

The Sultan of Sulu and His Comic Opera Court

MANILA, Oct. 1, 1899.—The sultan of Sulu is now our great and good friend. This has long ago been chronicled in the newspapers, which have told that this queer potentate of the east has signed a convention with us. He lives at Maybun, the capital of the Sulu archipelago, with his harem; he is virtually a citizen of the United States, and is to enjoy the protection of our army and our navy, yet he keeps his royal residence and keeps his harem. The story of how he came under our flag is now told for the first time.

The largest of the Sulu archipelago group is Mindanao, but the potentate who rules over the group lives on the island of Sulu. The inhabitants are called "Moros," and there is an emphatic distinction between them and all other Filipinos. Agulnaldo's name means nothing in the Sulu archipelago, and the Spanish foothold there was slippery. The subjugation of this group presented a different proposition from that which was being considered in Luzon and the Visayan group. Though the "Moros" are a more warlike people, our dealings with them have so far been in the realm of diplomacy, not of arms.

The federal system, which was brought to a state of perfection in mediæval Europe, has prevailed more crudely in some of the Pacific islands. During the age of the crusades the southern islands of the Philippines were given part of their population and language, and their religion, to which they have clung tenaciously. Traces of Arabic and Sanscrit are to be found in the Sulu language; it was from Arabia that the ancient emigration took place. The Moros are subject to petty chiefs called "dattos," and these in turn are subject to the sultans of Mindanao and of Sulu, the latter being the overlord and claiming the allegiance of the former. It was to the sultan of Sulu, therefore, that the Spaniards made overtures, and with whom they finally made an agreement, the articles of which were mutually disregarded. It was to secure a continuance of this agreement that General John C. Bates was dispatched to hold parley with his august majesty, Lori Padka Maha Lori Maniana Sultan Haji Muhamed Jamalul Kiram.

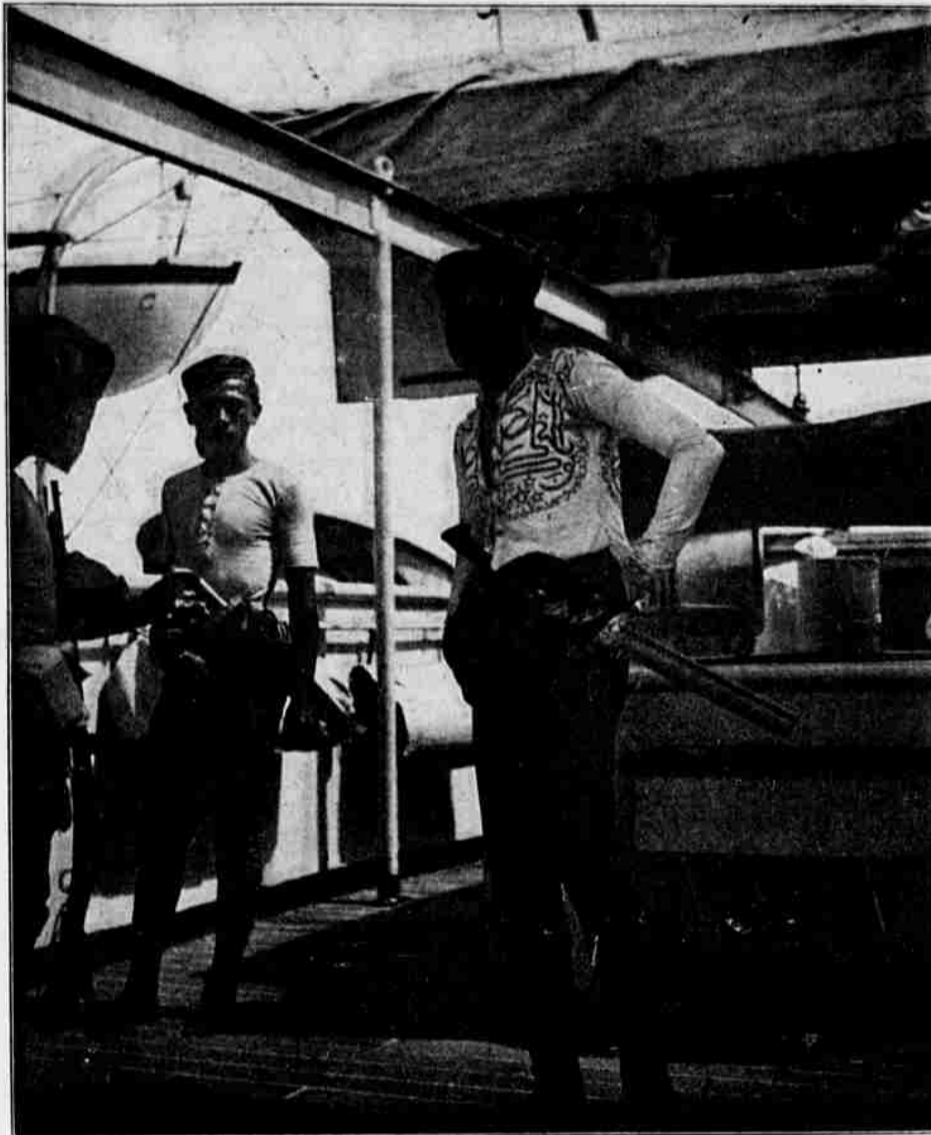
Common Sense with a Sultan.

The general went to Jolo, across the island from Maybun, with no other instructions except to use common sense. For several weeks he remained there without seeing the sultan, who felt indisposed. Conferences were held with the powerful chiefs and "dattos," and the meeting with his royal highness was finally arranged to take place at the palace of the sultan. The United States cruiser Charleston, Captain Pigman commanding, was at Jolo, and it was decided that this should take the general to Maybun. I happened to be one of a small party which was making the tour of the islands on the government transport Pennsylvania. There were other American women besides myself on board, and we had the good fortune to be included in an invitation to attend the conference, extended by Captain Pigman and General Bates.

We were not only destined to be the first American women to set foot on the island of Sulu, but we were also to be the first to behold the sultan.

One of the most powerful chiefs on the island, named "Datto Calvi," was on board with his suite; we sat on the after bridge most of the time, and as I looked down on the deck below I could hardly realize that I was not in a balcony seat of a New York play house watching a comic opera. No Italian bandits or other stage heroes who exult in the triumph of the costumers' art ever presented a more picturesque or ferocious appearance than our band of Moros. The physical difference between the Moros and other Filipinos is as great as that of their customs and religion. Their dress is essentially barbaric in its cut and coloring. Instead of the loose white shirt and trousers of the northern islanders, the Moros wear close-fitting suits of gaudy cotton or silk, the quality and ornamentation depending

on the means or rank of the individual. No Moro stirs abroad without a "barong" or a "kris" thrust in his sash. These knives are beautifully made and their edges are ground as keen as a razor. The Moro sometimes uses them for a general utility, as the Cuban uses the "machete," but they are often employed for a more sinister purpose. A "barong" deftly handled makes short work



THE "DATTO" ON THE SHIP.

of the life of a human being, and the Moros are skilled in this sort of carving.

Scorned Our Food.

The "Datto Calvi" had expressed so much friendliness for our government that General Bates thought that he would have a favorable influence on the sultan. But it was impossible, both for reasons of state and safety, for him to travel without a sufficient number of followers to uphold his dignity. The "datto" himself was a young fellow, and quite a dude, according to Moro standards. He was a man that would be singled out anywhere as used to command; he strutted across the deck in a manner imitable, his turban of raw silk tied with a style and a strong individuality, and his clothes showing a certain harmony of taste—they consisted of but two pieces. The "datto" was followed everywhere by the betel nut carrier, who kept him continually supplied with a good "chew;" his other retainers were men at arms and dressed only less gorgeously than the "datto" himself. They were shown all the civilized wonders in the way of guns on board, and were specially interested in the rapid-fire gun with a string of cartridges. A meal was served them which they found so distasteful that one of the suite was called in to cook some rice for his lord in the proper style.

At half-past 11 we slowed up opposite Maybun. There was only one person on the island

of Sulu who was capable of acting as General Bates' interpreter, a young German who was born there and had married a native woman. All our communications at Maybun were conducted through him. There was a certain program laid out for us; we were first to proceed to the residence of the dowager sultana, who lived within the crowded precincts of the village. While we were looking this way and that, trying to discern a building sufficiently magnificent to be the abode of one so exalted in rank we were halted before a small house, the central one of a group of huts, distinguished only from those that surrounded it by the fact that it was constructed of rough planks,

while the others were of bamboo and nipa. We were ushered inside and invited to sit down. It was the residence of the Sultana Inchi Jamela, the mother of the present sultan.

The room into which we crowded was not more than fifteen feet long and ten broad. A table, covered by a cloth, was in the middle and a number of bentwood chairs were grouped about it, an especially large one being provided for the general. At one end was a sort of couch or divan built of boards, over which was thrown a covering of purple satin, and three of us sat on this. By the time we had all crowded in and found seats the people who had followed us on the tug arrived. There was a general moving about to make more room, extra chairs were brought in from some interior region and, to our surprise, we found ourselves all accommodated, though wedged in so tight that it was impossible for one to move without disturbing the whole roomful. At the end of the table, opposite General Bates, were two "dattos" and the sultan's youngest brother. Outside the door and the one window was the population of Maybun. It was a promiscuous mixture of young and old, patrician and plebeian, all equally overcome by intense curiosity. The emotions which their faces so ingenuously expressed may be seen playing over the countenances of a young American when he attends his first circus.

An attendant placed a glass bowl filled with water on the table, one of the "dattos" leaned over and spit into it a mouthful of betel nut juice. To our horror this was merely a preliminary for refreshments, for more retainers appeared with trays, on which were chocolate in glasses and plates of peculiar-looking cakes. I shall never forget the varying expressions which flitted over the faces of our little band, and which finally settled down to a resignation animated solely by patriotism. These people were evidently setting their best before us, they were of a race most sensitive where their hospitality was concerned; we looked at each other, inwardly muttered a prayer—and drank. It is impossible to describe without being able to compare. I know of no drink of civilization with which I could compare this Moro beverage and convey any idea of its disgusting flavor.

Sultana of Sulu.

The sultana's appearance is not unprepossessing; she was clad in a gown of black brocade silk, not cut after the latest fashion, and wore a scarf of light, figured material over her shoulders, and some gauzy stuff like "just" on her head so that her hair was covered. Her stature is short, though it is hard to judge Oriental women by our standards. Her complexion is lighter than the average Moro and her small eyes show both intelligence and cunning. We

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GROUP OF MOROS—THE SULTAN'S YOUNGER BROTHER IN CENTER HOLDING THE KNIFE.

(Continued on Thirteenth Page.)