful, and sixty Dyaks to make them into baskets. In a few hours the orchids were packed and on the road to Sirambau.

It was a noisy, indeed a boisterous procession. The Dyaks laughed, joked, and yelled like schoolboys after a month's close confinement. Nobody sought orchids, or anything else. Nothing was heard of bad birds or *antus*; nobody dreamt of listening for good or bad omens.

Some miles from home Meta sent two swift-footed, unencumbered Dyaks to announce his approach; so that
when the tired *orang putih* arrived in sight of the long Dyak "houses," almost buried in the palms, they found the place alive. All the inhabitants able to stand, and many unable—infants in arms—were assembled in the outer verandah, or below in the open space. But Hertz's eyes sought the stage he had erected to dry his orchids.

"Ach!" he cried, "somebody has gollected orchids mit a vengeance!"

The stage was heaped up with plants. Every adjacent branch, easy to be reached, was loaded. The sight the *orang kaya* had of the treasures in the cases and bales left in his charge, had done their work. Apparently the Dyaks had gathered indiscriminately every plant in the immediate neighbourhood.

But now was not the time to examine them. Yells, mad bursts of laughter, the beating of gongs, wild dances, welcomed—the return of the Orchid Seekers? Not precisely—the arrival of the warriors who had taken six new heads.

Meta saw the *orang putih* safe upstairs—that is, up the notched trunk—then left them, to despatch messengers to all his friends for twenty miles round, urgently apprising them that a "head-feast" would be held on the morrow without fail.

The uproar gradually died away. The Dyaks had much to do. Food in vast quantities had been collected gradually for weeks past. Its condition by this time, in a tropical country, may be imagined. But arrack, rice spirit, had to be strained off into huge jars, the decorations to be fixed, etc. Wo-Sing provided a meal for his masters, after which they slept till dawn, when the hubbub of the busy Dyaks roused them. After breakfast Hertz took the youths away to escape the crowd, with the intention of examining the orchids on the stage and the trees round it.
Here was the great *Grammatophyllum*, which had required twenty men to carry it, still on the makeshift handbarrow, its flowers ragged, its spikes crushed and broken. Here were the lovely little *Anoectochilii*, not much the worse for the journey; the odd, acrobatic *Bulbophyllum*—all the plants which had been left for Meta to fetch. Here, also, was proof that some very unscientific collectors had been at work, men, women, and children, with the haziest of notions of what constitutes an orchid. Sirambau was rich in *Nepenthes*—here were dozens, all plunder, and many plants unknown to Jack and Harry, not orchids. One huge "pitcher" provoked many exclamations of wonder. Hertz measured it, and noted down the dimensions—12½ inches long, 23 inches in circumference, capable of holding more than two quarts of water. Colour—pale violet; convoluted mouth pale coral; lid green, with a pale violet centre; the shape like a pot-bellied claret-jug. A brief examination convinced them that the amateur collectors had been no more successful in the search for the "blue" orchid than themselves—at least, if it were in flower at this season. Summoning Bounce, Wo-Sing, and the Malays, Hertz set out on a tour round the neighbourhood.

"If ve shtay here," he said, "ve may be poisoned mit de stench of de cooking food. Ve hafe to stand idt to-night; und I dink ve vill hafe more dan enough of idt."

Returning towards dusk, they found the feast in full swing. Hundreds of visitors had arrived from all parts. Meta's "house" was decorated with green boughs. At regular intervals in the inner verandah were *pandongs*—trophies of arms and war charms, set up on posts and cross pieces. The ghastly chandelier had been removed from the *pangeran* house, and its load, with the new heads, placed in a rice measure in a prominent position.
The horror with which the youths had at first regarded them had almost vanished. Save the white teeth there was little of humanity left; indeed, one would hardly have known them for heads at a view from behind.

The whole population and the visitors had put on their best clothes. The men were mostly clad in red jacket, yellow or red headdress, and gay waist-cloth, or Malay trousers; the women weighted down with beads and brass wire. Meta was even grander than at the previous feast. More gold lace had been added to the hussar jacket, and festooned round it. His yellow, skinny legs were bare as before, except for the usual brass rings; but his body, from his head to his thighs, was astonishingly decked out. When he rose to welcome the orang putih, he resembled a "jack-in-the-green" in a military jacket, puffed out a foot thick all round with gold lace, brass wire, and necklaces and waistbelts of beads and tiger-cat's teeth.

Before each door was a fire, but the principal Dyaks and their visitors had gathered round Meta's hearth—rough planks laid on the floor, with big flat stones for the fireplace. Their arms and ornaments gleamed luridly in the glow. Brass armlets, anklets, and necklaces tinkled with every movement.

As every Dyak of eminence wished to shake hands with the orang putih, it was some time before the latter got settled on their mats in the place of honour, from which they soon wished themselves far away. The feast proper was over, the drinking had begun; but half-eaten fragments of food, not savoury, littered the verandah, and the smell was fearful! Here and there were piles of fruit—awful duriens, and other kinds—with strange compounds of mouldy rice and stale fish, heaped up on tall bronze dishes; but nobody paid any attention to the dessert, for the jars, full of arrack, had already been replenished once.
The tumult was indescribable; the heat awful; the smell worse than the odour of the *Rafflesia Arnoldii*; it resembled a blend of that and the terrible *Bulbophyllum*, with the durien thrown in wholesale!

The uproar suddenly decreased. Meta again rose, and spoke to Nyait, who with his four companions, the warriors who had taken the heads, proceeded to march up and down the verandah in solemn file. Very grand looked the five heroes as they strutted in their choicest bravery, with every eye upon them! The solemn tramp appeared to be the signal for silence. As soon as something like it had been obtained, Nyait began to recite in a loud monotonous tone.

"Idt ish de Mengap," Hertz whispered, "de song of Klieng, a myt’ical Dyak hero. Idt ish an invocation to de god of var, Singalang Burong. Nyait ish ashking him in a roundabout vay to gome to dis feast. He nodt presume to ask him down directly, so he tell how de hero, Klieng, enticed him to *his* feast. Idt’s a modest hint. Budt I tell you all about idt afterwards. Listen now."

They listened, and this—much condensed—is what they heard, as afterwards interpreted by the Collector, who, though unable to converse in Dyak, was familiar with the *Mengap*:

It is the evening of Klieng’s feast!
The Heavens are dark and close as a well-joined box;
The sun of day is fast sinking;
Night clouds like black cloths are spreading;
See the moon!—the stars!—the Milky Way!
Beneath are young warriors crowned
With diadems of jewelled gold;
Women, with touch of gentle fingers,
Decking the house like a forest flower;
Hoary warriors, wise and grave,
In the voice of prudence discoursing;
Young girls—here a soft, cooing dove—
There a painted argus pheasant,
Light-hearted, merrily laughing.

Oh, come all things that breathe and move—
Come flowers, trees—come stones and earth,
To mighty Klieng's feast!
They come—they call—they cry—
"Oh, Singalang Burong, come!
Great warrior, hear and come!"

He hears not, or he heeds not.

The wife of Klieng approaches her lord as he sits among the elders.
"The house is gay," she cries, "the warriors all are here!
The maidens laugh, the old men round the fire discourse wisdom!
Mountains of good food we have, and rivers of drink!
But where is the joy of your feast, O Klieng?
The hearts of men are not lifted up;
Your feast drags, husband—we wait for the mirth."

Great Klieng answers, quick—
"Cease, wife. What I begin I end."
He sings—"Indah keba aku nunggo,
Nda kala aku pulai lebu,
Makau benong tajan bujang.

"Oh, moth and swallow fly!
To Heaven fly, and fetch Singalang Burong!"

They leave the earth, they fly, they soar,
They reach the kingdom of the winds,
And she that rules there, Antu Ribut,
Even she that through the smallest crack,
Great Heaven at will can enter—
Of her, Antu Ribut, the messengers,
Fluttering moth and swallow swift,
Pray a hurricane o'er Heaven and earth,
To rouse great Singalang Burong!

'Tis done! Land and sea, all space below the Heavens, are convulsed;
A HEAD-FEAST AT SIRAMBAU.

The mountains bow and toss like leaves of the cocoanut when the north wind blows;
The depths of ocean are stirred as maidens toss paddy in the winnowing;
As the husk flies upon the wind, so fly the waves of the sea in scud;
The sand and the rocks beneath the wild waters are tossed like rice in a basket!
The clouds and the stars are mingled, and Singalang Burong wakes!

He rises girt with charms—he grasps his spear!
The bracelets clank on his red arm as he takes the death-dealer!
His eyes are like great forests burning—his mouth is a deep pool!

At the dread sight the Wind Chief, Antu Ribut, with pale fear trembles;
Silently she creeps away, and the hurricane slackens and faints and dies down
Like the sea beneath the mountain of Tunjong Api at low tide.

See—where the Wind Chief steals away, round the house creeping,
Where in a room below, Unjay, the war god's wife, in her chamber sits weaving!
See—through the window the Wind Chief creeps, puffing softly!

Aha! the loom—the spinning threads!
Aha! they blow— they fly—they spread!
Unjay, the war god's wife, is vexed.

"Hear!" cries the Wind Chief, Antu Ribut,
"Send your lord, great Singalang Burong,
To Klieng's feast! Then shall my breath vex you no more, your loom and threads."

She hears, she pleads, the war god yields!
Forth walks great Singalang Burong like the tapong, chief of
the forest,
Summons the omen birds, his brothers-in-law, to attend him.
But the wife of the kariah refuses, loudly complaining
That her dress is poorer than others', her choicest ornament
missing;
Mysterious it is as the growth of the flowers in the forest,
Wonder working, and strong as the bore that rolls up the
Rejang!

Forth fly the omen birds, the marvellous ornament seeking;
Old men and gods and the king of the sea they question;
Not one has seen or heard of the wife of the kariah's jewel.*

Not once did Nyait's memory fail him. Never ceasing
his solemn stalk round and round, up and down, followed
by his companions, he recited at astonishing length and
in the most grandiloquent language how the ornament
is eventually discovered in the house of Nising, grand-
father of the Night-omen bird.

At this point the audience shouted loudly.
"Will it never end?" Jack asked. Two mortal hours
had passed since Nyait began. Two hours of almost un-
endurable heat and odour!

"Hush—hush!" Hertz whispered. "I don't oonder-
shtand de vordts, budt I know de sheneral meaning.
Idt's most interesting. Yoost dink of Nyait's feat in
remembering it all! Vhy de dialect ish so archaic dat
de Dyaks demselves only oondershtand shenerally."

Nyait went on to describe how the Night-omen bird's
grandfather refuses to lend the ornament. So the birds
make him drink too much arrack, and steal it from him
—when it proves to be a human head!

* Any who take interest in the very curious song of the Head Feast
may find a prose summary of it in the Transactions of the Asiatic
Society (Straits Branch), read by the Rev. G. Perham, July 1, 1878.
The recitation lasts generally from 6 to 9 or 10 P.M.
Here the audience yelled. Many sprang up and danced. Evidently the discovery was of great significance, symbolically. Nyait stalked on, and talked on, almost as fresh as when he began.

With the ornament, Singalang Burong, the birds and their wives, set out for Klieng's house. Great marvels attend the journey, many difficulties and dangers. But all are surmounted, and wherever the war god goes with the head, the dumb speak, the blind see. Finally they reach the home of the Dyak hero.

At this point Nyait and his companions went round, touching everybody.

Fowls were killed and waved to and fro, demonstrations of welcome to Singalang Burong, now supposed to be in Klieng's house.

Amid much excitement Nyait described how Singalang Burong is made intoxicated, when the head rolls out of his head-handkerchief. The war god leaves the head with Klieng, and returns to heaven. This is the end.

As Nyait ceased, every man and woman sprang to his or her feet, yelling and laughing. Singalang Burong was now supposed to be in Meta's house. A squealing pig was carried up the notched pole, cut in two with one tremendous blow of a keen parang, and its liver taken out.

Over this Meta and the elders bent like witches over a cauldron, examining it with short sticks. From some sign, some arrangement of the veins, Meta was able to declare the war god present.

Cocoanut shells, cut into the form of a cup, painted black and red, adorned with the semblance of a bird's head and tail, and filled with arrack, passed round incessantly. Each possessor in turn danced wildly, with the odd loving-cup in his hands, then with a yell, leapt before some friend, and presented it to him to drink.

"De proper name of dis feast ish Gawe Burong," Hertz explained, "literally 'Bird Feast,' nodt 'Head Feast.'"
Presently Nyait seized a cup and made towards his orang putih friends. The champion dancer of the tribe excelled himself in their honour. But in the midst of his mad gyrations he suddenly paused, his hand, with the "bird-cup," still outstretched, staring over the heads of Hertz and the youths.

They glanced in the same direction. At the top of the notched trunk stood a Dyak not in holiday attire, a stranger. Behind him, travel-stained and woebegone, her dress torn, her lustrous black hair dishevelled, her eyes swollen, the Chinese maiden—Li-dah!

Hertz and Wo-Sing sprang to their feet
"Li-dah, why are you here?" Wo-Sing asked.

The girl wrung her hands, unable to reply, leaning heavily against the make-shift railing. The tears rolled down her cheeks.

The uproar died away, the roysterers curiously watching.

"Shpeak, Li-dah! What has happened?" Hertz cried.

The girl sobbed, her words came brokenly.

"The Rajah has returned, suddenly. Six hundred of the kunsi were ready, in the boats, when I came away. They would start at dusk. At midnight Kuching will be burned, and the Rajah and all the English gentlemen be dead!"

Li-dah sank on a mat and covered her face, sobbing hysterically.

Boy involuntarily drew his kris. The Dyaks, instinctively guessing that something tragic impended, crowded round, sobered in a moment.

"Dey hafe invoked Singalang Burong," cried Hertz, solemnly, "und he ish here!"
CHAPTER XXV.

TOO LATE!

That long invocation to Singalang Burong, the Dyak god of war, had indeed an unexpected answer, but one in keeping. The dogs of war had been let loose in Sarawak. Even while Nyait recited, the Chinese were descending the river. Hertz asked Li-dah when she left Bau. She answered: "At noon; as soon as I learned the real object of the Kunsi. Father tried to deceive me; he said he was going to attack a Dyak village in Sambas, where several Chinese had been killed."

"You have heard Li-dah's story, Boy, and you Wo-Sing," the Collector went on. "De Orang kina started adt dusk to attack Kuching. Idt ish barely possible, budt ve might get to Siniawan first. If ve couldn't shtop de Shinese, ve might varn de capital." He glanced at the sky. "Dere ish no moon—no shtars. De shkel-lums vill surprise Kuching mit ease. Ve must try to shtop dem adt Siniawan. Dere ish a fort, eh?"

"Yes, sir," Wo-Sing answered; "Biledah, on the other side of the river. But the garrison is always very weak."

"Idt must be reinforced. Boy, egsplain to de Dyaks. Tell dem dey must get to Siniawan before de Orang kina. How many men follow Meta?"

Boy asked the question, and replied:

"Two hundred Dyak men live Sirambau. Orang kaya
Bombok go fetch two hundred. *Orang kaya* Peninjow he fetch hundred fifty. *Orang kayas* I speak this time—all here be. Many of men be, too."

Fortunately the head-men of the neighbouring "houses," with scores of their followers, were at the feast. Boy addressed them in Dyak. Every *parang* was drawn before he had uttered twenty words. But had Li-dah reached Sirambau an hour later the Dyaks would most probably have been helpless—intoxicated with arrack—and Hertz could have done nothing. This terrible news—the Rajah's danger—sobered them. When Boy had spoken, Meta answered. The Malay interpreted.


"No!" cried Hertz, foreseeing the loss of precious time. "Bombok ish on de vay. Send messengers to bid de varriors arm und avait us. Quick, Boy—quick! Dere ish nodd a minute to lose."

Men left the verandah hurriedly. Bounce brought his masters' rifles and ammunition. The Dyaks threw off their finery—their yellow skins gleamed in the firelight. They seized their spears and brandished them. The uproar, checked for a moment, broke out afresh louder than before. Threatening yells; beating of war-gongs.

Through all the noise and bustle Li-dah sobbed on her mat. The rebels were her people. She, loyal to the Rajah, was a traitress to them. Wo-Sing regarded her wistfully, but made no effort to console her. He, also, was an *Orang kina*, loyal to whom he owed allegiance, an enemy to his own people.

Meta had a stock of resinous firewood. This was speedily converted into torches and distributed. Torches
Too Late!

were absolutely necessary. The path, with here and there long notched poles leading from plateau to plateau, was difficult and dangerous by day; more than perilous by night—and such a night! There was no moon, and not a star visible. No advantage corresponding to the risk of life and limb was to be gained by a secret advance. Indeed, Hertz was of opinion that the bigger the show of force the greater the probability of success.

Ten minutes after the messengers had left, the Dyaks were ready, assembled on the open ground before the “house.” The Collector gave the word:

“Forvardts!”

Some events—some scenes—stand out before all others in the memory of those who bore a part, or witnessed them. No effort is needed to recall them—they are ever present. Such was the night march on Siniawan!

The flickering lights—the flashing weapons—the yelling goblin figures—here, where a dozen torches luridly gleamed together, of grotesque proportions—there, almost invisible in the blackness, moving shadows—these made a picture which the youths never forgot.

The Bombok and Peninjow men were waiting on the road. Their respective orang kayas placed themselves at their head—there was no halt. Now the Dyak force was upwards of five hundred strong.

It was not a march. It was rather a tumultuous rush, in which the weaker were left behind.

In the van, with Meta, Nyait, and their own immediate followers, were Hertz and the youths. Had they been in the rear they might not have reached the little Chinesetown on the river Sarawak that night. Occasionally the leaders displaced or broke the notched poles, and with a warning shout to those behind, hurried on. Frequently Dyaks fell, and lay groaning beside the precipitous path. Many nasty tumbles the orang putih had, but they pressed on, though torn, battered, and breathless,
On the more level ground, half a mile from Siniawan—where lights could be seen moving about—Hertz halted to enable the straggling line of Dyaks to form in better fighting order.

"Forwardts!" he cried again, almost immediately, "to de river! Nefer mind de people here!"

Boy shouted the order, and with ear-piercing yells the wild warriors dashed through the Chinese town. Not a Chinaman did they encounter. Those who carried the lights were Malays, with a few Dyaks from neighbouring "houses."

Hertz seized a torch and ran at the head of the Dyaks, halting on the river bank. The stream was deserted. No sign of the Chinese flotilla.

"Are we in time?" panted Jack.

"I dink so; und yedt idt's shtrange. Surely de mad shkellums hafen't passed mitout leaving men to keep open de vay of retreat? Did you see a Shinaman in de town?"

"Not one; but then it's very dark."

"Idt's odd—fery."

"Tuan!" Boy cried—he had stopped to speak to a Malay—"Orang Kina go by half an hour. Biledah fort take, and go on. Boats fill river. Siniawan Orang Kina women and children run to Bau. Men go with Wang-lo."

"Too late!" Hertz rejoined, wearily. That desperate rush had been useless. He reflected a moment.

"Look for boats!" he suddenly cried.

The search proved almost fruitless. One small sampan only was found. Wang-lo had probably long since seized the boats left in his charge. They were now conveying the enemy to Kuching.

"If ve shvam de river, gould ve reash Kuching by dat batang pat'?" the Collector asked.

"It a day's journey, Tuan," Boy answered, "In two hours Orang Kina be there."
"Ach, Ja! Dyaks might walk dose batangs adt night. No European on eart' gould, soosh a night ash dis. Idt's no use; ve are too late!"

"Would it be impossible to overtake the Chinese and slip through them in the darkness?" Jack asked. "There's one little boat."

"Idt only garry von. Besides I dink idt's certain deat'. Who dare go? I gannot use de paddle."

"Ach! you—you, Boy?"

"Weh!" answered the Malay.

"Den go in de name of Allah!"

Boy stepped into the boat without another word. His paddle flashed in the torchlight. Krook—krook—krook, and the bold fellow had vanished in the darkness that cloaked the rapid stream. A moment, and the paddle ceased to be heard. He had muffled it.

"Hurrah—hurrah!" cried the youths in their excitement.

"Hoch!" cried the Collector.

Five hundred Dyaks yelled their approbation of the Malay's bravery.

Boy's answer floated back, every word distinct.

"La ilaha illa-la, Mahmoud resool illa!"

"The death cry of poor S'Ali, perhaps of Boy," said Harry, recognising the Malay corruption of the Fetsva.*

"Fery likely," said Hertz, with emotion. "De Shinese boats must cover de river from shore to shore, perhaps ten deep. I nodt see how he gan get t'reugh dem."

Lacking means to transport his Dyak forces, Hertz could do nothing more. Had he been able to follow the Chinese immediately, the history of this terrible episode in the Sarawak annals would have to be differently written. He conferred with the orang kayas through Wo-

* Allah is the one God, Mahomet is the prophet of Allah,
Sing, who knew a little Dyak; but who, as an interpreter, was much inferior to Boy. All were of opinion that nothing could be done until the morning.

The Dyaks camped on the river bank, squatting round huge fires. Hertz took possession of a Chinaman's deserted house. He roused the youths at an early hour; and, after a scanty, hurried breakfast, taken, by the way, from a deserted shop by Wo-Sing, they went to the Dyak camp. Their allies were busy constructing rafts to convey the *orang putih* across the river. Some of Meta's men, indeed, living at a distance from a river, could not swim, a very unusual failing—both Dyaks and Malays, as a rule, being almost as much at home in the water as fishes. The Collector and his party went over on the first raft that was ready, pushed by a dozen naked Dyaks, who laughed and chattered with more than their usual spirit. There were "heads" in view.

Hertz waited until most of the Dyaks had crossed, then made his way to the *batangs* and mounted the lofty path. Europeans never get used to these aerial roads. Much practice may lead to fewer falls; it never gives a feeling of security, to say nothing of comfort. Jack and Harry slipped off again and again; Bounce, as usual, grumbled loudly. But Hertz urged them on. They did not rest until they reached the tiny glade where Harry had asked his great question, "What is an orchid?" Here Hertz sat down on the log, and glanced round.

The *Cælogenæ pandurata*, with its flowers like green frogs with black tongues, was still there: the huge *Nepenthe*, the *Phalaenopsis grandiflora*, the little *Cælogenæ* like lilies-of-the-valley—everything. The garden in the jungle was just as they had left it.

Onward, through the swamp and by *batangs* to the *orang utan* creek. Beyond this the jungle path led through a district unknown to the Europeans, and Nyait took the lead. So far not an individual had been met or
overtaken, not an unusual sound heard. But as they neared the capital they occasionally heard a dull report like thunder at a great distance.

"Dere's firing going on!" Hertz remarked. "I fear de Shinese were successful."

The path now turned towards the Sarawak river, touching it at one point, and, for a short distance, running along the left bank. Not a boat was to be seen. But Nyait and the Dyaks with him suddenly halted, waiting at a patch of dense jungle until Meta and the Collector came up. Nyait spoke a few words, which Wo-Sing interpreted:

"Men, women, and children were here a few minutes ago, sir. They have fled into the jungle, fearing us."

"Fugitives!" cried Hertz. "Idt ish ash I feared! Shout to dem, Wo-Sing; tell dem what ve are."

Wo-Sing shouted at the top of his voice, informing the poor creatures, whoever they might be, that the Inggris Tuans, the Rajah's friends, with many Dyaks, were there. He was answered immediately. Three Malays emerged from the jungle, followed by a crowd of trembling women and children.

"What has happened at Kuching?" Hertz asked, in Malay, addressing the foremost.

The man's face was gloomy, lead-coloured; his eyes sought the ground; his fingers twitched nervously, signs of deep feeling. His low reply was terrible.

"Tuan, the Rajah is dead! The friend of the orang laut has been killed by the Orang Kina pigs."

A Dyak standing near understood. He repeated the news in his own language. It ran down the long line like fire down a train of gunpowder, hushing talk, paling cheeks. Many wild warriors shed tears. The just, brave Rajah was almost worshipped by his people. The orang laut, the Malays, claimed him as friend and father. Still more was he the friend and father of the Dyaks.
“Tuan,” said Meta in a choking voice, “the bad old days have returned upon us; the sun will no more shine on Sarawak. We are too late; let us go back.”

The blow had staggered the old orang kaya. The desire for vengeance had not yet awaked.

“I do not believe it,” Hertz answered. “The Rajah would not let himself be taken like a fluttering fowl. How do you know he is dead?”

“Tuan,” the Malay answered, “the Orang Kina have his head on a spear! I saw it. Then I fled. That sight made the ‘men of the sea’ like leaves in the wind.”

“Might it not be the head of another?”

“I heard them shout—‘See! we have killed the Rajah!’”

“His guards! Where were they?”

“The Rajah was caught alone in the great house. It is ashes, and all the Inggris houses.”

“Dose shkellum Shinese!” Hertz burst forth in English, his blue eyes flashing, convinced at last that the man spoke the truth so far as he knew it.

“What has happened?” cried the youths together. They had heard the news without comprehending it.

“De Rajah ish dead! Ach! boys, he was a man—he was a man! Ach! now his countrymen vill oondershtand what a great Englischman ish gone from dem for efer! He made de desert places shmile, und gared for de widow und de fatderless. Und dis ish his revard! Killed by de man whose daughter he brought oop!”

“We will avenge him!” cried Jack. “Let us march on Kuching!”

“No—No! Vengeance ish nodt ours. Dink you Gott vill let dose murderous shkellums go oonpunished? No, dt vill be quick und terrible.”

Again he turned to the Malay.

“Where is the Tuan Mudah?”

At Sakarran Fort, Tuan.”
"Ye must be prudent, boys. Our Dyaks would perhaps have been a match for de Shinese adt Siniawan, butt not now dey have armed demselves from de Kuching arsenal. De Tuan Mudah, Misder Johnson, de Rajah's nephew, governs de Sea Dyaks. Ash soon ash he knows dis he will send de shpear round among a hoondred t'ousand varriors, men dat fear nodings, pirates a few years ago. He will avenge his ooncle; he vill recapture Kuching, und drife de Shinese like shaff. I dink Meta besser go back to cut off de retreat."

He called the orang kayas round him, and consulted with them. They also thought an attack on the well-armed Chinese, flushed with victory, would end in disaster. Their proper sphere of action was Siniawan, Sirambau, and the Chinese road to the Dutch frontier. They agreed that the Orang Kina could not hold Kuching a day against the Tuan Mudah's Sea Dyaks.

The Collector chose a bodyguard, including Nyait and his well-tried men, intending to push on to the neighbourhood of the capital, and obtain confirmation of the terrible news. Then Meta and his forces turned sadly back.

Warily the Orchid Seekers pushed up the left-hand bank of the river, cutting a path where necessary. As they approached Kuching the sound of firing was incessant, not volleys but straggling shots, as though the victors were discharging their guns heedlessly, at no particular enemy. This, they afterwards learned, was the case. They met many fugitives. All told the same tale. The Rajah was dead, and many of the English, whose houses were even then in flames. Many of the Malays turned back, so that Hertz soon found himself at the head of quite a respectable force.

They avoided the capital, keeping well to the left of it, and passed by, as Hertz was confident that any English who might have escaped would go down the river towards
the sea, and not up into the interior. A wounded Malay they met just beyond Kuching, when questioned, gave them a little hope. He said he had seen the head carried on a spear by the Chinese, and had heard their shouts, but he did not think it was the Rajah's head. Asked whose he thought it, he was unable to say. It was not Tuan Merriman's, nor Tuan Crookshank's, nor Tuan Crymble's; it must be a stranger's. Asked if he knew the Malay, Buyong, he said he did. He had heard that Buyong paddled into Kuching the previous night, wounded, and hardly able to stand; that he had gone to a Malay chief, Abang Gapur, and told him that the Chinese were coming, that he must go and tell the Rajah, as he, Buyong, was unable. Gapur went to the Datu Bandahar, one of the Malay ministers, but the Datu said: "The Rajah is unwell; we have heard similar stories for the last five years; don't go and bother him about it. I will tell him what Buyong says in the morning." What had become of Buyong the Malay did not know.

This was news indeed! Hertz derived a gloomy satisfaction from the knowledge that Boy had succeeded in getting through the Chinese, and that only the misplaced confidence of the Datu Bandahar had prevented him from warning the Rajah.

Advancing, they presently saw a Malay sitting on a log with a gun between his knees, and his head hidden in his arms. As they approached, the man suddenly sprang to his feet, brought his gun to the ready, and challenged:

"Siapa ada?" [Who goes there?]

The challenger lowered the muzzle of his gun immediately, shouting, in rather a weak voice:

"Tuan Besar here! Young Tuans, Dyaks, orang laüt with him!"

"Why, that's Boy himself!" cried Jack.

"Ach! Ja! T'ank Heafen! Now we shall learn de truff!"
A tall European emerged from the jungle and stood beside the Malay. The youths knew him instantly—the one-armed, courteous Mr. Merriman.

Hertz hurried up to the Englishman with Boy, who had a blood-stained bandage round his left arm.

"Ish de terrible news ve hafe heard true?" he asked breathlessly. "Are dose shkellum Shinese garrying de Rajah's head about on a shpear?"

"No, thank God!" Mr. Merriman answered, with deep feeling. "That was the head of an unfortunate young fellow whom you did not know, I think." He stepped aside, pointing to a jungle glade a little distance beyond. "There is the Rajah, without a scratch!"

All looked and saw the ruler of Sarawak, bare-headed, seated on a log, surrounded by a little silent band of devoted Englishmen, and no less devoted orang laüt.

"Thank Heaven!" the youths exclaimed fervently.

Bounce muttered a hoarse "Hurrah!"

A Malay murmured reverently: "'I am the Just, the Merciful One! Which of my loving kindnesses will ye ungratefully deny?'"—a quotation from the famous 55th Chapter of the Koran.
CHAPTER XXVI.

INCIDENTS OF THE NIGHT.

The Rajah rose from the log and advanced to meet the Orchid Seekers, smiling, though sadly.

A king yesterday; to-day a wanderer in the jungle. Yet every inch a king still!

"Ah, Mr. Hertz," he said, shaking the Collector's hand, "we little thought when we discussed Chinese Secret Societies that we should have such an object lesson as this."

Turning to Jack and Harry, he said:

"I am pleased to see you safe, young gentlemen; and you will believe me I'm sure," he added, with a gravely humorous expression in his keen eyes, "when I say that no one regrets the inconveniences to which you have been put more than I."

The boys laughed. "Oh, we quite believe that, Rajah!" said Jack. "It's very kind of you to think of our little troubles under the circumstances."

The Rajah smiled and nodded kindly. Then his pale face became grave again as he turned to Hertz:

"We are holding a little council of war here, and your opinion will be valuable. You know some of these gentlemen, I think?" The Rajah named the others, and resumed his seat upon the log. "In the first place," said he, "I thank you for the exertions you made to avert this terrible catastrophe. All here know how much we are
indebted to you, and thank you warmly. You showed greater knowledge of the Chinese character than we possess. I am not by any means sure that things would have gone differently had I been at home”—this was said with a gracious smile towards the officers, who might think themselves to blame—“we are used to expect reasoning power and some sort of computation of strength on the part of those who give us trouble, and therefore I think I should have been very slow to admit the possibility that a few hundred Chinamen in possession of their senses could dream of attacking the seat of government. It is all the more credit to you, Mr. Hertz, that you should have grasped the situation so clearly. At least I am here, on the spot, alive and well enough to deal with these murderers, as, please God, I will deal with them”—the Rajah’s face was terribly stern as he spoke these words—“for that also we are indebted to Mr. Hertz, gentlemen.”

The officers murmured assent, and all shook hands with the Collector.

“Budt, Rajah, how did you escape?” Hertz asked.

“I will tell you. I was in bed—feverish and awake. The clamour and shouting reached me faintly from the other side of the river; and somehow, in a moment, I guessed what had happened. The Chinamen had not begun firing then. I ran to the window. It was dark, but I saw many figures on the lawn. They were creeping up from the brook to surround the house. I had only two fortmen and my servants—they have all escaped, I trust. There was not an instant for reflection. I jumped from the window and ran through the crowd—they made noise enough when they saw me—but I gained the brook, dived under their boats, and on the other bank”—he turned laughingly towards his house steward, who stood among the group of Englishmen.

Mr. Penny smiled back. “I thought it was all over with me that time, Rajah,” said he.
"Penny," the Rajah continued, "had heard the disturbance in his cottage, and he reached the brookside just as I rose to the surface. Whether he thought it was a water-rat, or a natural phenomenon, I can't say, but he was peering down with the utmost interest when I came up just under his nose——"

"And the Rajah jumped clean out of the water, caught my throat with his left hand, and took his sword from between his teeth before you could wink!" Penny interrupted. "I could only just whisper, 'It's me, sir—Penny!' before I was choked—but I've cause to thank God that was the worst."

"Well—from there we ran to the Writer's house," the Rajah resumed. "From there to the Datu Bandahar's. My officers came, and we tried to get men. We got a few, but their wives came—crying. We had no arms to speak of, and we couldn't have done much good in any case. So we moved all the women and children we could to this bank of the river. We are now on our way to the Siol, where we hope to get boats to take us to the Samarahan. Then we go to the Batang Lupar, there to organise a well-armed force to deal with the rebels. That is our plan. But you bring the latest information. Pray tell us what you know."

Hertz recounted briefly the events of the night before; the recital was interrupted by many expressions of warm approval.

"We owe you more even than we thought," said the Rajah. "It was a bold and soldierly project to intercept the Chinese flotilla, and though it failed, it has thoroughly roused the Land Dyaks, which is a vast saving of time. I can only repeat our thanks. For the present, however, we must depend on the Sea Dyaks, whom my nephew will summon to arms as soon as he hears the news. I hope to carry it myself if I can get a boat. But what are we to do with you, Mr. Hertz, and these young men?"
"May I speak, Rajah?" interjected Jack.
"Certainly."
"If you don't object, we'll see the end of this. We've been in it from the beginning, and I think we're bound to do what we can."
The Rajah smiled kindly.
"But I do—I must object. This is war! Your father sent you here to find orchids. I had no right to employ Mr. Hertz at Bau—to lead you into peril. Had I foreseen this, I would not have done so."
Jack hung his head, disappointed.
"I don't know what father will say," he muttered, "when we tell him that we deserted Rajah Brooke in the middle of the trouble. He'll be ashamed of us, I think. I know I shall be ashamed to say anything about it."
"And I," added Harry.
"What are we to do, sir?" Jack continued boldly. "We're safest with you, you know, and"—glancing at their own force of Malays and Dyaks—"there are about twenty of us, all well armed, and most of us have been tried. I don't see how we can ask these men to desert their Rajah, and I'm sure we can't venture back to Sirambau without them."
"There's some reason in that," said the Rajah, relenting.
"Then, sir, unless you order us away, we'll stay with you, and help you as well as we are able."
"What does Mr. Hertz say?"
"I dink mit Yack, Rajah. I am sure Misder Rider would blame dem severely for leaving you."
"Very well. It shall be as you wish."
Presently Hertz asked: "Vas de man whose head de Shinese are garrying about von of your officers, Rajah?"
"I do not know yet. One of my officers is killed, I fear—Mr. Nicholets; also a young fellow, not connected with my service, staying with Merriman. Only two men were
killed—that is, white men—but,” he whispered, “poor Merriman has lost two children. Crookshank’s wife is wounded, very dangerously we hear. She has been carried into the Mission—by Chinese boys, too, under fire. We must never forget that, gentlemen,” he added, raising his voice, “in the wild times at hand. Crookshank himself, you see, is wounded. Steel got off without hurt. So did Crymble. His story is interesting. Tell your adventures, Crymble!”

“I was in the fort,” said Mr. Crymble, a bronzed gentleman of medium height. “You boys know it—Merriman showed you round——”

“Oh, yes,” said Jack. “The moat is covered with pretty white blossoms, with pink lotuses on the edge.”

“Just so. The Chinese didn’t surprise us. The sentry saw them, and called me. But I had only four Malays. We had just time to load a six-pounder when on they came, led by a man carrying two torches. I shot him—the others stopped. I let them have the grape! Away they ran—behind the houses, into the ditches. Not all of them though. The grape knocked over half a dozen! I heard the name of the man I shot—it was Inchi Ch’en——”

Wo-Sing uttered an exclamation.

“Did you know him, Wo-Sing?” the Rajah asked.

“He was the second chief of the Kunsi, your Highness.”

“They soon got over their fright,” Mr. Crymble resumed, “and came on again. Some crossed the inner ditch to shift the planks. They threw over little iron tripods, holding torches. That made it awkward! The beggars could see us if we moved out of cover. They were in the dark. We had three men in the prison; one mad—he’d killed his wife. I gave them arms and set them free. I posted the mad fellow at the planks. I told him what to do. Now we were eight. I thought we could hold the place. But my men dropped one by
one. When only the madman, myself, and brave old Dout were left, I ordered a retreat. But the mad fellow wouldn’t go!

"I shall never forget the way he fought—his delight at the uproar and the blood! He exposed himself all the time. I don’t know how many Chinamen he killed or wounded—not less than a dozen. He was hit lots of times—the blood dripped off him! But he wouldn’t give in. Dout and I dragged him and a wounded corporal to the top of the stairs. There the mad fellow broke away! He flung himself on the Chinamen! I think he saved our lives. Down they went like ninepins under his tremendous blows, tumbling down the stairs in heaps! The last I saw of him he was surrounded by about a score of yelling Chinamen, all striking short, dodging his blows. But a good many rushed past him. They speared the wounded corporal, and Dout and I were forced to leave him. We jumped from an embrasure into the ditch. The rebels tried to stop us, but Dout floored one, I cut another across the face—the rest bolted! So we got away. But the row went on for some time. The madman died hard. A dozen men like him, and the Chinese wouldn’t have taken the fort without a siege. He expiated his crime, if a madman can commit crime."

"The other stockade," said the Rajah, "was held as stoutly. When every strong place was taken the brave fellows opened the gate and rushed out. They cut their way through the rebels. All were wounded; some severely." He rose from the log. "I think we will proceed now."

During the march to the Siol river Jack asked Boy how he got through the Chinese flotilla." Here is the Malay’s story, with the gaps in his English filled up:

"The sampan was a feather on the waters, Tuan; my arms were the arms of three men. The waters rushed under the boat as the shark swims! I paddled for my life
THE ORCHID-SEEKERS.

and the life of the Rajah, and my arms did not tire. The paddle made no noise—the sampan not more than a fish.

"An hour I paddled, then I heard the Orang Kina! I saw them not—the darkness lay thick on the water as black cloth. Their paddles and oars were muffled also, but their boats were heavily laden, and the timbers groaned and creaked. As I crept up I heard a hum like bees swarming. Here a voice spoke loud, giving orders; there another. Silently as the night creeps over the forest I paddled to the left bank. There was no room to pass! I waited, and crossed to the right bank. The boats of the Orang Kina filled the river from shore to shore! I returned to the middle of the stream and tried there, thinking to steal through. I passed two or three boats. No one saw me. But my heart beat fast; my limbs trembled as with a fever. Soon, I thought, I shall have passed all. But it was not to be. I ran the bows of the sampan against a boat in its path! There was a crash. A man swore. I knew the voice; it was Wang-lo's! I prepared to dive.

"He took a lantern from within a kajong, and flashed the light in my face, reproaching me in the Orang Kina tongue for my carelessness. Suddenly he cried: 'It is an orang laiit!'

"My heart sank within me as lead sinks in water. There was no room to dive—the boats covered the river. I thought of my children.

"'Who are you?' Wang-lo asked me. I bowed my head, so that he could not see my face.

"'I am a peaceful orang laiit,' I answered. 'My wife and children live at Batu Kawa. They will fear if so many boats pass and I am not there to encourage them. They will fly to the jungle and be lost. Let me pass, I pray you, to comfort them.'

"Wang-lo said: 'Let him pass.'

"I struck my paddle into the water, and the sampan
shot by. I thought Wang-lo led the others—that no boats were before me, and I laughed! Even before the Orang Kina shouted, I crashed into another boat, and felt another on the left. There were many yet before me! Wang-lo cried: 'Kill him, but do not shoot!' Again I gave up life in my thoughts. But I took my kris in my mouth, and paddled—paddled! Many blows struck the boat. I thought it would sink—it was but an eggshell floating. One cut deep into my left arm. I thought I would never pass that forest of boats. But soon I found myself alone on the water. I heard the Orang Kina say they had killed me and sunk the sampan. I paddled swiftly then, while I had strength. Much blood was leaving me—I could not stop the flow. I reached Kuching fainting. I had just strength to paddle to the house of Abang Gapur, and tell him the Orang Kina were coming. He laughed. He told me not to tell the chiefs or the Rajah such a tale. My senses left me. When they returned Abang Gapur was not there. His wife said he had gone to the Datu Bandahar, and tell him the Orang Kina were coming. He laughed. He told me not to tell the chiefs or the Rajah such a tale. My senses left me. When they returned Abang Gapur was not there. His wife said he had gone to the Datu Bandahar, and I thought all was well. Soon he came back, saying he had told the Datu, who would tell the Rajah. He bound up my wound, and a deep sleep fell upon me. The firing awoke me. That is all."

He did not add that, tired as he was, and weak from loss of blood, he had fought his way to the Datu Bandahar's house, and there joined the Rajah; nor did he say that, after a couple of hours' rest, he had assisted to remove the women and children, and was on sentry duty when Hertz and his party came up.

The Rajah walked on, conversing with Hertz about the T'ien-ti Lodge, and other matters of interest. With regard to the ultimate result of the insurrection, he seemed to have no doubt whatever, though he was very anxious regarding the fate of the English officials of the Borneo Company, and the Bishop of Labuan, who resided at Kuching. But, troubled as his thoughts must have
been, he did not overlook the reason of the Collector's visit to Sarawak—the "blue" orchid. He asked if it had been discovered, and expressed his regret at the ill success of the Orchid Seekers.

At the mouth of the Siol they found the war-boat of Abang Buyong, a Malay chief, with sixty men, awaiting the Rajah. Six smaller boats soon arrived, and the entire party embarked. Before the Rajah left the Siol every Malay in the neighbourhood able to bear arms had joined him. Now his just rule met with its reward. Now that he was a fugitive he learned that he was indeed enthroned in the hearts of his people. More sympathy, tender attention, and delicate generosity have never been shown to an unfortunate ruler by his people. The Malays vied with each other which should supply him and his party with clothes and food. They stripped themselves, and received his acceptance of their gifts as the greatest honour he could bestow upon them.

"This is consolation, indeed," he remarked, sitting between Hertz and Mr. Crymble, as boat after boat overtook them with men and supplies, eagerly, even anxiously offered. "I was never quite sure until now that my government was really popular. I have felt that my people might sometimes long for the old lawless days. Now I know the truth, and I thank the Chinese rebels for it."

"It's more like a triumphal procession than a retreat after a disaster," Jack whispered to Harry.

"The Rajah hasn't been defeated yet," Harry answered. "I don't think he will be by Chinamen."

They passed the night at the little village of Sebang, on the Samarahan river, where fresh proofs of affection were offered, and thence a letter was sent to the Tuan Mudah. In the morning a messenger arrived from Kuching to urge the Rajah to return at once. The man had a strange story to tell.
The morning after the attack, the rebels, six hundred in number, half stupefied with opium, wandered about, discharging their muskets loaded with ball in every direction. But at an early hour Wang-lo and the other Chinese chiefs sent messengers to the few Europeans who had not fled, to say that the victors did not intend to meddle with anybody not connected with the government. A message was also sent to the Bishop of Labuan requesting him to come and attend to the wounded. He complied, and found thirty-two stretched out.

Afterwards, the Bishop, the officials of the Borneo Company, and the Datu Bandahar, who had stuck to his post, were ordered to attend at the court house. They did so, and found Wang-lo in the Rajah's chair, from which he issued his orders.

Two English officers of the Borneo Company, Mr. Helms and Mr. Ruppell, were appointed to rule the foreign portion of the town; the Datu was to manage the Malays; the Kunsi to be supreme over all, and to govern the interior. The T'ien-ti Hué was not alluded to, of course. The Rajah was even now supposed to be dead, the head taken being still exhibited in proof.

Before the meeting was dissolved, somebody suggested that the Tuan Mudah might possibly be angry with his uncle's murderers. This threw the Chinese into blank consternation. They had actually forgotten his existence! Yet he could march with ten thousand men at very short notice, and in a few days could muster one hundred thousand! Hertz's estimate of the Chinese character was thus verified. These people are deficient in "brain vision"—the capacity for looking ahead. After an animated discussion the chiefs decided to send a letter to the Tuan Mudah, requesting him to confine himself to his own government, where they would not attempt to interfere with him!

This remarkable piece of news provoked a smile from
the Rajah, the first since the messenger began his long story. He knew the Tuan Mudah's resolute character.

"If I were dead," he remarked, "there would scarcely be a Chinaman left in Sarawak in fourteen days. They must not expect mercy from my nephew."

The messenger resumed his story. The Chinese then called upon the English gentlemen and the Malay chiefs present to swear fidelity to the Kunci, under threats of instant death if they refused. The English and the Malays, being in the enemy's hands, and unable to help themselves, complied, going through the Chinese formula of taking an oath by killing fowls. This done, the Chinese prepared to retire from the town, and the prisoners, who were to rule the capital, were given their liberty.

The Datu Bandahar at once called a meeting at his house to discuss future proceedings. Abang Patah, son of the Datu Tumanggong, another Malay minister, addressed the assembly. He spoke but few words, though very much to the point.

"Are we," he asked, "to submit to be governed by the Orang Kina, or are we to remain faithful to our Rajah? I am a man of few words, and I say I will never be governed by any but him, and to-night I attack his enemies."

All were unanimous, and the messenger was despatched to the Rajah to ask him to return and lead his people.

After a very brief consultation with his officers the Rajah said, in words as few as Abang Patah's:

"It would be more prudent to wait until we are stronger, but I cannot resist this appeal. We return to Kuching at once."

In half an hour all were ready and in the boats. The Orchid Seekers, with their Malays and Dyaks, had a large sampan entirely to themselves. Boy steered it, though his wounded arm was stiff and sore.
Jack was delighted at the prospect of a fight with the T'ien-ti fiends, as he always called the Chinese.

"Now we shall see a real battle!" he exclaimed almost gleefully. "The T'ien-ti fiends had all their own way when they attacked the lang-kan, but we made them run from the cave, and we'll make them run now."

"Gott grant we may!" Hertz rejoined. He was not exhilarated by the prospect; neither was the more sober-minded Harry. Bounce, however, chewed his quid in silent content, and carefully looked to the arms. A grim look on his comical visage, foreign to it, spoke for him.

It was not necessary to go out to sea to reach the Sarawak river from the Samarahan, as the two were connected by a branch; but they did not get into the former stream until noon. They had not proceeded far up the Sarawak when they were met by another messenger with even more stirring news.

Abang Patah had kept his word. Manning a boat with a dozen Malays as desperately reckless as himself, he had followed the retreating flotilla, and had actually attacked it, capturing a boat and killing five of its defenders. Strange to say he brought the captured boat into Kuching.

But the Chinese, who had been reinforced by several hundreds of men from other gold-workings, and had compelled all the agriculturists at various places to join them, returned to the capital at once to put down the Malay revolt. They were now so numerous that their great cargo boats would not hold them, and one half marched overland.

As soon as the Malays, inspired by Patah's daring, saw the Chinese boats rounding the point, they dashed at them, capturing ten of the largest and driving out or killing the crews.

But the Chinese, much better armed, kept up a hot fire from the rising ground, killing many Malays, among them
Abang Gapur, to whose house Boy had gone on his arrival at Kuching. They towed away the boats, nevertheless, and secured them to a trading prahu anchored in the centre of the river, whence they fired on their enemies who lined the banks. The Chinese, however, reoccupied the town, and when the messenger left were fast destroying it. Smoke was rising in every direction. Some of the English were with the Datu Bandahar, who commanded the Malays, anchored in the middle of the river; others were missing.

"Give way!" cried the Rajah, when the messenger stopped breathless, with nothing more to tell. "Give way! or there will be nothing of Kuching left except ashes!"
CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RECAPTURE OF KUCHING.

All through the swift dash on the capital the sampan which carried the Orchid Seekers maintained its position a few yards in the rear of the war boat of Abang Buyong, with the Rajah and his officers on board. But Boy had constantly to encourage his mixed crew of Dyak and Malay paddlers. They had hard work to keep their place.

For the Abang's boat was seventy feet long, raised in the bows and stern, where it was decorated with rude carvings. From stem to stern extended a long kajong to protect the paddlers, forty in number, from the sun. On either side, and in the rear, raced other smaller boats, carrying, in all, some two hundred men.

The many-coloured head-handkerchiefs, jackets, and brilliant sarongs made a very pretty sight, but the youths had no eye for the picturesque. The shouts and songs and excited laughter of the warriors, the certainty of a desperate fight at hand, kept every nerve in their bodies tingling. Hour after hour the prahu swept on in the full blaze of sunshine. Only the prospect of fighting would have enabled even those hardy fellows to support the strain. Drenched with perspiration, their wild eyes starting with excitement and fatigue, still they grumbled at the orders issued from time to time to pause whilst the smaller boats closed up. Harry suggested that they
would be in no trim for fighting after such a race. Hertz laughed.

"Dey vill dink idt a blissful rest," he said.

So they sped up the river—the faint rattle of musketry growing distinct as they neared Kuching. The *Datu Bandahar* still held out! A heavy pall of smoke ahead, which had been visible for an hour past, became more and more dense, and pale flames glimmered beneath it. The hot air was stifling with fumes. They knew what to expect before turning the last bend, which showed them the reality.

All one side of the river, the Kling and Malay quarters, even the Chinese *campong*, was in flames. Small parties of Chinamen loaded with booty were hurrying to the *sampans* moored along the bank, or returning for another foray. Not a Malay could be seen. The other bank was still untouched, excepting Government House, the handsome building where the Rajah had welcomed his young guests, and the bungalows adjacent, in one of which they slept that night. Built of wood, though large and stately, the Rajah's palace had flamed like a bonfire, and nothing was left of it now except a shapeless mass of ruin which poured forth thin wreaths of smoke. On this side a few Malays stood here and there, helplessly watching the scenes of loot and devastation across the river. Not all were helpless, however. From a large trading *prahu*, anchored in the middle of the stream, a slow, dropping fire issued whenever a group of marauders passed within range; such a fire as prudent men keep up when their supply of ammunition is running short, and the prospect of relief uncertain. It was effective also, for several blue-clad corpses lay upon the bank, where their comrades dared not approach to remove them, even if they wished. Probably none thought of it.

But this was not the firing the relief party heard. From the hill where Government House had stood, on one
side, and from sheltered spots around the landing place on the other, a large detachment of Chinamen poured volleys incessantly upon the *prahu*. The *kajongs* which roofed it in were split in all directions. Doubtless the Malays had built an effective shelter of some kind beneath the *kajongs*, or they could not have resisted that storm of bullets.

"The brave old *Datu Bandahar* still holds out!" cried Jack. "Let us join him! I believe that ship's the old *Cockroach*!"

"No—no!" Hertz answered. "Idt's certain deat'! Obey de Rajah."

*Abang* Buyong's *prahu* had halted. One glance told the Rajah that the case was hopeless. He might run the gauntlet of that heavy fire, but the loss would be terrible and the gain nothing. The *Datu Bandahar* was in no urgent need of help, evidently; had the Chinamen courage to attack him by boarding, they would have tried it long ago. Since they had burnt the town and were storing the plunder in their boats, they did not intend to occupy it at present. In two or three days, with God's help, the Dyaks would assemble in force enough to crush the enemy. He gave the order to retire.

The quick-witted Malay chiefs about him, all experienced in warfare, obeyed without demur. But a few of the younger men, not hearing the command, or too eager to listen, dashed past, yelling. By this time the Chinamen had perceived the flotilla and they were ready. A hail of bullets from either flank swept the water. Almost every man in the foremost *sampan* was killed or wounded; all the others suffered. In desperate haste they took the shattered craft in tow, and sped out of range. A moment more and the flotilla was retreating, pursued by triumphant yells and jeers.

"He laughs best who laughs last!" cried Jack, breathless with fury and disappointment.
Beyond the bend the Rajah landed; he did not fear all the host of Chinamen on dry ground. Parties went out along each bank to seek fugitives. This lasted the remainder of the day. Most of the English residents, including the Bishop, were found, and the ladies at once sent off to the well-armed fort of Lingga, on the river of that name, where they would be safe.

The Rajah spent the night on the river. Every now and again through the hours of darkness the firing broke out afresh, proof that the gallant Datu still held his own. At early morning they continued their retreat, intending to make Lingga a base of operations and rallying place for the Sea Dyaks, who were mustering fast doubtless. They had reached the sea to bear away eastward, when suddenly a great cry arose.

"Smoke—smoke! A steamer!"

"What course is she steering," cried the Rajah. Hertz had his field-glass to his eyes.

"Straight for de river!" the Collector joyously answered.

"What is she? Can you make her out, Mr. Hertz?" the Rajah went on in tones of great excitement.

"Idt's de Sarawak flag! Take de glass, sir!"

A splash of paddles, and the Rajah had the glass in his hand. In a moment he cried:

"It's the Sir James Brooke! Thank God! The country is saved!" continued the Rajah. "Give way! Get out my flag! Run it up!"

The crews had been paddling their best before. Now the light craft skimmed the water at an astonishing speed.

On board the Sir James Brooke this abrupt appearance of a little fleet was hailed with astonishment and delight. Visions of loot and head-money to be won whilst performing a service to humanity danced before the eyes of all on board.
They supposed it a pirate fleet, of course, and hastily prepared for action. But as the white flag with a red cross, the ensign of Sarawak, streamed out, their bewilderment was utter. Cautiously, suspecting a trap, the captain slowed down, and turned to meet them. Greater still was his bewilderment on recognising the ruler of Sarawak at sea in an open boat, surrounded by his officers.

The Rajah went on board, followed by all his party. The terrible story was soon told, the native boats taken in tow, and the Sir James Brooke proceeded up the river, the crew busy loading the guns with grape.

The string of boats increased in length every mile, checking the vessel's speed, always slow in a winding river. Suddenly the council of war upon the quarter deck—a cheerful council now, eager with the assurance of triumph—was interrupted by loud shouts and vehement demonstrations of joy from the boats in the extreme rear. Quickly the word was passed along:

"The Tuan Mudah! The men of Sakarran! The Seribas! The Sea Dyaks!"

"Is it possible?" cried the Rajah. "Heaven blesses us indeed!"

Jack and Harry ran to the stern. Beyond the long string of prahus and sampans swept a dozen boats of great size, crowded with men paddling rapidly. The sunlight sparkled on their arms and ornaments—on chowats of orange and crimson and parti-coloured sarongs.

"They must be Sea Dyaks," said Harry, to whom the glad shouts of the Malays were unintelligible.

"They are," said a voice behind, the Rajah's. "It is the Tuan Mudah's advance party."

The steamer lay to. Swiftly, with measured clank, the fleet of prahus drew up. No sooner did the Sea Dyaks catch sight of their beloved Rajah than they set up a yell that boded ill for the rebels. Increasing their exertions, they swept alongside five hundred warriors, laughing in excess
of joy. Great painted shields, ornamented with fluttering scalps, lined the sides of the boats and hid the brown limbs of the Dyaks. Their huge earrings of brass and boars’ tusks and alligators’ teeth flashed and glistened in the sun. Their arms were spears and the terrible *parang ilang*, the Kayan sword.

“Grand varriors!” cried Hertz, enthusiastically. “Dere are t’ousands more behind. Dose shkellum Shinese forgot de Sea Dyaks.”

“What a difference between the Sirambau men and these!” exclaimed Jack.

“Ach! de Land Dyaks are shtay-at-homes. Dese fellows vere all pirates nodt long ago. You would dink dem a different race.”

The *Tuan Mudah*, who was in command, swung himself aboard the steamer—a stout man whose closely shaven face was burned red with sun and wind. He had been a distinguished naval officer before throwing in his lot with his uncle. With a pleasant smile on his firm mouth, and a voice as soft and cool as if discussing the weather in a London drawing-room, he greeted the Rajah, shook hands all round, addressed a courteous word to Hertz and the youths, and drew apart with his uncle. Leaning over the taffrail they discussed the situation briefly. Few words suffice between such men. In five minutes the interview ended. With the same cool and gentle smile the *Tuan Mudah* returned to his boat, and the avenging flotilla swept on.

Slowly but surely the *Sir James Brooke* progressed, the crew standing to their guns, the English and Malays with rifles and muskets ready. The Chinese, if still in the town, must be aware of their approach. In fact, rounding the last reach, they were seen to be holding one bank in force, standing among the blackened posts of the Malay houses—but panic-stricken parties were already stealing away in the hope of escaping the vengeance which had overtaken them. Those who stood their ground fired one
wild volley. The bullets whistled harmlessly over the steamer. Not a shot took effect.

"Fire!" thundered the Rajah.

The roar of artillery followed—the sharp crack of rifles, the duller report of muskets.

The Chinese did not wait for a second broadside. Some fled in wild panic to their boats, impeding one another in the mad effort to escape. Others ran along the bank. Wild Dyaks and avenging Malays dashed forward and were among the Chinese boats in an instant, cutting and slashing. Not an Orang Kina escaped by water. The greater number jumped ashore, and, with those who had been unable to embark, fled towards Siniawan.

Meanwhile the Rajah turned his attention to that portion of the town which stood on the opposite bank, where houses recently fired were blazing. Here were a large number of deserted Chinese boats fastened together.

"Recall the Dyaks!" he cried. "Secure those boats! The enemy is burning what is left of the town."

"Are we to do nothing?" Jack asked, appealing to Hertz. He had fired his rifle several times, but now no enemy remained to fire at.

"Ja!" Hertz answered. "To de boat, und land mit de Dyaks!"

He signalled to Boy, chafing under his inaction, who paddled alongside. The Collector and the youths dropped into the boat, where Nyait, Bounce, and Wo-Sing awaited them. But Hertz ordered the China "boy" to board the steamer.

"De Dyaks vill kill you for a rebel," he said, "if you go ashore."

They paddled off to the left bank, where the Sea Dyaks were already landing, whilst Malays towed the Chinese boats to the prahu in the middle of the stream, held all through the trouble by the gallant Datu Bandahar.

It afterwards transpired that at an early hour that
morning a large party of Chinese had crossed the river to
burn the half of the town which had previously escaped.
They had succeeded in destroying the greater portion before
the steamer arrived. The experienced Rajah saw the
boats and conjectured what was happening. Hence the
recall of the Dyaks.

Led by the Tuan Mudah, accompanied by Hertz, Jack,
Harry, Bounce, Boy, and several of the Rajah's English
officers, with many Malays, the Sea Dyaks sprang ashore
—most of them, indeed, leaping overboard. A wide space
of gardens and clearings encircled the town on this side.
The Chinamen ran for life, pursued with roaring laughter
and jeers by the fleet Dyaks. Many of these danced and
cut capers as they sped along, so sure were they of catch-
ing their prey, and so joyous over the prospect of securing
heads—a delight long forbidden them. It was more like
a schoolboys' game than war—at first. In two minutes
the hindmost were overtaken, cut down, and beheaded;
with the reeking trophy suspended to his waistbelt the
victor dashed on. Now and again a fugitive or a small
party would turn to bay. But no being upon two legs is
more clumsy than a Chinaman. Strong he is, but his
strength avails him nothing in a fight like this; his fat,
awkward limbs are at the mercy of a more active
antagonist. Many had thrown down their guns to increase
the chances of escape, so that when the Dyaks overtook
them they had only swords or spears to defend themselves,
with which weapons one Dyak is a match for at least two
Chinamen. The terrible parang ilangs cut through the
spear shafts, often through the sword blades, and sliced
away the wielders' limbs. Few of those who were in sight
when the avengers landed reached the protection of the
jungle—they only deferred their doom. The Dyaks were
at their heels, and burst after burst of exulting clamour
proclaimed it.

In five minutes, probably, the wild chase was lost to
view behind the curtain of the jungle, leaving mangled bodies here and there for evidence of its passage; but such sights the youths beheld, and such sounds they heard in that brief space, as dwelt in their shuddering memory for life.

The Tuan Mudah and his officers had halted at the river bank—they knew well what was going to happen. Hertz and Harry would have stayed with them, but Jack ran on, shouting like a Dyak almost, and they would not leave him. He paused, however, when a Chinaman was cut down almost at his side, and Hertz, catching him by the shoulder, made him sit upon a log.

"Shtop!" he cried. "Leave vengeance to de Dyaks! I hafe seen many fights, but nefer anydings like dis!"

Mr. Merriman came to them and sat down.

"The scoundrels murdered my two innocent children," he murmured, "but I feel pity for them now."

Even as he spoke a Dyak dashed up, bespattered with blood, his eyes fixed on the ground—a stalwart warrior, not tall, but apparently of prodigious strength, with necklace and earrings of tiger-cat's teeth, spear and Kayan sword in hand. He halted at the log, taking no notice of the Europeans, his eyes restlessly moving in every direction.

Suddenly, with a burst of wild laughter, he thrust his spear down the log, which was hollow throughout. A terrified Chinaman instantly scrambled out at the other end, uttering a scream of mingled pain and fear. Hertz and the youths sprang up. They had been sitting on the log in which the Chinaman had sought refuge. Thither the Dyak had tracked him.

Unable to fly, he turned upon his cunning foe, his face ghastly. The wild warrior crouched and sprang at him. Desperate, the Orang Kina struck with all his force; his sword, shattered on the back of the heavy parang, broke at the hilt. Harry turned away his head.

The Dyak played with his disarmed enemy as a cat
plays with a mouse. He forebore from striking the fatal blow. The Chinaman tried to grapple with him, but the agile Dyak easily eluded every attempt.

“He’s showing off for the benefit of the orang putih,” said Mr. Merriman. “He doesn’t get such an audience and such an opportunity every day.” He spoke sternly to the Dyak, adding: “I’ve told him to finish it. We’ve seen enough of tragedy.”

It was soon over. With one blow the Dyak stretched the Orang Kina lifeless at his feet, secured his head, and rushed on after his fellows.

The relentless Dyaks never ceased the pursuit whilst a foe remained in front of them. Many Chinamen were found hanging to the trees—they had committed suicide, preferring self-destruction to death at the hands of the Dyaks, or by starvation, which was the fate of most of those who escaped the wild warriors. On many of the bodies was found money, with silver plate and jewellery, the plunder of the English houses.

Returning to the steamer, they learned that the Rajah had gone to a little cottage which escaped the flames. Taking the youths with him, Hertz proceeded thither. They found the ruler of Sarawak surrounded by his officers, English and Malay. Here were the gallant Datus Bandahar and Tumanggong, the daring Abang Patah, and many others who had distinguished themselves. Here, also, was an old acquaintance, the Reis of the Cockroach.

“I knew the prahu was the Cockroach,” Jack whispered, shaking the brave Arab’s hand. He had made a voyage to Singapore and back while the Orchid Seekers were in the interior.

The Rajah at once addressed the Collector.

“When the Sirambau and Bombok Dyaks returned,” he said, “did you understand that they would go home?”

“No, Rajah, I consulted mit de orang kayas. Dey vere of opinion dat de Sea Dyaks vould soon drife de Shinese
"I've told him to finish it."
oudt of Kuching, und dat dey wou'd do most service by cutting off de retreat at Siniawan. I dinked mit dem."

"You think they will attack the rebels at sight, without waiting for orders from the Government?"

"Yes, Rajah, if de Shinese are not too strong for dem."

"In that case they will resort to guerilla tactics, attacking small bodies? I thank you, Mr. Hertz." He turned to the Datu Bandahar. "Hold yourself in readiness to advance at dawn with two hundred men, Malays and Seribas and Sakarran Dyaks."

The Datu retired to give the necessary orders.

"I think, Mr. Hertz," the Rajah resumed, "that you have left your orchids at Sirambau?"

The Collector bowed.

"If you would like to be on the spot in case the Chinese should retire to Sirambau, perhaps you had better go with the Datu."

Hertz bowed again. "I t'ank you, Rajah," he rejoined. "Ve hafe many treasures adt Sirambau. Dey may need protection."

Accompanied by Jack and Harry, the Collector went in search of Boy and Nyait, last seen with the Sea Dyaks pursuing the flying Chinese. They were eventually found and given their orders, after which Hertz sought lodgings for the night. The river was covered with Sea Dyak boats; the banks swarmed with warriors even wilder looking than the Tuan Mudah's advance party.

There were Sibuyaus from the Lundu river; Lingga Dyaks; Balaus from Banting; stalwart, handsome Seribas and Sakarrans; Dyaks from the Batang Lupar; Milanaus from the Rejang; tattooed Kennowits armed with the deadly sumpitan, all clamouring to be led against the Orang Kina rebels.

"Ach!" Hertz exclaimed; "here's a hornet's nest! Dose mad shkellums!—dose mad shkellums! Vhy dere
are enough Dyaks here already to eadt efery Shinaman in Sarawak mitout salt! Und t’ousands more on de vay, Miser Merriman tells me, mit t’ousands marsching ofer-land from Sadong to attack dem in de rear. Dese fellows are only advance parties, hurried off ash soon ash de shpear de Tuan Mudah sent round reashed dem. De main bodies von’t reash Kuching for a day or two.”

They were unable to find lodgings, so Boy conducted them to his own house, which had escaped the general destruction.

Thus was the capital of Sarawak recaptured. But as a town it no longer existed. The Malay portion was represented by charred posts and shapeless heaps of timber; the handsome Government House had disappeared, and, to the Rajah’s great sorrow, its magnificent library, once the pride of Sarawak, was ashes. Mr. Crookshank’s and Mr. Merriman’s houses had both been destroyed; but the Church, the Mission-house, and the premises of the Borneo Company still stood, though they had been plundered. The Rajah had suffered the greatest loss.
CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FIGHT AT TANAH LEDA.

The Malay quarter of Kuching resembled a low bank thickly studded with short charred scaffold-poles or naked blackened masts six to eighteen feet high. Here and there the flames had devoured the posts until only a stump remained; but those of *bilian* (ironwood) had mostly withstood them. Few were the shapeless heaps of rubbish propped in the air, which represented a house only partly destroyed. Beyond such an indistinguishable mass the Orchid Seekers found Boy’s habitation. It stood some thirty paces from the river, to which fact it very probably owed its escape from destruction.

Throughout the night they were constantly awakened by the arrival of fresh Dyaks. Scarcely had they dozed off after such an irruption than renewed yells proclaimed another. Orders were almost incessantly shouted from the lawn where Government House had stood. In a cottage left standing near, the Rajah had established his headquarters. But little rest had he or his officers that night.

When the youths went out in the early morning, the river was clothed in grey mist, through which scores of boats, paddled by indistinct figures magnified to gigantic proportions, were moving in every direction, not noiselessly. The banks swarmed with Dyaks, naked except for the *chowat*, squatting round the embers of their fires,
warriors from Scribas and Sakarran chiefly. They felt the cold, for many were attired for war, or rather unattired: they had discarded everything except the waist-cloth, a few brass rings, and an occasional necklace. Every man wore at his side the *parang ilang*, and carried a spear.

It transpired that many of the men who formed the Tuan Mudah's advance party, some of whom were gaily clad, had been attending a "council" at Sakarran Fort when the news of the insurrection reached their leader. They had not stayed to remove their finery, as is the Dyak custom when going on the "war-path," but had jumped into their boats and paddled off as they were as soon as the Tuan Mudah had despatched a messenger with the spear.

This is the Dyak method of summoning to war. The spear is forwarded from "house" to "house" with great rapidity. Everywhere it is received with joyful shouts and instantly answered. On this occasion, within forty-eight hours, eight thousand Scribas and Sakarran Dyaks had assembled round Sakarran Fort ready to advance. All these men reached Kuching in the early morning; thousands more were on the way. By eight o'clock the Rajah had at least ten thousand men, Dyaks and Malays, at his disposal.

The Datu Bandahar assembled his command at dawn, but the Rajah bade him await the return of spies who had followed the Chinese. This delay enabled the youths, whose boat was ready to accompany the Datu, to survey the stirring scene.

They were struck by the martial appearance of the Scribas, the bravest warriors in Borneo, tallest and handsomest. Like the other tribes, their features had something of a Tartar cast, but the general expression was frank, happy, and fearless. The carriage of these nearly naked fellows was superb. While the youths were
admiring them, Mr. Merriman walked up with an order for the chiefs.

"Splendid fellows, aren't they?" he observed.

"Yes," said Jack, "but they look more picturesque in the sarong."

"Of course. Don't imagine that they are always nearly naked. They generally wear the Malay costume, with the addition of the Dyak armlets and earrings. The Seribas are very wealthy, comparatively speaking; gold and silver ornaments are common, and the daughters of the orang kayas appear in golden waistbelt and silk or satin petticoat on grand occasions."

The Sakarrans also received their share of admiration. They resembled the warriors from Seribas, but lacked something of that dashing martial appearance.

Here and there stalked a warrior who had accompanied the Tuan Mudah, and still wore his finery, probably because he could not leave it anywhere. The appearance of some was very striking. One, especially, attracted the youths' attention, though he seemed conscious that his ornaments were out of place.

Jack named him "The Dandy" at once. They were destined to see a great deal more of "The Dandy."

He was the son of a Seribas orang kaya, not more than feet five four in height, massively built, but active as a tiger-cat; his face was very pleasant. A scarlet cloth hung from his brawny shoulders. From the knuckles to the elbow both his arms were covered with brazen rings, polished and glistening; above the elbow were two broad armlets of snowy shell, which contrasted admirably with his yellow-brown skin. To his orange-coloured chowat behind was attached a network of agate beads and bugles which jingled musically when he moved. Round his neck were strings of bright beads; his knees were encircled with brass rings. A number of scalps dyed scarlet fluttered from the parang at his side, and when the sun rose,
and his ornaments flashed and sparkled in its light, he cut a splendid figure!

Another warrior whose striking appearance demanded and received admiration, wore huge earrings in addition to the brazen gauntlets, the armlets of shell, and the beads and bugles. His hair was adorned with leaves, now withered.

The gallant Datu Bandahar, who sat in his boat awaiting the order to advance, wore a head handkerchief adorned with a heavy fringe of gold lace; his jacket, trousers, and sarong were stiff with gold embroidery; over the sarong he wore a kain bandara of cloth-of-gold. The hilt of his kris, which stuck out in front, was of gold, set with rubies and emeralds. But the precious metal was tarnished and blackened with gunpowder—the silk rent and grimy.

Malay nobles do not usually wear gay clothes when going on an inland expedition, but the Datu probably had no opportunity to change an article of his attire since Boy's messenger, the unfortunate Abang Gapur, called upon him. The Chinese arrived soon afterwards, and burnt his house with all its contents.

The Datu Tumanggong, also thus early stirring, matched the Bandahar for grime and powder—on his dress, that is, for Malays and Dyaks alike are scrupulously clean in their persons. Otherwise his costume would have been magnificent. The black satin jacket was closed to the throat with gold buttons; wide trousers of crimson satin, brocaded with a leaf pattern, almost concealed his bare feet. His madder-coloured sarong was embroidered with silver; over that was another of silk, woven in bars of all the colours of the rainbow. But the dark stains on jacket and sarong, not of gunpowder alone, were proof enough that the Malay chiefs had not passed unscathed through the stirring scenes in which their gay attire had been spoilt.

“What is the Datu Bandahar supposed to do?” Harry asked of Hertz.
"He's a sort of Home Secretary," was the answer. "Dere are t'ree Malay ministers connected mit de Sarawak government; de Datu Patinggi—I hafen't seen him—ish, I dink, de shief; den gomes de Bandahar—I'll gall him de Minister for Home Affairs; den de Tumanggong—he's an old pirate—Var Minister und Sheneral combined, I dink. Budt de Home Secretary ish de grand fighting man! Ach! he's a glorious fellow! kind und goedt und yoost, a grand fellow for a Malay, und very popular."

"He must be as brave as a lion," said Jack, "or he couldn't have held the old Cockroach against such fearful odds."

"He ish ash brave ash a lion."

"By the way," said Harry, "I should like to have a look at the Cockroach."

"Nodings easier. Dere's Boy. Hi, Boy! De Tuans vant de boat to visit de prahu."

In a few minutes the sampan was alongside the battered trader. The youths and Hertz clambered on deck, occupied by the Reis alone. He came forward to shake hands.

"I fear her voyages are over," said Hertz, in Malay, glancing round.

The Arab merely answered, "The Rajah is just," meaning that he would make good the loss without question.

"The poor old Cockroach!" cried Jack; "why, she's like a sieve!"

The hog's back in the middle of the deck had been flattened down. Makeshift bulwarks—sampans hauled on board and set against the posts—had afforded shelter for her defenders. She had actually been roofed in with planks and sampans; over these were kajongs. Some twenty or thirty boats had been used in making the prahu defensible; not one would ever float again! They were riddled with the bullets that had hailed against them.
The ataps were in tatters, ploughed up with jingal balls, stained dark crimson with blood. Jack glanced at the spot where S'Ali had died; the crimson stain was still there, merged in many another.

Hertz asked the Arab what had become of his crew. Two lay in the hospital—the Mission-house—badly wounded; the others were dead. As they left the prahu Hertz remarked again:

"De Datu Bandahar ish ash brave ash a lion! Yoost so."

They landed, and walked about till noon. The Rajah's messengers had not yet returned. Jack became impatient to be off.

"Why doesn't the Rajah send his army of Dyaks after the T'ien-ti fiends?" he asked. "Surely there's nothing to fear? What's the use of this delay?"

"I don't know de Rajah's plans," the Collector answered, "budt I know him to be a merciful man, und I am sure dat if de shkellum Shinese begged for pardon und gave oop deir leaders, he vould pardon dem villingly."

"What! After burning his capital, and murdering right and left?"

"Vhy noedt? Do you dink a man like Rajah Brooke vould put revenge before de goodt of de shtate? Nein—nein! De Shinese are usefull in Sarawak—dey are de labourers, de miners, de gardeners, de shopkeepers. De Malays are too proud to do coolies' work; de Dyaks noedt know how, efen if villing. Be sure de Rajah vill gife his enemies efery shance. I noedt sure, budt I dink de delay ish to gife dem de opportunity to humble demselves und beg for mercy. Budt if dey go on burning und murdering, Heafen help dem; no oder power gan, und Heafen ish, I dink, de last dat vould. Dink you vhat would happen if de Rajah said to dese fellows: 'Forvardts! all of you!'"

"The Chinese would be swept off the face of the earth."
"Yes! und de innocent women; perhaps de shildren, too. De Dyaks give no man nor woman quarter. Dey lofe liddle shildren, but deir blood ish oop now. Be sure de Rajah vill order soosh terrible fellows prudently. Und dink of dis—many years de Rajah und his officers have worked to bring de Sea Dyaks to reasonable order—to make dem gife oop deir bloodt’irsty habits. To some egstent dey have sugceeded, budit efery time de shpear ish sent round ish a big yoomp on de backwards track. Dey vill be years before dey get ofer dis egscitement. Be sure de goodt Rajah vill nodt say de vorde ‘Forwardts’ to dese fellows oonless he ish obliged, for, look you, ‘Forwardts’ to Dyaks ish de same ash ‘kill und kill!’

Soon after mid-day the Rajah’s spies returned. Whatever merciful intentions the ruler of Sarawak may have entertained, the reports called for prompt action.

The Chinese had retired to Siniawan, whence some had gone on to Bau. But the Sirambau Dyaks had raided their stores of food. Now Meta and the orang kayas of Bombok and Peninjow rushed on the crestfallen Orang Kina from every direction. The latter held Siniawan and Biledah Fort opposite, but they had hardly anything to eat.

The Kunsi had made no preparations for a reverse, and all the food had been carried away or destroyed except a little at Tundong and a little the Land Dyaks had left at Siniawan and Bau. Yet the rebels were required to maintain all those they had forced to join them from Kuching, and the whole agricultural population. They could not even fetch firewood or water without a strong armed party, as Meta’s men were everywhere.

But the spies further reported that Wang-lo had actually dared to make a foray down the river in the direction of Kuching. At Tanah Leda, some distance below Siniawan, he had constructed a strong stockade, garrisoned with 250 picked men, himself in command.
The garrison had the best of the government rifles and carbines; four cannon and numerous jingals were in position to sweep the river. From this point Wang-lo sent out his raiders, and all the Dyak "houses" within reach were in flames.

The Rajah heard the news with his habitual calmness; then turned to the Datu Bandahar.

"Mercy is wasted," he said sternly. "Advance on the stockade. There wait for the Tumanggong."

In a moment all was bustle, but not confusion; the Datu had been ready at least six hours. Hertz and the youths sprang into their boat, which, steered by Boy, took up a position in the van. But the Collector turned to Wo-Sing.

"Are you going?" he asked. "De rishk for you ish great. Besser you shtay here."

Wo-Sing’s face was very pale, but resolute.

"With your permission, sir, I will take the risk," he said.

"Budt, Wo-Sing, de rishk ish double. If your own gountrymen gatch you dey vill certainly kill you; und if you are separated from us de Dyaks may do so. Consider de danger."

"I have, sir. It is no greater than Li-dah’s."

"Ach! Ja!—Li-dah! I forgot her—I forgot her! I wonder what has become of her? Ach! gome—gome by all means; ve vill protect you so vell ash ve are able."

Wo-Sing bowed his thanks. The poor fellow was in sore trouble. No news had been heard of his sweetheart since they left her sobbing at Sirambau.

The Datu’s force, two hundred strong, consisted chiefly of Malays, but there was also a body of Seribas and Sakarran Dyaks. All were picked men. On the right of the Orchid Seekers’ sampan sped the Datu’s war-boat, near enough for the Bandahar to converse pleasantly with Hertz the greater part of the way. The Datu told the
Collector that the Rajah had enjoined him to take care that the youths did not get into danger. Hertz smiled, knowing well the difficulty of restraining such a fire-eater as Jack.

On the left of the sampan raced a long Seribas war-boat. To this the youths gave an almost undivided attention, for "The Dandy" was in command; the steering paddle was held by another tremendous swell, the warrior with the leaves in his hair. The Seribas chief laughed and chatted cheerfully with Jack, through Boy, whenever the boats were near enough. Indeed "The Dandy's" face was one continual smile.

"One would think," said Harry, "that we were going to a picnic rather than to take a fort. These fellows laugh incessantly. Do they ever think of danger?"

"Nodt often, I should say," Hertz replied.

The perspiration streamed off their yellow-brown backs, and glistened in their hair; but they were salamanders when on a balla—war expedition. The heat appeared to affect them very little, though Hertz and the youths were careful to keep in the shade of the kajongs.

Again and again Jack asked of Boy, "Aren't we nearly there?"

Two hours' paddling carried the Bandahar's force to the neighbourhood of the stockade. At last Boy was able to answer:

"Tanah Leda in next reach, Tuan."

"Hurrah!" Jack murmured. His rifle had been ready a long time.

"Budt, Yack," said the Collector, "de Datu has said you must nodt fight."

"Has he?" softly laughed the fire-eater. "The Datu will have to tell me so himself, and I don't understand Malay."

But the Datu Bandahar had something else to think about. He sent forward a Dyak in a small sampan to
reconnoitre. The man returned and spoke a few words. A silent advance was ordered. The Malay chief's war-boat and the Orchid Seekers' sampan stole round the bend abreast. The Datu held up his hand, checking further progress.

Beyond the bend was the junction of the right and left-hand branches; the stockade had been erected on the tongue of land—Tanah Leda—between the two rivers at the point of junction, so that it faced the main stream. Thus the cannon, thrust out boldly through rude embrasures, commanded a considerable stretch of the river. It was a very strong position indeed.

The current carried the boats back behind the bend. The slovenly Chinese look-out had not perceived them, though Hertz saw by the flags and the points of spears above the stockade that the enemy was in force.

The Datu drew the boats together and held a short council. The strength of the enemy's position surprised him. He remembered the Rajah's order—to wait—and counselled prudence. The Datu Tumanggong would be up in a few hours at the most; perhaps the Tuan Mudah or the Rajah himself. The youths, of course, took no part in the discussion, though Hertz did, also counselling prudence. He had counted four large cannon and nearly twenty jingals. The Datu eventually decided to wait.

Then, to Jack's great delight, "The Dandy" leapt to his feet with a yell, his pleasant eyes glowing now, and his features twitching with excitement. Boy interpreted roughly in haste.

"I am Si Loyo, the son of Pamantuah!" he screamed. "I am the warrior!" Wh-r-r-r—ah-he-e-e—yah!

The terrible war-cry of the Seribas rang out, and at the first note every man of the tribe bounded to his feet, taking up the chorus No chance of surprising the Chinas-men after that roaring clamour. It ceased.

"The Tuan Mudah called me! 'Go fight, Si Loyo!'
he said. I am here—there is the enemy! 'Go fight, Si Loyo!' said the Tuan Mudah, 'for you are a warrior, the son of Pamantuah!'—Maybe he gave the orang laut other orders! It's nothing to me! Let them go home and spin. I am the warrior Si Loyo! Wh-r-r-r—ah—he-e-e-yah!'

Again the war-cry rolled along, and as they echoed it the Seribas men lashed themselves into madness.

"Ach! Idt's grand after all!" Hertz muttered. "You boys vill oondershtand English history besser after dis—if you live t'rough de day!"

Each Seribas man dropped back upon his seat as the breathless, quavering "Yah!" died away, grasped his paddle with straining hands, and waited, his feverish eyes glaring at the young chief. They were all mad, conscious of nothing but the excitement of battle. A deep silence reigned. Faintly they heard the tumultuous shouting of the Chinamen.

The Bandahar knew his allies too well to hesitate longer. He drew up beside the Seribas chief's prahu, exchanged a few words with him, and gave the order to advance.

The boats sped forward, keeping as far apart as the width of the river would permit, to avoid the expected storm of balls.

"Ve are in for idt now," said Hertz, cocking his rifle.
"Don't lose your head, Yack, whatefer you do!"

No response. Something of the light that gleamed in Si Loyo's eyes was now in Jack's.

The Malays and Dyaks were silent until they had turned the bend, and were face to face with the enemy; then, as they dashed through the water, the terrible war-cry of the Seribas again rang out, blended with that of Sakarran, the yells of the Malays and Chinamen, and the "Hurrahs!" of the English.

A puff of smoke swept along the front of the stockade, pierced by a hundred pale tongues of flame, as the roar of
cannon and musketry answered the yells of the assailants. The guns were near enough to blow every boat out of the water. But they had been trained too high. The hail of balls and bullets passed idly overhead into the jungle beyond. Not a man—not even a boat was struck!*

Boy steered the sampan to the bank, right under the smoking guns. In an instant every man had left it except Wo-Sing. Jack was the first of its crew ashore, the second of the Datu's party.

Before him dashed the scarlet-robed "Dandy," his ornaments jingling, his parang flashing in the sun, whilst his war-cry rang high above the uproar. The Seribas chief flung himself against a weak part of the stockade, and crashed through the bamboos. Jack followed—the second man inside—firing his revolver right and left. A scramble of blue-clad figures! A forest of upraised weapons! Like a meteor "The Dandy" gleamed among them, hewing a path, Jack close beside him. Behind, a jumble of assailants and assailed—yells and screams! A big Chinaman turned with an oath, swinging a clubbed rifle. Jack fired and missed. It was his last shot! The heavy stock descended on his shoulder, felling him, dazed, but not insensible. "The Dandy" cut the striker down, and dashed on without staying for his head—so many were in reach. The fellow rolled over towards Jack and drew a long knife. He rose to his knees, with the blood pouring from his face. But Boy was upon him. His keen parang swished through the air, and the Chinaman fell back dead. Boy rushed on.

Jack rose to his feet, and reeled to a gun, still half dazed, staring at the dead man. Many Chinamen lay around. But Jack fancied this man's disfigured face was familiar.

Hertz, with Harry and Bounce, had followed Jack im-

* The persistent bungling of the Chinese must appear almost incredible. But this is history.
Jack rose to his feet, and reeled to a gun.
mediately, but the press at the breach delayed them. When they got within the stockade all was over; the Chinamen were in full flight, throwing away their guns, panic-stricken. The stockade had been carried in a moment.

"Are you hit, Jack?" cried Harry, running up.

"I got a nasty blow on the shoulder; there's nothing much the matter. There lies the man that did it," pointing to the body at his feet.

Harry shuddered. "Did you kill him?"

"No. 'The Dandy' cut him down. Boy finished him. I've seen him before somewhere."

"So hafe I," said Hertz; "fetch Wo-Sing to identify him. Idt's Wang-lo."

Thus fell the man whose mad ambition had brought death or ruin upon thousands. Only a few hours before, the chief of the Kunsi had occupied the Rajah's chair in the court house at Kuching. Now he lay dead!
CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SURPRISE IN THE PHOSPHORIC FOREST.

A repetition of the scene at Kuching followed the capture of the stockade at Tanah Leda. The Chinamen fled into the jungle, pursued by Malays and Dyaks. The Malays soon returned, leaving the pursuit to the men of Seribas and Sakarran. Boy, however, with Nyait and the other Land Dyaks, went on.

Another party, led by the Datu Tumangong, left the capital half-an-hour after the Bandahar’s departure. With him were several of the English officers, Abang Buyong, and the daring Abang Patah. They were less than a mile behind when the others charged, and dashed on in mad haste; but Chinese and Dyaks alike had vanished in the jungle when they sprang ashore.

The Bandahar, with a few Malays, had returned to the stockade, where, with Hertz and the youths, they gathered round the body of the chief of the Kunsi. Meanwhile Harry had summoned Wo-Sing to complete the identification, for Wang-lo’s face was terribly gashed by the blow “The Dandy” had dealt him. Bounce stood by, complacently smoking, and attentively regarding Wo-Sing, as, with arms folded and bowed head, the latter gazed on the remains of Li-dah’s father.

Mr. Crymble came up just then and heard his state-

ment.
"There's no doubt in your mind, Wo-Sing?" said he.

"None whatever, sir," was the low reply.

"Dere's none in mine, eider," Hertz interjected. "I had several interviews mit Wang-lo. Dis ish' he."

"I am quite satisfied, Mr. Hertz." Mr. Orymble turned to his immediate followers. "Pile all these bodies together. The Dyaks have heads enough—more than is good for them, unfortunately. Heap everything combustible upon the top. We'll fire the pile when we leave. But we must ascertain who killed Wang-lo! The Rajah may think proper to reward him."

"'The Dandy' did that," said Jack, pointing to the gash, "but he was in such a fury I don't think he was conscious of the act. Boy slew him."

"Who is 'The Dandy'?" Mr. Crymble asked, surveying Jack with much interest.

"The Seribas chief in scarlet and crimson, and no end of brass rings."

"Oh, Si Loyo! That reckless fellow will have more heads than he'll be able to carry. But I say, young man, where were you? You must have been pretty near the front to see what 'The Dandy'—as you call him—did."

"I was in the stockade," said Jack, quietly.

Bounce removed his pipe from his mouth. "That thee young gen'leman," he said, pointing at the youth with the pipe-stem, "were the second man in—next after the chap in red. I seed him, an' I made sure it were all up with him. If they'd been them thee beasts o' pirates, with their krises and——"

Bounce stopped suddenly, with a conscious look at the Malay chiefs beside him that sent the English into fits of laughter. The old Datu Tumanggong, who stood at the sailor's elbow, had been a desperate pirate, robber, and murderer in the days before Rajah Brooke, and he never professed penitence. But the Tumanggong did not understand. If he had, he would not have cared.
"Well, Mr. Rider," resumed Mr. Crymble, "this is your first big fight, I believe, and you have distinguished yourself—a piece of luck which doesn't often fall to a young man. You had better take Wang-lo's arms as a remembrance of this affair."

"Thanks," said Jack, picking up the knife and rifle, "perhaps I have a claim on them." Turning to Harry, he added, "Wang-lo knocked me down with the gun, and he would have stabbed me with the knife had not Boy come up."

Hertz was naturally very anxious to get to Sirambau, but he hesitated to venture. He had no idea which way the main body of the rebels would retreat. They might make a stand on the mountain itself, or retire up the river to Bau. The survivors of the two hundred and fifty men driven out of the stockade were not much to be feared. Few would join their friends. But the main body was known to be at Siniawan, or Biledah Fort, opposite which the Orchid Seekers must pass, or make a long journey overland, risking the chance of falling in with a party of desperate fugitives. An attempt to reach Sirambau by way of Siniawan would be madness, so the Collector decided to remain with the Rajah's forces for the present. This suited Jack admirably, though Harry declared he had seen enough bloodshed to satisfy him for a lifetime.

The Bandahar sent a swift sampan to the Rajah at Kuching with a report of the capture of the stockade. Another he despatched up the stream to reconnoitre. Some of the Malays busied themselves collecting the plunder, and getting the captured guns to the bank of the river. Others destroyed the stockade, heaping the material above the bodies of the slain. Others, again, lit fires to cook food. They encamped on the tongue of land, a short distance from the funeral pyre, which, at dusk, Mr. Crymble ordered to be set alight.
"It will be a beacon to direct the Dyaks," he said. Very few of the wild warriors had returned.

"So ends Wang-lo's ambition—in shmoke!" exclaimed Hertz, as a thick volume rolled skywards.

"And fire!" added Harry, as the red flames burst through the heavy pall. In a few minutes the pyre was a mass of flame, roaring and shooting upwards, scorching the green leaves near, casting a lurid glow on the ugly faces of the Malays, and lighting up the camp.

"If all the T'ien-ti fiends were under such a fire, or over it," said Jack, as he watched the fierce element at work, "I imagine the world in general wouldn't much regret their loss."

"Yoost so," Hertz commented.

The Seribas and Sakarrans returned in straggling parties, loaded with trophies. "The Dandy" was among the last to arrive. Boy returned with him. They had followed the Orang Kina for miles through the jungle.

Boy reported firing in the direction of Peninjow, on Sirambau mountain. Evidently the Chinamen were attacking the Land Dyaks.

This news was also immediately sent to the Rajah. The messenger met the Tuan Mudah, advancing with a body of Sea Dyaks. The Rajah's nephew reached Tanah Leda at an early hour in the morning, and at once took command. He still held back the main body of his Dyaks. When the strength and armament of the destroyed stockade were explained to him he expressed great surprise.

"Neither the Rajah nor I had any idea that it was so strong," he said. "I am sorry so small a force was sent to dislodge the rebels. Well, 'the fewer men the greater share of honour'"—this was spoken to Mr. Crymble

"I've heard that before, somewhere," whispered Jack.

"I'm sure you have," said Harry, smiling.

Warmly the Tuan Mudah complimented the Bandahar.
The gallant Datu, in replying, did not omit to mention that the Seribas chief had practically forced him to attack. After an animated but brief conversation with Crymble and Merriman, the Commander-in-chief turned to Hertz and the youths.

"I understand that you gentlemen joined in the attack. I thank you on behalf of the Rajah." Addressing himself to Jack, he said: "You, I hear, were the second man in the stockade. I admire your pluck, but really you ought not to fight at all. I have no wish, indeed, to constrain you to take no further part in this unfortunate business. That would be a poor reward. But pray don't be too bold. Where are Si Loyo and Buyong?" He glanced round the assembled warriors. Boy first caught his eye. "You, Buyong," he went on, speaking in Malay, "killed the chief instigator of the rebellion, Wang-lo. The Rajah will reward that great service fittingly."

Boy's honest face glowed with pleasure; gracefully he salaamed.

No fear that Si Loyo would be passed over. He was not a man to hide in the background when praise was being bestowed. It would be unreasonable for a Dyak warrior to affect modesty when feats of arms are the only distinction he covets. Si Loyo stood close to the Tuan Mudah, who, turning slightly, addressed him in Seribas Dyak. The gratified Boy interpreted at Harry's request.

"Si Loyo, son of Pamantuah, you are a great warrior. The Orang Kina fled before you. You struck down the rebel chief, Wang-lo."

This was evidently a surprise. "The Dandy" stood at least an inch taller.

"You were the first in the stockade. Many of the Rajah's enemies you have slain. The Rajah will thank you and reward you."

Proudly "The Dandy" answered, strutting and swell-
At the sight of me the Orang Kina trembled . . . Who can number the trees of the forest? Who can number the Orang Kina that fell before Si Loyo, the son of Pamantuah?

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ing like a turkey-cock, whilst his ornaments flashed and tinkled.

"'Go fight, Si Loyo,' you said, 'the Rajah needs you. You are a great warrior!'—I came. Here was the enemy, in number as the leaves of the forest. Where are they now? Strong were the male bamboos before them, many and big their guns, sharp their swords, long their spears! Where are they now? I, Si Loyo, the son of Pamantuah, cared not for their guns and spears. I am a great warrior!"

"What a boaster!" whispered Jack.

"Fortunately his deeds also speak," said Harry.

"I dashed against the bamboos, and they bent and broke like twigs!" cried the Seribas chief, swinging out his right arm, so that the brass rings clashed together. "At the sight of me the Orang Kina trembled. Down they went before my thirsty parang, even as the withered leaves fall when the wind blows strong in the trees. Many I killed. Who can number the trees of the forest? Who can number the Orang Kina that fell before Si Loyo, the son of Pamantuah?"

"Good gracious!" whispered Jack.

Si Loyo threw out his chest, and lifted his head.

"I am a great warrior! Strong I am, and resistless as the bore on the Batang Lupar.* But I staggered under the load of heads!" Here he reeled, suggesting in pantomime a very great weight indeed. "'Go fight, Si Loyo, son of Pamantuah!' you said, you, the Tuan Mudah. I have fought; I have eaten and slept. Now I fight again!"

"Well, of all the braggarts!" murmured the youths together.

"Hush! Listen!" whispered Hertz. "He nodt know dat bragging ish shameful. Idt ish de Dyak custom."

* The tidal wave on the river Batang Lupar; it sweeps on with resistless power, dashing boats to pieces, etc.
But "The Dandy" had spoken his peroration. He had fought, eaten, slept, got his share of the plunder, and bragged to his heart's content—perhaps. All he wanted now was another fight, no matter where or with whom.

The Bandahar's spies returned and reported that the Orang Kina had evacuated Biledah Fort and Siniawan. A few fugitives from Tanah Leda had reached those places with the news of Wang-lo's death; the rebels immediately fled towards Bau. The spies confirmed Boy's report of fighting on Sirambau. A strong body of Chinamen had ascended the mountain, intending to destroy "The Look-out"—the Rajah's country house. The Dyaks were defending the path.

The Tuan Mudah at once sent for the Sea Dyaks, the main body of whom had halted lower down the river. Nothing but the most terrible lesson, it appeared, would serve to humble the rebels and crush the spirit of destruction they manifested. The Tuan Mudah's wild warriors arrived late in the afternoon—too late for a blow to be struck that night; so they encamped on the river bank with the Datu's forces.

In the morning all started up the river, the Sea Dyaks in the rear. The Orchid Seekers' sampan occupied its old position, between "The Dandy's" war-boat and the Bandahar's, which now carried the Tuan Mudah, and Messrs. Crymble and Merriman.

The wisdom of holding back these wild fellows now became manifest even to Jack. The Seribas in the boat alongside were mad with excitement. Rarely was the measured clank of their paddles broken, but the antics, the wild cries and laughter of the warriors, intoxicated with the joy of battle won and in prospect, shocked Harry. The youths were now accustomed to the ghastly trophies piled at bow and stern.

Half way to Biledah they met another spy, who said
that many of the Orang Kina were still on Sirambau, fighting intermittently with the Land Dyaks.

The Tuan Mudah called a halt and held council. He still inclined to mercy, but the Land Dyaks, who were badly armed in comparison with the Chinamen, could not be left to fight it out with the Rajah's enemies. Eventually it was resolved to send the Bandahar's and Tumanggong's forces overland to reinforce the Sirambau Dyaks, whilst the Sea Dyaks advanced slowly to attack the rebels in the rear. Possibly the Tuan Mudah hoped that the Chinamen would surrender to the Malays when they found those more dreaded foes marching upon them.

Hertz saw in the plan a possible means of reaching his orchids without any great risk. He resolved to go with the overland party, "The Dandy" and his Seribas accompanied the Datu's force, also a number of Sakarrans and tattooed Kennowits.

With this mixed detachment the Collector and the youths entered the jungle, accompanied by Boy and Wo-Sing. The China "boy" was perhaps the most anxious of all to reach Sirambau. Certainly he ran the greatest risk. Though Nyait had joined his tribesmen, a dozen Land Dyaks still remained with Hertz.

The expedition started in the afternoon, necessitating great speed to reach Sirambau before nightfall. But two miles an hour in a tropic jungle is reckoned very fast indeed. One mile is splendid progress when a path has to be cut, as was often the case.

"The Dandy," with eager impetuosity, pushed on in front, and, being unfamiliar with the district, went too far to the eastward. Hertz discovered the error. A halt followed.

The Seribas were recalled—they had got nearly two miles ahead. All this took time, and it soon became 2 a 2
evident that a night march was before them. Hertz suggested that Boy should take the lead with the Sirambau Dyaks. This was agreed to. The Collector accompanied the guides; thus he became virtually the leader of the expedition. The Datus, like everybody else who came in contact with him, recognised his great ability. He ordered the Dyaks to avoid all new jungle, if possible, and to march through campong, as the few paths were difficult. In the event of darkness they would have to take the paths, difficult or easy. The Sirambau men obeyed, keeping to the old forest, often making detours in order to do so. Thus they were enabled to march at fair speed in a body.

Close behind the leaders stalked "The Dandy," who seemed to have taken a great fancy to Jack since they had entered the stockade together. But as the Seribas chief knew no English, and Boy was always in front with the Dyak guides, no conversation could be carried on until Harry bethought him of Wo-Sing, who, by the way, kept close beside the Collector.

"Wo-Sing, do you understand the Seribas dialect?" he asked.

"A little, sir," was the answer.

"I wish you would come here."

Wo-Sing fell back at once. The instant Si Loyo looked in his face he started, and laid his hand on his parang, muttering. He had apparently not noticed the Orang Kina previously. Wo-Sing had occupied the stern of the sampan on the journey, Si Loyo the bows of his war-boat.

"He says I wear a tail and ought to die," said the China "boy," shifting his position, so as to place Jack between himself and the fierce Seribas.

"Tell him you are the Rajah's servant," said Jack.

Wo-Sing did so, but "The Dandy" seemed incredulous Jack did not like his looks
"Tell him how you faced the Kunsi at Bau, and see if that will satisfy him," he suggested.

During the narration, which was brief, "The Dandy" smiled at Jack, and took his too ready hand from the hilt of his weapon. An understanding effected between the chief and the interpreter, the youth was able once more to converse.

"You are a great chief," he said.
"Yes," answered Si Loyo, swelling with pride and pleasure.

Wo-Sing added: "His father, the Orang Kaya Paman-tuah, rules all the Seribas. He is the Rajah's friend—a very old man, now."

"Ask Si Loyo how many times he has fought."

Wo-Sing obeyed.

"How many times?" "The Dandy" repeated contemptuously. "Who could tell? I am a great warrior. Seventeen heads are hanging in my house at Sepuk!"

"Seventeen heads?" Harry cried; "how old is he?"

Wo-Sing asked the question, but the young chief only stared with a look of displeasure, and turned away.

"He does not know how old he is, und he does not care," said Hertz.

The talk was not resumed, to Wo-Sing's apparent satisfaction. He put as great a distance between himself and the Seribas chief as the order of march would permit.

Presently a heavy shower of rain fell, making the tramp through the jungle exceedingly unpleasant. With it came the night, suddenly. For more than an hour they had been ascending a hill—the north-eastern slope of Sirambau. Hertz was rather surprised that no firing had been heard.

"How far now, Boy?" he shouted.

"Not far, Tuan." Boy halted until the Collector caught him up. "We close Peninjow now. There in hour."

"Dere's no fighting going on?"
"No, Tuan. Too much dark. All quiet."

It soon became very dark. The rain fell in torrents. Presently they crossed a watercourse—swollen already—in a ravine covered with old forest. Though on the side of a mountain the ground was marshy. Here the youths saw a sight as strange as any they had witnessed. The earth shone with phosphoric light; the vegetation, the bark of the giant trees, glowed; the insects left a trail of white fire. Jack crushed one beneath his foot. A flash ensued.

"How beautiful!" cried Harry.

"It's very singular!" exclaimed Jack. "How is it caused?"

"Idt's a very rare phenomenon," Hertz answered. "I dink idt ish caused by a liddle fungus. Dere ish some-dings of de kind in Europe, budt on a very shmall scale. I nodt sure if de European shpecies ish allied to dis; if so, idt must be fery distant."

Suddenly the Dyak guides returned hurriedly, and spoke to Boy in excited but low tones.

"Someding's de matter," said Hertz. "What ish idt, Boy?"

"Orang Kina here, Tuan," answered the Malay.

"Here, in dis forest?"

"Weh!"

"Tell de Datus adt vonce."

Soon the leaders knew that the enemy was before them. What the Orang Kina were doing—their numbers—the Dyaks did not know;—they were there. Once more the guides stole forward, whilst the Datus gathered their men together. Nobody had dreamt of an encounter with the enemy on this side of the mountain. Where were the Land Dyaks? Had they been defeated—or had they driven back the Chinamen and not pursued them owing to the approach of night? Those questions were breathlessly asked, but not answered.
The guides returned. The *Orang Kina* had built a stockade in a strong position on the edge of the old forest. They estimated their numbers, by the light of their fires, at three hundred, with no women or children.

The leaders held a council. All were unanimous that a surprise would be easy. The *Bandahar* ordered the Malays armed with guns to extend through the forest so as to outflank the stockade. During the operation a Malay stumbled, and accidentally discharged his musket.

"De business ish done!" Hertz exclaimed.

The *Bandahar* ordered every man to remain where he stood in silence. An hour passed. Hardly a whisper broke the quiet. Not a sound was heard louder than the pat-pat of the big raindrops which reached the ground in that strange forest, where the trees, and every shrub and stick and leaf, the very earth itself, gave forth a dim light, like that of myriads of glow-worms. No movement was heard among the Chinese. The Dyaks who crept forward saw nothing suspicious, heard no unusual sound. At last the order was given to advance.

"Yack," said Hertz, very gravely, "dis vill be dangerous work. Shtay mit me, now."

"But, Mr. Hertz——"

"Shtay mit me!"

Almost noiselessly the Malays crept on in extended order, followed by the Dyaks. Soon the *Orang Kina* fires were visible through the trees.

Suddenly a shot rang out in front. In an instant, from almost every pale gleaming tree before them, red fire flashed, lighting up the indistinct figures of the Chinamen, who, warned by the accidental discharge, had crept from their stockade to surprise the would-be surprisers.

Hertz seized both Jack and Harry, forcing them down behind a log over which he had stumbled.
"Don't move for your lives!" he cried, "budt return de fire—quick! or de Malays vill run!"

Many had already turned to flee. Luckily the Orchid Seekers were all together—Bounce, Wo-Sing, Boy, Paham, Si Buntak, even the Dyaks. They fired a volley from behind the fallen trunk—the first shots from their side—and loaded with all speed.

"Yack—Wo-Sing," Hertz shouted, "keep idt oop mit your revolvers!"

With rifles, double-barrels, and revolvers the little party held back the enemy. "The Dandy" was the first to get over the surprise. A ringing "Wh-r-r-r—ah-he-e-e—yah!" at Jack's left hand proclaimed the presence of the Seribas chief. But he did not pass the log. Soon the position became doubly dangerous. Straggling shots rang out behind, where the Malays fired. Bullets struck the trees on all sides.

The panic was short-lived. Encouraged by the example set them, by the reiterated war-cry in front, the Malays advanced, firing all along the line. The Kennowits rushed forward and blew flights of deadly sumpit arrows. The Seribas and Sakarrans, who had no guns, hurled their spears and yelled their war-cries. A few men dropped, wounded or killed; nobody heeded them, probably nobody saw them, though the youths heard groans. As the Malay fire increased, the Chinese slackened, died away. Then "The Dandy" led forth his fierce warriors. Jack sprang up to follow.

"No, no!" cried Hertz, "dere's de shtockade behind!"

As the assailants emerged into the open they were received by a tremendous volley, followed by another, drowning the yells and straggling shots. Back they came, furious. Not all, however. Many lay on the forest edge. The Orang Kina had merely retired into the stockade, whence they poured a murderous fire.
The Bandahar, who had joined in the attack, halted near the log, surrounded by gesticulating figures, screaming themselves hoarse. Loud above all rang the war-cry of the Seribas. It was a strange scene! But for the phosphoric glow all round the warriors would have been invisible.

Most furious of all was "The Dandy." He could not articulate for rage. Again and again he made as if he would rush on the stockade alone in his endeavours to induce others to follow. The old pirate, the Datu Tumanggong, ably seconded the chief's efforts. The youths could not see him, as he was behind some intervening trees, but his peculiarly shrill voice could be heard above the tumult.

"Back, cowards! Shall it be said that Orang laüt ran from the Orang Kina pigs?"

Then shrill arose a whistle, and Malays, Seribas, and Sakarrans ran together.

"What's that?" Jack gasped.

"De pirates' call to board. De Tumanggong has nödt forgotten idts power," Hertz answered, breathlessly.

"I've heard it afore," muttered Bounce, between his teeth.

"Can I go, Mr. Hertz?" Jack asked, his eyes flashing.

"Nödt on any agcount. De Datus are mad! Dey trow men's lifes away!"

Again the whistle screamed, and the reckless fellows rushed through the forest, the Malays calling on Allah. But the Chinamen had been given time to reload. The terrible fire they delivered again forced back the Datus' men with heavy loss.

Hertz made his way to the Bandahar, guided by the hoarse shouts, blended with the death-songs of the mortally wounded.

"This is madness!" he cried in Malay. "The enemy is
too strong. Wait until daylight, or till the moon is in the heavens."

"Your words are wise," the Bandahar replied, instantly ordering a retreat. Not far, however. He halted within the phosphoric forest, and posted sentries, not more than half a mile from the victorious Chinamen.

Here, with the weird luminous glare all round, sheltered from the rain only by a rude roof of bark and boughs hastily thrown together by the Dyaks, the youths prepared to pass the most wretched night they ever experienced.
CHAPTER XXX.

THE HEROISM OF THE MAIDENS.

The rude lang-kan which the Dyaks had constructed to shelter the Orang putih leant against two huge trees. On the roots of these the youths sat, watching the movements of their allies, faintly visible in the luminous glow that almost every moment was paled by vivid lightning, the like of which they had never seen. The rain, checked by the close, spreading foliage overhead, poured down in cascades.

Indistinct figures hurried to and fro, shouting to each other, and from time to time raising the war-cry defiantly. By the frequent gleams of the lightning they could be seen shaking their spears, and clashing their parangs on their shields. But the sounds were only audible at moments when the thunder’s hoarse rattle died away in a rumbling bass, to burst forth again with terrific claps that seemed to shake the solid earth.

Fortunately the youths had food, but they were drenched to the skin, cold, and very, very wretched.

The experience was new to them, and intensely depressing. Perhaps only one scene is sadder than the night bivouac of a defeated army, and that is the field on which they were beaten, where the dead and wounded still lie.

"I suppose this is the sort of thing soldiers have to put up with every now and again," muttered Harry.
"They have to take the rough with the smooth," said Jack.

"Yes, but active service appears to me to be all rough, if this is a fair sample. I never felt half so miserable and down-hearted."

"I've felt worse, once," muttered Bounce.

No movement was heard among the Chinese. But when the storm was at its height they might have attacked and almost fired volleys from behind the trees unheard. Sometimes even the flashes of their guns would scarcely have revealed them. About two o'clock the lightning became less bright and continuous, the thunder less loud. Gradually it died away, and the rain ceased to fall.

At dawn a party of Dyaks crept to the edge of the forest to reconnoitre. They returned and reported the stockade deserted. The Orang Kina had stolen away during the night. But the Datus, prudent now, feared an ambush. Not until Dyaks had completely encircled the stockade and found the trail of the retreating Chinese leading towards Siniawan, did they order an advance through the forest.

Here and there lay the bodies of Malays and Dyaks. Near the irregular border of the campong were a few Chinese. Hertz halted before two of these, reclining side by side, with their backs against a great tree. One held clenched in his rigid hand a tiny arrow, just a thorn of the sago palm. On his broad yellow chest was a puncture, so small as to be invisible but for the speck of congealed blood round it. On the other body no wound could be seen, nothing but a tiny rent in the bajo.

"Killed by de Kennowits' sumpits," the Collector exclaimed. "Dere ish de weapon dat shlew von," pointing to the arrow. "A pin vould make ash big a vound."

Jack stooped, disengaged the tiny arrow from the man's
grasp, and put it in his knapsack. It was as innocent-looking as a butcher's skewer, and not half so thick.

"I can believe what I've seen," Jack remarked. "These men were scratched by thorns and died. I would like to see the Upas tree they get the poison from."

"Ach! So would our botanists! You have touched a great scientific puzzle dere, Yack," Hertz rejoined. But that was no time to discuss puzzles.

At the edge of the forest and before the stockade the dead lay thicker; no Chinese were among them. It was at once seen that the stockade had been hurriedly constructed; here and there the bamboos stood a foot apart. But the position was a strong one; the slope on which the stockade stood formed a natural glacis, nearly free from brushwood. The rebels, apparently, had arrived during the afternoon, before the rain came on, as a considerable quantity of dry fuel, carefully sheltered, remained.

The Datus halted and held a council, then tended the wounded, with the assistance of Hertz and the youths, whilst their men collected the dead. "The Dandy," with other Seribas and Sakarran chiefs as eager as himself, urged a hurried pursuit of the retreating Orang Kina; the prudent, and these were in a majority since the repulse, counselled a cautious advance. Hertz, asked for his advice, gave it on the side of prudence.

"The Orang Kina are many, and well armed," he said in Malay. "The Tuan Mudah must be now at Siniawan, whither the rebels have retired. They will meet the Sea Dyaks, who will eat them up. If they run back, they will meet you. Follow the Orang Kina, but do not risk an attack."

This coincided with the Bandahar's views. While they

* The very curious subject of Upas poison was treated lately in the Kew Bulletin, Nos. 58, 59,
were discussing the matter, a small party of Land Dyaks suddenly emerged from the jungle south of the stockade. Their leader stepped forward—Nyait. He shook hands with the Collector and the youths, explaining his presence through Boy.

For three days the *Orang Kina* and the Land Dyaks had been fighting intermittently on the path up the mountain. The latter had erected stockades, which they with difficulty defended. During the afternoon of the third day the *Orang Kina* suddenly retired. Nyait heard much shouting previous to the movement.

"Dey must hafe heard of Wang-lo's deat'," interjected the Collector.

The Dyaks did not follow them. They had lost many men, and the *Orang Kina* were well armed. The Dyaks were no match for them, except behind their stockades. Soon after dark they heard the firing; but it ceased before they could decide to move. Early in the morning Nyait set out with a few men to reconnoitre.

Hertz had several questions to ask.

"Hafe de *Orang Kina* been adt Sirambau 'house'?"

"No, Tuan."

"Are de flowers yoost ash ve left dem?"

"Yes, Tuan."

"Dat ish vell! De goodts—are dey shtill in Meta's house?"

"Yes, Tuan."

The Collector was much relieved. "Boys," he said, "de orchids are all right. Nodings has been touched adt Sirambau. What you wish—to go dere, or see de end of dis?"

Before they could answer, Wo-Sing asked in a tremulous voice:

"Did Nyait speak of Li-dah, sir?"

"Ach! Boy, ashk about de *Orang Kina* girl—Wang-lo's daughter."
But Nyait did not know what had become of her. He questioned his companions. One said that when the Dyaks returned home after accompanying the Orang putih part of the way to Kuching, the Orang Kina maiden was not there. She and her Dyak companion had left secretly.

Wo-Sing was in great trouble. The poor fellow had some difficulty to restrain himself from weeping outright.

"Wang-lo would kill her if he saw her," he muttered, huskily.

"Fery likely," Hertz rejoined, "if he had a soospicion dat she warned us. I dink she would keep ouldt of his vay—go on to Bau. He gan't harm her now, Wo-Sing; he gan't harm anybodys. What you vish to do?"

"I must go with you, sir. If you go to Sirambau, there I must go."

"Dat ish so. Your life woul be safe mit de Sea Dyaks. Where do you vish to go?"

"To Siniawan and Bau, to look for Li-dah, sir."

"Dat settles idt; ve go too. Yack, Harry, you nodd vish to go adt vonce to Sirambau?"

"No, indeed," Jack quickly answered. "I want to see the end of this, as you said. Harry's had enough of fighting, but for all that, I think he wants to go on."

"Yes," said Harry, "I couldn't seek the 'blue' orchid now."

"Den ve agcompany de Datus."

Swiftly, but prudently, the Malays and Dyaks followed the retreating Chinese. An hour after starting they were reinforced by the Sirambau men, summoned by Nyait. The trail, which at first led in the direction of Siniawan, turned away at a point some two miles from the Chinese town. Hertz took out his compass.

"Dey make shtraight for de goodt road to Bau," he said.

"Dey know de Tuan Mudah ish adt Siniawan."

Soon the leaders called out that Sea Dyaks were before
them. The Tuan Mudah’s men were on the trail of the Orang Kina. When they struck the good road traversed by the Orchid Seekers while marching from Sirambau to Bau, it became evident that a considerable force of Sea Dyaks had passed recently. The men of Seribas and Sakarran pushed on in great excitement; the Malays and Land Dyaks were little less eager—they feared the fighting would be over. On this tolerable road the Orchid Seekers were a match for their bare-foot companions. They hurried on in front of the main body, close behind the yelling Dyaks. Presently they heard firing—steady volleys.

"De Shinese retire in goodt order," said Hertz, "butf dey must all surrender at Bau, or die."

"Have you any idea of their strength?" Harry asked.

"Vell, I dink nearly all de Shinamen left alive in Saravak vill be dere—t’ree t’ousand, perhaps."

"Do you think Li-dah will be with them?"

"Probably."

The firing excited the Dyaks still further; many started to run. As they neared Bau it became stationary. The Chinamen were defending their chief town. Suddenly they overtook the Tuan Mudah, marching with his English officers and a body of Malays. His wild warriors were in advance now. The Datus reported, and awaited the Commander-in-Chief’s orders. He turned to the Collector.

"Ah, Mr. Hertz, still with us! I presume our young friends wished to see the end of the insurrection?"

The conversation was interrupted by a Dyak, who ran up breathless, speaking excitedly. The Tuan Mudah turned to his officers.

"The rebels are retiring from Bau towards Gombang."

"Making for the Dutch frontier," said Mr. Crymble.

"Exactly. If we permit it, trouble will follow. They
must be stopped on Gombang, forced to surrender, and disarmed."

From a little distance beyond Bau a good road led over the Gombang range of mountains towards Sambas, a Dutch possession. The Tuan Mudah's plan was to delay the Chinese retreat, so as to enable a strong force to reach Gombang before them and bar the way. This operation was entrusted to the Datus. Meanwhile the Sea Dyaks were ordered to close with the rebels.

"Ye must be present mit Wo-Sing adt de surrender," said Hertz, "or nobody knows what vill become of his shweetheart. Ve had besser go mit de Datus."

They hurried forward at a great speed to Bau, deserted now by the Chinese. Passing through the town, they advanced by jungle paths, numerous here, where there were so many gold-workings, leaving that taken by the rebels to the right. The sounds told them what was going on. The volleys proved that the Chinese were still retreating in good order, but from time to time the firing became hurried. Faint yells reached them. The Sea Dyaks infested the jungle, attacking at every opportunity. Again and again the rebels were compelled to halt and face their active foes; thus the retreat was delayed.

With great difficulty the Datus restrained "The Dandy" and his fellows from rushing off to take part in this guerilla warfare. So soon as the sounds told the leaders that the rebels had been passed, they made for the main road. When they struck it the Chinese were behind them, not in sight, but audible enough. The retreat on Gombang was one long, straggling fight. Hundreds of the rebels were cut off. But they had all their women and children with them, and they fought with desperate courage. Armed with rifles and carbines taken from the arsenal at Kuching they held their own against the reckless Sea Dyaks, but at a terrible cost.
"Dey are in a trap now," said Hertz, as the precipitous hill of Gombang loomed before them. "If dey run into de yoongle nodt a man vill escape. Dey hafe to beat us, or surrender."

So soon as the Datus reached the hill where they intended to bar the way, every man was set to work cutting bamboos for stockades. In an incredibly short time the precipitous path over the mountain was blocked. The stockades extended into the jungle on either side of the road. Hertz, however, noticed another path, almost impassable, leading over the steepest part of the mountain. He called the Bandahar's attention to it, suggesting that it also should be stockaded. But this would have occupied several hours.

"There is not time," the Malay replied. "The Orang Kina are here."

A moment afterwards the vanguard of the Chinese came in sight, followed closely by the women and children. A yell of derision greeted them, drawing their attention to the stockade in front. They halted in consternation, tumultuously shouting.

From the high ground a good view could be obtained. The Dyaks in the rear of the enemy, ignorant of the Tuan Mudah's shrewd operation, thinking doubtless that their prey was about to escape, attacked with renewed vigour. The youths saw a swarm of naked warriors issue from the jungle and hurl themselves at the rebels, who boldly faced them and drove them back with a murderous fire; but not before some of the Dyaks had broken their ranks. A number of men in the centre of the crowd of Chinese gathered round something resembling a treasure chest, as if to protect it during the attack.

"What have they got there?" Jack asked of Hertz, who had his field-glass to his eyes.

"Ach! I was looking—I gan't make idt oudt. Ja! I know. Idt must be de Sacred Bushel."
Whatever's that, sir?"

"De palladium of de T'ien-ti lodge. Idt gontains de—what you gall—de regalia, und a lodt of dings." *

As the Sea Dyaks fell back sullenly, to gather for a fresh assault, the rebels crowded round a man who pointed to the stockade.

So near were they that their features could almost be seen with the naked eye. Hertz, through his field-glass, saw the baffled rage, the desperate hate and fear, as, all shouting and talking at once, crushing, swaying hither and thither in mad excitement, they turned their faces towards the impediment—a host of blue-breeched, brawny figures, naked to the waist, very many of them stained with blood.

The tumult suddenly ceased. Men fell back, others advanced. They formed up in ranks the width of the road, with the women and children in the middle.

"Ach! de shkellums are going to attack us," muttered

* The "Sacred Bushel" is, as Hertz said, the palladium of a T'ien-ti lodge. It is placed with solemn ceremony upon the altar before the Master, and his act in opening it is the formal opening of the lodge. It contains a great variety of things, trivial to our notions, but every one symbolic—in fact, we perceive how abstruse and complicated are the philosophic principles underlying the T'ien-ti Hué when we regard the contents of the Sacred Bushel, remembering that each article has its significance. They are—a piece of cloth of the five colours; silk thread; incense; dried vegetables in common use; fruit ditto; red wood; a metal mirror; a steelyard; a foot-measure; a quantity of "cash"—money; an "abacus"—calculating machine; pieces of cedar; a pencil; ink; the state canopy of yellow silk which shelters the bushel on great occasions; dried articles of food; the sacred "Hung lamp"; specimens of every weapon; the Golden Orchid; a great number of small banners with inscriptions, for use in the lodge ceremonies; the authorised copy of the Book of Ritual. It is hardly necessary to say, that the members or even officers of the Hué, outside China, who understand the meaning of these things, are so rare that not one could be found probably to interpret them. And investigations cannot be prosecuted in China.
Hertz. "Dey nodt know when dey are cornered. Yack, Harry, mind where you shoot. Don't hit de women und children, but don't shpare de men. Dey are two to von, und dey mean fighting. Wo-Sing, keep close to me. Gan you see Li-dah amongst dem?"

"No, sir," said the China "boy."

"Take de glass. Look ouldt for her. Ach! what mad shkellums, what mad shkellums!"

As if by preconcerted signal every rebel shouted and brandished his weapon. Then on they came at a run, with open mouths, hoarsely roaring. The Malays took aim. The Kennowits levelled their deadly *sumpitans*. Seribas and Sakarrans answered the fierce shouts of the Chinese with their war-cries as they impatiently awaited the onset.

Suddenly the rebel leaders left the road, disappearing in a jungle path two hundred yards below the stockade. The threatened attack was a ruse.

"Dey eshcape, dey eshcape!" Hertz roared. "Dat pat' goes ofer de mountain!"

It was the precipitous path of which he had warned the *Bandahar*.

A howl of rage rose from the stockade. Malays and Dyaks dashed out headlong, scrambling along the steep mountain side to intercept the *Orang Kina*, many of whom still crowded the main road.

"Let de shkellums go!" cried the Collector. "Dey von't surrender, und what ish de use of killing dem? Dey only vant to eshcape. Let dem go, Yack!"

"I see Li-dah, sir!" Wo-Sing suddenly cried. "She's there—in the road! Li-dah! Li-dah!" he shouted, "come this way! She doesn't hear—she's going with the others—she's gone!" Wo-Sing wrung his hands in an agony of apprehension as Hertz snatched the field-glass from him. "She'll be killed! All will be killed!" he sobbed.
“I’m nodt so sure of dat,” muttered the Collector. “Budt gome along, ve’ll save her if ve gan.”

They were the last to leave the stockade. Boy had gone with the first. Scrambling up cliffs, climbing, clinging to shrubs, they hurried on as fast as they dared, guided by the tumult ahead, until they reached a plateau near the crest of the mountain.

Here a fierce struggle raged. The Dyaks and Malays held the path, and, though not half so numerous, were slowly forcing back the rebels. Hertz led his followers to a rock with a flat top. On this they lay. There was no need for them to fight now.

Down below the combatants swayed to and fro in desperate conflict. Brawny Chinamen ran *amok*, swinging clubbed muskets round their heads. The rebel fusillade never ceased. But the fierce Seribas, led by “The Dandy,” fought like madmen. The Kennowits showered *sumpit* arrows. A hail of bullets poured from the Malays’ muskets. Standing on higher ground, they could fire into the rear ranks of the Chinese, over the heads of those who engaged the front ranks hand to hand. Every now and again the Seribas and Sakarrans rushed forward with fierce screams, gaining a yard or two.

Slowly and stubbornly the rebels fell back from the death before them to death as certain behind, for the Sea Dyaks were already in the jungle path, climbing swiftly upwards.

The rushes of the men of Seribas and Sakarran were always made in the direction of the Sacred Bushel, round which the bravest among the Chinese rallied. Terrible was the carnage about it.

“Si Loyo dinks idt’s a box of gold,” Hertz muttered. “I dink he vill lose his life for dat bushel of odds und ends.”

Suddenly, high above the din, shrill arose the *Tumang-
gong’s whistle. Swiftly the defenders of the path ran together to hurl themselves in a body upon the rebels, among whom the old pirate had noticed the hesitation that precedes panic.

"Idt’s grand, idt’s grand," murmured the Collector, "but idt’s awful!"

At the critical moment—just as the Chinese wavered—as the Malays and Dyaks were crouching for the final rush, the youths saw all the maidens push steadily but swiftly through the surging mob of Chinamen. They sang a shrill chorus as they struggled to the front, clapping their hands in unison.

"What’s dis?" Hertz muttered to himself. "Can idt be? Himmel! idt ish! Ach! de brave young maids! You see what dey’re doing, Yack? Dey show de men de vay! Ve read of dis in old stories—now ve see dey’re true."

In a few moments the girls had pushed through, forming a mass compact, two or three hundred strong, between the crowd of Chinamen and their foes. Steadily still they advanced up the path, two by two, singing and clapping their hands in time. But the foremost, the captain, marched alone. Though her dress was in ribands and the long black hair, matted with dirt and perspiration, almost hid her face, Wo-Sing recognised her.

"Li-dah! Li-dah!" he screamed. "Come to us! Here is safety!"

She did not look at him, if she heard. The little phalanx pushed on. Even the Dyaks stood irresolute, struck with superstition. The Malays muttered in unwilling admiration. All sounds of battle stilled so far that the shrill chorus and rhythmic beat of hands alone were heard.*

* The thrilling scene when the Chinese girls pushed to the front, singing and clapping their hands, is no fiction. But for those brave girls it is doubtful if any of the rebels would have escaped.
But the Dyaks, at least, would not hesitate to kill women. A Malay fired his piece.

"Cease firing! Cease!" roared the Collector, rising to his feet. "Idt's like a scene from a Norse Saga! Dose brave girls must be saved! Ach! sooch a grand ding vas nefer—nefer—in dese days!"

He sprang from the rock to the ground, followed by the youths, Bounce, and Wo-Sing, shouting loudly:

"Clear de pat'! Let de girls go! Let dem go!"

Then he shouted in Malay, towering over the astonished warriors, waving them back, his face aglow with admiration of the deed he witnessed, his blue eyes flashing. One on either side the youths stood, as excited as their leader. To right and left Malays and Dyaks opened out, leaving the Orang putih in the path of the maidens.

What might have happened had the Chinamen behaved with sense is very doubtful. But they, roused by the devotion of their daughters and sweethearts, burst forward, shouting and brandishing their arms, when the moment of surprise had passed, broke through the maidens' ranks, and charged.

Malays and Dyaks sprang to meet them. The fray broke out afresh, all the fiercer for the breathing space. A whirl of weapons—swords and spears and clubbed muskets and parangs—a hurtling, reeling mass of men—shouts, war-cries, and death-screams. Terrible but brief was the struggle. Numbers prevailed. The rebels surged through the first ranks of the Malays and Dyaks, carrying the Sacred Bushel with them. Down went the fierce Tumanggong! Down went the great warrior, Si Loyo! But the Bandahar was behind, with Hertz and the youths.

On came the enemy, a hoarse roaring mob, bearing many of the maidens with them, Li-dah still among the foremost.
Wo-Sing sprang forward as she passed to drag her from the crowd. He fell, pierced by a Malay bullet, pulling the girl to the ground with him. In an instant Jack strode over them, his clubbed rifle uplifted, yelling, with Hertz, Harry, and Bounce close behind him.

They were powerless to check that desperate rush. Jack was the first to fall; Bounce fell across him. One after another they went down and lay beneath the trampling feet of the victorious Orang Kina.

Four times as numerous as those who now barred the way, fighting with desperate courage, the rebels cleared the path of their foes, and carried the hill, escaping over the border into Sambas. More than two thousand Chinamen charged up the Gombang mountain. Not a thousand crossed it.

The Tuan Mudah’s Sea Dyaks, however, were close behind. Those wild warriors knew little of frontiers, and cared less. Two days’ journey they followed the rebels through the Dutch territory, killing—killing until they were weary. Only then was the order to return obeyed.

The miserable survivors of five thousand Chinamen sat down amongst the houses of the village of Sidin, and wept bitterly, lamenting their madness. Of the six hundred members of the Kunsi who commenced the rebellion only a hundred remained. These were the men who had so carefully guarded the Sacred Bushel.

At Sidin the discontent of the agriculturists and others who had been forced to join the rebels burst forth in angry recriminations. Blows succeeded words, and forty more of the Kunsi fell, killed by the peaceful folk they had betrayed. Continuing their disorderly retreat, they were met by the officers of the Dutch Government, who stripped them of their arms and plunder—indeed, of everything.

So ended the insurrection.
When the Dyaks had swept by, eager and clamorous as a pack of wolves, Hertz slowly raised himself amongst the wounded and killed lying thick around.

He saw Jack's chest heave in an attempt to rise, but Bounce lay across him. Harry lay still. Li-dah was sobbing, bowed over Wo-Sing, who still grasped her arm firmly.

Malays and Dyaks forced from the path by the rush of fight came crashing through the brushwood with burning, savage faces, and hurried to overtake the pursuers. None of them heeded the fallen.

"Ach! de shkellums, de shkellums!" the Collector muttered, passing his hands over his eyes and head. "Ach! a loomp so big ash a hen's egg. Vhat a blow de fellow gave me!"

"Is that you, Mr. Hertz?" Jack gasped faintly, too weak to throw off the weight that held him down.

The Collector rose painfully. "You are hurt, too, Yack?" he said, approaching. "Vhy, Bounce! Vhat sheer, man?—shpeak!" There was no reply. He raised the sailor tenderly and sorrowfully. A groan burst from the poor fellow's lips. "He ish nodt dead!" He laid the sailor down, and helped Jack to sit up. Blood trickled from the youth's hair, down his face.
“Do you see Harry, Mr. Hertz?” he murmured. “Oh, look for him!”

The Collector glanced around, and saw the motionless form. He knelt beside it. Jack struggled to his feet, and approached, staggering. “Oh! he’s killed!” he moaned.

Hertz tore open the youth’s shirt. “Nein, nein! He lives, t’ank Gott! My brandy! Wo-Sing has idt. Where ish he?”

“Here, sir,” said a low voice, with a half sob. “Ach! Li-dah! Ish Wo-Sing dead?”

“No, sir; but he bleeds—I fear he will bleed to death.”

“Shtop idt if you gan. I vill see to him soon.” He took the flask from the China “boy’s” knapsack, and poured a few drops of the spirit between Harry’s lips. The youth opened his eyes, staring vaguely, without recognition.

“I’m afraid he’s hurt much worse than I!” murmured Jack; “will he die?”

“I don’t dink so. He’s got a cut on de head, und he’s dazed. What’s de matter mit you?”

“My left arm’s useless, and my head’s hurt. Never mind me.”

But Hertz examined him, passing a hand down the damaged arm. “Ach!—broken!—dat’s bad! Ash for de broken head, you’ll soon get ofer dat. Sit down und be patient. Dink yourself lucky most of dose fellows fought mit clubbed muskets und nodt bayonets. A bruise or a break gan shenerally be mended; bullets und bayonets go deep.”

He examined Harry, finding several severe contusions besides the cut on the head. The youth regained consciousness slowly.

“He vill soon be besser,” the Collector remarked, and turned to Bounce, who had opened his eyes. Whilst he bent over him, Boy came up, furious, with a bloody
parang in his hand. He, also, had been knocked over, but early in the struggle.

"Nyait dead, Tuans!" he cried. "Si Buntak same."

"Dat's bad! Poor fellows! Budt dey're past help."

"Orang Kina all die!"

"When deir time gomes. See to Wo-Sing. Shtop de bleeding, if you gan." Hertz forced the mouth of the flask between the sailor's teeth. The poor fellow moved his head.

"I'm done for!" he gasped.

"Don't say dat—drink!" But Hertz saw a discoloured froth about his lips, and feared the worst. "Where are you hurt?" he asked.

"Shot slap th—through the lungs," was the faint answer. "Don't bother—it's no good. I've seen—more than one——" A pause. Then, "I'd like to know about the young gen'le——" A fit of coughing stopped his utterance. Hertz knew now that the poor fellow had correctly described his hurt.

"Dey are bot' wounded, budt nodt dangerously," he answered.

"That's a—good job."

Jack rose, though every movement caused him intense pain, and approached the old sailor, whose eyes brightened.

"He's dying," Hertz whispered.

Bounce heard. "I reck'n I am," he murmured.

"You'll tell—'em at Draythorpe—Master Jack?"

"Yes, Bounce."

"You'll see as—the old woman—has my money?"

"Yes."

"That's all—I reck'——" The exertion of speaking brought on another fit of coughing. "I told—Mr. Rider—I'd take you—blue awkard—I can't——"

"Nefer mind dat, my poor fellow," Hertz interrupted.

"Don't dink of worltdly dings now."
"Let me say—my say. I've thought—sometimes—as you didn't—believe about the awkward. I did see it—on the word of a—dying man."

"Yes—yes. We know you saw it."

"Then that's—all right." Another pause. "Theer's that pirate yarn—I never told you—aboard the *Mary Anne*. I can't now—but it's true."

"Bounce, my poor fellow," said Hertz, very, very gently, "don't dink of dose dings. Make your peace mit Gott."

"Ay, ay, skipper—I ain't afeard. I reck'n it'd be almost too late—now—to be prayin'—if I'd never prayed afore. Just put summat under me head."

Hertz took one of the bundles with which the ground was strewn—dropped by the flying Chinese—and put it under his head for a pillow; then gently pressed the dying man's hand, and turned sorrowfully away. Harry was sitting up, with his back against a rock; and the Collector approached Wo-Sing.

"Vell, Boy, vhat ish idt?"

"Bullet in shoulder, Tuan. Him get out, he well soon."

But something more than the bullet was troubling Wo-Sing. Perfectly conscious throughout the struggle, he had seen his friends fall one after another whilst striving to save Li-dah, who, until the last moment almost, had actually led those who had struck them down. The Collector appeared to divine his thoughts.

"Dey vere her people," he said. "She ish a brave girl, und every brave man respects her."

Wo-Sing smiled. Hertz had lifted a heavy weight from his mind. Li-dah burst into tears. Hertz turned away. He could do nothing for Wo-Sing; he could not extract the bullet. He set Jack's arm, with difficulty, in the absence of appliances. Meanwhile Boy brought water and bathed the youths' heads. The Collector,
approaching Bounce as soon as he was at liberty, found that the sailor had passed away.

"Our poor comrade ish gone," he said. "He has reached his last port. He was a goodt man, Yack. Poor old Bounce!"

"Poor fellow!" the youths murmured together.

The Dyaks began to straggle back, each with a bleeding head, or more, slung to his waist-belt; those who had not yet secured a trophy would not return whilst a Chinaman survived, for the most peremptory orders. Among them came "The Dandy," too severely wounded to continue the pursuit. The Tumanggong, who had been overthrown with Si Loyo, was also alive and likely to recover.

Boy and his surviving men constructed rude stretchers of bamboo, one for poor Bounce, and all the wounded set out for Bau. It was a sad march. The youths walked part of the way, but, feeling faint, were borne on stretchers. In this manner most of the wounded reached the Chinese town, including Wo-Sing, by whose side walked Li-dah, pale, dishevelled, and with eyes cast down. At Bau they found the boats, and at once embarked for Kuching, where the youths arrived late at night, worn out and very ill. Symptoms of fever had already manifested themselves. Nevertheless, they insisted on going to the churchyard the next morning to see the last of their old comrade. Poor Bounce! His grumbling was forgotten now. Only his gallant deeds were remembered.

The youths returned to the Mission-house much worse. The fever was not a surprise to Hertz. He had feared the effect of that awful night in the phosphoric forest more than their hurts. Doubtless the disease was aggravated by the latter, but its symptoms were those of the ordinary jungle fever—intense headache, pains in the joints, and a disinclination or inability to move. Hertz was very anxious about them, for the fever is sometimes
fatal to persons not acclimatised. Fortunately, however, the Bishop's stock of quinine had escaped the general destruction, and the stores of the Sir James Brooke could be drawn upon to alleviate the suffering of the scores of poor fellows in the temporary hospital. Many wounded lay in the Mission-house, not Malays and Dyaks only, but Chinamen—rebels. Here Wo-Sing had the bullet extracted from his shoulder. All were under the care of the Bishop of Labuan, who was skilled in medical and surgical science.

Hertz seldom left the youths until all danger was over. Boy and his Malays ransacked the jungle for fruit, trapped game, and caught fish, which they brought to the Mission-house for the young Tuans. The Rajah and his officers also were most attentive. Even the wounded Si Loyo called to bid them "good-bye" before returning to his "house" at Sepuk. Few hours passed without some friend looking in.

One day Harry said to Mr. Merriman, who was sitting beside him: "The morning we came you mentioned the loss of your arm. You said you cut it off yourself. I've thought about that a good deal."

"Have you?" Mr. Merriman rejoined, and passed the matter by.

But Harry persisted. "I don't know if I ought to ask you to tell me how it happened?"

Mr. Merriman smiled. "It was a simple thing. I had to choose between losing my arm and losing my life."

Harry sat up, showing deeper interest. Mr. Merriman smiled again and resumed:

"I had a fight with some Malay rebels. They burnt the fort I was in charge of, and wounded me in the arm. I was in the jungle, with only a few natives, hurrying towards Kuching. I found my arm mortifying, so I sharpened a parang and cut it off."

That was all! Mr. Merriman had nothing more to say
about the matter, and he did not seem to understand that anything more could be said.

Jack bore his confinement very impatiently. He was continually talking about the "blue" orchid, and planning another visit to the beautiful vale of Bidi. Hertz said very little until the youths were convalescent, as he did not wish disappointment to retard their recovery. But when the fever had passed, and the wounds were healed, he spoke:

"I am going to Sirambau for de orchids to-morrow," he said.

"I am jolly glad to hear that," cried Jack, joyously.

"I'm tired of doing nothing, and I think I'm fit."

"But I'm going mitout you."

"Without me!"

"Mitout bot' of you."

"Oh, I say!"

"Listen, und be patient. I gife oop de searsh for de 'blue' orchid dis time, mostly on your agcount. Idt would be madness for you to go into de yoongle again. Having caught de fever, idt would be absolutely certain to return. You are veak, und you would probably die, bot' of you. Den de gountry ish in a terrible shstate. Shinamen, shtarving und desperate, may be hiding in dose fery caves adt Bidi. De Dyaks are egsited—moosh too egsited to seek orchids, or anydings else, egsept heads. I have shpoken to dose who know, und dey say six mont's must pass before ve gan safely go about. Budt ve gan't vait six mont's. Dink you of de angsiety adt home. De news of dis fighting vill soon be dere. So I hafe decided to take Boy und some oder Malays, und gollect de orchids ve left in dat liddle garden when ve vent by batangs, und fetch de plants from Sirambau here. Misder Rider von't be disappointed; don't dink idt. Soosh a grand lot of ploonder has nefer been gollected before. Vhy, I shall vant all Meta's men to carry idt down to de
boats adt Siniawan. Idt vill take days to make *tamboks* und bamboo cases to pack idt in."

"What will you do when you get it here?" Jack muttered. Both Harry and he were bitterly disappointed, but they felt the force of the Collector's remarks.

"De *Sir Yames Brooke* sails for Singapore fery soon; ve go mit her. Dere ve get on board a P. and O. boat und go home. Some oder time, Yack, ve gone again; ve go again to Bidi, und ve find dat 'blue' orchid. No reasonable man gould doubt dat idt's dere."

On the morrow Hertz and Boy left the capital, going at once to the tiny glade. There they collected the beautiful *Phal. grandiflora*, the *Caelogene pandurata*, with its flowers like green frogs, the *Grammatophyllums*, and the *Dendrobium macrophyllum*, still fragrant with lovely flowers of purple and magenta and lilac. Searching the jungle carefully they found other grand plants, all "ploonder." These were taken to Siniawan, where the boats remained whilst the Collector and Boy went on to Sirambau.

They found the mountain path more difficult than ever. Most of the notched poles were gone. Numerous were the signs of the struggle that for three days had raged here between the men of Sirambau and the rebels. Other signs there were that the Dyak collectors had visited this side of the mountain previous to the insurrection. The plants which Hertz had seen during his first climb were mostly at Sirambau.

As he expected, he found his old friends in a very excited state. The *Orang Kaya* was sorrowful as well as excited. The loss of his son, of whom he was justly proud, was a severe blow. But Nyait's was not the only face the Collector missed. Only two of the five men who had started from Kuching with the Orchid Seekers now lived to assist in packing. But through all the trouble
and the tumult not a thing left in Meta's charge had been touched. The cases and bales of goods were intact.

Hertz condoled with Meta and other elders whose sons had been slain. The answer of all was similar:

"Yes, Tuan, it is a grievous thing to lose the children we love, but the Rajah lives and is unhurt. Were he in danger to-morrow we would gladly give our remaining sons. His welfare is our solace."

Scores of Dyaks were employed in cutting bamboos and rattans, and making them into tamboks and cases for the "ploonder." The huge Grammatophyllum had to be cut in pieces. When all was ready Hertz remembered that he had not seen one plant, in his opinion the most rare of all—the lovely old-gold Bulbophyllum, which the youths had found during his absence from Bidi. He had every case and tambok unpacked, but did not find it. He questioned the Dyaks, sought in the brushwood near the stage, among the trees, looked in every place he could think of, without success. He was very much put out. He even, for a moment, thought of sending Dyaks to search the path to Bidi. Some Dyak, he fancied, had put down the tambok containing it in the jungle, and forgotten to take it up again. The Dyaks, marching home with their heads full of the "Head Feast" in prospect, were excited and forgetful. But when he came to reflect, he saw the absurdity of sending men, even more excited than they were at that time, to seek for a tambok of plants over such an extent of jungle. They would remember the road taken exactly, doubtless, but they would almost assuredly return without the missing plant; though, if they hit on the trail of a fugitive Chinaman, they might bring back his head to increase the already too numerous trophies. In the end the Collector was forced to abandon the idea of taking that prize to England.*

* In 1889 a Bulbophyllum exactly answering to the description of the one lost by Hertz was discovered in Borneo by a collector in the
Nothing now remained to be done, except to reward Meta and his tribe for their great services and their hospitality. The cases in the Orang Kaya's "house" were unpacked, and their contents distributed, except certain presents reserved for Boy, Wo-Sing, Paham, and other Malays. Great was the excitement over the scarlet cloth, the brass wire, and the looking glasses and beads, but the toys and other trifles were perhaps in greatest demand. Everybody was satisfied. Hertz sincerely regretted that Nyait was not there to take the lion's share that would have been his. He, however, put aside every article that he had intended to give to Nyait. When all else had been distributed he took Meta to the great heap, with Boy to interpret.

"These should have been your son's," he said. "I cannot give them to him. I give them to you. Nyait was a great warrior, brave and honest. I regret his death. Take these things as evidence of my sorrow and sympathy."

The old Orang Kaya burst into tears.

"The Tuan Besar has a good heart," he said, when calmer. "He never forgets his friends. He has put aside all the best of his treasures for the dead—to comfort an old man, who will never again hold his son's hand in his. They will not bring Nyait back; but I will take them, and when I look upon them I will remember that the Tuan Besar loved the Dyak who died for the Rajah. Nyait will look upon them, too, and be glad."

Hertz wrung the old man's hand, and turned aside, leaving him weeping over the treasures that would have delighted the simple heart of the brave fellow who had passed away.

Almost all the men of the tribe, and many girls and employ of Mr. Sander of St. Albans, and sent safely home. Mr Sander named it Bulbophyllum Godseffianum, after Mr. Godseff, his manager.
women, even children, accompanied the Collector to Siniawan. Many were the messages for the young Tuans given on the way. When the orchids had been placed in the boats, Hertz shook hands all round, bade them "good-bye," and sprang on board with Boy. Soon he was out of sight. But the Dyaks stood on the bank until a bend of the river hid the Tuan Besar from them.

Meanwhile everybody at Kuching able to get about was busy. The Rajah had not been well for some time previous to the insurrection, but the demands upon him restored his energy and vigour. There were no useless regrets over losses. Every European and Malay and Kling; even the loyal Chinese, set to work with a will to put things as they were before the mad outbreak of the Kunsi.

One great pleasure the youths had during Hertz's absence. With the Rajah and most of the English they attended at the pretty little church, where the Bishop made Wo-Sing and Li-dah man and wife.

When Hertz reached the capital with his "ploonder" the steamer was almost ready to start. The orchids were got on board as quickly as possible, and nothing remained but to reward Boy and his Malays, and take leave of old friends.

The moment of departure arrived. The Rajah himself, with his officers, boarded the steamer.

"Good-bye," he said, when the time came to get into his boat and return. "I am sorry that your visit was disturbed by these unhappy events. I hope you carry away pleasant memories of Sarawak all the same. There are gentlemen in England," he added, smiling, "in the House of Commons, at least, who represent me as a tyrant. If you had that impression, it is corrected, I hope?"

"Indeed it would be, Rajah," they exclaimed, "if we had believed it."
"Well then, gentlemen, our esteem is mutual. If we meet again, it will be in England, I hope. But you may be returning, Mr. Hertz, and I shall be very pleased to see you. Good-bye, and God bless you all!"

The last word of farewell was uttered by Boy, who, with Wo-Sing, accompanied them to the mouth of the river. He stood up in his boat and shouted:

"Baniak su-sa hati saya Tuan andak pulang ka-pada negri Tuan! Dan saya minta selamat ber layer di atas Tuan! Jangan la Tuan lupa amba Tuan!"

["My heart is grieved that my lord is about to return to his own country. I pray for his prosperous voyage! I beg my lord not to forget his servant!"]

The voyage certainly was prosperous and uneventful. At Southampton they were met by Mr. and Mrs. Rider. That was a joyful meeting! Mrs. Rider scarcely knew her sons, so bronzed were they. Of course they had to find their orchids and fight their battles over again.

Hertz was right. Mr. Rider went into raptures over the bare description of the treasures in the cases.

"As for the 'blue' orchid," he said, "well, better luck next time! We'll try again, Mr. Hertz; we'll try again."

"Ja! ve vill, sir! Idt's dere! Und idt's a heafenly ding, dat I know!" the Collector rejoined.

But he had to go elsewhere almost immediately—and the boys also.

Five years afterwards they heard that the "blue" orchid was found by Mr. Bentley, manager of the antimony mines opened in that beautiful valley of Bidi which our adventurers had explored so hopefully, without success. Mr. Bentley told the tale in the same lovely vale to Mr. Frederick Boyle.

Malay servants have a pleasing habit—not learned
from their masters—of setting basins full of fresh flowers about a room every day. Not infrequently new species have been discovered in this manner, for those people, so indolent as a rule, will give themselves trouble to find and gather flowers that please their eye. When Mr. Bentley rose one morning, the basin already stood upon his dressing table as usual, but instead of a variety of blooms it was filled with one species—long sprays of a bright blue orchid! Mr. Templar, Managing Director of the Borneo Company, had asked him to send home any striking plants which the natives declared uncommon; this gentleman’s collection was one of the best in Europe at the time. No orchid so striking had Mr. Bentley ever seen; and the Malay “boy,” observing his interest, volunteered the statement that neither he nor any of his comrades recognised the flower. It grew upon a tapong tree within a few yards of the bungalow; Mr. Bentley must have passed beneath it a thousand times, but that morning only had its buds unfolded. Though sprays enough had been gathered to deck the tables, and to adorn the head of every servant, a great mass remained. The plant was duly sent to Mr. Templar, who returned a cheque for 100L. But when his collection was sold the “Blue Orchid” of Borneo had vanished, and it has never been heard of since.

Of the facts thus stated there is no question. But Sarawak, the Dutch territories, and the concession of the North Borneo Company have been explored in every part since those days by skilled collectors. At the present time there are few tribes of Dyaks within that enormous area who do not understand, more or less, that an unfamiliar plant of striking appearance is worth notice. They mark it down, so to speak, and tell the nearest Resident presently. Malays, as has been said, require no inducement. But from 1862 to this day, not even the rumour of a blue orchid in Borneo has come to hand.
It must be one of the rarest plants existing, or that specimen which Bounce saw and Bentley secured was an emigrant from other climes—assuredly they were one and the same. The latter supposition commends itself, upon the whole, to persons of experience. There are but two blue orchids known which could in any way answer the description—Vanda caerulea, and V. caerule-scens. The one is a native of Burmah, two thousand miles away; the other of the Khasya Hills, more distant still. But their seed is so fine and so light that it might be transported, by a succession of favourable winds, all round the world. Thus, probably, a grain was carried to Bidi.

We have many illustrations to the point—one from that very same neighbourhood. Sir Hugh Low found a plant of Calanthe vestita upon a tree in the valley of Bidi. That species also is unknown to Borneo. Its nearest habitat is Tavoy in Java.

THE END.