

Queer Characters and Customs in the Philippines



CHEAPEST FERRYBOATS IN THE WORLD.

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WASHINGTON, May 1.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I want to give you some of the strange sights you see every day in the Philippine islands. Our new possessions ought to be called Topsy-Turvydom, for everything is upside down and everything is strange. Take, for instance, a white carabao in spectacles. I saw one in Manila. The carabao or water buffalo is the ugliest of animals. It is a mixture of a hippopotamus, a cow and a hog in appearance, and it has been described as a dog hog with horns. It is larger than the largest cow. Its horns are at least half a yard long, and its hair stands out like the bristles of a hog. The usual animal is a dirty gray or black color, but there are some albinos, and they are the ugliest of the lot. Their skins are a rosy pink, their bristles as white as snow and their eyes almost white. Put one of these animals into a cart, yoke it there by a bar across the neck, and drive it with a line through a hole in its nose, and you will have one of the moving pictures of everyday life in Manila. You must add, however, the spectacles. These the two halves of a brown coconut shell, so tied together that they completely cover the eyes and blind the beast, as it were. Whether the goggles are used on account of weakness of the eyes or on account of the viciousness of the animal I do not know. I have seen many such, and am told it is because they are dangerous and liable to burn.

Ducks of the Ox Family.

These water buffaloes are the ducks of the ox family. They have wide hoots, and they can swim through the swampy rice fields, dragging their harrows or plows. They can travel over the quicksand which swallows up army mules, and they are used to drag flat boats and sleds over the soft soil. They are fond of water, and are to be seen lying in every pond or puddle taking mud baths. Indeed, they must have water every few hours or they will go mad, and their owners drive them every now and then down into the canals for a swim.

These animals do the draying and carting of the towns and the heavy farm work of the country. They are also used for riding, and a common sight is a farmer going to or from work on one of these ungainly beasts. The children ride them, lying down upon their backs or sitting with their heads to the horns or toward the tail, as they please, directing the buffaloes this way and that by a kick or a slap. The animals are fond of their child masters and submit to them without trouble.

Our Filipino Vaudeville.

The street scenes of our Filipino cities would be a continuous vaudeville if they could be transported to the United States. Take the men and boys who go about with their shirts outside their trousers. It seems so queer that you can't get over it. If you could drop the Escolta, the principal street of Manila, down upon Pennsylvania avenue this morning the police would run in the little brown men who in their Sunday best are on their way to church, because of indecent dressing. They would tell the women to go home and put on hats and stockings and perhaps warn them that their mosquito net dresses are rather too thin for propriety.

The Washingtonians would stare at the half-naked Chinese coolies, bare to the waist, trotting along with great bundles on their naked shoulders. And they could not understand one-tenth of the other queer characters. They would wonder at the milkman with a great clay jar on his back, who serves out milk from a tube of bamboo. They would wonder at the chicken peddlers carrying wicker crates of fowls fastened to poles on their shoulders and they would stare at the women going home from the market with bundles and baskets on their heads.

The Washington girls would hold their

fans before their faces at the sight of a naked brown baby riding on the hip of its half-naked brown mother, and the boys would probably hang around the church doors and itch to tickle the bare feet of the pretty Filipinos kneeling on the stone floors of the cathedral with their upturned feet peering outside their dresses.

Indeed, everything in Manila would be odd could it be dropped down in the United States. Every store would be a curiosity and every trade would make you open your eyes. The tailors, for instance, all squat on the floor as they sew. They have hand sewing machines, which they rest on the floor or on tables half a foot high, and they use their feet as well as their hands in their work. Indeed, every Filipino has four hands and twenty fingers, for the feet take the place of the hands. The cooper holds the tub between his feet



FILIPINO MILKMAN.

as he puts on the hoops, the carpenter steadies his lumber with his toes as he saws and planes, and a woman carrying a bundle on her head through the street and having a baby in her arms, may pick up something from the pavement with her toes. The Filipino farmer threshes his grain with his feet and the coconut peddler walks up the great trees with all the facility of a cat or monkey.

Bare Feet as Carriage Lamps.

A queer instance of skillful pedality I saw one night on the Luneta in Manila. It was a coachman using his toes for candlesticks. According to the municipal regulations no cab can be driven through the city streets after dark without lights. This man was the driver of one of the little carriages which ply in Manila for twenty cents an hour. He had taken a party out to the concert on the Luneta, but had forgotten his carriage lamps. By the time the concert was over it was dark and he knew by the law that he must have a light on each side of his carriage or he would be arrested. He could not stay where he was all night, for his passengers would not pay their fares unless they were taken back to the city. The man solved the problem by making cab lamps of his toes. He borrowed two candles, and having lit them stuck one between the first two toes of each foot. He then stretched out a foot at each side of his cab, and so drove on through the crowd of fashionable vehicles, groaning as the hot tallow melted by the flames ran down and congealed upon



CARABAO, THE DUCK OF THE OX FAMILY.

his bare skin. This training of the feet as an additional pair of hands begins at babyhood. Many of the Filipino houses have ladders for steps and the baby who cannot hold on with its toes has many falls.

Shoes of the Philippines.

Speaking of feet, those of the Filipinos are small and well formed. The women have high insteps and slender ankles, and as a rule feel no delicacy about showing them. But few stockings are worn. I venture that the Washington girls alone wear more stockings than are used among the 8,000,000 of our Filipinos. Even the ladies use them only at churches and parties, and some of the fairest and swiftest of the Filipinos dance with their bare feet thrust into sandals. In the whirl of the waltz the fair dame, Cinderella-like, happens to cast a shoe, she dances on with one foot bare until she comes near the lost shoe, when she picks it up with an entrancing twist of the ankle without stopping the dance.

The shoes worn by the Filipinos are usually heelless. The better class woman's shoe is a bright colored velvet embroidered with gold; it is often elaborate and very expensive. In the stores the shoes are hung up on poles rather than laid away in boxes and the shoe merchant hooks them down with a long stick for his customers.

The shoes of the lower classes are half wood. Every market has its shoe bazaar and the one in Manila consists of low tables covered with shoes. The dealer, who is invariably a woman, squats on the table, with her goods about her and gossips as she sells. All the shoes have wooden soles with uppers of white or dark leather. There is nothing to hold the heel at the back, and it bobs up and down as its wearer clatters over the streets. The shoes for children are about the same as those for grown-ups and the prices are correspondingly less. A 10-year-old boy can be shod for 10 cents, and as he wears shoes only on Sunday it is easy to keep him supplied.

Stove Stores of Manila.

I wish I could show you a Filipino cooking stove. There are many stores in Manila which sell kitchen furniture, and which nevertheless have not a bit of iron in them. The stoves and all the pots, pans and kettles are made of red clay. They are merely clay bowls with little knobs on them to hold up the pots on the charcoal fire within. The average stove is about fourteen inches in diameter and eight inches deep, and it can be bought for 25 cents. The cooking bowls are equally cheap, as I found by asking a stove merchant the prices. As we talked I persuaded him to lift up one of his stoves and hold it out in the sun while I photographed it. He did so, bending over and reaching the stove out toward me while I pressed the button.

It is on such stoves that the meals of the Filipinos are cooked. The natives do not like our stoves, and one which was imported by the wife of an army officer had to be thrown aside because the servant would not use it.

A separate stove is used for every dish, some families having a dozen going at every big dinner.

The fuel is usually charcoal or little sticks of wood, such as we use for kindling. The wood is sold in bundles so small that an average 10-year-old boy could carry a dozen of them in his arms at one time.

Scenes About the Markets.

I spent much time about the markets in Manila, now and then eating my breakfast at a market cook shop. There are many little stands there where rice, fish and other foods are offered for sale. Everything is sold in small quantities, and 5 cents will buy you what the Filipino considers a good meal. I remember one cook stand on the porch of the market house in Manila. The cook was a black-haired, brown-skinned woman, bare footed and bare headed. She chewed vigorously at a quid of betelnut as

she worked, and her blood-colored teeth and gums shone out when she laughed. She was cooking shrimp patties in a red clay basin of boiling grease. She would mix some white sprouts and rice flour together into a dough and wrap it around a couple of shrimps as big as your little finger. This she would drop into the pan and in a moment it would be cooked a light brown, ready to be ladled out with a coconut dipper and served with pepper and sauce hot to the customer. Just beside this woman was another who sold chocolate squares wrapped up in green banana leaves, and beside her a girl who peddled out yellow coconut candy. In the same place I was offered sausages about the size of my little finger for 2 cents apiece.

I am surprised that the books about the Filipinos make little mention of the fish. I doubt whether there is a country on earth



A FILIPINO COOK STOVE.

which is so blessed in this way. Fish and rice form the chief diet of the people, and both are consumed in vast quantities. The fish are of all sizes, from little ones no bigger than a pin to some weighing several hundred pounds each. There are quantities of white bait, bushels of shrimps, oysters and crabs of all sizes in every market. The fish peddlers and sellers are women, although salt fish are sometimes sold by the Chinese. There is no danger of getting stale fish, for those on the markets are sold alive, being kept there in bamboo baskets of water. When a sale is made the woman takes the kicking fish out of the basket, lays them on the stones and kills them by striking them just back of the neck with a club. One of the most common fishes sold in Manila is a round sunfish not bigger than a 25-cent piece. In the southern islands fish of gold and ruby and other brilliant colors are common.

All of the Filipinos are excellent fishers and fish trappers. They catch fish with hooks, they seine them out in great nets and entice them into traps of all shapes and sizes. The rivers are filled with fish traps, labyrinthine networks of bamboo, into which the fish swim and cannot find their way out. All along the coast of the islands you see great fish corrals fenced in with bamboo canes woven together with rattan, so set that they are below the water at high tide. The fishes swim in and when the tide falls they cannot find their way out. Then the men come and scoop them up in dip nets, killing the larger ones with their spears. They have also small fish traps in the shape of bamboo barrels, which are not unlike lobster traps.

What would you think of going into the fields and catching fish in every mud puddle? That is what they do in the Philip-

pine islands. The lowlands are so underlaid with water that in some sections you can break through the crust at almost any place and by digging down a few feet come to a slimy mud which is full of fish. Some of the mud fish are as long as your arm and they are so common that after a rain the ditches and streams are filled with them. Small mud fish are sometimes found even in the gutters of Manila. In the wet season the people always go out after a heavy rain to fish in the rice fields, and in dry times you may see women and men wading in the mud of every canal with fishing traps. These are mere cylinders of bamboo open at both ends. The fisherman pushes his cylinder down through the muddy water into the mud bed of the canal to prevent the fish caught in it from getting out and then reaches in with his bare arm and pulls out the fish. Many such fish have no scales; they seem to be a sort of catfish.

Waterways of Manila.

I spent much of my time in Manila in strolling about the canals. Parts of the city remind one of Venice, they are so cut up by waterways, overhung by old Spanish buildings. The business parts of the towns can all be reached by canals. The Escolta runs parallel with the Pasig river and canals cut through Binondo and Tondo. These waterways are filled with craft of all kinds, from steamers from China and all parts of the archipelago to the little dugout canoes in which the natives bring their wares to the market. A trip through these parts of Manila gives you an idea of the real business of the Philippines. There are ships from the north unloading great cargoes of tobacco and steamers from the south with cargoes of hemp. There are cascoes filled with coconuts and other flat boats of goods brought in by the steamers out in Manila bay. The cascoes are the chief boats of the interior. They are found in all the large canals and you see many at anchor in different parts of Manila, their owners using them as retail stores, in which they peddle out the stuff they have brought in from the country. In one canal not far from the Oriente hotel you may find floating rice stores. The rice is exposed for sale in great baskets and in piles, and it is peddled out by the women belonging to the boats. There are cascoes of firewood, cascoes filled with grass, cascoes of vinegar and sugar, and, in fact, cascoes filled with every kind of Philippine product.

Many of these cascoes form the homes of their owners and the people who live in them are of their own kind. They have a covered awning over one end of their boats and it is there that they cook and eat. It is there that most of them are born and there many of them die.

The cascoes are intended for inland travel and freighting. They are barges about fifteen feet wide, six feet deep and 100 or more feet long. They are made of great timbers of hardwood so joined together that the prow and stern rise high out of the water. On each side of the cascoe is a path of bamboo poles laid upon supports extending out at right angles with the boat. This is for the pushers, who thrust long poles into the banks or bed of the stream and thus force the boat onward. Each cascoe has a supply of mats of woven bamboo which are stretched over the boat to protect it from the sun and rain, making it look not unlike the cover of an old-fashioned emigrant wagon.

Manila Ferryboats.

The ferry boats of Manila are the smallest and cheapest of their kind. They are mere rafts with a floor not bigger than a bed quilt and of about the same shape. Each has a rude matting canopy over it and each is manipulated by a ferryman, a brown-skinned, barefooted, bareheaded Filipino. The fare is equal to half a cent of our money. The passengers stand up as they ride and a stream of brown Filipinos, white-helmeted Englishmen, American soldiers in khaki and others flows on such boats across the Manila canals from daylight to dark. FRANK G. CARPENTER.