SIX YEARS IN THE MALAY JUNGLE

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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ONE morning in May, after getting out of bed on the wrong side and making the baby cry, I determined to quit my job of Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering and look for something dangerous. With that in view I went up to London to present myself at the office of the Crown Agents for the Colonies and suggest that they needed a railroad engineer with American experience. Thinking that perhaps a little "pull" might be of assistance, I called upon Lord Halsbury, England's Lord Chancellor, at 9 o'clock one morning.

As I was ushered into the dining room I felt a strange sinking sensation when I realized that the only connection there was between me and the Lord Chancellor of Great Britain was the fact that I used to buy apples from his brother's little greengrocery store in Torquay, Devonshire, when I was a boy at school. Just as I was about to sneak out of the room, Lord Halsbury entered—a short, thick-set little man with rosy cheeks, over eighty, but erect
and immaculately dressed. I had secured the introduction to the noble lord through my sister-in-law. He said:

"Well, young man, what can I do for you?"

Swallowing my Adam’s apple I said:

"I’m afraid you will think it awful cheek! But I wondered if you would recommend me to the Crown Agents for a job?"

He replied:

"Why, I’m very sorry, but I’m afraid I don’t know you."

I said:

"Oh! but I knew your brother in Torquay. You know I used to buy apples from him!"

Lord Halsbury’s manner immediately changed.

"I shall be delighted," he said, "to write to the Crown Agents and state the fact that you know my brother and that I know you to be a young man of remarkable initiative!"

I thanked him profusely and withdrew. A few days afterward I received instructions to call upon the Government’s consulting engineers in Westminster, Messrs. Gregory, Eyles & Waring. My interview with Mr. Waring I shall never forget. He was at that time a very old man but was still responsible for practically all the appointments made by the Crown Agents. A noted civil engineer, he loved to talk
about his jungle exploits, and instructed me in such matters as the art of walking across a slippery coconut log and a bamboo bridge, and as seasoning to his counsel added:

“`We send dozens of young fellows like you abroad, and the Governments are continually asking for more. You see, they don’t last long!”`

At the end of the interview he said, “You are appointed a surveyor, and will sail for the Malay Peninsula within two weeks. Take my advice, keep your head cool and your stomach warm. Good-day.”

And in two weeks from that date I was on my way to the jungle!

Those two weeks before sailing were spent in buying an outfit for life or death in the tropics. I spent nearly five hundred dollars in equipment that turned out to be absurdly useless except for the following articles, which were invaluable:

A waterproof canvas dunnage bag
A hair pillow with waterproof canvas cover
Mosquito boots and a fine mosquito net
A small airtight, watertight, tin trunk with a wooden bottom
A folding camp stool
A looking-glass in a wooden case
A medicine chest and medical book

The most useful medicines I carried were:

Quinine (the chloride, not the sulphate)
Aspirin
Chlorodyne
Eno's Fruit Salt
Sulphur ointment
Boracic lint
Permanganate of potash
Iodoform
Iodine

Zinc ointment
Vaseline
Adhesive tape
Castor oil
Toothache drops
Seidlitz powders
Plenty of bandages of lint

All of the so-called tropical clothes, underwear, cholera belts, the enormous pith helmet, and patent explorer's appliances too numerous to mention, were discarded when I reached Malay. They might have been useful for a gentleman explorer of unlimited means and nothing to do except play at exploring; but for the practical engineer and jungle surveyor such things were impediments. I bitterly regretted the expenditure of so much money uselessly when I needed it so badly, but I believe the same mistake is made over and over again by men going to the tropics for the first time. It is nearly always best to wait until you arrive and then get a man to advise you as to the local customs and requirements.

One of the last persons I met before I sailed was a famous naturalist, Professor Albert Günther. He was one of the members of the Challenger Expedition and had married my cousin. I always loved to visit his house in Kew where he spent his time surrounded by books, animals, and elderly survivors of the Challenger Expedition. He was probably greatest as an
authority on fishes but he was also a wonderful all-round naturalist. It was he who first told me of the wonders of the Malay Peninsula. He advised me to spend all my spare time studying the unusual plant and animal life of the marvellous country to which I was going, and as I left him he said, "Plant citronella grass around your house and it will keep away the mosquitoes."

I took his advice and planted that luxuriant grass not only around many government houses but also for several miles on both sides of the railway embankment.
CHAPTER II

IT WAS not until the whistle blew and the R. M. S. Simla of the Peninsula and Oriental Line had cast off that I realized what I had done, and as I watched my wife waving to me and gradually fading away in the distance, I experienced the feeling of being tragic. But I comforted myself by saying, "What, after all, is two years' separation?"—little dreaming that long before two years would have elapsed there would be a World War and that the German cruiser Emden would be chasing my wife across the Indian Ocean. At the time I sailed, Lord Roberts was imploring England to prepare for war with Germany, but he was laughed at.

I did not take much interest in anything until we has passed Gibraltar and arrived at that wonderful little place, Malta. Malta is an island of stone in the Mediterranean, inhabited by a race of people who still speak the language of the Phœnicians. As the steamer entered the harbour it was surrounded by quaint-looking Maltese boats which are unlike those in any other part of the world. The island is very much like a huge gray fortress in appearance, with
very little green apparent, set in a sea of brilliant blue. It was dreadfully hot when I landed and I was astonished to notice that the Maltese, both men and women, were dressed in black clothes. The women wear a strange headdress called a faldetta, or cloak of shame, to remind them of their dreadful sufferings at the hands of the early crusaders.

Nearly three years previously I had been in charge of a Maltese village at the White City, London's Coney Island, and there I had made friends with a Maltese girl called Virginia Camenzuli, an expert lace-maker. As soon as I landed in Malta, I visited the lace-making school on the Strada Mezzodi, and there, sitting at a table, just as I remembered her in London, was Virginia Camenzuli. Her astonishment at seeing me can be imagined. She left her work, and within an hour we had rounded up all the Maltese, both men and women, of whom I had had charge at the White City, and under their guidance I visited the principal sights on the island. Eventually I entered a strange little pony carriage and told the driver to take me to the steamer. I had no idea that Malta possessed several harbours, and when we arrived at the harbour there was no sign of my steamer. The driver suggested that I should try another harbour, and as I had only twenty minutes before the steamer was due to sail we started off at a gallop, driving
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madly through the crowded streets, scattering men and women and children and chickens in every direction, finally arriving at the correct harbour just as the steamer was heaving up her anchor. As I waved good-bye to my friends Virginia shouted, "Mind you go and see my brother. He is a policeman at Port Said."

Although the voyage through the Mediterranean was very calm and hot I saw no sign of the celebrated St. Elmo's Fire, and I was not at all sorry when the buildings of the Suez Canal Company Offices came into sight as we entered Port Said. Here the dazzling whiteness of everything made it difficult for me to open my eyes. In fact, all of us immediately purchased dark sun glasses.

I was very soon surrounded by a chattering group of guides who were eager to show me something wonderful. In every case what the guide had to show had to be whispered. I think that Port Said, if it is not now, certainly was the most immoral town I ever visited.

At that time both Cairo and Port Said were being drained for the first time in their history and there were immense piles of iron pipes, large enough to drive an automobile through, to be seen everywhere. Now the sewage from Cairo is pumped out on to the
desert, after purification, and is returned to Cairo in the form of fresh vegetables.

Going through the Suez Canal is a fascinating experience. It is so narrow that on one occasion when we were anchored to enable a steamer to pass us in the opposite direction we actually shook hands with the passengers on the other ship. Every now and then we saw an Arab caravan crossing the desert, and once, on the Arabian side of the desert, a magnificent mirage. When it was dark searchlights were lit at the top of the masts and the course of the Canal could be traced for several miles ahead.

At the other end of the Canal is the town of Suez which is situated at the most northern extremity of the Red Sea. As we sailed along the coast of the Sinai Peninsula every one was straining to get a glimpse of Mt. Sinai, but we were not rewarded. At the end of the Red Sea is the Strait of Babemandeb, and after passing through the Strait we anchored off the town of Aden at about seven o’clock in the evening. There was a strong breeze blowing, but the air was hot and full of fine sand. As soon as the boat anchored great lighters full of coal came alongside and the vessel was coaled by most frightful-looking specimens of humanity. Some were yellow and some were black and they all looked as if they