

Odd Manners and Customs in Asiatic Holland



CELEBES WARRIOR IN FULL DRESS.

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BATAVIA, Java, Nov. 7.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—In this my last letter from Java I wish to mention a number of curious little things I have heard and seen in this out-of-the-way part of the world. I might write for a year and not describe half the colonies the Dutch have in the East Indies. I hear of new people and new islands every day, and such as I visit are more strange than the stories told of them.

A ship which has just arrived at Batavia has brought a New Zealand mining engineer from the Celebes. He has been in the employ of the Dutch government, and has spent the last few years in investigating the mineral possibilities of different Dutch unexplored islands. He tells me he finds traces of gold almost everywhere, but so far none in paying quantities.

Unexplored Celebes Islands.

I chatted with him for some time about the Celebes. These islands lie almost directly south of the Sulu archipelago, so near indeed, that they might be called our neighbors. The Celebes, which is the name of the largest island, is bigger than any of the Philippines, and it has a coast line of enormous extent. It is shaped much like an octopus, with feelers reaching out in every direction. It has more land than the state of Missouri, and from end to end in its longest part it is about 500 miles. The natives are very wild in some sections and semi-civilized in others. The Dutch have coffee plantations in the civilized sections. They have had possession of the country for 200 years, but have done little with it.

The most prominent settlement is that of Makassar, at the southern end of the island. Here the Dutch steamers stop. There are several business houses and the chief exports of the archipelago come from there. I asked the engineer something about the town. He says it has many Chinese and Arabs, but very few Europeans. The people are Mohammedans and they have a way of running amuck as they do in the Philippines.

Very little of the Celebes is explored. This engineer spent many weeks without seeing a white man and at times found it very dangerous. He described the country as rich in the extreme and said that the coffee plantations which have recently been set out in the north are doing well. He tells me that the natives have many tribes and languages and the different tribes cannot understand one another. In one section the chief natives wear breechcloths of bark. They take the bark of a certain tree and soak it and then beat it out with mallets until it is very thin. When dry it is glossy and will withstand the rain.

In the Land of Nutmegs.

This man spent some time in the Moluccas. He knows all about cloves and spices, and tells wonderful stories of the nutmeg plantations. There are some nutmegs here in Java, but the best trees are found in Amboina, in the Banda Islands, the Moluccas and other parts of the Dutch East Indies. There are also plantations in Sumatra and Borneo. The trees in the Moluccas are planted and cultivated. They grow in the shade and require somewhat the same care as our apple trees. Indeed, the nutmeg tree looks just like a pear tree and its fruit is not unlike an apricot or peach.

The tree does not begin to bear until it is ten years old, but after this if it is properly cared for it may last a century. A good tree should annually produce about three pounds of nutmegs and one pound of mace and at this yield the business is profitable. The fruit ripens several times a year and you sometimes see blossoms and fruit on a tree at the same time. As the nutmegs ripen the pulp, which is about half an inch thick, breaks and shows the nut encircled by a network of mace. In preparing the fruit for the market the pulpy outside is thrown away and the nuts are dried slowly

in ovens. There are about 1,500,000 pounds of nutmegs exported from the Dutch East Indies every year and something like 350,000 pounds of mace.

Foreigners Abroad.

I have investigated the chances for Americans here and I should not advise the ignorant among our people to come to Java to live. The foreigners of this part of the world are men of fine education. They are usually college-bred and it is rare to find a man who cannot speak three languages. The Dutch officials in most cases speak half a dozen and the higher classes of the natives two or more. There is no place where one so much needs to know the customs of refined society, and no place where matters of etiquette are more rigidly observed. It is impossible to travel comfortably and see anything of the people without dress suits and dinner gowns. This is so in every settlement of the far east from Yokohama to Hong Kong and from Singapore to Australia. In the most out-of-the-way parts of the least known islands you are likely to find a planter who puts on a swallowtail coat for every dinner and whose wife would rather resent your coming to the table without one.

All a Matter of Custom.

Notwithstanding this, the same woman would think nothing of your traveling around through the house in the early morning in your pajamas or sitting on the veranda in your bare feet and a sarong. In fact, she would do the same thing herself.

This is so more in Java than anywhere else. The women come not only to early breakfast, but to the noon lunches in a state of dishabille that would insure their summary dismissal from any of our seaside hotels. I remember one stately dame who sat next me at dinner last night and whom I met again this morning. As she appeared in the evening she made me think of a dowager queen. She was clad in a soft gray silk which looked as though it came from Paris. Her hair was a la pompadour and her well-laced-in form, though a bit overplump, was not unhandsome. She wore diamonds in her ears, at her neck and in her hair. She was vivacious, and her conversation was charming. Indeed, I came early to breakfast hoping that I might see her again. I did see her and such a sight. If I had had a fan I really should have hidden my face behind it to conceal my blushes. The stately figure had disappeared and in its place were the flabby outlines of a fat old woman hunched up on a chair. I could see the gross layers of adipose tissue plainly through her thin cambric jacket, which was half open at the neck. Below the jacket a gorgeous sarong or bag of red and black calico was draped. I might almost say panted about her enormous hips and well developed stomach. It fell within six inches of her bare ankles, which, as she sat there over her coffee and hard-boiled eggs, her bare feet resting on the toes of her heelless slippers, were plainly visible. They were not pretty ankles and the sight rather disgusted me. Such a costume may be all right for the tropics, but it is to be hoped that it will never be adopted by the American women of the Philippines.

Land of Good Hotels.

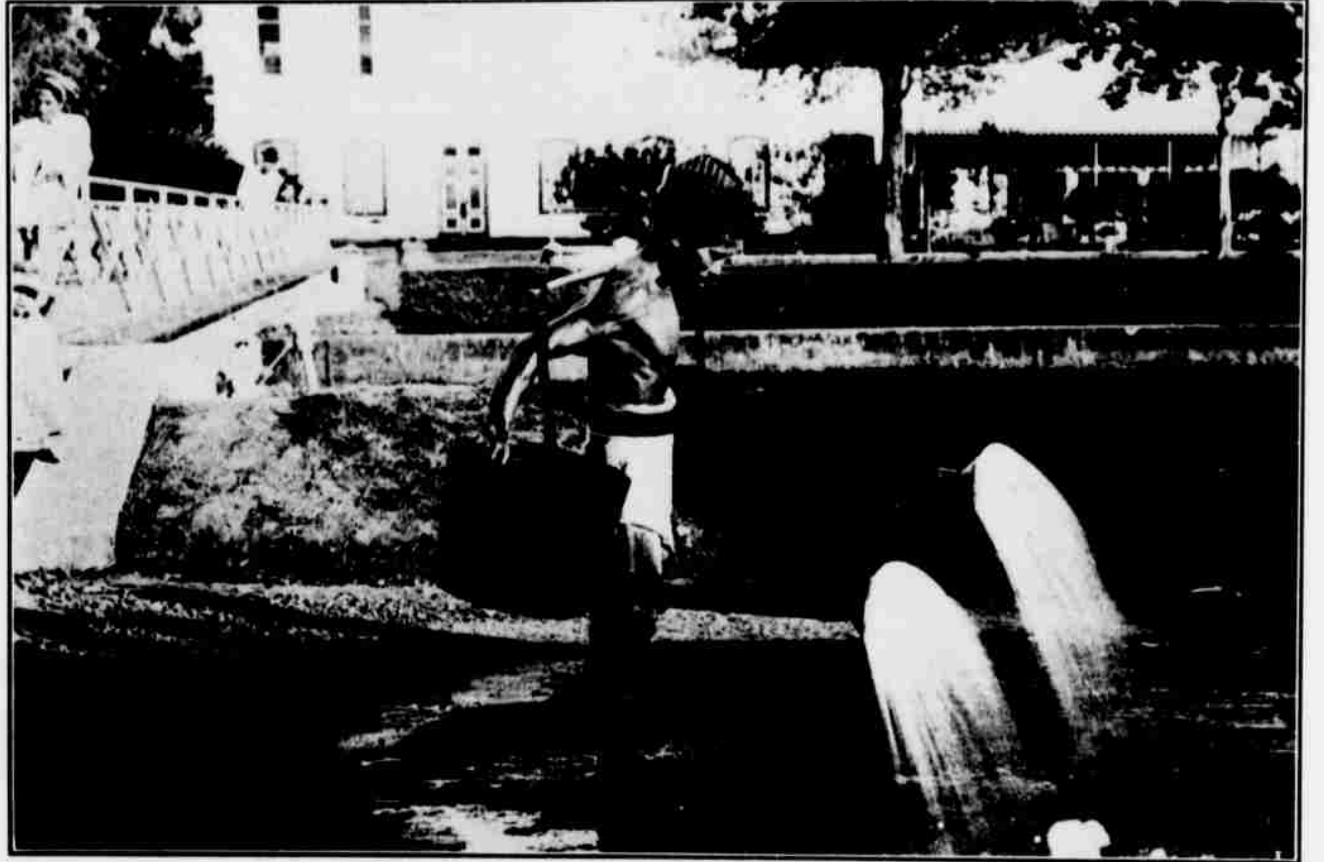
The contrast between the hotels of Java and those of the Philippines is striking. Outside of Manila there is hardly a hotel of any size in all the Philippine islands, and the hotels in Manila are uniformly poor. Here there are good houses everywhere and where there are no regular hotels there are government rest houses where one can stay at low cost. The average hotel rate is about \$2 a day and never more than \$3. For this you have coffee or tea in the morning, as early as 5 o'clock if you wish. A breakfast at 9 or 10, luncheon at 12:30 and dinner at about 8. No one dines early and after dinner but few people go out.

The rooms at the hotels are usually good. All are on the ground floor and nearly all face verandas, each guest using that part of the veranda in front of his own room. The beds are hard—a desirable thing in the tropics—and every bed has its extra bolster, or Dutch wife. The stuffed madame is round and she never kicks on cold feet. She is about five feet in length, about thirty-two inches in diameter and so packed with cotton that she is perfectly hard. In the warm nights of the tropics this forms an excellent support for one arm and one leg, thus aiding ventilation.

Very few of the hotels have electric lights and in the interior there is no gas in the rooms. Every guest has a night lamp, a tumbler half full of water with an inch of cocoanut oil on top. In the oil is a sort of a tin whistle with a wick running through it. The whistle floats and the wick burns all night without a smell, giving a light equal to that of a flickering candle. I usually insisted upon having a lamp in my room, but when I got it I had to pay 20 cents a day extra.

Yankees in Java.

There are very few Yankees in Java. The Standard Oil company has offices in Batavia, Samarang and Soerbia. There are one or two large coffee exporting firms and now and then a commercial traveler or so. Our consul, Mr. B. S. Rairden, has lived in Java for many years and he is very efficient. He was long vice consul, but President McKinley elevated him to the head of the consulate. He has a wide acquaintance among the Dutch and the better-class natives. He speaks Dutch and



THE WATER WORKS OF BATAVIA, JAVA.

understands well how to deal with the people. He is at the same time an enthusiastic American and is doing what he can to advance the interests of the United States.

Samplers of Dutch Inquisitiveness.

It is important that our governments be well represented here. The officials are highly educated, and they are as a rule able men. The people are inquisitive, and as the foreign colony is small everyone knows all about his neighbor. Batavia is a large city, but as far as its European population is concerned it is little more than a village, and the people are quite as village-like in asking questions. An American connected with one of our large monopolies doing business here gave me some of his experiences. Said he:

"When I first came to Batavia I was asked by a Dutchman how much salary I got. I told him bluntly that I thought that was none of his blanked business, whereupon he replied: 'Well, if you won't answer I will ask the head of the house.'" I afterward heard that he did so and I am sure he eventually found out what I was getting.

There is little possibility of anyone keeping such matters a secret. The government collects an income tax on all salaries and even the government officials have to pay. The assessment is equal to about 2 per cent, and you have to declare your salary to the collector of taxes. Your declaration is filed in the recorder's office and the government clerks allow the information to go out.

Newspapers in Asiatic Holland.

I am surprised to find daily newspapers away out here south of the equator. There are plenty of them. Every town of any size has its big paper. There are twenty-six published in the Dutch colonies. There are six in Sumatra, three in the Celebes and seventeen in Java, five printed in the Malay and Javanese languages and twelve in Dutch. The largest circulation is that of the Batavian news sheet, which comes out every afternoon and the most important perhaps, is the Javache Courant, the official organ of the Dutch government, which is issued from the government printing office, where all the government books and papers are published. This establishment issues the school books, printing them in different native languages. It publishes notices in Chinese, Javanese and Arabic, as all the proclamations have to be put forth in four or five different languages.

I have chatted with the official publishers and also with the editors of the different newspapers as to how the Dutch are treating the natives. They have changed their policy during recent years. For a long time they ran Java exclusively

for themselves, but they are now running it more for the Javanese. They are trying to educate the people and to give them modern ideas. Many fear that education will spoil the people as workers, but they say they must educate them notwithstanding. They look upon the Javanese as their part of the white man's burden, which they wish to carry as creditably as any of the other nations of Europe.

Educated Natives.

Many of the natives are already well educated. I have written of the native schools. They are found everywhere and the number of students steadily increases. The leading native officials speak the Dutch and Javanese languages. There are natives in private business who have had good educations. There are some doctors who have taken a medical college course and been awarded diplomas. They are licensed by the government to practice and they do a great deal of work among the natives. Native doctors are used in all the hospitals and they are to be found everywhere occupying different medical positions under the government.

There is no doubt but that our government can learn much here as to the development of the Philippines. The Dutch have scientifically developed Java. Within a few years they have increased its population from 6,000,000 to 25,000,000, and at the same rate the Philippine islands could support a population equal to that of the whole United States. The Dutch have all sorts of experimental farms and gardens here. They have the finest botanical gardens of the world at Buitenzorg, and in it every sort of tree and plant that will grow in the tropics. They have some of the best botanists and agriculturists in their employ and they are always testing the different varieties of soil for tea, coffee and other plants.

Tea, Sugar, Coffee and Quinine.

It was through the Dutch officials that the immense tea, coffee and quinine plantations have been built up. A hundred years ago there was not a cinchona tree in Java and now three-fourths of the quinine of the world is raised here. The coffee estates were practically destroyed by the blight, but through the government the Liberian coffee trees were introduced and Java has again become rich as a coffee land. The government started the tea industry and millions of tea trees have sprung to life upon a thousand hills. There has been trouble with the sugar estates, but the government experiments are remedying the defects, and the same care is shown in the cultivation of other things. The government has set out forests of valuable woods, and, in fact, it acts like the manager of a

great estate, making it its duty to develop Java for the Javanese.

The Dutch have spent millions of dollars here in making roads, in building railroads and irrigation works. The internal improvements of Java are almost as fine as those of Holland, and I venture to say there are no such roads in the world as here. I doubt whether better civil engineers can be found than those who have been in the employ of the Dutch government, and as I have said before it would pay Uncle Sam well to send here for advisers to our authorities in the Philippines. If this is done it must be by good salaries. The Dutch pay their colonial officials more than we are paying our men in the Philippines, and salaries of \$100 a week in the higher places are not uncommon. There are natives here who are getting \$25 a week and school teachers who are getting \$150 to \$200 per month.

Ruling Through the Natives.

I don't know that the Filipinos could be ruled through their own people as the Dutch rule Java, but I should think it might be possible on some of the islands, such as those of the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao. The Javanese are not unlike the Moros in some respects. They are Mohammedans and they are ruled by their chiefs. For a long time they had slavery among them and it was late in the '60s before it was abolished, the government paying each owner a certain amount for his slaves. The prices varied according to age from \$20 to \$140, the latter sum being paid for able-bodied men.

A great deal has been published about the terrible oppression of the Javanese by the Dutch. This may have been the case in the past. It is not so now. The natives have to do police duty and work on the roads in lieu of taxes, and some of them are employed in the government plantations, but no one labors for any time without pay, except when doing work for his taxes. There is no doubt but that the people are far better off than those of India or China, and the island is more thickly populated than either of those countries. There is no poverty to speak of. I have not seen a score of beggars in my several thousand miles of travel in different parts of the island. There have been no revolutions for years and as far as I can see, the people are, from an Oriental standpoint, both prosperous and content.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Pointed Paragraphs

The part of wisdom is often enacted in the divorce court.

Occasionally a man, like a mule, puts his best foot backward.

Good resolutions don't cost anything, but they are hard to keep.

Chicago News: Knowledge is power—in a college foot ball contest.

The flirt's punishment for contempt of court is ancient spinsterhood.

Women can't be logical because they are always begging the question.

No man knows how foolish he can act until he attends a 5 o'clock tea.

The most trying time in a woman's life is when she visits her dressmaker.

"Glad to see you" is one of the little white lies that are worked overtime.

When a man guesses he can knock another man down he usually makes a rough estimate.

Short reckonings are supposed to make long friends, but when you begin to reckon on making a touch your friends are usually short.

If a man has the right kind of material in his backbone it doesn't matter whether he is born with a silver spoon or an iron ladle in his mouth.



AMERICAN CONSUL AND HIS FAMILY.