

THE WOMEN OF JAVA.

They Are Not Pretty, but They Manage the Business of the Richest Island South of the Equator.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

WELTEVEDEN, Java. — I want to tell you something about the little brown people of Java. They are the most lovable of all colored races outside of Japan, and even more quaint than the Japanese. There are twenty-five million of them on this little island, and they are swarming about me as I make notes under the shade of the palm trees. My seat looks out on the wide canal which runs through Welteveden. It is walled with brick, but at every few feet there are stone steps leading down into the water, and in each of these places Javanese girls are standing waist-deep in the canal washing themselves or their clothes. They are a cleanly people. Every Javanese takes his bath at night and morning, and the bright cottons they wear are frequently soiled. The little girls down there in the water have bag-like skirts or sarongs wrapped tightly about their plump bodies just under the arms, and the rich golden brown of their shoulders shows out as they bend down at their work. The wet sarongs cling to their forms like the traditional paper on the wall, and they look like brown statues with the lightest of drapings. Notice how their shoulders bob up and down as they rub the clothes on the stones. There is one turning around, she is wringing the clothes; and here is another holding a wet garment high in the air and bringing it down with a slap on the steps to get the dirt out.

HOW THE JAVANESE BATHE.

See the men and women swimming about in the canal. There are scores of them, bathing together, all dressed in these thin cotton sarongs. There are grandmothers and granddaughters, old men and young men, children and babies, the latter in the arms of their mothers, being dipped in and out. Here come two girls of sixteen for their daily swim in the warm flowing water. They are well dressed, after the Javanese style, each wearing a long cotton jacket or skirt which forms the costume of both women and men, and each carries another sarong with her to use in the bath. Now they have stopped on the bank within twenty feet of where I am writing. They are letting down their hair. It is long and reaches to the waist. See! each girl is twisting it up in a knot and fastening it tight to the top of her head, so that it may not impede her while swimming. Now they take off their jackets and hold up the sarongs they have brought with them. These are bags of bright figured cottons about a yard wide and two yards in length. Each girl steps inside one and pulls it up under her arms and at the same time allows her dress sarong to drop to her feet. She is now pinned in, as it were, in this wide bag, with her arms and shoulders exposed. She pulls the bag close to her person, twisting it this way and that to tighten it, and fastens it by a knot under the chin. She now folds up her other dress and lays it with the jacket in a neat pile on the bank, and jumps into the stream. Her sister has followed, and the two are paddling about like two little brown ducks. They swim this way and that. Now you see only their heads and now only the soles of their little brown feet. They stand in the canal and scour themselves, and after a long time spent in sporting about walk up the steps, two dripping Venuses. I am interested in watching them get out of their wet dresses and into the dry ones, but they do it in the bright light of this tropical sun without the least exposure of person. They are modest and as innocent as that little baby who stands there on that porch across the hips of her twelve-year-old mother staring at me.

THE JAVANESE WOMEN.

The Javanese cannot be said to be beautiful, although you now and then see a good looking man. The people are about as tall as the Japanese, their average height being a little more than five feet. Both sexes are plump and well shaped and exceedingly straight. They have slender limbs, small wrists and ankles and long, slender fingers. They look not unlike the Filipinos, save that their foreheads are, if anything, higher, and they are of a more pronounced Malay type. Many of them have high cheek bones and their eyes are a trifle slanting, making you think of the Chinese. They have thick lips, though nothing like so thick as the negroes.

The women as a rule are not as good-

They Act as Druggists, Meat Sellers and Tailors—As Porters and Bankers—Quiser Scenes in Bazaars—Odd Business Methods—Pigeons That Whistle—A Land Where the Women Chew Tobacco—They Are Cleanly and Take a Swim Twice a Day.



"THE WOMEN ARE NOT BEAUTIFUL."

Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter.

looking as the men, although many of the young girls are pretty. Those of the better classes are often fine looking, having high, narrow foreheads, fairly good noses and luscious red lips. They are particular as to matters of etiquette, and are universally polite and well behaved. This is so of both sexes.

THEY MARRY AT TWELVE.

The women marry very young. Girls are often mothers at eleven or twelve years of age, and old maids are almost unknown. Among the poorer classes the women do as much work as the men. The whole family in a manner takes care of itself, and the more children a poor man has the richer he is. It is not uncommon for a woman to have a dozen children, although owing to sanitary conditions the families are not as a rule much larger than ours, many of the children dying in infancy. Many of the people are Mohammedans, but as a rule they have but one wife, more being common only among the chiefs and nobles.

I am told that the women believe in love potions, and that there are witch doctors who sell stuff which introduced into the food or drink of a man will make him your lover. I should think the recipe for this might be valuable to the patent medicine men of our country. The women are very jealous. They understand poisons as well as love potions, and such of the Dutch officials and soldiers as form matrimonial alliances are careful in breaking them, for desertion may bring about a terrible revenge on the part of the woman.

THEY ARE BUSINESS WOMEN.

Come with me to the bazaars and take a look at the business women of Java. They do the greater part of the buying and selling, and they are as sharp traders as you will find anywhere. The only women like them are those of Burmah, who look and act much the same.

The most of the business of this part of the world is done in great bazaars or vast department stores under one roof. The only difference between our department stores and the bazaars is that in the latter each counter has its own merchant, who owns the goods piled about him, and that there are hundreds of merchants selling the same kind of goods in the same place.

Sometimes the bazaars cover acres. At Buitenzorg they are in the form of a hollow square, the roofs being upheld by white pillars. In the center of the square is a court filled with market men and women who have temporary roofs to shield them from the sun. The bazaars proper are paved with red

bricks; they run in one long aisle, lined with stores under the great square. The goods are spread out on little counters, piled up on the floor, or hung up behind the merchants, or more often, if I may use the term, merchantesses, who squat on the bricks.

One section is given up to the cloth bazaars. Here the gayest of calicoes hang on poles about the great square. There are blue, red and yellow goods of all kinds, forming a striking background to the brown-faced bare-ankled, bare-footed women, who sit there and sell. Further on are the tailors. There are dozens of shops, each owned by a male or female dressmaker, who is working away. How an American tailor would laugh at the sight! They are using sewing machines, but the machines are all worked by hand, and they rest flat on boards on the floor, and not on stands, as with us. Here is a girl sewing on a silk jacket. She sits cross-legged on the floor, with the machine in front of her. Now she has stopped sewing and is reeling a spool of pink silk on the bobbin. She holds the machine between her bare toes as she works. She is bare-armed and bare-shouldered, and she has beautiful hands.

In the next shop is a prettier woman, dressed in a cream colored jacket and bright red sarong. A fierce Malay man, wearing a turban, a red jacket and black gong, sits beside her. It may be her husband or possibly a customer waiting for that skirt on which she is sewing. Notice the jewelry which the woman wears. She has a half dozen bracelets of silver and a bracelet and three rings of gold. Her jacket is fastened at the breast with a great medallion of silver, to which hang long silver chains and she has a silver belt around her waist.

FEMALE DRUGGISTS.

Leaving the tailor shops, we go on to the drug stores. These are in little sheds roofed with palm leaves upheld by poles of bamboo. In each shed is a table just about as big as a double bed, and about as high. From the ground, in the center of the table, squats the druggist with her goods about her in little flat baskets. She sits with her feet under, and in most cases chews tobacco or betel nut as she sells. The baskets are of all sizes; they are filled with various kinds of roots, nuts and powders. One basket contains cotton bands, another has a white powder, and in others there are rose leaves, cloves, pepper, ginger and every conceivable thing. As we wait a woman comes up with a baby who

looks pale and sick. The druggist takes the little one up with her eye and then gives the mother about a quart of various medicines and tells her to boil the soup into tea for the sick infant. Further on we stop in the tobacco bazaar. Here the business is done by both women and men. Tobacco is sold in great quantities in cigarettes, in cigars and in the lump or roll. The most of the native tobacco is put up in rolls, twisted like ropes. The wrapping paper is banana leaf, which is fastened together by a thorn pinned through the ends. Sometimes the bundles are tied with strands of dried banana peel. Banana leaves, banana peel and thorns formed the packing paper of the whole market, and all sorts of goods are done up in them. There are places which sell nothing else, the merchants coming there for their leaves and strings.

IN THE MARKET 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 lazars 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 traces 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 two cents. The string was a strip of rattan floor.

Next to the coal sheds were the vegetable merchants, and further on sheds containing 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 one 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 very tropical variety. I come home every day loaded with mangosteens, bananas, oranges and pineapples, and my chief drink is coconut water, which I buy of the coconut seller in Djokja, who has the freshest of green coconuts always on hand. She sells them for two 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 good 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.

WOMEN BANKERS.

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 golden, 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

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which require money to operate and they are also the pawnbrokers.
WOMEN AS PORTERS AND LABORERS.

The Javanese women occupy a similar 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 yell, 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.

WOMEN BUTCHERS.

It seems odd to see women butchers, but there are scores of them in the Djokja bazaars. The meat is 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 which the meat is cut. 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 cracked 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.

A 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 that extra piece, the value of which, reduced to our money, was just one-fortieth of a cent. The next purchases I saw were 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 GIRLS CHEW TOBACCO.

The worst thing about the women of Java is their custom of chewing the betel and tobacco. As for smoking, I saw some women do this 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, however, when you see 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 flat of a thirteen-pound baby. Sometimes a 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 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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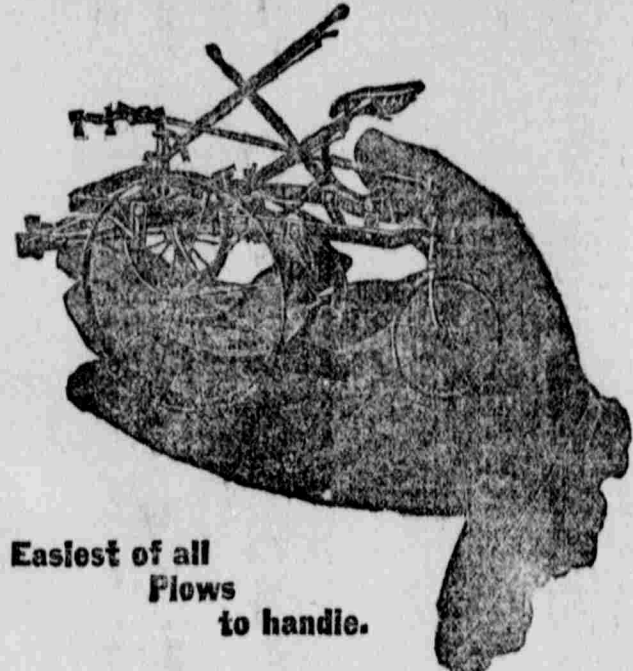
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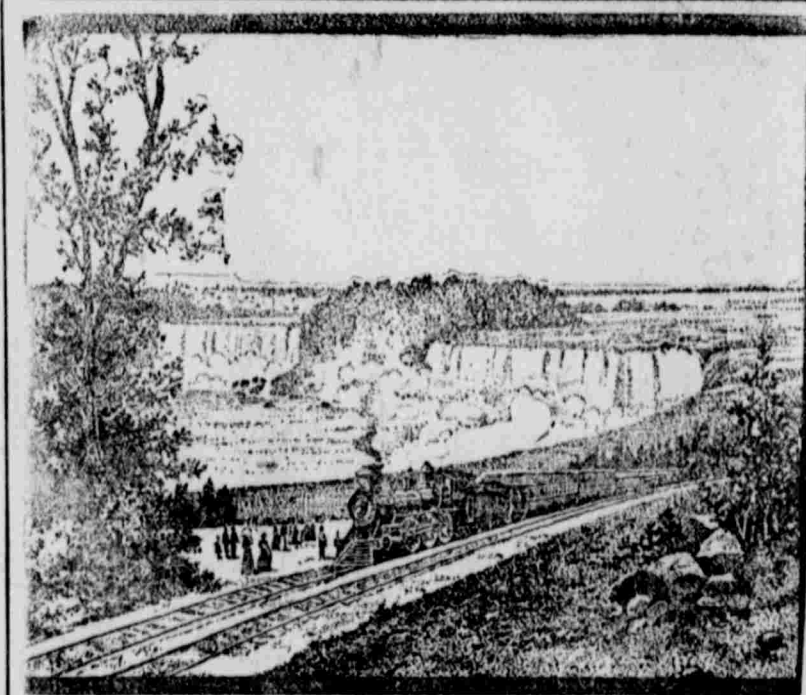
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PHOTOS BY NAKA.
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Gratitude and Sympathy

Joplin, Mo., March 25, 1900.

It is with gratitude to you and sympathy for suffering women that I write this. I miscarried September 15th, and flooding followed. Three doctors attended me but did me no good. I had almost given up hope of recovering, when on December 12th, my husband brought home a Little Boy Almanac, in which I saw a testimonial from a lady afflicted like myself. I immediately got a bottle of Wine of Cardui and commenced taking it. From the first dose it seemed to help me. When I began I could not sit up. Some time I could not raise my head to take a drink without help. The doctors said I would have to undergo an operation as soon as I had strength to stand it. Thanks to Wine of Cardui, I am well without an operation and weigh 123 pounds, which is more than I ever weighed before. I have done all my own work since January 15th.

Mrs. T. H. ELLIOTT.

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