

Carpenter's Letter

(Continued from Sixth Page)

ing else, the merchants coming there for their leaves and string.

In the Markets of Djokja.

Some of the most interesting bazaars I have seen in Java are those of Djokja. This is the capital of a state far in the interior, ruled by a sultan, where the natives are much as they were centuries ago when the Dutch first came to the country. Djokja is a large city and its bazaars cover many acres. They consist of vast sheds roofed with thin brick tiles, which are green with the moss of old age. Here the business is done almost entirely by women, the various trades and goods being classified. In one section I found nothing but coal merchants, sooty-faced girls squatting on tables with piles of charcoal about them. Each girl had a bundle of banana leaves beside her and her measure of value seemed to be what one leaf would hold. The leaves were about as large as a sheet of foolscap and a leaf full of coal sold for 2 cents. The string was a strip of rattan fiber.

Next to the coal sheds were the vegetable merchants, and farther on sheds contain-



TWELVE-YEAR-OLD MOTHER WITH HER BABY.

position to that of the women of Japan. You see them laboring in the fields, cultivating the rice, picking tea and coffee and working at every trade along with the men. In the markets they act as porters, going about with baskets slung to their shoulders and backs. They have a queer cry, a sort of a ye! ye! ye! as they walk along with their burdens; this is a warning to the people to get out of the road. They will carry your marketing a mile for a couple of cents and be glad of the job.

The women are the chief purchasers in the markets, and I venture to say the woman keeps the purse of the family.

It seems odd to see women butchers, but there are scores of them in the Djokja bazaars. They squat cross-legged on mats behind tables a foot high loaded with mutton and beef in all sorts of chunks and slices. Each woman has a long, sharp-pointed knife, with which she cuts according to order. The scales are seldom used, and the meat is sold at so much a slice, little regard being paid to the part of the animal from where the meat comes.

There is a great deal of fish in the markets, and especially dried fish, which is used to cook in rice and other vegetable stews. There are pieces of bullock skin sold as cracklings for the same purpose, and in the rice markets there are hundreds of yellow-faced girls with plug earrings who squat before piles of white rice and measure it out in coconut shells at so much a shell.

One-Cent Business.

The purchases are everywhere exceedingly small. A nickel will buy a meal for a family and a cent is the cost of many single articles. I stood one day and watched a woman buy some dried fish of a Chinese. The fish was cut up in pieces no larger than a postage stamp and about half an inch thick. The woman had picked out five of these pieces, examining them carefully to see that they were good. She finally put her hand on them and offered the merchant a cent. The Chinese took up the fish and wrapped it up in a banana leaf, leaving out one of the pieces. The woman refused to take it, and she fought for ten minutes in her efforts to get an extra piece, the value of which, reduced to our money, was just one-fourth of a cent. The next purchaser bought 2 cents' worth, getting eight little cubes of salt fish, and while I waited, a full half hour, I judge, there was no purchase made of more than a nickel in value.

The worst thing about the women of Java is their custom of chewing the betel and tobacco. As for smoking I have seen women doing that in so many parts of the world that I have grown accustomed to it, and rather like to see the blue wreaths flowing from the ruby lips up into the air. It is different with chewing, especially the betel. This discolors the teeth, giving them the hue of black varnish; it fills the mouth with a blood-red saliva and makes the tongue black. Tobacco chewing as done in Java is fully as bad. The women use enormous quids. I have seen girls with wads inside their mouths as big as the fist of a thirteen-pound baby. Sometimes the girl keeps the chew in her cheek and sometimes she allows it to glide out to her lips, holding it there between the teeth, while at

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A PORTER OF THE BAZAAR.

ing fruits, bamboos, chickens and eggs. The vegetables were sold in piles. I saw one pile of five potatoes, each the size of a walnut, and was told that I could have it for 1 Javanese cent, equal to two-fifths of a cent of our money. The same merchant had two piles of string beans, a little pile of tea, which she was selling out by the cupful, and, altogether, a stock worth not more than 25 cents of our money.

The cheapest things of all are the fruits, which are of every tropical variety. I come home every day loaded with mangoes, bananas, oranges and pineapples and my chief drink is coconut water, which I buy of the coconut peddlers in the bazaars. There is a sweet little coconut seller in Djokja, who has the freshest of green coconuts always on hand. She sells them for 2 cents apiece and will open them up with a cleaver, so that you can drink the sweet coconut water fresh from the shell. I assure you it is a drink for the gods.

Pigeons Which Whistle.

I stopped in the chicken market and found that I could buy a pair of broilers for a shilling and then went to a shed where there were hundreds of cages of pigeons of all colors. The cages were of bamboo, each about as big around as a flour barrel and a foot or so high. Each cage was filled with pigeons, which were selling for 2 cents and upwards apiece. The woman who was peddling them out was selling whistles with them, to be tied to the tails of the pigeons, so that they might make a whistling noise as they flew through the air. This is one of the customs of Java. I saw the same thing done in north China, the whistles being fastened to the tails of the birds to scare off the hawks. I bought four little whistles for 10 cents and the Javanese maiden who sold them to me took out one of the birds and fastened a bright red whistle to the roots of its tail feathers to show me how they were used. The whistle is tied round one or more feathers, so that it stands upright in the tail, catching the wind as the bird flies and making a shrill, whistling noise.

In the Djokja markets the women act as cashiers and bankers. In every bazaar I saw them squatting behind little tables with pennies and half pennies and all sorts of silver and copper coins piled up before them. The chief business of these women is making change. They charge 1 cent or more for each gulden, so that the lowest rate is 1 per cent. They are backed by the Chinese, who furnish the capital and pay them so much a day for their work. The Chinese, as I shall show later, do a large part of the retail business of Java. They have nearly all of the stores which require money to operate and they are also the pawnbrokers.

Women as Porters and Laborers.

The Javanese women occupy a similar

THE ILLUSTRATED BEE.

others, mixed with saliva in a sort of mush. It placidly rests between her lower lip and lower teeth. In such cases there is often a stream of yellow juice trickling down from the corners of the mouth, and altogether it is disgusting.

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