

The Jungle's Edge

By Dorothy M. Fish

A Memoir of Almost Three Decades of Life on A Rubber Plantation
in British Malaya during Colonial Period of 1914-1938

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FORWARD

by
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The Jungle's Edge consists of the recollections of a young married woman, Dorothy Marjorie Fish, set down some years later in her life. Dorothy was a British Citizen and acquainted with travel to the Mid and Far East, having resided in Ceylon for a period in the early 1910's before marrying Nick Fish.

The journal or recollections begin with Dorothy's move be with Nick in British Malaya where he, a young Engineer, was forging ahead in a career that saw him manage a rather large, and expanding, rubber plantation as well as overseeing the development of a processing facility. The journal shows the depth of the manager's involvement in the health and welfare of both the permanent and temporary workers and their families on the estate - and off it.

What struck me reading this account by my Grandmother of her life in British Malaya in the second to fourth decades of the twentieth century, was her assumption of superiority throughout her life in the Mid and Far East. She reveals herself to have a typical "Colonial" attitude in her primary role as wife to the Manager and domestic supervisor of the home and to a great extent of the people living on or serving on the plantation. Dorothy has no hesitation in asserting her own authority both as mistress of the estate and as a British Citizen living abroad amongst slightly lesser (read not white) beings.

In Dorothy's world servants are acquired or dismissed on the basis of cultural and racial stereotypes concerning how useful at particular chores different types of persons are. These biases, these filters, serve in her mind, as useful guides to establishing harmony in the household and obtaining the best and least obtrusive services to be had. The silver is polished. The food is prepared. The guests are properly arranged. Proof positive that her assumptions were well founded. Another reason to think of them as living and breathing servants who in addition to their duties, must be chided like children to prevent them from doing things that

might be more natural to their culture than to the kitchen and dining room of the cottage or estate house. A certain amount of education - and hopefully of breeding were desirable when picking a wife suitable for a plantation manager or other colonial officer. After all one can not let the end down when in the middle of so many ready to judge you and take the fruit of your labours.

Yet, in it all Dorothy is a young woman - and then a middle aged woman - in an exotic country at an exotic time in history. She arrives during the First World War and, despite a number of visits to England and to Canada, she does not leave until a few troubled years before the outbreak of World War II. Around her is something not to be found in England and even things Ceylon did not prepare her for. The Jungle. The many wild animals. The adventure of being there. The romance. Indeed I am struck by Dorothy's attitude towards the animals in her environment, it being at once both dismissive in its practicality and yet peculiarly idealized and reverential. Again, it is the edge of the jungle we are at in this memoir. The cosmopolitan rush of social niceties is confined to a small club, the power of the jungle is kept at bay by her husband the various men on the plantation, but still you do have to shake scorpions and other nasty critters out of your shoes or boots in the morning.

I can't pretend to comprehend what went on in the mind of my grandmother, but *The Jungle's Edge*, that place where civilization and safety interacts with the untamed and the dangerous, gives to me a picture of life, particularly in the 1920's as lived by a young and undoubted privileged wife and mother on a rubber plantation in British Malaya. That picture is richly supplemented by certain photographs that may grace future editions of this journal, and by my own memories of my Grandmother's apartment during the 1960's and 1970's in Victoria, BC. and by her very proper poise and tone.

For a number of years between 1962 and 1970 I visited my Grandmother annually with my Father and my Mother. While there I saw upon her walls tiger and leopard skins. Near the front door there was an elephant's foot umbrella and walking stick container (presumably part of the same elephant whose foot graced our front hall holding not umbrellas or walking sticks, but a giant Japanese glass buoy or float.)

Specially kept for our visits were small Chinese puzzles to play with. Knick-Knacks ranged from small mahogany and teak carvings and objects to cork carvings between glass and scattered among some very impressive works of art were odd framed photos of a ship taken in one of the many crossings of the Indian or Pacific Oceans mingled with people and places that impressed me with their "otherness".

Tea, and from time to time the smell of incense always graced our visits - as did a solid wood chest with a heavy flat lid inlay-ed with ivory and shell and carved in panels in the intricate style so common to Asian Cork carvings. Still another steamer trunk, one that had traveled the world since at least 1901 was stored at the foot of a bed. The trunk had been owned by a Mr. J. Pearson, an older gentlemen and family friend to Dorothy and Nick. Mr. Pearson frequently traveled in the East, and often he visited with or traveled with the Fish Family. His trunk had an amazing smell when it was opened. It reeked of mothballs even though none could be found inside the trunk. The smell arose naturally from inside the trunk since it was fully lined with camphor wood, the source of moth balls, so that no wool or cotton clothing need fear moths and other little creatures during the long trips by sea and by land. One hundred and ten years later that trunk still keeps some old linens in prime condition in my home in Cranbrook, British Columbia.

The Fish and the Fairchild Families are not particularly close to themselves or to each other.. My mother's marriage to John Winter Fairchild took them to the opposite end of the country from her parents, and even in the years when the family lived out west in Cold Lake Alberta and Edmonton not much happened. It is safe to say our family was not close until we ended up stationed in BC in 1962 and never left the province again - moving first to Dawson Creek in 1962, then to Kamloops in 1964 and finally to the Nanaimo Region in 1967 when my Father resigned his stripes in the Armed Forces and took up both selling automotive equipment for Simpsons Sears and obtaining his master-mariners unlimited coastal trade certificate, one endorsement shy of Master Mariner unlimited ocean trade.

Patricia Marjorie Fairchild, Dorothy's youngest daughter, separated from John Fairchild in 1968. Some time between 1968 and 1980 or so she

typed the text of *The Jungle's Edge* on a small Smith Corona electric typewriter. I well recall the hours my mother would spend typing things out at the kitchen table of her home in Nanaimo, a coffee and a pack of smokes by her side. During that period she also typed out her own memoirs, both of her years in British Malaya and her time in Canada up to the early 1970's. It is my hope to publish that portion of the those memoirs particular to her early years and her romantic attachment to and identification with both the animals and the people of Malaya. These attachments shaped her view of the relation between animals and human beings, almost invariably humans came up wanting in her judgments.

As I close this introduction, I would like to acknowledge the work of various people to bring this text to publication. To Lorraine Kelly Logan for discovering, copying and helping distribute both documents to my family members - Michael Winter Fairchild, oldest son to Patricia, Peter Temple Fairchild, the middle child, and myself, Richard John Fairchild, the youngest. To my brothers for their consent in allowing me to publish these family records. And last, and most, to my wife, Ann Lorraine Fairchild (nee Stirling) for her transcription of the physical text to digital format. It was hard to not correct grammar and harder at points to not edit lines that might have made more sense - or proven to be more appropriate - if expressed in modern and more politically correct ways. Ann helps me take a sober second though in many areas of my life - and then encourages me to step up and go for it if it passes that muster. Thank you my Love.

Objectives for Second Edition

- ❖ Photo graphs from Malaya
- ❖ Mom's Journal and her tiger art cat pictures
- ❖ Good Maps
- ❖ A chronology for trips from England to Malaya to Canada and back
- ❖ locations of family at these times.

Possible Reference to Nick working the Yards in Vancouver at Fraser Arms Landing Barges/

If any of the place or person names might have special meaning to you please contact this writer in Cranbrook, BC, Canada.

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CHAPTER ONE

As the ship was nearing Port Swettenham I wondered what this new life I had chosen would have in store for me – if the people would like me and the white population who made up the district, also what my bungalow would be like and if I would be able to stand the climate after the high country of Ceylon. I wanted to make a success of life in the Orient for it is a gamble for white people. One either loves it or hates it, there are no half measures.

We married in England three months before, and Nick was returning for another four years to a rubber estate in Selangor where he was Engineer and Rubber Planter. This rubber estate was 7 miles through the jungle, and no white woman had ever lived there. There were four Europeans on the estate, and at that time 700 natives. Five who were clerks, conductors, and Dressers, the latter meaning male nurses, there were the better class educated Asians.

A new bungalow was being prepared for us, and was not quite finished, so I stayed with a married couple – friends of my husband – for several days while another bungalow was made ready for us. This had three rooms with servants quarters off it. The few days I stayed with Nick's friends, I met most of the white people of the district, they came to tennis and tea, also morning coffee. They were a strange mixture, and all very interesting. One of the men had come from Scotland very many years before, he came when most of that part was jungle, and had started in from scratch and made a very profitable Rubber Estate, but not without suffering and hardship, and many disappointments. He was considered a hard task-master by his assistants.

I am fond of flowers and one day I went to gather some in the garden and sank up to my knees in the soft soil. I never did that again. We stayed in this bungalow for 4 months.

One of the young planters interested me because when he was invited to play tennis he would bring a large suitcase with him. As he was not invited to stay the night, and his bungalow was only a stones throw away, I asked my hostess why the suitcase. She told me that he was afraid of getting cold, and the suitcase held his jerseys and scarves to put on after his game. She said it caused a great deal of mirth in the district, and they had nicknamed him "dolly" because of this habit. He was not a very stable person I learned later, because he ran away with a fellow planters wife who I must admit was very attractive and a fine musician. When friends condoled with the husband he said "What I cannot understand is why they ran away. I would have given her to him if he had asked me".

There were seven estates in this district, and the white population met twice a week at a tennis club, within easy distance for all to join and we got to know each other very well. At this time there were only three married people in this district, the European doctor and two planters. Assistants could not afford to marry unless they had private means, as their salary ranged from \$175 to \$250 per month Malayan dollars.

Nick came to fetch me to go to his estate at 9PM; he was building a large cement tank and damming a stream for a water supply for the estate and worked as long as daylight lasted, so could not fetch me earlier. It gets dark in Malaya between 6:30 and 7PM, so it was pitch dark as we left to go through the jungle. In those days were had acetylene lights on the cars, and they were apt to let one down, especially if you sent over a large rut in the road, or a bank. Our car was a 10 horsepower DeDion – not built today – and the back seat would hold three people in great comfort. The only fault I had to find with it was that the water in the radiator boiled over and spurted into my face when we climbed a hill. We did not use our

windscreen at night as it steamed over from the same boiling water and windscreen wipers had not been invented.

I was startled by the sound of many voices, Tom-Toms and the blaze of lights coming around a corner. By this time we were three miles from the estate on a very narrow road with dense high jungle all around us. I was more than a little nervous when Nick asked me to get out the car and walk towards this crowd. There must have been quite three hundred people. I was told they were the estate labour force coming to greet the bride and first white woman to come and live on that estate. As I walked forward guided by the car lights, two Indians (Tamils) dressed in white cloth coats and turbans came towards me with brass trays filed with fruit, nuts and biscuits, behind them came two more men with brass trays of goats meat, bottles of ale and wine, and behind them came another man with a tray with a large three tier wedding cake on it. I feared to eat the cake because of tales told to me in Ceylon. They put them on the ground in front of me and I bowed and thanked them. They made a speech of greeting and then, amid the voices of the crowd I was conscious of a very fine voice singing, he was greeting me with many compliments and hoping I would be happy in my new home. It was all very bewildering and not a little frightening yet it was so much a part of the jungle's magnificence. The natives danced in the light of the flares as we walked forward on to the estate. It filled me with awe and made me wish I understood what they were trying to convey. Then and there I made up my mind to learn to know these Orientals who had given me such a wonderful reception.

Our Cook and boy were Chinese, and the water carrier – who was most necessary – was a Tamil (Southern Indian). It was the water carrier's job to prepare bath water, and be at the back and call the cook.

Living so far away from a town, I soon learned that Chinese servants were not very satisfactory. The cook did not like me

inspecting his pots and pans and the boy was too fond of my husband's razors and my powder, also he sulked when we had good reason to reprimand him for anything and would retire to his room and smoke opium. After several changes I decided to try Tamils. My husband lent me a small Tamil boy who was working in the office. He was about 10 years old, and really a smart little fellow. Unfortunately, I could not speak his language; however we got on awfully well the first day with hand signs until my husband gave me a few sentences to learn in Tamil. The boy had a black polished look about him which means good health. We dressed him in a white cotton cloth, white coat fastened with buttons to the throat and a little white round hat made from a few yards of cloth. We have him six sets of these so he had no excuse to be dirty or untidy and the dhobi (laundry) washed them for him twice weekly. He soon learned to do house work the English way and was most particular about brass-ware and silver. He was very quick at learning everything that was needed of him, and became my shadow, which was fortunate as I was entirely alone all day. He learnt to put records that I liked on the gramophone. I suppose he had a secret sign all his own.

This little boy with the water-carrier did the work of the house with a little help from me until I could find an intelligent boy whom I could train to cook. We had a small store on the estate and they supplied the essentials and the cold storage supplied meat, milk and ice twice weekly. The tappal coolly (mail boy) fetched the cold storage and mail from the station 9 miles away daily, he went by bullock cart or bicycle. We had a club 7.5 miles away where all the Europeans living around met twice weekly. It was a tennis club. At that time my husband was very busy putting a Lister Ruston Engine in the factory also he was learning rubber planting. Although he was an Engineer, he was very interested the growing of rubber and had decided to learn from the bottom up. Half the acreage of the estate was still in jungle and was given the job of building the factory.

Walks, there were plenty, and sometimes I had company. The native children were very interested in me and would follow me but as soon as I stopped walking they would stop, and at first if I put my hand out in friendship to give them a chocolate they would run away in fear. I don't think they had ever seen a white woman so close before. This made me sad because I needed friends and loved children.

One morning my husband took me around the factory and lines, as the native houses were called, and introduced me to the European Assistants and the heads of the factory. We visited the school, and nursery for babies. The children gathered around and this was my opportunity to become acquainted. My husband spoke to them in Tamil, and said I had come to live on the estate and wanted to be friendly with them, and they need not run away from me because I would not bite the, - he made them laugh. From then on the children were all friendly, and I could visit the nursery and see the babies who were being looked after by ayahs (children's nurses) while their mothers were working. I'll never forget visiting the school – children from 6 years and upwards. They were very quiet as I entered, and when they saw me they all started to read from their books. I think they had learned it off by heart because some of the books were upside down. I tried to be dignified but it was very difficult as it was very amusing, I think the teacher was trying to show his pupils off. It was a school built by the estate and grants of money were given by government for every pupil who passed certain tests.

We had a dispensary and dressing station with a Dispencer Dresser in charge. He took care of minor accident such as 1st degree burns, and gave me my medications including quinine – which was given for Malaria – to anybody who needed it. We had a large lying-in hospital 7.5 miles away where serious cases and maternity were looked after, with senior native dressers and nurses, with a European Doctor in Charge.

There was a lot of Malaria on the estate and the deaths from this disease was causing great concern. Being a hilly estate there were many swampy ravines where the anopheles mosquito – the Malaria carrying type – and others bred. We did not know very much about stamping out the disease in those days. I would save all the mosquitos that stood on their heads to bite me, and all those that darted in flight.

Nick would examine them under a microscope and classify them, and send them to the head of our medical board Dr. Malcolm Watson who was the nephew of Sir Ronald Ross.

About this time we moved to our new bungalow. It was built into the side of a small hill and to get to the servants quarters we crossed a bridge in to the hill proper. To prevent white ants and other obnoxious insects from entering the bungalow, the bridge had a gap of two inches near the kitchen side.

I had not found the intelligent boy to train as cook, so had to take a cook from the town 22 miles away. His name was Rajah and he called himself a Christian. He had never been in a bungalow where there was a white woman before, but he was quite happy to carry out my orders. The small boy was excellent at waiting on the table when I had guests, and he could be relied upon to do many chores in the bungalow. The water-carrier was only able to fetch water and cut fire wood for the cook-stove at this bungalow, as it was a long distance from the other buildings.

When you had Southern Indian servants there was the caste problem to deal with, and I always respected this and did not embarrass them by asking them to do some work which was taboo. I would enquire the caste before giving the work. When the bathroom needed cleaning also, the hen house, or the dog was sick on the mat, we would tell the low caste servant to do it he was always around

waiting for orders. He was supplied for the bungalow and was called the sweeper: Vosacouti class.

About half a mile from our bungalow there were about 6 acres of beluka, which is secondary growth jungle – mostly swamp; rubber would not grow there. It was the bane of my husband's existence as every kind of animal would hide there. It would be a pastime of mine at 4PM to sit at the far end of my Verandah and listen to noises of monkeys and elephants. Did you know that elephants can roar like a very large bull, grunt and squeal like a pig and make the ridiculous noise of a child's toy trumpet? They roar like a bull when they are disturbed or upset but when they are happy they grunt and squeal.

On morning about 3AM I was disturbed from sleep by the noise of the kitten spitting and swearing on the Verandah. I jumped from my bed and started to go and investigate but changed my mind remembering how near we were to the jungle. My husband was a very hard working man and he could sleep through anything – he was a very early riser. On this particular morning he was away from the bungalow at 5:15AM before dawn broke.

I awoke at 6AM to the sound of many voices at the front of the bungalow. This was most unusual, and in investigation found that a mother and baby elephant had paid a very close visit. The mother had put her trunk through the louvers (openboard) of our Verandah. This is what the kitten must have seen that startled her so much. I often wish I had risked it and gone on to the Verandah that early morning.

A friend of ours who was an expert on elephants said we were very fortunate that the young calf elephant had not decided to go under the bungalow, as more often than not the mother follows. If this had happened I'm afraid this story would not have been written. She was quite strong enough to remove our bungalow from its 4 feet pillars. I suppose she would have been killed also.

One morning my husband was walking through the estate near our bungalow, when he noticed a most unusual sight. The cups hanging from the trees that collect the latex, had been removed carefully, and the cups stamped into the ground from over two hundred trees along a straight row. An elephant had done this. The intelligence of the beast was unbelievable. Elephants were a real headache, and there was a very large herd of them at that time and they had done quite a lot of damage pulling out young rubber; some parts of the estate had to be replanted several times.

My husband told me about a Chinaman who arrived at his bungalow one evening covered with blood and multiple injuries. How the man survived it was difficult to understand. He had tried to pass a small herd of elephants on our private jungle road with a bicycle of vegetables; the elephant objected and picked him up and threw him into the jungle. The poor fellow got up and ran two miles until he reached my husband's bungalow where he collapsed unconscious.

There was a large labour force living on the estate. Elephants were being protected by law. It was not permissible to shoot them unless they were in the act of doing damage, and then you had to get a permit. Also, if you shot one, it had to be buried, and cost came out of one's own pocket which was not funny – it was \$40. In those days that was considered quite a lot of money to a young assistant who got \$275 per month.

It was my husband's job to try to cope with the water run-off from the hills in the rainy weather. He built a very large cement reservoir with filters, in a ravine and piped it to the factory lines, washing places for laundry, and cement baths for the labour force. It was very good clean spring water and it was the water our water-carrier fetched every day for us in four gallon kerosene cans, two at a time, suspended on a wooden yoke on his shoulders.

CHAPTER TWO

The rubber estate was surrounded by jungle and where the road entered, was fairly flat. I enjoyed the walks on the jungle road in the early morning. It was fun to stop and listen to the voices in the jungle stillness. First, there would be no sound, it was just as if they were listening to my footsteps. Shoes were noisy and strange. After standing absolutely still for a few minutes I would hear a bird cheep, then another. Then there would be a shifting movement in the trees – very soft – then a hoot of an owl on it's way home to it's nest. Gradually, the jungle would talk again. Monkey calls, many birds singing, the cry of the greater hornbill as it leaves it's nest high in the trees, wild pig grumbling, and sinister sounds in that dense jungle that caused fear and chills down the spine. For fun I would walk heavily, and the voices would die down to a dead silence again. Sometimes, as I stood listening I would frighten myself with my imagination, picturing a tiger stalking me, and the top of my head would go cold. There were tigers, black panthers rufus panthers – they were not leopards – bears, wild cats and many other animals too numerous to mention. The Malayan bear is a nasty fellow, quite capable of attacking you on sight. A Malay boy, wishing to get honey from a tree in the jungle decided to climb without looking well first. A bear had got there before him. He was attacked and very badly mauled before help arrived. Often we saw Elephant slides. Elephants would come out of the jungle hillside on to the road, and slide down about 150 feet the other side, and take all the undergrowth with them, and part of the roads. There were large python in that jungle. One night we were going to a friends house 17 miles away to dinner, we had not gone far when suddenly before us, about 50ft away we saw a python right across the road, we could not see it's head or tail. We decided to bump over it's enormous body. We did not feel much of a bump. As we had a good search light on the car we decided to investigate, but there was nothing to be seen but a few spots of blood. It had got away. If it had been daylight and we had a gun we still could not

have done anything in the dense jungle with its creepers and deep undergrowth.

At the edge of the jungle near the estate there was a bullock shed, it was an open shed like all those built in the tropics. How those bullocks survived is quite a mystery. They belonged to another estate further on, it was a convenient place as they could not use their estate road. Week after week tiger spoor was noticed all round the shed, yet no bullock was even taken in the 24 years I was there.

The walks in the jungle came to an end when the doctor informed me that a baby was on the way. Any excitement with a first baby could cause trouble and it was really dangerous to walk alone in the jungle. The estate roads were so dull, just nothing but rubber anywhere, so I decided to help the gardener even if he did not want my help, which he seldom did. Indians are very good gardeners if you show your interest in flowers and vegetables. We had 16 varieties of standard hibiscus. They are lovely flowers, but not for picking for the house, they droop too quickly. We also had a hedge of red hibiscus round the bungalow on three sides. Every time a native passed it he would pull a piece off to clean his teeth, apparently the sap whiten the teeth. It only took a few years of his treatment to kill the hedge.

A friend promised me a few rose cuttings and the first time I went to see her she gave me a box of plants, her servant put them in the back of the car for me. The next morning the gardener brought them to me to ask where he was to plant them. They looked like rose cuttings and I pictured roses all round the bungalow in a narrow strip that had been dug just 4 inches from the side of the bungalow. They were tended carefully for a month and we noticed the leaves were getting very large for rose leaves. However I left them there until they began to spread and grow too large for that position. We had them planted a distance away from the bungalow and when I met my friend again, I asked her what kind of roses they were. She laughed heartily when I told her where I had first planed them. They were the

beautiful Flame of the Forest which grows to a tremendous height. In fact, during the 4 years we were in that bungalow we had to get rid of all but three. Our garden was not large enough to hold them without completely blocking our view. They were called the tulip tree because of the lovely flame-colored flowers like tulips.

I must relate here about our cook Rajah. Like many Indian Christians of my knowledge in those days, he got a little muddled about Christian behavior. Very few Indians of the lower orders can drink like a gentleman. If they drink at all, it is all or nothing with them, and if they stick to their own type of drink they can manage it fairly well, but not a European drink.

Once weekly I gave money to Rajah to go to the village 9 miles away on his bicycle to get fish and vegetables. On this particular occasion we had a guest coming to stay the weekend and I wanted the food to be extra special. The cold storage which was sirloin, fruit, and ice, came in by bullock cart. Rajah arrived back, I did not see him, he had his orders in the morning and it was not necessary for me to speak to him again. The guest arrived about 7PM and was shown to his room. When he came out, we bathed for a while then I ordered dinner. The small boy by this time was fairly well trained, and was a most dignified servant. He was a high caste Indian and proud of his position. It is most important – when one employs Indian servants – to see that they have plenty of well fitting white clothes, and be responsible for their laundry, then they do not anything to worry about outside their work, and you can always be certain they will be spotlessly clean in their appearance.

The boy brought the soup, then there was a long wait before the fish course. I was a little disturbed as this had not happened before. When the fish finally came, the boy looked a little frightened. I put his scared expression down to having kept us waiting. As we were eating the fish there was a loud clatter and a thud from the direction of the kitchen. My husband went to investigate and found that Rajah had taken the joint out of the oven to baste and not being

very sound of his feet had dropped the pan. The joint had fallen out and he had collapsed on top of it in the middle of the kitchen floor. He had drunk not wisely but too well, and had to be assisted – in no uncertain manner – into his bedroom. We gave the meat course a miss, and had the cold sweet and coffee. It is amazing how one can take the rough with the smooth on such occasions as these. We knew there would be some kind of an explanation the next day, but always fantastic.

During the day I had a slight accident. The boy had bought some soda water and Ginger ale from the store on the estate. I always dealt with anything that had to go into the tea-chest. I went on to the back Verandah and put my hand into the sack to get the bottles of aerated water, when there was a sudden explosion. I had an accident with my hands before, but on this occasion I was rather scared. I called our friend and asked him to bring a towel and take my hand out of the sack while I turned my head. He said; "I can't see the damage, your hand is covered with blood" "Come and sit down." I did so, and kept my hand covered until my husband arrived back for breakfast. My hands were always in trouble even before marriage, so it was not a surprise to my husband when he arrived. He was an excellent medic and nothing seemed to worry him. A planter has to be more than just a planter, he is called upon to deal with every kind of trouble that flesh is heir to and if he is an understanding person, he is well beloved by his labour force.

When my husband removed the towel from my hand, he discovered that only my small finger was badly cut. The next day our friend left and we settled back to the usual chores routine.

That evening I was having my bath before dinner when suddenly a peculiar light-headed feeling came over me. Thinking perhaps it was the injured finger – which was still aching, - and the excitement over it I said nothing.

The gong went for dinner, and I sat down and started my soup. Suddenly I went very hot and then very cold and started to shiver and shake, it was a most disturbing feeling. My husband looked on knowingly, he, poor soul, knew exactly what was happening. He put me into a long chair and piled rugs on me. I was shaking the bungalow and – as I was ashamed of myself – apologizing as well as I could, my teeth were chattering so much. It was 8PM. We had no telephone in the bungalow, it was quite a distance away in the office which was locked up for the night. My husband would not leave me to phone. He wrote a note to the clerk and asked him to call the doctor who lived 7 miles away.

Not feeling very comfortable on the chair, my husband put me to bed, I could not have done it myself I was shaking too much. I was rolled in blankets with hot water bottles at my feet and sides, and given a hot drink. He could not give me quinine as he was afraid for the baby. In a few minutes I stopped shivering and felt happier in spite of my drumming head. Strangely enough as ones temperature rises one feels more comfortable with this type of fever – benign tertion – and as I did not get quinine which was given in those days, I had nothing to break the fever so my temperature when up and up. As I lapsed into unconsciousness I heard my husband say; “Well it is you or the baby” and he pushed two gelatine capsules between my lips and lifted me up to drink some water. How long I lay unconscious I really don't know but the doctor disturbed me when he came into the room at 12:30AM. He seemed quite unconcerned, - what did a life mean to him? – he was seeing death every day from Malaria on the estate. What could he do, it was the husband's business whether he wanted to give quinine or not no orders were given. He examined me and patted me and left and said his wife would come next day. Private nurses were not to be had, there was so much sickness, and the 1st World War was still on. It was July 1917,

The doctor's wife and a friend arrived at 4:30AM. This friend was very close to me because of a terrible thing that happened to her

only child six weeks before. He was a lovely child of six months old. My husband was in the "Malay States Volunteer Rifles" and took part in excursions twice weekly. On one occasion, I went with him as far as this friend's bungalow. The child was in his nursery – he was my favorite baby – I went in to see him, he chuckled and I was delighted that he knew me but Oh dear! He was a peculiar color and I remarked on it. It was 4:30PM. At 7PM he became very ill and died in my arms at 8:15 of opium poisoning. The child's Amah was not to blame, nothing could be proved, but we had our suspicion. An old Amah, who had been dismissed four months before was staying with the baby's Amah – she was a friend of hers. Jealousy is a terrible thing. Good Chinese Amahs (nurses) are a priceless possession, they are devoted to children, know their work well and are very loyal. From my experience, they might be a different race from the men who take work in the bungalows. Excuse my digressing but this had to be told here.

The doctor's wife and my friend came into my bedroom. I was a miserable wreck. If you have never seen a person who has just had a bad attack of benign tertian Malaria, well don't. You are better not knowing about it.

I lost my baby the next day and there was nothing to do but try to get strong again, but complications set in and I developed another high fever and if it had not been for another very kind woman who was a complete stranger, I would have died. She knew what was needed and fought the doctor to get it. That and a thunder storm saved my life.

When I got up for the first time, this friend said she had called some of her friends to come and have tea because she thought I ought to meet other women as I knew only the men on the estate. They all came from the next district 17 miles away. The tea table was beautifully set for eight people, with a tea service of Japanese eggshell china, a present from my husband. This was the first time it

had been sued. The cook surpassed himself. I did not realize that he could make cakes so well, they are always good at making sandwiches. We all sat down and I poured tea. Suddenly I noticed one of our guests having difficulty with his teacup – the tea was seeping out of the side and looked quite nervous. I went to his assistance and quickly ordered another cup to be brought. We found that the cup had been broken, and mended with soap and of course the hot tea melted the soap. Timely intervention prevented the cup from falling to pieces in his lap. Rajah again. Oh dear! He made many excuses – I could always tell when they lied. He said he did not know anything about it. From that day we made a rule that whenever anything was broken, even if it was very valuable we would not punish them if they told us about it at once, but if we had to discover it for ourselves we would cut the pay of all servants until the culprit was found, then we would fine him double. They realized this was fair and we never had anything broken again. If anything was broken, I did it. All our Indian servants stayed with us until they returned to their own country, except Rajah, we had dismissed him because of drunkenness and lying. We never had another so called Christian servant again.

The doctor came the next day and told my husband that he should try to get leave and take me to a cooler climate for a holiday as the fever had left me low in health. Fortunately I had a sister in Ceylon on a tea estate in the hills 4000 ft up. My husband stayed there with me for a month and then returned to the estate.

When I returned to Malaya four months later, my friends had dealt with everything to do with the preparation for my baby. There was nothing to remind me and I was most grateful and felt very fortunate indeed to have such wonderful friends. On entering the bungalow there was a beautiful little golden chow puppy with a green silk ribbon on his neck with a label "Welcome back" "This is a small gift to keep you company", from Mr. Gordon, the Manager of the estate. I

The Jungle's Edge

by Dorothy Fish

immediately called the puppy "Chu Chin", he was my shadow and a one man dog, obedient only to me.

CHAPTER THREE

The First World War ended, and then came the awful wave of the "Flu". It traveled very quickly all over the world. It struck Malaya, and the rubber estates, and tin mines had a serious problem on their hands. It had no respect for anybody high or low. The hospitals were overcrowded and any large house was made into an emergency hospital. Our Manager was on leave in Australia and my husband was in charge. The first thing I remembered – and what was used in my childhood – was a small bag with a lump of camphor in it I tied round my neck. All our servants were sick, they could not go to hospital – no room – I nursed them at the bungalow. It made us think of the Black Death of London because our coolies were dying on their way to hospital and there was nobody to bury them. Those that did not have the "Flu" were too weak to dig graves and remember, only the low caste dug graves.

My husband always went to Muster at 5:20AM. One morning the office boy brought a note to tell me my husband had collapsed in the office with a temperature of 103 degrees and they were taking him to Doctor Malcolm Watson's bungalow, it had been turned into a hospital. I ran out of the bungalow and stopped them and got a stretcher and had him brought home. If he had gone into hospital I would have had to go and nurse him.

God was good. I did not lose a single case the blessed camphor kept the germs away from me. We had only one private European nurse in the country. She came out on a visit to her sister, Mrs. Mercer, after her family was killed in the war. She decided to stay as she was a fully trained nurse. She died two years later from exhaustion. She was the finest nurse I have ever known, never spared herself in any way and was beloved by all her women friends. She did not know what "Time off" meant. She was taken ill while nursing a case of Malaria, put into hospital, and died two days later. My daughter Margery is named after her. She was only 26.

After Peggy (Margery) died, everything took on a new meaning for me. I realized that life really only hung by a thread; one could be here laughing today and gone tomorrow. Malaria and the flu had taken so many fine people and I had so much time to think and wonder and it was then I really grew up. Now, as I look back I wonder why I was spared, as death was so near to me all the time, perhaps it was the strong instinct of preservation in my blood handed down by my mother from her mother. The estate was very unhealthy and not "sufficient" money was allowed in the estimates to deal with the source of the trouble – that was proper drainage. It was a fairly new estate and very hilly and surrounded by dense jungle where mosquitoes can breed in millions and if there is one person with Malaria and a carrier mosquito bites this person, many can be injected. It is the female mosquito that causes all the trouble, she cannot produce her own kind unless she gets blood.

In 1920, the doctor told me I was going to have another child. My husband immediately booked my passage to England as we decided the risk of losing another child was too great for me to stay on the estate. He was born on August 14th, 1920 – a very fine healthy little boy, we were so proud of him, he was so good and happy.

In January 1921, we returned to the estate to find 50% of the labour force and two Europeans in hospital with Malaria. We were frantic for the life of our child, and the only woman I could have gone to stay with was in Scotland on leave. So there was nothing for me to do but go on to the Estate. We had only been there three weeks when my husband and I went down with Subtertian Malaria, this time. Of all the Malaria I had, this was the most difficult to understand. With Benign tertian one feels cold then hot and one starts to shiver and the temperature goes as high as 106 degrees. We took 10 grams quinine and 10 grams aspirin and a hot drink of whiskey with lemon and put on all the blankets and hot water bottles

one could find and sweat it out until the temperature goes to normal, then you have a quick hot bath and roll into a clean bed to sleep, not forgetting to take aspirin and quinine every four hours. With Sub-tension it is entirely different. One can feel sick and have a headache for several days and think one has a tummy upset. Malaria does not enter your head if you have had benign tension only. Then your head gets worse and your heart starts missing a beat although your temperature does not rise about 102 degrees. One gets a little light headed with the pain. You cough and are very restless indeed and cannot for the life of you settle down – only brandy helps. The quinine given as for benign tension works all right but brandy must be given also, as the heart is affected; a person can go unconscious and should not be left. This is the type of Malaria we had in March 1921. The doctor did not understand it. Somehow it affected the skin and one could not bear being touched, as the nerves seemed to be on the surface. A blanket bath was torture on me, it was just as if I was being skinned alive. My baby went down with the fever on the March 10th, 1921 and he died on the 19th, only because they bathed him too much and did not give him brandy. I had this fever again and learned from it the cause of my baby's death. Changing his food to a kind his weak digestion could not take (Doctor's orders) and the constant bathing against my orders by the doctor's wife. He really died of heart trouble.

On August 28th, 1921, another child was born to me – a little girl, she was so small she might easily been a fairy except for her brilliant color and temperature of 102 degrees. I had benign tension Malaria the day before she was born, and this time I thought my number was up as it seemed the worst go, my doctor later told me it could have been benign and Sub. Because 6 months later he found I was breeding all types in my blood and nearly had black water fever. This little girl, although so small (5.5. lbs.) was very strong, perhaps it was because she got a good quantity of quinine from her mother's milk. How this child grew up is a miracle she was treated for Malaria for three years and never forget to ask for her quinine, but we had to

learn the hard way because she nearly died of heart failure because of the large inflamed spleen pressing against it when she was 5 months old. The doctor had insisted her rapid pulse was caused by "flu", her temperature was only 100 degrees. It was sub-tersion Malaria but they could not find it in her blood because she had quinine, but not enough to stop the rapid increase in germs manufactured in the spleen.

We had to leave the estate and go and live in a bungalow belonging to the hospital, six miles away. While we were away our bungalow was made mosquito proof and work was begun in earnest to rid the estate for all time of Malaria. Catchment areas were built and subsoil drainage put in, also a system of oiling all ravines and anywhere water lay, every ten days. This was done by my husband. The company at last discovered it was cheaper to wipe out the cause of Malaria than to have big hospital and medicine bills – rather too late for me.

Every morning on the muster ground at 5:30AM all the labour force were given hot coffee and quinine. Sometimes a laborer would hide away with a high temperature, then was a dreadful menace, he could re-infect many of his friends, so it was very important that the roll-call was properly done, spleens tested and questions asked. A medical dresser was always present on these occasions, and two European Planters. The European Doctor came out every week and examined the spleen of the labour force and Europeans. The working women who expected babies were not allowed to do any work on the estate at six months, and they were given half pay and vitamins. When their babies were born they were given mild for the first two months for both baby and mother. The labour force seemed to understand the difficulties and they were very sporting. One or two of our servants were always down with Malaria and in hospital, but when I went out I learned to treat them and administer the quinine daily. This intrigued them, my sympathy for them made them think I had a weak spot in my character. Whenever they wanted to slack

they would say they had a headache. At first I was genuinely sorry and would give them coffee, quinine and aspirin and told them to take the day off. I trusted them, but later I learned to test their pulse and take temperature. Sometimes a boy would stay from work a week. Finally I learned.

The fever, as a rule with me come on and leave in two days, after I had it often; and I decided to allow the servants four days, then give them light work for another four days, if they did not report at work after the first four days they would not be paid. It was really amazing; they did not try to take advantage of me again.

I was so used to all noises around me that I knew exactly what was going on without seeing. The servants said I was (banyan pandai) (very clever). I could see through the back of my head. One needed to have this gift sometimes.

On the April 1st, 1921, my husband became manager of the estate and being an engineer, he was able to speak to the Directors and convey to them exactly what was needed to make the estate perfectly healthy. There were wonderful men and a great help in this pioneering job. I shall always remember one very kind director and bus wife, a Mr & Mrs More. When everything looked very black for us they helped with their kindness and understanding, which made such a difference in our lives.

The language of the country was Malay and when I trained an Indian I taught him a little Malay because the Tamil language is a tongue twister and I ever learned it properly but could understand ordinary sentences needed to run the house.

I had one servant later on who had a language all his own, he was the only Telegu on the estate. My husband spoke Telegu but I did not know one word. This servants language was mixture of Tamil, Malay and English spoken between closed lips. He would

come to me for orders. I would carry on a conversation in Malay, he would answer in his own language and my husband and children would look on in amazement and wondered how he came to talk that way. He was a wonderful servant and faithful, he adored the children. His only real fault was a yearly binge and I don't know how he survived them, they were so unusual.

During one period of our lives we were bothered by instant visits for marauding animal, we were not quite sure if they were leopards or tigers. Our children's donkey was killed one night and another night two of our dogs were taken in front of the bungalow. Our Tamil servants were very frightened and would not stay at the house after dark, but our Elegg could not be frightened away. We had cold suppers and Sarah served them with a sharp knife in his belt, and after the meal would wash up near the dining room instead of taking the utensils to the kitchen. Between courses he would sit at the top of the stair back entrance to the bathrooms.

One evening we went to call on some friends and took the Amah and children with us. When we returned about 7PM we saw Sarah lying on the cement floor when the car was being driven in. We sounded the hooter (car horn) I to awaken him feeling all the time he might be dead, finally, after making a terrific noise he woke up, stood up and turned around and hit the pillar of the house with the top of his head and sat down with full force. We both thought he had broken his neck, but no, he got up and came forward to help the children out of the car. Naturally we thought he had been on one of this binges, otherwise he would not have slept on the floor in the open. However, if he was oblivious, the awful bang on the head must have sobered him instantly, as he showed no signs of it while serving supper.

There were a few more raids from the leopards or I should say panthers, as we found out afterwards.

My husband sat us and stalked them but they were too clever for him. Finally he made an ingenious trap of heavy timbers crisscrossed with a heavy door, and put it close to the jungle and baited it with goats meat. One night, we were returning to the estate and as the car light shone on to the trap, we saw a beautiful Rufus panther in it. We stopped the car and walked up to it. When we got there, to our horror it had disappeared, yet the door was closed. My husband was a big game hunter in Burma, and having seen the panther or leopard realized that the timbers were too open. Where a leopard can get his head through, he can also get this body as they are very slim.

The next day he set to work and covered the trap with wire on the outside. The door was of very heavy construction, yet it was held open with black linen thread. It was very necessary that we caught and killed these animals. They had taken most of the dogs on the estate and my husband was afraid they would become bolder and take the children.

One night, I woke up to hear terrible sounds that seemed to come from the edge of the jungle. I woke my husband and asked him to listen. The sound was like snarling, we were terribly keyed up, my husband had been many times in raids by man-eating tigers marauding round his workmen's quarters in Burma and what could happen on this estate was a very serious thought and made us constantly on the alert. It was a dreadful nightmare.

We had been listing for some time to this snarling noise when my husband decided to go to the jungle's edge, and I was going with him. Suddenly, we heard a very sleepy voice in the next room say; "Amah! Amah! Jangan snot (don't snore)" What a relief! We both went into fits of laughter when we realized that the noise was the Chinese Amah (nurse) snoring and was keeping our small daughter awake.

I had never heard of a panther taking human beings but it was possible for them to kill if cornered. We had many tigers in the jungle and my husband had killed some in revenge for taking our pets. Strangely enough I never saw a tiger all the 24 years I was in Malaya, they always came when I had left. On one occasion my husband with the Padre was driving home from a service at 8:30PM, when a tiger jumped from a high bank right over the bonnet of the car, and kicked the fender with an awful bang the other side. He told me later he would have thought it was a dream only the deep scratches were there to prove it.

When one lives where we did, - the other side of the jungle – most days we took our lives in our hands but always felt that only whom we could not see was watching over us.

I had three chows, Chang, Pong and Puppy Girl. They were beautiful animals, golden brown. Chang was the only puppy of his canine marriage, and grew well. I could have sold him many times for a fabulous sum but we just could not part with him.

When my daughter, Joan, was 2 years old, the doctor convinced my husband it was time she and I went to England. The Malaria had taken its toll and we were both very anemic and listless. We had more Malaria than my husband.

Every morning we all had Chute Hazer (tea and fruit) on a small Verandah outside our bedroom at 5AM. As soon as it was light enough, it was my husband's habit to whistle his dogs, and they would come immediately and look up and wag their tails, they loved their morning walk, and the whistle always excited them. About a week after my daughter and I left for England, my husband whiled the dogs as usual, but he got no response. Rather surprised, he went looking for them, but all he found of Chang and Pong were their heads lying in the rubber. As a game hunter this told him that a tiger had done it. He was heart broken and he did not have me to console

him. Where Puppy girl had gone, he did not know, and guessed that there were two tigers, and they had fed on two dogs and taken the other away. Literate is very hard ground, tennis courts are made of it, and unless there had been heavy rain, sometimes it was difficult to find the spoor of animals, it was so in this case. However, when my husband arrived in for breakfast at 9jAM Puppy girl for waiting for him – he was overjoyed, and that day sat down and wrote a letter telling me all about it.

Every time I left the estate tigers came and did damage. My dreams – when I had them in Malay – were mostly of tigers, perhaps this had something to do with it – a sort of warning perhaps – I would not know, but I always longed to see one of these beautiful deadly animals in it's wild state and would go out of my way to find one.

My husband and I admired courage, and neither of us stopped the other from investigating anything. I would go out into the dark rubber late at night, after the donkey had been killed – and stand for five minutes hardly breathing, and would suddenly flash a powerful three battery torch into the darkness, sometime I would see a shadow, and hear the body of a large animal crash through the undergrowth and bound away. Often I saw eyes like two bright lamps in the distance but never anything more. They would wait until our lights were out. We had a small 6 acre piece of beluka (secondary growth jungle) in the middle of some rubber. This land was swampy, no rubber would grow on it. The laborers were always a little afraid of tapping the latex trees near this part. Our second bungalow was only half a mile from this small jungle, and I found great pleasure in the earlier days sitting at the end of the Verandah listening to all the strange sounds coming from that part in the afternoon. I often heard the trumpet insect at night and the Greater Hornbill in the morning and evenings. The insect makes a noise like a child's toy trumpet and I was curious to see it, but never did until a year before we left the country and then it was stuffed and in a case at Frasers Hill. I got a surprise, as it was a very large ugly black beetle, but what delighted

me was it's beautiful wings, clear like glass decorated with gold. Mother nature is very strange. I wondered why she should waste such lovely wings on such an ugly insect, perhaps she was sorry she had made such an ugly thing, and for recompense had added the wings. Elephants and tigers were seen often in this beluka, and sometimes the elephants would use it as a hiding place after doing damage.

The elephant is protected in Malaya and unless they are in the act of doing serious damage one is not allowed to shoot them. On several occasions these elephants had done considerable damage in some budgrafted rubber – 300 acres to be exact. Parts of it had to be replanted several times because elephants had destroyed it. This was terribly frustrating to my husband, so he decided to catch at least one and teach it a lesson. He had a large deep pit dug and placed sticks and bracken over the hole. The next morning when he went to investigate he found he could walk into the hole, but it was very muddy indeed. An elephant had fallen into it and his brothers had trampled the sides until they had filled the hole in and pulled the victim out. An elephant may have a very small brain, but he uses it to outwit his enemies.

I have heard of elephants being shot, and as one was shot the others came each side to prop him up, this was in the days when it was safe for the Malay in his house and the young rubber suffered great damage.

We had a tennis club 7.5 miles away where all the planters and their wives met twice weekly and played tennis and bridge. It was a very happy district and we all got on well together. Once monthly this club would be used for church services, and there was always good attendance. One afternoon we went out to play tennis and after, went to the service, and later, with the Padre to tennis at a friend's bungalow. At this time, we had a friend from Ceylon staying with us, she came with us also. While we were having dinner, a car drove up

and a neighbor who lived 2.5 miles from us, brought Nick's game rifle and told us we had a leopard and a small black panther in the trap near the jungle and the coolies were so excited that if he did not hurry they would torture the animals with their spears. Of course we left at once driving at 60 miles an hour through a rubber estate and nearly ran over a civet cat. My friend from Ceylon remarked: "All the years I have been in Ceylon I have never seen so much wild life." It really was exciting and a relief to us, we would now be able to sleep at night.

When we got to the trap, nearly all the labour force were around it and very excited. What struck me first was, where had they kept all those weapons, I had never even seen a spear, it was rather frightening. However, with a few words of Tamil from my husband they quieted down. There was a beautiful full grown leopard and a young black one in the trap. This was the brute that had killed our little donkey and very many dogs, and I had to keep that in mind. They looked so dangerous snarling and throwing themselves at the door I was afraid it would break down. As my husband knelt to shoot I knelt by his side and my one thought was, if he is going to be killed I will be with him.

We took the carcasses on the running board to the bungalow and put them in the dining room until morning. We were afraid the mate might come looking for them. We called Asriah to come and see them, and as he came forward he took his knife out and held it. When he walked away he fell on his knees and prayed to his God.

When I awoke the next morning, my husband had gone to Muster, and the children were coming upstairs. I heard my elder daughter Joan say "Oh Amah this is the second spider I have had on me". I jumped out of bed and hurried downstairs to see the dining room wall where the animals were lying covered with ticks, it gave me quite a turn, they burrow under your skin. The servants removed

the carcasses out of the house. When my husband arrived back at 9AM he took them to a Japanese and had the skins cured.

Not long after this affair, my husband was walking past the beluka to examine some tapping that was not good, when he came face to face with a tiger, his dog was by his side. He told me that for the first few seconds they stood facing one another, then they all three cautiously backed away. After the tension was over, it struck my husband as being very funny and he roared with laughter. Later on that tiger was shot by one of the labour force, he was out looking for wild pig, say what he thought was a pig and fired, when he discovered he had shot a tiger he was so frightened he shot several times then ran away and called for help.

CHAPTER FOUR: ON ORIENTAL SERVANTS

My first experience with Oriental servants was in Ceylon. We had a Tamil cook (Southern Indian) and two Tamil house boys. They were all well trained in a school for servants. Later in my life in Ceylon we had a singlese cook and a Tamil boy, there also understood their job well but I felt unhappy because I had heard so many stories of the antagonism of the Singalese for the White people, and the awful things they had done in secret to Planters in the past. Poison, killing their dogs and mysterious happenings. A Singalese cook shot our Tamil clerk, who was a most kind and happy person.

In Malaya, after my marriage, we had a Chinese cook and Chinese house boy. This was the time when I just learned what the word "squeeze" means. It is the usual practice to allow your Chinese cook to "make" a little food account and any other should it please him to do so. If you are fortunate enough to have laying hens, you have to hold they key of the hen-house otherwise the eggs would be few and far between. One good point the Chinese had, they helped each other and did not steal from those who paid their wages other than food which was considered a right, and you could trust them with thy of the wine cupboard. They had a weakness for looking on Master's razor as their own, and would take it and use it when he was out. The solution to stopping this was to give them one. I did not feel very safe with Chinese servants, they were not British subjects, and I had heard so much of gang robberies by Chinese, also I was told you could never be sure when you engaged them that the testimonials they presented were their own or hired. But most important of all to my way of thinking, they could not take criticism – they sulked – a sulky servant is unpredictable.

When I had a good excuse, I decided to try Indians. The first two years was grim, and if it had not been for a little boy I trained in my first year in Malaya, my life would have been very miserable. He

was always there to do the jobs that were left undone by the other servants.

I had never been trained to do anything properly myself. This was a big handicap in a country of uneducated Orientals. I wanted so much to be a success in everything I undertook. The solution was revealed to me in a Mrs. Beaton's Cookery book my mother gave to me. Not only did it give recipes for cooking everything under the sun, but it taught one how to manage a house.

I got my husband to give me many sentences in Malay and Tamil (Southern Indian) that would be required, and I wrote them in my own way. This was quicker than learning the language which was really not needed in the towns. I started in to polish furniture, doing some cooking and every job that would be required in a house. This was quite a hard task considering the heat and the taboo, but I explained to the young boy that I would not try to teach until I knew the job myself.

My husband always said that the best engineer is the one who starts at the bottom of the ladder and works his way up, and that also applies to many other professions which seems to be ignored in most cases today. Book learning is alright in its way, but experience proves more along with the good books and of course – ambition. The younger one learns, the better the pupil.

The podian (small boy) learned very quickly, he was a very good looking little fellow and proud of his white uniform I supplied. It was a white vest and coat which he wrapped round him with a fringe on the side, and a little rough white cap which he always wore when he entered the bungalow. I gave his six sets and the estate Dhobi (laundry) washed them. He always looked very smart and spotlessly clean and he had a very healthy black highly polished face which means good health in an Indian.

After the Chinese left, my husband took on a so called Christian cook. This seemed a bit of luck, but I'm sure he said he was a Christian to impress us because he had all the Vices that flesh is heir to, but one could not treat him seriously because we were at that time so dependent on a cook until we could find the intelligent Indian I was looking for. The podian had been an office boy and had proved himself, but it was more difficult to choose an older man to track. Rajah the Christian was quite a good cook and was that was all that was required of him he worked well until he had to go shopping in the Village 9 miles away. Then he was unpredictable.

The cold storage came twice weekly to the railway station 7.5 miles away, and the tappal (post) coolie fetched in on a bicycle and when it arrived at the bungalow, the meat had to be cooked right away or it would not be good the next day. One night Rajah arrived back from shopping the worst for wear. We were not aware of this until we heard a loud bang in the kitchen. On investigating my husband found him prostrate across the sirloin. He had taken it out of the oven to baste, and being unsteady on his feet, he overbalanced on top of the hot meat and was completely oblivious to the sound slap my husband gave him. A 5 lb. Joint spilt was not amusing even in those days. My husband put him to bed and we carried on with our meal leaving out the meat course.

The next morning, Rajah came to me to tell me he had Malaria and could he have leave. I said "Yes to hospital, but first I must give you quinine". I brought out the liquid quinine and he immediately said it was not Malaria. I was laughing inwardly all the time. I was a case of "The morning after the night before" and a little help from my husband that he was suffering from. Any servant who drank never got any sympathy from me.

I was always a bit upset as I looked on it as a serious weakness. A drunken man with responsibility in a kitchen is a menace not only to the food but to the other servants.

Rajah was 6 ft and broad in proportion. I was never afraid of anybody. I learned to look them straight in the face every time I spoke to them and never took my eyes off them until I had finished speaking.

Rajah was the only Indian we had to dismiss not only because of his drunkenness but for telling untruths.

The next cook was a Chinese, an older man, and an excellent cook, his fault was opium. He would cook the meal and send a course to the table, then go and take opium, forgetting he had other courses to serve. The podian would go into the kitchen and find it empty, the cook was completely under between the meat and sweets. I was so sorry and asked one doctor to give him a job and try to cure him, but it was hopeless.

The next cook (Chinese) drank, which is most unusual, they will gamble all night and take opium but never drink. He stayed six months and was only dismissed because he stole money from the bungalow and gambled with it. The amount was so unusual that the head Chinese became suspicious and with a little slow torture – as only the Chinese knew how to give – he confessed he had stolen it from Masters pocket.

The next cook – also Chinese, brought excellent testimonials which surprised us very much. All the same I decided to try him for a month. A cook's salary in those days was \$35 per month; it was always understood, they made a little on the side out of the housekeeping money. This cook said he had his own utensils and he preferred them to mine and could I buy them from him. I was still green or would have seen through this, but cooks were not easy to find and I had so much Malaria I could not spend most of my time in a hot kitchen and in any case it just was not done. My other servants would have left as I would have lost face. There were snags of all

kinds, we had to deal with them in the easiest way for our own comfort. I bought the utensils. He proved a failure, he was so dirty round the kitchen and could not bear being spoken to about it. When my husband went to pay him he looked astonished at the \$35 and said (This is a very small salary. I got \$50 in my last place." My husband asked him what his work was in the last place, he said "I was an engine driver" so my husband told him to go and drive engines, we thought we had employed a cook. It seems he hired his testimonials which was very common among the Chinese, they were born many centuries before we were. The utensils left with the cook, he probably stole them from his last place.

The next cook, also Chinese, was a wonderful cook and when I had him for a week the doctor made his usual weekly visit and discovered he had T.B. and would have to leave my employ. We were so sorry that we decided to pay his passage to China and gave him enough money to live without work for six months. He seemed very grateful and promised to live in the pen and have a doctor examine him every month. I told him that when he was completely cured I would take him back.

He wrote to me from Singapore and I did not hear again for six weeks and then he telephoned me from the nearest town (Klang) to say he was cured and could he return. We went into Klang to have a talk with the Head boy of Klang Club, and he told us that the cook had not been any further than Singapore. By this time I was cured of Chinese and never had another Chinese man-servant in my house.

Manly Indian cooks were tried but I found they could not get on with servants I had trained; the gardener, water carrier and Indian Podian.

We moved to a very large bungalow and when my husband took over the management I decided to train all my servants and pick from the estate labour force if they could be spared. This turned out very satisfactory. I always supplied their uniforms and laundry and they were always spotlessly clean and never came into the bungalow

without their headdress. If only the bachelors would take a tip from this they would not be embarrassed when a lady called at their home. I had this idea from my sister in Ceylon before I was married. Tamils in the town bungalows had the name for being difficult to manage and dirty, if only the women had taken the responsibility of the uniform off the servants hands they would have discovered that the Tamil was a much more loyal servant than the type of Chinese who were house boys. The clean uniform every day made them feel important and therefore proud of their job.

After five years in our employ the podian with his parents went to India and I never saw him again I was told he died of Malaria. They ext boy I trained was Sinai, he was also an office boy and very smart. He was with us when we left Malaya and the new manager took him on, I often wonder what happened to all those Indians during the was against Japan. I'm told that 75% of all the Indians were moved to Thailand railway and never returned, most of them died of fevers and malnutrition.

We had a kitchen garden where all our vegetables and fruit were grown and we had a hen house and all our fowls were imported and I tried to breed from them. The Malayan fowl was very small through interbreeding. I had Plymouth rocks and white Orpingtons. I was not very lucky with the male birds, five Cockerels of the Plymouth rocks died in one night, and when I examined them there was no sigh of any disease. On day the cook brought me one of the white Orpingtons that had fallen sick. I thought he had a cold and gave him cinnamon which usually worked. I put him down and forgot about him after making him comfortable in a box of straw. Later in the day I went to look at him and he was very floppy I thought he was dead. I lifted him and he made a feeble noise so I fetched the liquid quinine and got the cook to help me open the fowls mouth and pour the quinine down. I lad him back on the box and went into the house. Half an hour after I heard a noise and the fowl was out of his box and trying to walk. I at once knew that I was Malaria. In a few days the

The Jungle's Edge

by Dorothy Fish

bird was back to normal. I did not know that chickens got Malaria. The puzzling thing was only the male birds got it. I never lost a hen in this way or even had to treat them, but I lost 10 Cockerels before discovering that it was Malaria.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUCH IS LIFE IN THE BACKWOODS OF THE ORIENT

We were having lunch that day as I heard a terrible bussing and flew upstairs to find out what it was all about. The noise was familiar, it could only mean certain insects – hornets or bees. I hoped it was the latter. As I arrived at the top of the stairs, bees were flying in all directions, and I rushed and closed the mosquito and louvered windows at the front of the house. The bees had come in a straight line from a tree in the jungle, of course following their Queen.

We lived on a hill 300 feet up, and the bungalow was 32 feet high, so we were the highest point in vicinity.

The queen settled on the apex of the roof. This beam was made of wood, and this part had been oiled to prevent rot. In a very few minutes the beam was covered with bees, they swarmed round and settled, and when we had finished lunch we found that the swarm was three feet long and almost as wide. It was a frightening sight.

We had to go out that afternoon, but before leaving, Nick gave orders to the office to send a native with sacks, oil and a long pole to the bungalow at 9PM – not before.

As we drove up the hill to the bungalow that evening at 8:30PM, I looked up, and to my horror saw the beam where the bees had settled, on fire, and blazing furiously. My children were in the bungalow and the man who was using the oiled sacks could not see what we could see, he was below and concentrating on the bees and their demise. He also was disobeying orders. We did not have fire extinguishers or hoses. The only thing to do was to use buckets of water from the front window, and throw the water up. This we did, and as I came away from the window I had about ten bees on me, but fortunately they were comatose through the terrific amount of smoke

and heat, I could brush them off without harm. If we had not arrived at that moment we could not have saved the bungalow as the beam was well alight. The children were kept away by the Amah (Chinese nurse), Chinese do not lose their head in any crisis I have discovered, they have suffered in their Homeland, and nothing disturbs them outwardly. They make excellent children nurses.

A week after this happened we received another shock. We had three beautiful golden chows, they are very independent dogs, with very clean habits, more like cats. May of them are one man dogs, and grow very fond of people the same sex as themselves. Chu Chin was my shadow, also Wu, but the mother was my husbands favorite, Pong. On this day Nick, as was usual, called the dogs from his verandah. They generally were looking up for him, but this they were not to be seen, nor did they come to his call. This was quite alarming as we were surrounded by jungle. By this time all the servants were out looking for the dogs. They did not have long to look. Two heads were found a short distance from the bungalow, Chu Chin's and Chang's. Puppy Girl was nowhere to be found. Nick said "This is the work of a tiger and I will get the blighter if it is the last thing I do". The Malayan jungle is very dense, with undergrowth and swampy land, and to try to follow an animal in this kind of growth is almost impossible. For an animal of this nature to come right up to a bungalow for food proved he was very hungry, and Nick was concerned for the bullocks and the Tamil's dogs. He built a Malay trap by digging a deep hole and covering it up with branches and leaves. He sat near it for three nights but the tiger was too clever. Nick made a habit of taking his gun with him when he went round the rubber in the early morning. One morning he noticed spoor marks on the jungle edge and heard a slight rustle in the jungle, also a kind of grunt which, from long experience knew that the tiger was quite close. He waited hidden for about ten minutes, and then, to his joy, the tiger exposed himself, and one shot finished his marauding habits for ever. Nick found that the beasts skin was full of thorns and he was old. We took the skin to England but the hair fell out. Our maid was very glad

to have it as the tiger's stripes were still visible. Roland Ward did all our work. This was the only failure. Two days after the two were killed, Puppy Girl came down the drive wagging her tail as if to say "I know I ran away, but I thought I had left the place in good hands". I wondered if she had been away all the time and was not aware of what had happened. I think that the female of the species is much more aware when danger is near, as we have been warned many times by different female dogs. They bark insistently and will not obey when one tells them to be quiet.

I will give one instance of this. We had a radio, and could get stations from all over the world. One night we were sitting reading, when Ping, a black female chow of ours started to bark outside. She would not stop, although usually she was very obedient. She was so insistent that she came right into the fernery quite near where we were sitting. She could not get into the house proper because it was all mosquito proof netting on the doors and they opened outwards. We were so interested that she should be so disobedient that our curiosity made us investigate. Nock took an electric torch and I followed him without thinking of going to the stairway to put on the light, which was foolish. The music on the radio was lovely, it came from Holland this station always gave us classical music. We walked across the fernery, as Nick started to step into the garden, he brought his torch down towards his feet, and as he did so, he saw a large hamadryad at his feet (King Cobra). He jumped back and nearly fell over the tiny concrete drain we had built to keep dangerous insects from getting into the fernery. Nick called to me "Hurry and get a large stick while I keep my eyes on this thing". The cobra was coiled and upright dancing to the music. I was so thankful we had not shut off the radio. I remembered at that moment about a large bamboo pole the servants used to take down spiders webs. I opened the lounge door and groped around until I found it. The pole was about 12ft long. I brought it in, still forgetting to put on the light outside, and gave the pole to Nick, who immediately struck at the cobra. He missed it, I was they thing's head to down and up. The pole broke in

hand and left the cobra still swaying to the music. Nick struck again and missed. By this time I was too frightened to leave him. We had a certain amount of light from the dining room where the radio was, but that did not show the cobra who was in pitch darkness when the torch was not shining on him. When the pole was about four feet long Nick managed to kill it. We were both exhausted from fright and relief at what might have happened. We were due to leave the country for good a week after.

I discovered later that this was the cobra I called the gardener to kill a few days before. At that time, three servants came with sticks but they made no attempt to try to kill it, they only drove it away. I had forgotten about this although I should have remembered as it was the first snake I had seen in eight years and the first cobra in that country of Malaya. Now I know why the Tames treat the cobra as a Holy thing. This goes back to the Adam not the story that we are told in Sunday school. I know that so-called wild animals are more afraid of us than we should be of them, this also applies to the snake. We have persecuted the poor things for so many centuries that they feel they must kill us before we kill them. Animals are much more tame in the Orient than in Europe. The Tamil children are very kind to all animals.

When my husband first arrived in Malaya in Feb. 1911 there was a rubber boom and companies were being formed all the time. He had been taken on to construct a factory warehouse and line for the workers, also bungalows, and put machinery in the factory. When he entered the office to take up his work the manager gave him a desk for his use. As he opened the top drawer, he jumped back in astonishment. The drawer was full of python. It had followed a rat who had used it for a nest and stored rubber seeds. The python had dined off the rats and had gone to sleep. My husband quickly closed the drawer and fetched his revolver but when he opened the drawer again, the python had quickly stolen away. He had digested the rats and found he could get out without trouble. It is strange that this

man's first experience in the country and last should be with a snake. His dog warned him once, he barred his way when he was walking one early morning on the estate. The dog was not a snarly type and had walked ahead on the path, he doubled back in a hurry and halted my husband with a vicious snarl when he tried to pass him, so he stepped off the path and took a wide turn and came to a large hamadryad (King Cobra) lying across the path, he certainly would have stepped on it or been attacked if the dog had not warned him.

THE END