

Women of Java and Their Ways

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WELTEVREDEN, Java, Aug. 8.—
(Special Correspondence of The Bee.) I want to tell you something about the little brown people of Java. They are the most lovable of all colored races outside of Japan and even more quaint than the Japanese. There are 25,000,000 of them on this little island and they are swarming about me as I make notes under the shade of the palm trees. My seat looks out on the wide canal which runs through Weltevreden. It is walled with brick, but at every few feet there are stone steps leading down into the water and in each of these places Javanese girls are standing waist deep in the canal washing themselves or their clothes.

They are a cleanly people. Every Javanese takes his bath night and morning and the bright cottons they wear are frequently secured. The little girls down there in the water have bag-like skirts, or sarongs, wrapped tightly about their plump bodies just under the arms and the rich golden brown of their shoulders shows out as they bend down at their work. The wet sarongs cling to their forms like the traditional paper on the wall and they look like brown statues with the lightest of draping. Notice how their shoulders bob up and down as they rub the clothes on the stones. There is one turning around; she is wringing the clothes, and here is another holding a wet garment high in the air and bringing it down with a slap on the steps to get the dirt out.

How the Javanese Bathe.

See the men and women swimming about in the canal. There are scores of them, bathing together, all dressed in these thin cotton sarongs. There are grandmothers and granddaughters, old men and young men, children and babies, the latter in the arms of their mothers, being dipped in and out.

Here come two girls of 16 for their daily swim in the warm flowing water. They are well dressed, after the Javanese style; each wears a long cotton jacket over the sarong of skirt which forms the costume of both women and men, and each carries another sarong with her to use in



"THE WOMEN ARE NOT BEAUTIFUL."

looking man. The people are about as tall as the Japanese, their average height being a little more than five feet. Both sexes are plump and well shaped and exceedingly straight. They have slender limbs, small wrists and ankles and long, slender fingers. They look not unlike the Filipinos, save that their foreheads are, if anything, higher and they are of a more pronounced Malay type. Many of them have high cheek bones and their eyes are a trifle slant, making you think of the Chinese. They have thick lips, though nothing like so thick as the negroes.

The women as a rule are not as good looking as the men, although many of the young girls are pretty. Those of the better classes are often fine looking, having high, narrow foreheads, fairly good noses and luscious red lips. They are particular as to matters of etiquette and are universally polite and well behaved. This is so of both sexes.

They Marry at Twelve.

The women marry very young. Girls are often mothers at 11 or 12 years of age and old maids are almost unknown. Among the poorer classes the women do as much work as the men. The whole family in a manner takes care of itself and the more children a poor man has the richer he is. It is not uncommon for a woman to have a dozen children, although, owing to sanitary conditions, the families are not as a rule much larger than ours, many of the children dying in infancy. Many of the people are Mohammedans, but as a rule they have but one wife, more being common only among the chiefs and nobles.

I am told that the women believe in love potions and that there are witch doctors who sell stuff which, introduced into the food or drink of a man, will make him your lover. I should think the recipe for this might be valuable to the patent medicine men of our country. The women are very jealous. They understand poisons as well as love potions and such of the Dutch officials and soldiers as form matrimonial alliances are careful in breaking them, for desertion may bring about a terrible revenge on the part of the woman.

They Are Business Women.

Come with me to the bazaars and take a look at the business women of Java. They do the greater part of the buying and selling and they are as sharp traders as you will find anywhere. The only women like them are those of Burmah, who look and act much the same.

The most of the business of this part of the world is done in great bazaars, or vast department stores, under one roof. The only difference between our department stores and the bazaars is that in the latter each counter has its own merchant, who owns the goods piled about him and that there are hundreds of merchants selling the same kind of goods in the same place.

Sometimes the bazaars cover acres. At Buitenzorg they are in the form of a hollow square, the roofs being upheld by white pillars. In the center of the square is a court filled with market men and women, who have temporary roofs to shield them from the sun. The bazaars proper are paved with red brick; they run in one long aisle lined with stores around the great square. The goods are spread out on little

counters, piled up on the floor or hung up behind the merchants, or more often, if I may use the term, merchantesses, who squat on the bricks.

One section is given up to the cloth bazaars. Here the gayest of calicoes hang on poles about the walls. There are blue, red and yellow goods of all kinds, forming a striking background to the brown-faced, bare-ankled, bare-footed women, who sit there and sell. Farther on are the tailors. There are dozens of shops, each owned by a male or female dressmaker, who is working away. How an American tailor would laugh at the sight! They are using sewing machines, but the machines are all worked by hand and they rest flat on boards on the floor and not on stands, as with us. Here is a girl sewing on a silk jacket. She sits cross-legged on the floor with the machine in front of her. Now she has stopped sewing and is reeling a spool of pink silk on the bobbin. She holds the machine between her bare toes as she works. She is bare-armed and bare-shouldered and she has beautiful hands.

In the next shop is a prettier woman, dressed in a cream colored jacket and bright red sarong. A fierce Malay man wearing a turban, a red jacket and black gown, sits beside her. It may be her husband or possibly a customer waiting for that skirt on which she is sewing. Notice the jewelry which the woman wears. She has a half dozen bracelets of silver and a bracelet and three rings of gold. Her jacket is fastened at the breast with a gr at medallion of silver, to which hang 1 ng silver chains, and she has a silver belt around her waist.

Female Druggists.

Leaving the tailor shops we go on to the drug stores. These are in little sheds roofed with palm leaves upheld by poles of bamboo. In each shed is a table just about as big as a double bed and about as high from the ground. In the center of the table squats the druggist with her goods about her in little flat baskets. She sits with her feet under her, and in most cases chews tobacco or betel nut as she sells. The baskets are of all sizes; they are filled with various kinds of roots, nuts and powders. One basket contains cotton bands, another has a white powder, and in others there are rose leaves, cloves, pepper ginger, and every conceivable thing. As we wait a woman comes up with a baby who looks pale and sick. The druggist sizes the little one up with her eye and then gives the mother about a quart of various medicines and tells her to boil them up into a tea for the sick infant.

Farther on we stop in the tobacco bazaar. Here the business is done by both women and men. Tobacco is sold in great quantities in cigarettes, in cigars and in the lump or roll. The most of the native tobacco is put up in rolls, twisted like ropes. The wrapping paper is banana leaf, which is fastened together by a thorn pinned through the ends. Sometimes the bundles are tied with strands of dried banana peel. Banana leaves, banana peel and thorns formed the packing paper of the whole market, and all sorts of goods are done up in them. There are places which sell noth-

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SWEET COCOANUT PEDDLER OF DJOKJA.

the bath. Now they have stopped on the bank within twenty feet of where I am writing. They are letting down their hair. It is long and reaches to the waist. See, each girl is twisting it up in a knot and fastening it tight to the top of her head, so that it may not impede her while swimming. Now they take off their jackets and hold up the sarongs they have brought with them. These are bags of bright figured cotton about a yard wide and two yards in length. Each girl steps inside one and pulls it up under her arms and at the same time allows her dress sarong to drop to her feet. She is now penned in, as it were, in this wide bag, with her arms and shoulders exposed. She pulls the bag close to her person, twisting it this way and that to tighten it, and fastens it by a knot at the breast. She now folds up her other dress and lays it with the jacket in a neat pile on the bank and jumps into the stream. Her sister has followed, and the two are paddling about like two brown ducks. They swim this way and that. Now you see only their heads and now the soles of their little brown feet.

They stand in the canal and scour themselves, and after a long time spent in splashing about walk up the steps, two dripping Venuses. I am interested in watching them get out of their wet dresses and into the dry ones, but they do it in the bright light of this tropical sun without the least exposure of person. They are modest without and as innocent as that little baby who stands there on that porch astride the hips of her twelve-year-old mother staring at me.

Javanese Women Not Beauties.

The Javanese cannot be said to be beautiful, although you now and then see a good