

## MALAY PROVERBS.

BY W. E. MAXWELL.

*Continued from page 98.*

61. *Di ludah naik ka langit, timpa ka muka sendiri juga.*

To spit in the air and get it back in one's own face.

To speak evil of his own family or relations is an injury which recoils upon the speaker himself. "To wash one's dirty linen in public."

62. *Dimana semût mati kalau tidak dalam gula ?*

Where is it that ants die if not in sugar ?

Ruin is commonly the result when everything is abandoned for the sake of pleasure.

The justness of the illustration will be apparent to every one who has lived in the East. How to keep sugar free from ants is one of the problems that puzzles every Anglo-Indian.

63. *Deri jauh orang angkat telunjuk, kalau dekat dia angkat mata.*

From afar men point the finger at him ; if he is close by they make grimaces (*lit.* lift the eyes).

A man who has disgraced himself, and who is an object of contempt to his neighbours.

64. *Diminta kapada yang ada,*

*Berkaul pada Kramat,*

*Merajuk pada yang kasih.*

Ask from one who has something to bestow,

Make vows at a shrine,

Sulk with some one who is fond of you.



There is a refined cynicism about this piece of wisdom, hardly to be expected from Perak Malays, from whom nevertheless I got it. The third line which recommends a display of temper being reserved for those who love us best is especially admirable. The idea of the whole is "apply where you are most likely to succeed."

65. *Retak menanti pechah.*

The cracked will break.

Ready to part company at any moment, and waiting only for a decent excuse. Said of two companions, or of a chief and adherent, one of whom wants to break with the other, and only awaits an opportunity.

66. *Ringan tulang, brat prut.*

Light bones, full stomach.

The active man will always have enough to eat.

*Ringan tulang* signifies energy, activity.

67. *Ringan sama menjinjing, brat sama memikul.*

Alike to carry (in the hand) light burdens: alike to shoulder heavy loads.

To share together whatever befalls, whether good or evil fortune. To stand or fall together. Used in allusion to the treatment of children of one family, who ought to be treated with impartiality by their parents. One should not have all the light loads, and another all the heavy ones.

68. *Rumah sudah, pahat berbunyi.*

The sound of the chisel is heard after the house is completed.

Means: the re-opening of a matter which ought to be considered finally settled. To start an objection too late.

69. *Seperti ayam patok anaknia.*

As a hen pecks her chickens.

A rule to decide the degree of punishment allowable in Malay nurseries. Maternal correction should not be too severe. The hen does not kill her chickens outright, but merely gives an occasional peck to those which misbehave.



70. *Seperti kain didalam lipat.*

Like a "*sarong*" not yet unfolded.

Bright and fresh in its even folds, with its clean, new smell, attractive colours, etc. A simile applied to a young girl, a bride, etc.

71. *Seperti ambun di hujung rumput.*

Like the dew on a blade of grass.

When the sun is up the dew-drop falls from the leaf to the ground (*kumbang panas gugor ka bumi*): the Malays use the illustration familiarly in speaking of that kind of love which comes from the mouth, but not from the heart, and which melts away on the appearance of adversity.

72. *Seperti ponggok merindu bulan.*

"As the owl sighs longingly to the moon."

A figure often used by Malays in describing the longing of a lover for his mistress. It recalls a line in Gray's *Elegy*:

"The moping owl doth to the moon complain."

73. *Seperti kwang mekik dipuchuk gunung.*

"Like the argus-pheasant calling on the mountain-peak."

Another poetical simile for a complaining lover. Here he is compared to a lonely bird sounding its note far from all companions.

74. *Seperti api makan sekam.*

Smouldering like burning chaff.

Nursing resentment, though shewing no outward signs of heat or passion.

Paddy chaff when burned does not blaze, but a large heap, if ignited, will smoulder away slowly till the whole is reduced to ashes.

75. *Seperti kaduk kena ayer tahi.*

Like the *kaduk* plant when manured.

The plant alluded to grows like a weed and requires no cultivation. The meaning intended to be conveyed is exactly that of the English proverb. "Ill weeds grow apace."



76. *Seperti talam dua muka.*

Like a tray which has two faces.

A simile applied to a false friend.

77. *Seperti tulis diatas ayer.*

Like writing on water.

An act by which no impression is made.

78. *Seperti kra kena belachan.*

Like a monkey smeared with *belachan*.

*Belachan* is a favourite condiment among Malays, of which it is enough to say that shrimps and small fish dried in the sun and pounded in a mortar are the principal ingredient. Monkeys have a peculiar horror of its very strong smell. The Malay phrase here given is applied to any wild or extravagant conduct, which seems as absurd as the antics of a monkey frantically endeavouring to get the *belachan* off his paws.

79. *Seperti burung gagak pulang ka benua.*

As the crow returns to his country.

To go back as one came, no richer no poorer. When the crows imigrate, as the Malays say they do, they fly back as they came (*itam pergi itam balik*), taking nothing from the country where they have sojourned so long.

80. *Seperti anjing kapala busok.*

Like a dog with a sore head.

A contemptuous expression applied to an outcast without friends, shelter, food or money.

81. *Seperti gergaji dua mata.*

Like a saw with a double edge.

Which cuts both ways (*tarik makan sorong makan*), as it is drawn up or down. See No. 76.

82. *Seperti yu kiya-kiya.*

Like the shark (of the kind called *kiya-kiya*.)

A person with a character for sponging shamelessly on his neighbours.



83. *Seperti ular kena palu.*

Like a snake which has received a blow.

Used in speaking of a lazy, dilatory person. The Malays compare the slow, listless motions of a man who unwillingly gets up to perform some duty on which he is sent, to the contortions of a wounded snake. The verb *menggliat* signifies to writhe as a wounded reptile, or to turn and twist as a man yawning and stretching.

The Perak version of the proverb is '*Nggliong bagei ular di pukul.*'

'*Nggliong*==*menggliong*==*menggliat*.

84. *Seperti tabuan di dalam tukil.*

Like a swarm of bees.

The mumbling or muttering of a person who speaks incoherently is here compared with the buzzing of bees in a cluster.

85. *Siapa makan chabie iyalah berasa pedas.*

He who eats chilies will burn his mouth.

Everyone must be ready to bear the consequences of his own act.

86. *Sebab mulut badan binasa.*

It is by the mouth that the body is ruined.

A single word at a critical time may make or mar a man's fortune.

*Sa'patah chakap terhutang, sa'patah chakap me-lepas-kun hutang.*

87. *Sudah ludah lalu di jilat.*

Licked up after having been ejected from the mouth.

Said of a donor, who repents of his generosity and asks for his gift back again; or of a Mohamedan husband who after divorcing his wife would like to take her back.



88. "*Seperti peniajap berpaling handak ilir.*"

Like a boat starting down-stream and turning (as it leaves the bank.)

A Malay beauty dressed and decked out on the occasion of a festival is compared to a boat equipped for a voyage, at the moment when she heads round to the current.

89. *Seperti isi dengan kuku.*

Like the quick and the nail.

A figure to express the closest degree of friendship. As inseparable as the nail (of a man's finger) and the flesh underneath it.

90. *Sa'manis-manis gula ada pasir didalamnia, dan sa'pahit pahit mambu ada klatnia menjadi ubat.*

However sweet sugar may be, there is always some sand in it, and however bitter the *mambu* may be, its astringent qualities are useful in medicine.

Nothing is altogether good or bad. The leaves of the *mambu* are a native remedy in cases of small-pox. A bunch of them is tied over the door of the house where the sick person lies. When the disease is in its last stage, the leaves are bruised on a stone with rice, and the paste so procured is applied to the surface of the skin to allay irritation.

91. *Seperti belut pulang ka lumpur.*

Like the eel which goes back to the mud.

The return of a person to his own country or house after having been abroad to seek his fortune. The next proverb has a similar meaning.

92. *Seperti ikan pulang ka lubok.*

Like the fish which returns to the pool.

93. *Seperti tetegok di rumah tinggal.*

Like the night-jar at a deserted house.

The *tegok* or *tetegok* is a bird, common in the Malay Peninsula, whose habits are nocturnal and solitary. It has a peculiar, liquid, monotonous call. The phrase is used to signify the solitude and loneliness of a stranger (*orang dagang*) in a Malay kampong.



94. *Semut di pijak ta'mati, gajah harung berkalapangan.*

Without killing the ants on which he treads, the elephant passes by making a wide passage through the jungle.

Said of a person who is particular in his conduct regarding certain observances, ignoring the fact that his open breach of others is patent to everyone.

95. *Seperti anak ayam kehilangan ibunya.*

"Like a chicken which has lost its mother."

Description of a state of mental confusion and anxiety.

96. *Sedap dahulu sakit kemudian.*

"Pleasant at first but followed by pain."

Indulgence in vicious pleasure results in grief and sorrow in the end, "a sugarcane is sweet," say the Malays, "as long as the stem lasts, but when you get to the top (puchuk) you will find it insipid!"

97. *Seperti rusa kena tambat.*

Like a deer tethered to a post.

Stupid and helpless. A domestic animal under the same circumstances would be quite at home, but the deer tied up is out of its element.

98. *Seperti anjing beruleh bangkei.*

Like a dog which has found a dead animal.

Applied to persons who want to keep for themselves something which has fallen in their way, and who grudge others a share, (as dogs growl and snap at each other over a carcass.)

99. *Seperti gajah masuk kampong.*

Like an elephant's incursion into a village.

Refers to the damage done to the crops and gardens of villagers by the arrival of a troop of persons, e. g. the followers of some raja on his travels. Everything eatable is carried off, and the peasant compares the raid to the havoc caused by wild elephants.

100. *Seperti penyapu di ikat benang sutra.*

Like a broom bound with silk thread.



A contemptuous expression for a common person dressed more finely than becomes his position. The broom is the most base of all domestic utensils among Malays, and this adds bitterness to the comparison.

101. *Seperti lemukut di tepi gantang.*

Like the rice-dust (broken grains of rice) on the sides of the measure.

Something of which the presence or absence is equally inappreciable, *masuk pun ta'penoh, terbit pun ta'luah*. The fifth wheel to the coach.

102. *Seperti sayur dengan rambut.*

Like vegetables (compared) with hair.

The difference between an undertaking which promises a reasonable prospect of support and one which does not.

103. *Sayangkan kain buangkan baju.*

Out of concern for the *Sarong*, to throw away the jacket.

A second line, which is sometimes added,

*Sayangkan lain buangkan aku.*

(if you are fond of another, cast me off,) explains the application.

The proverb refers to the dilemma in which a Malay husband is placed, when he proposes to take a second wife, and finds that each lady wishes to be the sole object of his affections.

104. *Sapuluh jong masuk pun anjing ber-chawat ekor juga.*

Ten junks may come in, but the dogs still tuck their tails between their legs.

Ruler may succeed ruler, or other important changes in the government of a country may take place, but the condition of the lower classes will remain the same.

This proverb is to be found in Klinkert's collection and in Favre's dictionary, but the former gives no explanation and that given by Favre is hardly satisfactory. It is best exemplified by another Malay saying, "*Siapa jadi raja pun tangan aku ka dahi juga.*"



“Whoever may be *raja* my hand goes up to my forehead all the same (in allusion to the mode of saluting).”

“*The arrival of ten junks even,*” here used metaphorically for any important or astonishing event, is rather a characteristic figure; in Malay villages on the coasts of the Peninsula there are few events in the quiet lives of the people so important as the arrival of the periodical trading boats.

105. *Sudah ter-lalu hilir malam apa handak dikatakan lagi.*

(The *prahu*) has gone too far down-stream in the night; what more is to be said?

To have overshot the mark or to have done more than was intended and to repent when too late.

In travelling in boats on the rapid rivers of the Peninsula, if the polers, on the way upstream, go past their destination in the darkness, it matters very little, because the boat can come down again with the stream; but it is otherwise if the mistake is made when descending a river, and to go back involves a laborious journey against the current.

106. *Sesat di hujung jalan balik kapangkal jalan.*

If you miss your way go back to the beginning of the road.

If a thing is not likely to succeed it is best to commence *de novo*.

107. *Sirih naik junjong patah.*

As the sirih vine is growing up the prop breaks.

Said of the ruin or misfortune which befalls a family. when its support is suddenly removed by death or otherwise.

108. *Seperti janda belum berlaki.*

Like a widow who has not been married.

109. *Seperti gadis sudah berlaki.*

Like a maiden who has been married.

Compare the following lines from a Malay poem, of which it is enough to explain that earrings *subang* are among the Malays the token of virginity:—

*Sungguh bersubang tidak berdarah  
Bagei mumbang di tebuk tupei.*



110. *Sudah ter-kachak-kan benang arang hitamlah tapak.*

After having trodden on a charcoal line, the soles of the feet are of course black.

Said of a person who wilfully breaks a well known regulation and whose guilt is therefore clear.

The charcoal thread mentioned is the black line used by carpenters in marking timber for sawing.

111. *Sesak ber-undor-undor lari ta'malu menghambat ta'lugu.*

To retreat when hard-pressed, not ashamed to fly and not satisfied when pursuing.

A maxim illustrating Malay tactics in war or piracy. Malay warfare is generally a series of desultory attacks and retreats. Confronted by a superior force the attacking party does not disdain a retrograde movement, and when it is his turn to pursue he does not follow up his advantage.

112. *Seperti kumbang putus tali.*

Like a cockchafer whose string has broken.

Said of a person who has recovered his freedom.

*Kumbang* is the carpenter-bee, which Malay children spin, by means of a tread (tied to one of the insect's legs), to amuse themselves with the buzzing sound which it makes.

113. *Seperti bujuk lepas deri bubu.*

Like a fish (of the kind called *Bujuk*) which has escaped from the trap.

This proverb has much the same meaning as the last.

*Bujuk*, is a fresh water fish found in muddy places. *Bubu*, is a fish-trap made of split bamboo tied with rattan. It has a circular opening which narrows as the end of the passage is reached, and is constructed on the same principle as the eel-pot or lobster-pot. One of the highest mountains in Perak is called *Bubu*. It is supposed to be the fish-trap of a mythological personage named *Sang Kalemбай*, and the rocks in the bed of the Perak river at Pachat are pointed out as his *Sawar*, (stakes which are put down to obstruct a stream and thus to force the fish to take the opening which leads to the trap.)



114. *Seperti ayam kuwis pagi makan pagi kuwis petang makan petang.*

Like a hen, what it scratches up in the morning it eats in the morning, and what it scratches up in the evening it eats in the evening.

A Malay peasant will use this phrase in speaking of his own means of livelihood, if he wants to explain that he makes just enough by his daily labour to support himself from day to day.

“To live from hand to mouth.”

115. *Pagar makan padi, telunjuk merusuk mata.*

The fence eats the corn, the forefinger pierces the eye.

Klinkert's version gives “*menyuchuk*” instead of *merusuk* but this latter word is in use in Perak and seems to mean the same as *sigi*, (to poke with the finger,) and to be less strong than *merunjang* which means “to thrust upwards,” as with a spear.

The saying is sometimes quoted in a rhythmical form,

*Takar minyak sapi  
Di buboh dibawah geta  
Pagar makan padi  
Telunjuk merusuk mata.*

A measure of *ghi* put underneath the sleeping platform; the fence devours the rice; the finger thrusts at the eye.

The meaning is, to suffer injury at the hands of a person from whom protection was naturally to be expected. If the measure of *ghi* disappears, the owner of the house must blame the members of his own family, whose conduct in taking it is as unnatural as that of the hedge in the proverb, which eats up what it was put to protect, or of a man's finger, which injures instead of guarding his eye. Fayre quotes *Hang Tuah* as the work from which he took this proverb.

116. *Pelabor habis Palembang ta'alah.*

The supplies were exhausted but Palembang did not fall.

This refers to an ancient siege of the town of Palembang in Sumatra by the Dutch. According to Malay tradition



the troops of the Hollanders raised the siege after great expense had been incurred in the expedition. The failure of this particular enterprise has ever since been quoted in the above form to signify failures in general.

117. *Pelakat api diatas bumbung.*

To light a fire on the roof.

To destroy a thing on purpose, pretending all the time to be of use.

It is a common thing to light a fire on the ground in front of a Malay house to keep away mosquitoes. The proverb supposes the case of a man professing to light such a fire, but really setting fire to the house.

118. *Peti yang berisi mas perak itu tiada di-lilik-kan orang.*

People do not pour out the contents of the box in which they keep their gold and silver.

Men do not give away their best for nothing, whether, literally, their most valuable possessions, or figuratively, their wisdom, experience, discoveries, etc.

119. *Putus benang dapat di ubong,  
Patah arang sudah sakali.*

The thread severed may be joined again;  
If a piece of charcoal be broken, it is all over.

Near relations or intimate friends do not quarrel irreconcilably, but between strangers or mere acquaintances a collision may end fatally.

120. *Pipit tuli makan ber-hujan,  
Ta halau padi habis  
Handak halau kain basah.*

The deaf *pipit* is feeding in the rain,  
If it is not driven away the *padi* will all be finished,  
To drive it away one must wet one's clothes.

Said of a person in a dilemma; each course open to him presents difficulties.



There are two kinds of *pipit*, small birds which infest the *padi* fields when the grain is ripening. The *pipit tuli* will not move when shouted at, though it will take to flight if an arm is waved or other gesticulations made. The other kind *pipit uban*, or *cheah uban*, so called from its white head, is more easily frightened away.

121. *Pepat di luar ranchong didalam.*

Flat outside and sharp within.

Said of a person whose professions are fair but whose feelings are hostile.

122. *Pachat handak menjadi ular.*

The leech wants to become a snake.

Said in ridicule of unreasonable aspirations.

123. *Puchuk di chita ulam akan datang.*

To be wishing for young shoots just as the fruit arrives.

To receive something much better than what one is wishing for or expecting. *Ulam* is the word applied by Malays to the various kinds of fruit which they eat with *sambal*; e. g. *ulam putih machang*, *ulam petai*, *ulam jering*, etc. When no fruit is to be obtained, *puchuk*, the young shoots of various trees, are used instead.

124. *Padang prahu di lautan,*

*Padang hati di fikiran.*

The field for a ship is the ocean,

The field of the heart is reflection.

125. *Kalau telan mah mati kalau ludah bapa mati,*

“Swallow it and your mother dies reject it and your father dies.”

An awkward alternative quoted proverbially in any case where choice has to be made between two courses each open to objection. Another version is,

*Handak di telan termangkalan, handak di ludah tiada kaluar.*

“Would you swallow it, it sticks in your throat; would you spit it out, it will not go forth.”



126. *Kachang lupakan kulit.*

“The bean forgets its pod.”

Ingratitude. The successful adventurer declines to remember his humble origin.

127. *Kechil-kechil-lah anak, kalau sudah besar menjadi unak.*

“While small, *children*; grown big, *thorns*.”

Youth is the time for education; it is too late to commence tuition when the pupil is capable of resistance.

(It is impossible to reproduce in a translation the play on the words *anak* and *unak*.)

128. *Kalau tiada kulit berchereilah tulang.*

“If it were not for the skin the bones would separate.”

If there were not some important functionary to keep a Government or Society together it would fall to pieces; if the father or mother dies the family is likely to be broken up.

129. *Kamana handak pergi layang-layang itu tali ada di tangan kita.*

“How can the kite get away while the cord is in our hands?”

The sense is, there is no fear of a debtor absconding when his debt is secured by some substantial pledge or deposit in the hands of the creditor. The kite without a string is a very common figure among Malays when describing an uncertain condition. See Crawford, *History Indian Archipelago*, Vol. II. p. 14.

130. *Kechil tangan nyiru sahya tadahkan.*

“If my hands are too small I will hold out a tray.”

Expression of the willingness of a poor man to take all that he can get from the rich or great.

131. *Kechil-kechil anak harimau.*

“Though small, a tiger-cub all the same.”



Even the young of a dangerous animal are not to be trifled with. The Malay ryot must not imagine that he can take a liberty with a raja's son because he happens to be a child.

132. *Kalau sudah untong sa'chupah tiada bulih jadi sa'-gantang.*

"If a *chupah* is gained, there is no chance of its becoming a *gantang*."

Said of one who is just able to support himself, whose daily earnings enable him to live but not to save. The *chupah* and the *gantang* are measures corresponding roughly with the quart and gallon.

133. *Kena pukul di pantat gigi habis tanggal.*

"Struck on the back all its teeth drop out."

An expression used of a fruit-tree laden with fruit which falls off when the stem is shaken?

134. *Kikir pari bebulang kring*  
*Rendam tujuh hari ta basah.*

"A skate-skin grater, a dry hide,

Soaked for seven days is not moistened."

A phrase "used in speaking of any instance of excessive avarice or parsimony; *kikir* means literally "a file" but also signifies "avarice." The proverb illustrates the grasping, hoarding qualities of a miser and the difficulty of getting anything out of him.

135. *Kilat didalam kilau, guruh mengandong hujan.*

"Lightning lurks within brightness, thunder is big with rain."

Some hidden purpose may be concealed under a man's ordinary conduct or demeanour, just as a dangerous flash may be unsuspected amid the general brilliancy of a summer's day, and the first growl of thunder gives notice of an approaching storm though no rain has fallen.

136. *Kundur tiada melata pergi, labu tiada melata mari.*

"If the gourd-plant does not creep forward, the pumpkin-vine will not creep to meet it."



Advances must be made by both sides if two parties are to meet each other half-way. Mutual concessions are likely to bring about an understanding.

137. *Kandur berleting-leting tegang ber-jala-jala.*

"The loose vibrates with a twang, the tight hangs loose like a fringe."

("Black is white and white is black.")

An ironical expression, common in Perak, illustrative of the habitual falsehood and untrustworthy character of the Malays of that state. There is another saying of the same kind, with much the same meaning.

"*Ampat gasal lima genap.*" "Four is odd and five is even."

"*Ber-leting-leting*" signifies to make a twanging sound like that produced by the vibration of a taut string. I have not succeeded in finding the word in any dictionary.

138. *Krus kring seperti bayang*

*Siapa pun tiada menaruh sayang.*

"Thin and dry as a shadow,

There is no one to care about him."

A rhyme used by children making fun of a companion who has the misfortune to be thin.

139. *Kulai-balai bagei sendok di dukong.*

"Swinging about carelessly, like a ladle carried in a bundle."

"Said in ridicule of the gait affected by "fast" Malays, male and female, a swaying movement of the body from the hips while walking.

*Kulai-balai* like a common word *halai balai* (neglectful, careless, *Crawford*), is one of those untranslatable compound words the sound of which is intended to assist the meaning, like the similar English word "hurly-burly," or the Hindustani word *ulta-pulta* (topsy-turvy, higgledy-piggledy.)

*Dukong*, according to Marsden, means to carry on the back or under the arm. *Crawford* translates it "to carry on the hip;" Favre, "on the back or hip." In this proverb di-



*dukong*, no doubt, means "carried in a bundle on the back." Malays moving from one place to another usually carry their cooking utensils and a few days provisions on their backs. The load is bundled up in a *sarong* or other cloth, one end of which is brought over one shoulder, and the other end under the other arm, both ends being tied together across the chest. A native spoon for culinary purposes, (a wooden handle lashed with rattan to a cocoanut shell), is an awkward article to carry in such a bundle. It sticks out inconveniently and sways about with the motion of the bearer.

140. *Kalis bagei ayer di daun kladi.*

"Rolling off, like water on a *Caladium* leaf."

A simile used in speaking of one who will pay no attention to advice. Good counsel has as little effect on him as water on a *kladi* leaf, "runs off like water off a duck's back."

Klinkert (and Favre following him) gives *kalis* (peeled, pared,) the secondary meaning to be "unwilling to listen to remonstrance." They do not seem to have known this proverb, though it seems to explain satisfactorily the secondary meaning of the word.

141. *Kamudi deri haluwan.*

"Steered from the bow."

An expression used of a home in which the wife rules and where the husband is "henpecked."

142. *Kail sa'buntoh umpannia sa'ekor.*

*Sahari putus sa'hari berhanyut.*

"A single hook and one piece of bait.

Once broken off you may drift for a day."

Don't run the risk of having your business stopped by failing to provide the apparatus in sufficient quantity.

143. *Kata tidak dipegangnia janji tidak ditepatnia.*

"He neither holds to his word nor carries out his promises."

A general description of an untrustworthy person.

144. *Kreja raja itu junjong, kreja kita di kilik.*

"The raja's business is borne on the head, our own may (at the same time) be carried under the arm."



A common phrase in Malay States where the ryots are liable to forced labour at the order of the raja. It means "while obeying the royal commands let us also keep an eye on our own affairs."

145. *Kasih-kan anak tangis-tangis-kan*

*Kasih-kan bini tinggal-tinggal-kan.*

"To love one's children one must weep for them sometimes; to love one's wife one must leave her now and then."

The second proposition in this sentence recalls the fact that with the Malays, who are Mohamedans, polygamy is an institution.

146. *Karam dilaut bulih ditimba karam dihati sudah sakali.*

"The boat which is swamped at sea may be baled out, but a shipwreck of the affections is final."

147. *Kain sa'lei peminggang habis.*

"One cloth round the waist is all."

A figurative mode of expressing that a person is extremely poor.

148. *Kurbau sa'kawan lalu di kandang, manusia sa'orang tiada terkawal.*

"A whole herd of buffaloes may be shut up in a pen, but there is one being who is not to be guarded."

A woman, of course, is meant. I think that the Abbe Favre has missed the point in translating this proverb, of which he gives a slightly different version:—

*Kalau kurbau sa'kawan dapat di-kawal-kan manusia sa'orang tiada dapat di-malum-kan.*

The French translation runs, "it est plus facile de garder une etable pleine de buffles que de ramener un seul homme à la raison," but I should prefer to render it. "Though a herd of buffaloes may be guarded, a single human being (a woman) is not to be understood."

149. *Gigi dengan lidah ada kala bergigit juga.*

"The teeth sometimes bite the tongue."



The best of friends fall out sometimes.

150. *Getik-kan puru di bibir.*

“To be impatient with a sore on one’s lip.”

To hate one’s own child because it is deformed or ugly.

151. *Gerniut-gerniut bagei kambing ber-ulat.*

“As thick as maggots in a (dead) goat.”

A simile to express the number and movement of a crowd of persons *e. g.* an assemblage of persons in a Malay house,

*Gerniut* is not to be found in the dictionaries, but I believe it to signify the creeping motion of worms, etc.

152. *Gaya sahja rasanian Wallah.*

“A project only; the result God knoweth.”

“L’ homme propose mais Dieu dispose.”

“*Man proposes, God disposes*” is one of the proverbs mentioned by Archbishop Trench (*Proverbs and their lessons*, p. 63) as probably common to every nation in Europe. It has probably found its way into Malay through the Arabs. *Wallah* means literally “By God” though I have translated it as if *Wallahu alam* had been written.

153. *Gelagah borah rambutan jantan.*

*Orang berbunga dia berbunga.*

*Orang berbuah dia tidak.*

“Like a barren tree; others flower, he too puts forth flowers; others bear fruit, he does not.”

Said of a pretentious or ostentatious person, who wishes to imitate every one who has or does anything that he admires. He takes in hand many projects but none of them reach completion. I have been unable to identify the plant here called “*gelagah borah*.” In Favre’s dictionary *gelegah* is explained to mean “a kind of reed (*saccharum spontaneum*).”

154. *Gajah lalu de beli kwasa tidak terbeli.*

“He could buy the elephant, but not the goad.”

A taunt directed against a person who does not take any trouble about minor details when the main thing is secured, *e. g.* who, having a large house, neglects to provide a carpet or lamp.



155. *Luka itu sumboh parutnia tinggal juga.*

“The wound is healed, but the scar of it remains.”

A feud may seem to be forgotten but the sense of injury remains and may take an active form at any time.

156. *Lembu tandok panjang, tiada menandok pun dikata orang juga iya menandok.*

“Cows have long horns and so, though they injure no one, people say they are vicious.”

A man of a family, tribe or race which bears a bad character may be an excellent person, but he will be distrusted all the same.

“Give a dog a bad name and hang him.”

157. *Lepas deripada mulot buaya, masuk ka mulot hari-mau.*

“To fall into the jaws of the tiger after escaping from the mouth of the alligator.”

“Out of the frying pan into the fire.”

158. *Lagi tongkat lagi senjata.*

“Weapons to boot, besides staves.”

To have every advantage *e. g.* to be good and wise and fortunate besides being rich.

159. *Lampau serei masuk gulei tentu maung.*

“If there is too much lemon-grass in the curry, it is certain to be nasty.”

Said of an unsuitable match, *e. g.* the marriage of an old man with a young girl. Here one element, *age* preponderates in the transaction, and the result is not likely to be satisfactory.

160. *Lagi lauk lagi nasi.*

“The more meat the more rice.”

The more rajas the greater the number of followers.



*Lauk*, is anything substantial eaten with rice, such as meat, fish, vegetables, whether curried or not.

161. *Lenggok-lenggang bagei chupah hanyut.*

“Rocking to and fro, like a floating cocoanut shell.”

A simile used of a woman of openly wanton conduct.

*Lenggang* is the Malay equivalent for “swagger.” See No. 139.

162. *Lagi trang lagi bersuloh.*

“Though it is already light be carries a torch.”

Said of an upright judge, or other virtuous person, whose conduct will bear the closest scrutiny.

163. *Langit runtuh bumi chayer.*

“If the sky falls the earth melts.”

The downfall of an important personage involves the destruction of those immediately beneath and dependent on him.

164. *Lang punggok lang ber-ikan*

*Tidor siang berjaga malam.*

“The tail-less kite that preys on fish sleeps all day and is astir at night.”

Said of a noted thief or other bad character.

*Lang punggok* is probably some kind of owl, but I have not identified the species.

165. *Muka berpandang budi kadapatan.*

“To look on the face after having found out the character.”

Good manners do not permit Malays to betray open distrust of one another and, while the rules of courtesy are observed, it is difficult to discover from a man's demeanour what his professions may be worth. But “fore-warned is fore-armed” and a Malay, who meets in a bargain or in any domestic negotiation some-one regarding whose unfriendly disposition he has received private information, goes to the interview prepared “to look on the face with a knowledge of the character.”



166. *Minyak dengan ayer adakah berchampur?*

“Will oil mix with water”?

Distinctions in rank should be observed and upheld.

167. *Mati-mati berminyak biar léchuk.*

If you use oil let the hair be thoroughly greased.”

Do a thing thoroughly whether it be a good or bad action.

Similar proverbs are given by Klinkert in his collection;

*Mati-mati mandi biar basah; mati-mati berdawat biarlah hitam.*

The idea seems to be similar to that expressed by the familiar saying “One may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.” The Perak Malays say “*Pala-pala aku handak mati biarlah aku mati ber-kapan chindei.*” “Supposing that I must suffer death let it, at all events, be for a silk robe.” In other words, let me have the satisfaction of attaining notoriety by having killed some important personage and let me not be slain as a punishment for a vulgar or common offence.

168. *Malu berdayong prahu hanyut.*

“(He is) ashamed to row, (so) the boat drifts.”

The man who is ashamed to put his own hand to his work will make nothing of it.

169. *Mati segan hidup ta'mahu.*

“Disinclined to die but get not willing to live.”

Said of a person who is a burden on his family and is too lazy to do anything for his own support.

Sometimes the phrase is inverted, *Hidup segan mati ta'mau*; but the meaning is much the same.

170. *Mahukah orang menghujankan garamnya.*

“Will a man put his salt out in the rain?”

Will a man publish his own dishonour, or put himself to open shame and discredit by exposing the faults of his own household?



171. *Matahari itu bulihkah ditutup dengan nyiru?*

“Can the sun be covered up with a winnowing sieve?”

It is impossible to conceal what is patent to all. A great crime will almost certainly be discovered.

Another version (given by Klinkert) has *bangkei gajah*, the carcase of an elephant, instead of *mata hari*, the sun.

172. *Melepaskan anjing tersepit.*

“To extricate a dog caught (in a hedge.)”

To meet with an ill return for doing an act of kindness, the chances bring, that the dog will bite its rescuer.

173. *Merájuk ayer di ruwang.*

“To be out of temper with water in the hold.” To sulk and do nothing when the boat has sprung a leak.

The ryot cannot afford to shew temper with his chief, on whom he depends for support. His means of livelihood disappear if he does.

174. *Minum ayer sa'rasa duri,*

*Makan sa'rasa lilin,*

*Tidor ta'léna, mandi ta'basah.*

“To taste thorns in water,

To taste wax in food,

To take rest without sleep and to bathe without being wetted.”

Describes the restless and uneasy condition of a man whose mind is preoccupied with some plan or project which he does not see how to put into execution. The first line will be found in Klinkert's collection and in Favre's dictionary, *sub voce* “*minum*,” but the meaning there given is hardly satisfactory.

175. *Musang terjun lantei terjongket.*

“When the wild cat jumps down the flooring laths (split bamboo) stick up.”

The evil reputation of a criminal will cling about the scene of his misdeeds long after he has disappeared.



176. *Mengwak-mengwak bagei hidong gajah.*

“Bellowing as if he had the snout of an elephant.”

An uncomplimentary simile used regarding a person who breathes loud.

177. *Menguap bagei orang ombak.*

“Gasping like a man at the point of death.”

A Perak phrase used of a person to whom every movement seems to be an exertion.

178. *Masam bagei nikah ta'suka.*

“As cross as an unwilling bride.”

179. *Melabuh-labuh bagei buntal di-tiup.*

“Swelling and swelling, like the *buntal* fish blown out.”

180. *Menchonga rupa kerbau jantan kemdian.*

“Staring right and left like a buffalo bull which walks last of the herd.”

Said of a man in attendance upon Mohamedan women when they walk abroad.

181. *Mengleting-leting bagei chaching kapanasan,*

Turning round and round, like a worm in the heat (of the sun).”

Said of a person wandering about in an undefined and purposeless manner. Favre has (*sub voce* “*chaching*”) “*Seperti chaching kena ayer panas,*” like a worm touched by hot water, which he explains to mean a person writhing under misfortune. *Mengleting* (Perak) *me-lenting*, wriggling about.

182. *Meriap-riap seperti kangkong di olak jamban.*

“Flourishing like the *kangkong* beside a cess-pool.”

Said disparagingly of a person who seems to be doing well in the world. “Ill weeds grow apace.”

*Kangkong*, (*nom d'une plante potagère, convoloulus raptans*; Favre,) is a very common and rather despised vegetable which grows freely without cultivation.



*Riap*, joyous, mirthful, means also luxuriant as applied to vegetation.

183. *Minum chuka pagi hari.*

“To drink vinegar in the morning.”

Something that “goes against the grain” *e. g.* polygamy, from the point of view of the wives. Malay women are extremely jealous, and one of several wives of one husband (*perampuan berrnadau*) will describe her lot by this phrase, “*minum chuka*, etc.”

184. *Mengalis kain payah juga ka-cherok;  
Mengalis chakap dimata-mata sahja.*

“To change a garment there is the trouble of going into a corner, but to change words (break promises) is the simplest thing in the world.”

185. *Meniaga buluh kasap.  
Hujung hilang pangkal lesap.*

“If you trade in the rough bamboo, you lose the top and the bottom disappears.”

To lose one's capital besides forfeiting all the anticipated profit, by a foolish investment.

*Buluh kasap* is a kind of bamboo, (also called *buluh telor* and *buluh telang*), which is of no use for building purposes, the wood being extremely thin and the bore large. The Rawah Malays boil *pulut* rice in lengths of it to give to their friends on feast days, and the custom prevails also in some parts of Perak.

Goldsmith's “gross of green spectacles” is just the kind of transaction to which this proverb would apply.

186. *Menahan jerat ditempat genting.*

“To set a snare in a narrow place.”

To take advantage of another's difficulties, *e. g.* to purchase (property for a quarter of its value) from a man in distressed circumstances, (by tempting him with ready money.)

187. *Menulong kerbau ditangkap harimau.*

To go to the rescue of a buffalo which has been seized by a tiger.”



To make professions of assistance, but really to take advantage of the misfortunes of the person in want of it.

Malays who follow up a tiger which has carried off a buffalo, cut the throat of the latter, if it is still alive, in order to be able to eat the meat.

188. *Manis mulutnia berchakap,  
Seperti santan manisan, didalamniya pahit bagei ham-  
pedu.*

“The mouth speaks sweet things, like sweetmeats made with cocoanut, but inside there is bitterness as of gall.”

Hypocrisy. “Lingua susurronis est pejor felle draconis.”

189. *Membuat baik tiada dipuji,  
Membuat jahat tiada dikeji.*

“If he does well no one praises him,  
If he does wrong no one despises him.”

Said of the condition of a slave in the household of a Malay raja or chief.

190. *Menyaladang bagei panas dipadang.*

“Stretching away like a plain lit up by the sun.”

An illustration of the even justice which should be the measure of a man's dealings with his neighbour. To run over your neighbour's rice field and to pick your way over your own (say the Perak Malays) is like the unequal light in a thicket, not like the broad blaze of sunlight in the plain,

(*Ladang orang berlari-lari, ladang kita ber-jangkei-jangkei.*)

Not a bad illustration of the Christian maxim “Do as you would be done by.”

191. *Nafsu-nafsi Raja dimata Sultan dihati.*

“The desires are a raja in the eyes and a Sultan in the heart.”

Compare No. 10, “Ikut hati mati, ikut rasa binassa.”

192. *Handak masak langsung hangus.*

“Intending to cook food, to go and burn it.”

To spoil any undertaking by excessive zeal.



193. *Hujan jatuh kapasir.*

“Rain that falls on the sand.”

Clean thrown away, like favours bestowed on a man who shews no appreciation of them.

194. *Harap hati handak memeluk gunung, apa daya? tangan ta' sampei.*

The desire of the heart may be to grasp a mountain, but what is the use? the arm will not reach round it.”

Said of a person desirous of marrying above his or her station.

195. *Hangus tiada berapi, karam tiada berayer.*

“Burnt without fire, foundered without water.”

A catastrophe, the cause of which is not apparent and for which it is difficult to impute blame to any one.

196. *Handak sombong berbini baniak, handak megah berlawan lebih.*

“To shew arrogance marry a number of wives, to attain celebrity be forward in fighting.”

A maxim of Malay chiefs.

197. *Hati gajah sama dilapah.*

*Hati kuman sama dichechap.*

“Together we have sliced the heart of the elephant,  
Together we have dipped the heart of the mite.”

To share good and evil fortune, plenty and want, together

Said of tried friends and comrades.

*Chichap* or *chechap* is to dip e. g. food into gravy or sauce, bread into sugar, *hulam* into *sambal*, etc. etc.

Another common proverb conveying a similar idea, namely the readiness of sworn comrades to face together whatever may befall them, is “*Changkat sama didaki, lurah sama diturun.*” “Together we climb the hill, together we descend into the valley.





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