

# Among the Bagobas

A Queer Tribe of the Southern Philippines, Who Sacrifice Human Beings to Their Gods.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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Davao, island of Mindanao, May 10, 1900.—This province of Davao, situated in the southeastern corner of the great island of Mindanao, at what might almost be called the jumping-off place of our Philippine possessions, has some of the queerest savages on earth. It has tribes which worship the great volcano Mount Apo, which looks down upon me as I write. It has Moros who are more fanatical in their Mohammedan belief than the dervishes of Egypt, and it has nature worshippers who sacrifice human beings to their imaginary gods. I have met during the past week a large number of two of the tribes which have human sacrifices, and through the vice president of the town of Davao have learned much concerning them and their customs. The vice president is perhaps the most learned man of this region. He has been a school teacher, and has a working knowledge of eleven different languages, including many of the native tongues. My conversation with him was in Spanish, which he speaks and writes most fluently. He has lived all his life in this part of the world, and has had close associations with some of the most savage tribes.

## PROFESSIONAL KILLERS.

This man tells me that fourteen different languages are used with a radius of thirty miles of this place, and that the whole country is divided up among hostile savages, who are nearly always at war with one another. Most of them are head hunters, and some such as the Mamboos, choose as their chiefs the men who have committed the greatest number of murders. In some of the other tribes men are allowed to become ready for marriage before they have killed one or more human beings, and the Bagobas and Gilingas have a class of special murderers appointed by their chiefs who have the right to wear what is called the murderer's turban, which gives its owner a license to kill. This is not worn until the man has put to death a certain number of people. It is a piece of red cotton the size of a large handkerchief, with white polka dots scattered over it. I saw a Bagoba wearing one today, and asked him how many men he had killed. His reply was, "Twenty!"

## AMONG THE BAGOBAS.

These Bagobas live within about ten miles of Davao and parties of them frequently come into the town to see the strange white giants who have sailed across the sea to take possession of the country. They are not allowed to bring in their arms and they deposit the great knives, swords and spears which they always carry when at home on the other side of the Davao river before they venture within the range of our soldiers' guns. The result is that one feels perfectly safe in moving about among them. I have talked with many of them and have them, I venture, the most intelligent that have ever been taken of them.

The Bagobas are the finest-looking people I have yet seen in these islands. They are taller and better formed than the Tagalogs or the Visayans, and far more intelligent than the Moros. They look more like Persians than Malays. They have bright yellow skins and luxuriant hair, which they wrap up in a knot at the crown under their turbans. Their foreheads are high and round, their noses straight and their lips rather sensual.

## EARRINGS AS BIG AROUND AS PINT CUPS.

The ears of many of them cannot be seen for the immense earrings which they wear. These are of ivory made in the shape of an old-fashioned cuff button, with the top disk three or four inches broad and the under one at least an inch in diameter. The under disk of the button is slipped through a hole in the lobe of the ear in such a way that it holds the upper disk firmly against the side of the head, hilling the ear. In order to get the exact size of one of these earrings I persuaded the savage to take it off, and made a tracing of it in my note book. It is, I judge, just about as wide as two columns of this newspaper, or about as big around as the rim of a pint tin cup. The under disk or button, which goes through the lobe of the ear, which I also traced, is as big round as a half dollar. The earrings are of the finest ivory, and I judge, costly, for the man would not sell them for less than \$20. The hole in the lobe of the ear was at least an inch long, and the man stretched it out by pulling down the lobe which he inserted into the button. I understand that the holes are made by piercing the ear and inserting pieces of wood or grass, adding additional sticks or straws from time to time, until the holes are enlarged to the required size. Others of the Bagobas had earrings of wood, and one I noticed had thrust a large sugar through his ear lobe and was carrying it in this way.

## CLOTHES OF WOVEN GRASS.

The clothes of the Bagobas are curious in the extreme. These men wear jackets and short trousers made of grass cloth, dyed red and white, and heavily embroidered with beads. Their jackets did not reach to their wrists, and their sleeves came but little below their elbows. The trousers were tied on with rope at the waist, and in no case did they extend much below the middle of the thigh. All of the Bagobas wore bracelets about the wrist, and nearly all have on bands of beads about the legs between the calf and the knee. They carry on their backs knapsacks of woven cloth, conspicuously embroidered with bands of many colors, and those which I saw had turbans of bright hues.

I watched them at their meals. They sat with their fingers all dipping their hands into the same bowl of rice. They chew the betel nut, like the Moros, and are very fond of American tobacco, begging it of the soldiers whenever they can.

## POLYGAMY, SLAVERY AND HUMAN SACRIFICES.

The vice president of Davao tells me that the Bagobas are polygamists. Every man has ten, twenty or forty wives, according to his means, and all the chiefs own slaves. They enslave the natives when they take in war, and it is from the slaves that they get their slaves for sacrifices. They are nature worshippers, praying now and then to the volcano Mount Apo, and it is, I believe, to this mountain that they make their sacrifices. The man who furnishes the slaves for the god, and therefore is the chief official at the ceremony. The slave is stripped and led to the limb of a tree that he or she is to stand upon. Then the owner gives the first blow with his barong, a sort of knife, which is as sharp as a razor and as heavy almost as a butcher's cleaver. With this he chops the victim's neck from behind. The neck is stretched and he

usually cuts the head from the body, whereupon the rest of the tribe rush up by one and give a cut at the dying human. Before the ceremony is finished the body has become minced and the gods are then supposed to be pleased, and if angry, appeased. These sacrifices are celebrated at least once a year at the national feast and also at times of sickness or famine, when the gods are supposed to be throwing upon humanity. As a usual thing but one slave is killed at such a celebration.

Slaves are bought and sold among these people. They are traded for with the neighboring tribes and are also brought in at times and sold to the Christians. The four slaves here which I have spoken of as having been offered to me for \$50 were originally brought in by the Bagobas and sold to their owners in Davao.

## MATADEROS, OR PROFESSIONAL KILLERS.

According to the vice president, the Bagoba who has killed the most men is the most thought of. He says when a young man reaches his majority he starts out on a killing tour in order to make a reputation, preferably seeking the haunts of the neighboring tribes. He lies in ambush with his spear or bow and poisoned arrows and waits for human game. When he has killed a man or woman he cuts off an ear or a finger and brings it home and shows it. If he has an enemy in his own tribe he may kill him, and if he has killed a number he is selected by the datto, or chief, as a professional and given an appointment to court. Those who have killed ten or more men are called mataderos.

The Bagobas are very revengeful. They have the vendetta and carry their enmity to the families or slaves of the men they hate, and spear or lance them on sight.

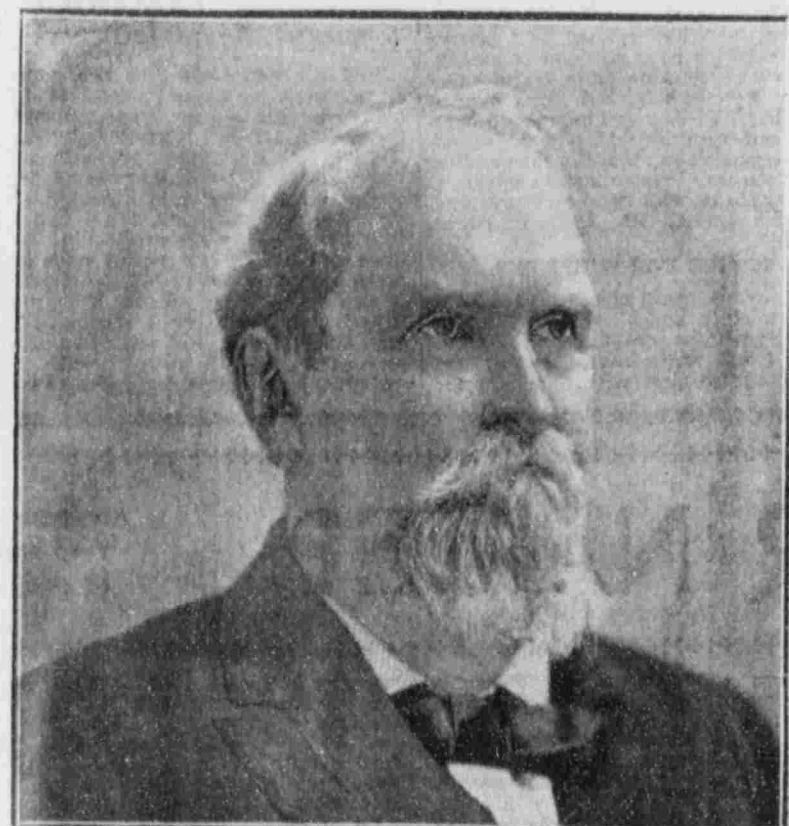
They are adepts in the use of the lance and the spear. One stabbed a Visayan here the other day, driving his spear clear through the body of his victim. The Visayan was armed with a bolo, and with the spear still in him he turned and chopped off the head of the Bagoba. The Visayan was brought into the town, left for several days without treatment, and then handed over to the care of Capt. A. L. Haines, the surgeon. Capt. Haines put him under ether and performed an operation which saved his life. I called upon the sick man the other day and found him almost recovered. He is very grateful to the doctor, and has given him the bolo with which he killed the Bagoba as a reward for saving his life.

## HOW THE BAGOBAS LIVE.

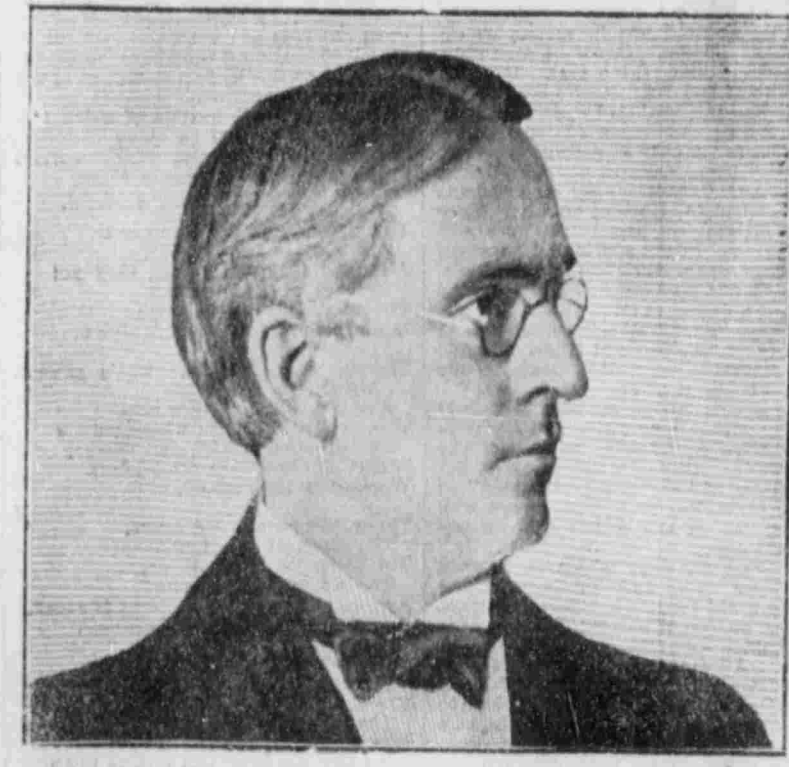
The Bagobas are not entirely savage in their way of living. They have small farms and cultivate rice and sweet potatoes in the intervals of their hunting excursions. They have houses erected on poles high above the ground. They raise some hemp and weave the most of their clothes from it, choosing the best of the fiber.

The Bagoba women are better looking than the other female savages of Mindanao. They are almost white. They are straight and well formed. Their dress is a skirt, reaching from the waist to the knee, and a very short jacket. Both skirt and jacket are heavily embroidered with beads. They are fond of jewelry and wear little earrings of much the same shape as those I have described as worn by the men. They

SENATOR JAS. K. JONES OF ARKANSAS.



CHAS. A. TOWNE OF MINNESOTA.



They Own Slaves and Are Polygamists—The Mataderos or Professional Killers—Queer Customs of Marriage—Men Who Wear Earrings as Big as Tin Cups—Queer Dress for Women—A Look at the Tagacaules and a Lieutenant's Adventures Among Them—They Have Houses in Trees and Shoot Poisoned Arrows—How the Savages Were Surprised With Our Modern Inventions—An Adventure With a Colt's Automatic Gun—The Power of the Searchlight—How They Regarded Electricity, Etc.

wear strings of bells above the knees at about the place where the American girl wears a garter, and have heavy brass rings about the ankles. They have a sort of headdress which covers their hair, which is often so long that it hangs almost to the knees. When fully dressed they adorn their hair with fancy feathers and buns.

The Bagoba women do the most of the hard work. They do the weaving of the people and plant the crops and keep out the weeds.

Still among the words of the vice president, "These people are very hospitable and universally treat guests well when they come to see them. Their hospitality, however, ends after he has left the village, at which time he had better keep his eyes open for one of the young men who is after a head, finger or an ear to establish his reputation."

## OTHER QUEER SAVAGES.

The vice president has given me the names of 15 different tribes who live in this vicinity. They are as follows: The Bagobas, the Gilingas, the Aetas, the Mindayags, the Malabas, the Samalags, the Tagacaules, the Belanags, the Moros, the Tagacaules and the Samalags. He says that the Montones, whom Dean Worcester seems to consider a separate race, are of different kinds, the word being used as a general term for "mountain people." The Tirurayags live near and in Cotabato. They are not so savage as the Bagobas, go almost naked and live chiefly by hunting and fishing. Their women wear short skirts, less than a foot long, and adorn their ankles and wrists with brass rings.

The Tagacaules, who live on the east coast of Mindanao, about thirty miles from here, are hill worshippers. They are said to be the poorest, weakest and most cowardly of the savages. They live in settlements, cultivating small farms and being governed by a datto or chief.

The Mindayags show traces of Malay origin. They live in the branches of trees or upon houses built upon posts from fifteen to eighteen feet from the ground. They crawl into their houses by means of notched sticks, which they pull up at night. Only a few days ago Lieut. Lowry made a trip up the Kin Kin river, which flows into the Bay of Davao, not far from here. He took five natives and fifteen men with him and explored the river to its source. He passed many native huts, which must have been those of Mindayags. He tells me that the houses were twelve to fifteen feet square. They consisted of a framework of bamboo poles covered with a nipa thatch, built high up in the air on trees, that had been cut off with bolos for the purpose. In many cases there were three, four and five houses in one bunch, a common pole with cross pieces serving as a ladder for the whole. The floors of

the houses were of heavy timber, each about eight inches thick, put together so tightly that it would be impossible to shoot an arrow through them. The inhabitants of these villages were almost naked savages. They were armed with long bolos and bows and arrows, the latter being, it is said, poisoned. The savages looked at the soldiers from a distance, but did not venture to attack them.

## ROOM FOR THE ETHNOLOGIST.

These are only a few of the strange things which I hear of the wild people of this part of the world. The stories are hard to believe, but the authorities are good. There is almost nothing known about the people of the mountains and there is a great chance for the ethnologist to make original investigations. So far the savages have not been described in the books, nor have the white men lived enough among them to know about them. The Spaniards did not go beyond the limits of their army posts and the field is practically one of virgin soil for the explorer. As to how many savages there are in Mindanao there is no accurate means of judging. The Bagobas are said to number about seven thousand, and the total number of people in all the tribes must be large.

## SURPRISES FOR THE MOROS.

The Moros themselves are almost savages, although, as I have said, they believe in the Mohammedan religion, and in some cases own Korans. Very few of them, however, can read and write and have any idea of modern civilization. Many of the Moros who have visited

# WARRIORS NOT BORN IN CHINA

Literature the Only Path to Glory There—While Little Japan is Full of Good Fighters—Wide Contrast Between the Two Far Eastern Nations—Alliance of the Dragon and the Tiger May Yet Result From Present Troubles.

Japan loves military and naval glory above all things. China does not. She is literary, and has small regard for fighting men. The only officials in her empire are bookmen, those who have passed successfully the civil service examinations in philosophy, ethics, prose and poetic composition, history and the like. There are no questions on military or on naval science, nothing that refers to means of protecting the country from the "outer barbarian." The literary classes rule and steal while the troops go ragged, are underpaid, underfed, robbed and held in contempt. The best part of their wages goes into the mandarin's strong box. Archery and wrestling are still part of the training of the Chinese soldiers. Wrestling includes boxing, whence the Boxers—the discontented, hungry rabble that is making so much trouble at present.

## MILITARY GLORY.

In Japan military glory has been the greatest glory since the beginning. The songs of the schoolboys are war songs, songs of the sword. Male singers at entertainments chant of the prowess of departed heroes. The military class—the Samurai—has ruled always, and today, though caste distinctions have gone, those who were Samurai retainers of feudal lords—hold the great offices. The spirit of Japan has been military too long for a change to take place suddenly. The legend, "The sword is the soul of the Samurai," was a true one, and is true today. Some say that Japan is becoming a commercial nation and is forgetting her ancient honor. That is a mistake. She is making great effort to develop manufactures and to increase her foreign trade, but she is doing it as a means to an end. In order to establish herself as the "England of the East" she must have an army and a navy, and these she cannot have without wealth. So she is busy with commercial enterprises.

## JAPANESE CHILDREN ARE SOLDIERS.

In Japan every able-bodied man is a soldier, and even the children know the use of arms. Military drill is a part of the regular education in the schools throughout the empire. Schoolboys dress in military uniform, ever peep into the pattern of cadet uniforms in Europe and America. Their instructors are regular army officers, veterans of the war with China, and some of them of the Sanyuan rebellion of 1877. This has its effect on the youthful mind, ever peep to hero worship, and truly so in Japan, where folk build temples to their heroes. For the drillmaster tells his pupils what he saw with his own eyes, how he suffered, how he conquered, how fine it all was, and the pupils are keen for a chance to do likewise. So it is that to achieve success in war brings great glory in Japan—almost divinity. To glory in Japan is to die for the Mikado or Tenno the Heavenly Emperor, as they call him, is to join those spirits whom posterity will worship through coming ages. Every year the imperial troops draw up before the great Shinto temple Shokon sha, at Kojimachi, in the heart of Tokio, and present arms to "our soldiers who died in battle." It is an impressive ceremony, dear to the nation's heart, and makes her pulse beat faster.

## LI HUNG CHANG.

In China how different all things are! The literary classes made up of those who have passed the civil service examinations in ethics, philosophy, poetry and prose composition, etc., have control. There are many ministers of foreign affairs, and of these only one—Li Hung Chang—knows anything of the outside world before the war with Japan. These men now think that Japan is more powerful, but they still hate Europeans and Americans. They have gone so far as to send the young Chinamen, many of them the sons, grandsons and nephews of viceroys, over to Japan to learn how to defend themselves in time of war; but there is not much of a European would call national spirit or ambition. The average Chinaman does not care about national honor. He admits that some Chinese had the worst of it at the hands of some Japanese in the late war, but he himself was not there. No one hurt him. It was none of his business. He would not die for the emperor if he could avoid it. Not much. The emperor

the boats where the soldiers are have expressed great surprise at the strange things which they have seen. Our mules attract crowds wherever they go, and the big American horses are admired by all the inhabitants. Christians and Mohammedans.

On one of the gunboats the other day a party of Moros were shown one of the boat's automatic guns, which shoots about fifteen hundred shots a minute. The Moro who put his finger upon the trigger was so frightened that he could not let go, and the other warriors almost dropped to the ground with fear. A few days ago one of our gunboats used its searchlight, sending long rays of electricity into one of the villages on the shore and lighting up the town. The next day a delegation was sent out to the ship asking that the people be permitted to submit, for they could not pretend to fight people who could turn night into day.

Another time the telephone was shown to a party of Moros. It was on a gunboat. The Moros could not understand where the sound came from, and during the rest of their stay they went around the ship listening for strange sounds. One of them put his ear against the mouth of a cannon and, with an expectant face, held it there for some time. Another man, a datto, said to one of the officers: "If we go back to our homes and tell our wives what we have seen today they will say we are liars."

## THE ELECTRIC LIGHTS OF DAVAO.

One of the things which surprises the savages most is the electric lights. On one of the ships they were turned off and on to show how they worked, but the Moros could not understand it and went around pressing the walls to find buttons and touching other things to see how it could possibly be done.

This town of Davao has until now been lighted by coconut oil, although since Major Liggett has taken charge some kerosene has been used. Many of the street lamps are old ginger ale and beer bottles with wicks hung to a string, which is tied across the mouth. Major Liggett wants to put in an electric light plant. He says it can be run by water power from the Davao river, and if the people of the town will pay the expense of putting it in one of the soldiers could run it. He also wants a saw mill and a lot of agricultural implements of American make. Such things will civilize these people more quickly than fighting, and it seems to me that it would be economy to the government to furnish them.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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