Elephant & Seladang Hunting
in the
Federated Malay States

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CONTENTS

PART I
THE GAME OF THE COUNTRY

CHAPTER I
A narrow Escape from an Elephant

CHAPTER II
The Malay as a Sportsman

CHAPTER III
The Seladang and Elephant of the Federated Malay States

PART II
A two months' shooting trip in the Negri Sembilan and Pahang

CHAPTER I
From Singapore to Pertang, in the Negri Sembilan
x  Elephant and Seladang Hunting

**CHAPTER II**

**From Pertang to Plangai, on the Pahang Border** .......................... 98

**CHAPTER III**

**From Plangai to Pasir Kondang** ............................................. 133

**CHAPTER IV**

**At Pasir Kondang—I wound a Big Tusker** ................................. 157

**CHAPTER V**

**From Patah Gading to Chememoy—Still following the wounded Tusker** ............................. 180

**CHAPTER VI**

**I return to Pasir Kondang with two Pairs of Tusks instead of one** ................................. 205

**CHAPTER VII**

**To Kryong—I again increase my Bag, although not to the extent I should have done—**
**I reach the Pahang River** ....................................................... 224

**CHAPTER VIII**

**From Kuala Triang to Kampong Sereting** ................................. 252
Contents

CHAPTER IX
A good Finish—Back to Singapore en route for England and Home .......................... 268

CHAPTER X
Camps, Transport, etc. ........................................ 281
PART I

THE GAME OF THE COUNTRY
CHAPTER I

A NARROW ESCAPE, FROM AN ELEPHANT

Although it is by no means uncommon to hear persons ignorant of big-game hunting deprecate the shooting of elephants, asserting that one of these animals is a mark which nobody can possibly miss, and that the beast itself is so slow and ponderous that it cannot afford much sport to the hunter, the acquaintance of such persons with elephants has generally commenced and ended at the "Zoo," and they can accordingly scarcely be blamed for their mistaken estimation of the nature of the sport furnished by these huge animals. In confirmation of what I assert, let us take, for instance, some of the opinions of two such great hunters as Sir Samuel Baker and Mr. Sanderson, who state, in their writings, that an elephant is the most dangerous and formidable game sportsmen can be asked to encounter—provided, that is to say, the pursuit is followed
Elephant and Seladang Hunting

up to its full extent. An elephant may be encountered and killed by a single shot in the brain and cause the hunter no trouble at all, or he may be met and wounded, and, if followed up to the bitter end, may cause the pursuer more trouble in a few minutes than many a man goes through in ten years.

Although not wishing to state that such has actually been my lot, I think that the following instance of how a rogue elephant nearly did for me, had it happened to one of the deprecators, would have been quite enough to dispel his illusions as to the tameness of elephant hunting.

During the first half of the year 1898 I was living in a small town called Klang, in the State of Selangor, from which my work took me up and down the coast, and at many of the villages visited I frequently heard news of elephants, which in those districts were fairly plentiful, and caused much damage to the native crops. I thereby soon acquired a taste for elephant shooting, and, as so often happens, was at first exceptionally successful.

When going my rounds I had often been told of a large herd of elephants which frequented an island in the Kuala Langat district. How
A Narrow Escape from an Elephant

plained, since the latter was constructed by cutting a canal through a small isthmus dividing the Langat River from an arm of the sea some fifteen miles from its mouth, a canal which afterwards became the main outlet of the river. This island consists principally of swamp, in which grow quantities of coarse grass and succulent rattans, food of which elephants are particularly fond. It is, however, a terrible place in which to hunt, since the greater part is almost impenetrable, except where the elephants have cleared wide paths through the long, coarse grass. The herd in those days must have numbered over thirty animals, amongst which were two or three big tuskers. At the east end was a smaller island, divided from the main one by a short canal constructed where two bends of the Langat River come within a quarter of a mile of each other, and on this a solitary elephant generally resided, and, according to the Malays in the district, was frequently to be seen on the banks of the river. This elephant was reported to have attacked a boat on one occasion, crashing down the river-bank with that short, impetuous rush peculiar to elephants; but the occupants, who were paddling up stream close alongside the bank, in order to avail them-
Elephant and Seladang Hunting

selves of the little tide, that happened to be just on the turn, quickly put their craft beyond the reach of the enraged beast by a few strokes of their paddles. I was particularly anxious to go after this old elephant, and had arranged with the Malays, who lived at a village called Telok Penglima Garang, on the Langat River, to let me know, at any time, when he was about. Towards the end of May, when visiting this village, I heard tidings of a couple of elephants which had done considerable damage at a kampong\(^1\) on the Langat River, called Telok Prian; and as I heard no news of the rogue on the island, and it was necessary that I should go in the direction of Telok Prian, I decided to spend a day in search of the pair. Accordingly, I followed up these elephants, both of which were, I believe, tuskers, the whole of one Saturday; but although I approached close to them several times, I was unable to get the opportunity of a shot. Returning to Telok Penglima Garang late on Saturday night, very tired, after a long walk of over twenty-five miles with no result, I found a Malay waiting at the Rest House, where I was stopping, who told me that he had been on the island that morning and had seen tracks

\(^1\) A kampong is the Malay word for a small village.