

Parang-Parang.

Queer Features of Life and Nature on the Southern Shores of Mindanao.

FRANK G. CARPENTER

Parang-Parang, April 5, 1900.—I am writing this letter in the beautiful harbor of Parang-Parang, more than seven hundred miles south of Manila, on the southern coast of the great island of Mindanao, in one of the strangest parts of Uncle Sam's strange world, the Philippine Islands. I am in the land of savages, a country of Moros, where every man I meet has a turban and has a knife a yard long strapped to his waist. I have just had an interview with the famous sultan of Mindanao, and have photographed the brown-skinned ladies of his imperial harem. I have been hobnobbing with one of his dattos, a sort of prince and grand vizier, and when I can persuade myself that my head is still on my shoulders by putting my hands to it, I imagine myself in the land of the Arabian Nights.

AMONG THE NATURE WORSHIPERS.

Southern Mindanao has wilder people than any described in any of the stories of Haroun Al Raschid. It has queer Christians as well as Mohammedans, and it has nature worshippers who are more grotesque than were the people of Gulliver or Sinbad the Sailor. Our soldiers have just taken possession of the region, and it was only last week that they made their first trip into the mountains, going about fifteen miles inland. They met many people who were clad only in bracelets and leglets. The bracelets reached from their wrists to their elbows, and the anklets or leglets covered their legs from the foot to the knee. Further than this both sexes were naked. The women wore nose rings about as big around as trade dollars and rings in their ears, running all about outside of the ears from the lobes to the tips. These rings were brass, copper and buffalo horn, and in a few cases of silver. The people who live on the shore say that these savages are cannibals. They warned the soldiers not to go inland, telling them that they would be surely attacked from the mountains. Capt. White who was with the expedition, tells me that they were very careful of their treatment of the people, and were not molested. He says the savages look very much like the Moros, except that they are darker and fiercer. They use spears and poisoned arrows. They have no houses, but live in the trees and move about from place to place.

ALONG THE MINDANAO.

Before I describe my adventures with the Moros let me tell you something of the region where I now am. It is situated to become one of the richest parts of the Philippine Islands and may at some time have a large population of Americans. It is known as the province of Cotabato, it lies east of Zamboanga and west of Davao, and includes a vast strip of rich land, running along the southern coast and far back into the interior. It is only about 350 miles north of the equator, but it has an excellent climate. The air here today is not warmer than that of the average June day in Washington city, and I was quite cold last night when I slept, rolled up in an army blanket, on the deck of the steamer.

The most of Cotabato is rolling. The land rises from the coast in low foot hills which lose themselves in quite high mountains further inland. As you go toward the east the mountains increase in size, culminating in Mount Apo, in the province of Davao, at an altitude of more than two miles. In the mountain regions the air is cold at night, and as you ascend the hills you find it full of ozone.

THE SWITZERLAND OF THE TROPICS.

I despair being able to give you good pictures of the wonderful scenery of this part of the Philippines. It is the Switzerland of the tropics, and a Switzerland which is practically unknown to the traveler or the scientist. Its resources are undeveloped; its beauties are as yet unexplored. I came to Parang-Parang from Zamboanga on the transport Port Stephens, which brought some mules and wagons for the use of the soldiers. Our transport is larger, I fancy, than any steamer which has ever been in these waters, and it is important for the captain to have a correct map of the coast. He tells me that there are no accurate charts and that he finds the coast line in places three miles and more out of the way.

We left Zamboanga at night, steaming slowly around the point on which the town lies and then sailing due east, with the island of Basilan, the seat of the pearl fisheries, on our right. It rained as we left Zamboanga and all night long the lightning played over the waters, now flashing out in great sheets and now cutting the clouds, as if this way and that. There was no thunder, and until after a short time no rain, but these vivid flashes of light blazed out over the water.

We steamed slowly along all night and in the morning came to the great Bay of Illana, a vast curve in the southern coast of Mindanao, which is lined at the west with half a dozen or more rocky blue islands which rise like great mountains out of the sea. The shores in the distance seemed to rise up like a blue wall, upon which the clouds rested. As we went further into the bay the scenery grew wilder and wilder. We found the hills densely wooded, great bushy trees casting their shades, and silhouetting themselves against the sky line at the top. Back of the hills at our right were rolling mountains of navy blue, which apparently tumbled over one another, hair washed with cloud masses of fiery white. Here a long strip of snowy vapor stretched itself like a necktie below the heads of the hills, their blue tops peeping out over it and separating them from the dense blue walls below. The clouds hang very low in this part of the world. In some places they rest upon the water, and in others they just touch the tops of the hills. The sky above is always filled with masses of smoke-like clouds, which, like those of the hills, are always chasing one another.

IN POLLOK HARBOR.

Passing through the great Bay of Illana, we came into the little harbor of Pollok, a harbor which is destined to be one of the chief shipping places of this part of the world. It is almost a perfect horseshoe, not over ten miles wide, and with such a narrow opening that it is protected entirely from the sea. The water is very deep, and at Parang-Parang, which lies some six miles from the harbor, the transport, which drew seventeen feet, came within a few yards of the shore. The country about the harbor is rolling. The land rises gently, spotted with forest and patches of the greenest green. The whole country, although it is wild, looks like a beautiful garden. It makes one think

The Naked Cannibals of Cottabato and the Fiercest of Our Moro Citizens—Bloodthirsty Hordes—They Have Been Fighting the Spaniards for 300 Years, but Have Been Adopted by Uncle Sam—Gossip About the Great Dattos Piang and Utto—A Visit to the New Garrison at Parang-Parang and Something About its Dangerous Surroundings—Travels in the Rich Land of Cottabato, the Undeveloped Garden of the Southern Philippines—The Bay of Pollok and Why It Will Be a Great Future Seaport—A Look at Pollok and a Description of One of the Most Promising but Least Known Parts of Our New Asiatic Possessions—Prospecting for Gold and the Possibilities as to Rice, Coffee, Sugar Cane and Hemp.

It is possible to tell just how lands can be acquired and held, it will be well for Americans desiring to invest or settle in the Philippines to look into this part of the country. I am told that the most of the land about this harbor belongs to the United States government, including the water fronts of Pollok and Parang-Parang.

On the northern side of the bay, reaching away for hundreds of miles into the interior, the land is all government property. It is made up of forests of the most valuable hard woods, interspersed with patches of natural pasture, covered with grass as high as your head. Back of the hills, lining the shore, are mountains, but the whole of the island of Mindanao is rolling and there are plains and tablelands in the interior. As to these, and also as to the mineral resources, no prospecting has been done. Everywhere I have gone so far I have heard stories of gold existing in the sands of the rivers. In most cases the metal has been found in small quantities, but no one knows what there is. Capt. White, who is stationed at Cottabato, tells me he has washed in some of the streams of the hills and has found black sand and small grains of gold. He says he found color in nearly every case.

At present a large part of the cultivated lands are in the hands of the Chinese, of whom there are about 200 in Cottabato, although there is one Spaniard who has 1,700 acres of rice. The Chinese number about one-third of the population of Cottabato town. They do

The soldiers have cleaned up the town and have made ghettos along its principal streets. Its population is not more than 500. It is chiefly Visayan, the people dressing and looking much like the inhabitants of Panay and Iloilo. They are very quiet and are not at all like the Moros across the bay.

THE FIERCEST OF THE MOROS.

The Moros of Cottabato are said to be the fiercest of all the Mohammedans of our new possessions. They have been fighting the Spaniards since 1590, and almost always successfully. They have a good organization and thousands of fighting men. Their chief datto is a man named Piang, who was originally a Chinese mestizo slave, but who, by his force of character, has raised himself to be a commander of his people. He has all the Chinese thrift combined with all the Chinese cruelty. He is said to have made himself very rich and to have added to his wealth by killing such of his people as would not submit to his taxation. Last September he killed twelve of the leading insurgents. They were organizing against the Americans and had raised an army and had seized one of the towns. They were taxing the people, killing all who opposed them. The Chinese merchants appealed to Datto Piang. He came in with his Moros, picked out the twelve insurgents and sliced off their heads. At present Datto Piang is a friend of the Americans. Before our troops came he sent word to General Bates that he wanted to turn over the region to him,

others had bows and arrows, the latter tipped with steel and dipped in poison. There was such a variety of weapons that I cannot describe them all. Every man and every boy had a sword stuck in his belt or fastened to his back. Some of them scowled at us and others pointed to their knives and offered to sell them to us.

The picture was gay, as well as savage. The men and boys wore brightly colored turbans and waistcloths. One or two of the more distinguished citizens had on skintight trousers of red, yellow, blue and other colors, in some cases striped and in others mixed. A few had jackets, but most were bare to the waist, their brown skins shining like varnished mahogany under the sun. Some wore tall hats with tassels, and one little fellow, the son of a datto, was resplendent in tights of turkey red calico, polka-dotted with white. Talk about the wild man of Borneo! You could see him on every side, and more savage and wild than Barnum's curiosity ever was.

Through this crowd we passed on our way up to the town, seeing Moro women and children looking out of the Spanish buildings at every window and every door. Some of the women had only a cotton cloth wrapped about their breasts under their armpits and others were clad in strips of bright-colored cloth. All were bareheaded and frowsy-looking, and all were barefooted.

A DANGEROUS PLACE FOR A SMALL FORCE.

We found the town full of Moros. They had taken possession of the fort and all of the buildings formerly held by the Spaniards, with the exception of the church, which is occupied by our soldiers. The soldiers are only ninety-five in number, and in an interview which I had with the datto he told me that he controlled about ten thousand men. If this is so, it would seem to me to be very dangerous to have so few troops at Parang-Parang. By means of a conspiracy they could wipe

out the garrison at any moment, and Colonel Webb Hayes advised Captain Gillenwater, who is in command, to put the Moros out of the fort and to hold it for our soldiers. Care is especially necessary among the Moros of Cottabato, who, as I have already said, are noted as being bad citizens. They have no regard for life, and they believe that killing a Christian is a sure passport to heaven. The fort is well formed for defense. It covers about an acre of ground and has heavy stone walls, on the top of which is a picket fence made of palm. It has good water and its arrangements for the soldiers are of the best.

During our stay we have bought numerous weapons of the Moros. They are good traders, but are anxious for money, and beautiful knives, bayonets and campbells were offered us at from \$2 to \$5 each. Col. Hayes bought a dozen or so swords and lances. Later on the Moros brought weapons to our steamer, and I made photographs of two of them fencing with knives. One wore a helmet and coat of mail, which were probably relics of their fights with the Spaniards centuries ago. They were of brass, beautifully made, but exceedingly heavy and almost unbearable down here in the tropics. The men offered the armor for sale for \$10 in gold, but before he left was glad to sell it for \$5. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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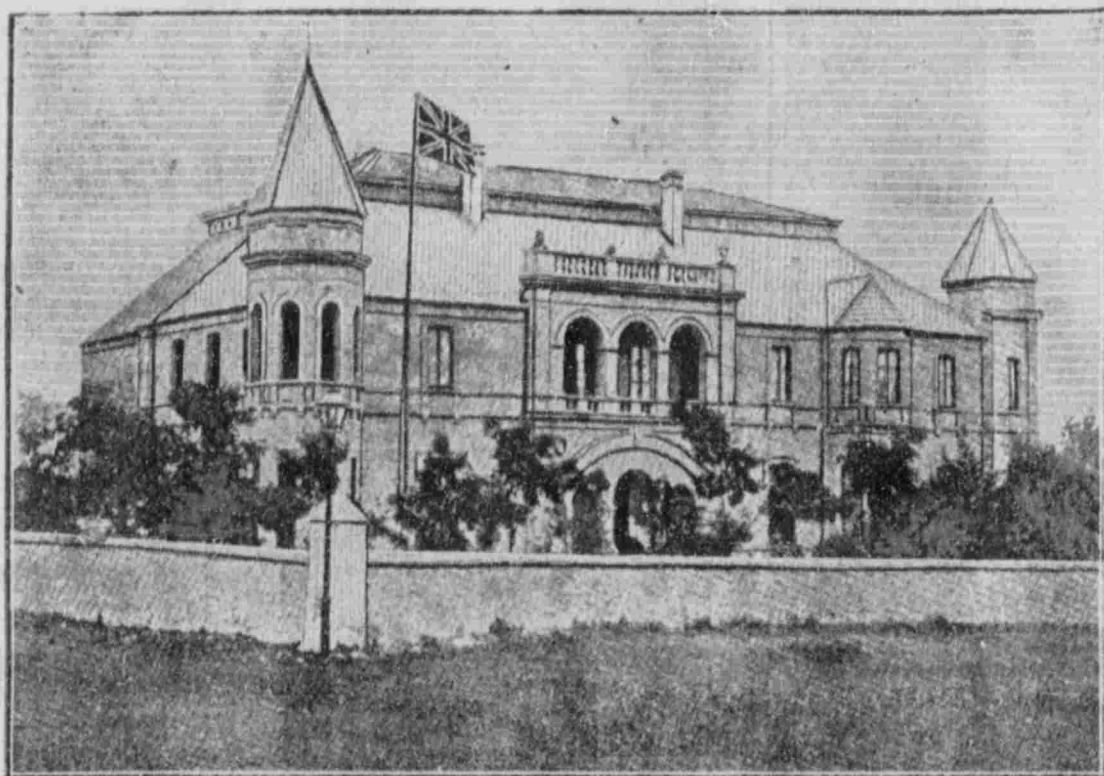
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This solid appearing structure, built of polished freestone, was the official residence in Bloemfontein of the chief magistrate of Orange Free State before the occupation of that town by the British. There is an extensive garden which is well laid out and in front of the house is picturesquely planted with various kinds of trees.

have been the only explorers of this island, 239 miles long, and of this 102 miles are navigable for small boats. Cottabato, the capital of the province of Cottabato, is situated on this river, about six miles from where it flows into the Bay of Illana, and small steamers can sail with the tide up to it. There is a bar at the mouth which gives out a few feet of water at low tide, which leads me to think that the future city will be on this Pollok bay, where ships of the largest draft can have safe anchorage and be perfectly protected from the storms.

ONE OF OUR FUTURE SEAPORTS.

It would seem to me that this harbor will naturally be the great seaport for southern Mindanao. It is far better than the harbor of Zamboanga and better than that of Davao, which is at the eastern end of the island, some two hundred miles away. The Rio Grande valley will eventually be the center of a large population and the trade of the interior will come down the river by boat to be shipped abroad. One of the natural lines of the railroads which will some day be built to open up this great island will be through this valley. At present nearly everything goes down to Cottabato city, but on account of the bar this will be turned to the Bay of Pollok. There is now a military road eight miles long, built by the Spaniards, between the bay and Cottabato. It is in bad condition, but is being repaired by our troops.

FOR AMERICAN PROSPECTORS.

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the mercantile business of the country and have all the stores. They are to be found everywhere in the Philippines and I see them engaged in business at the two little towns of Pollok and Parang-Parang. The trade of the district now amounts to \$1,000,000 silver per annum.

IN POLLOK.

I spent a day in the town of Pollok. This is across the bay, about six miles from Parang-Parang. The latter is a Moro settlement, but Pollok is almost altogether Christian and Chinese. It is a little tropical gem set into the hills of the harbor, with a stone pier reaching far out into the water. Near the shore are the barracks and buildings of the Spaniards, now occupied by our soldiers. They are surrounded by walls of stone and include a well-shaded park and beautiful streets and walks. Entering the grounds from the sea is a little canal formed of masonry which leads to a dry dock about twenty feet wide and one hundred feet long. The barracks consist of many comfortable wooden buildings, roofed with galvanized iron. Back of them is the town proper, a collection of neat huts over which hang great trees loaded with coconuts. The most of the huts are built upon piles, the first floor, upon which the people live, being about six feet from the ground. There is one quite large church, now without a priest, a convent and a school building.

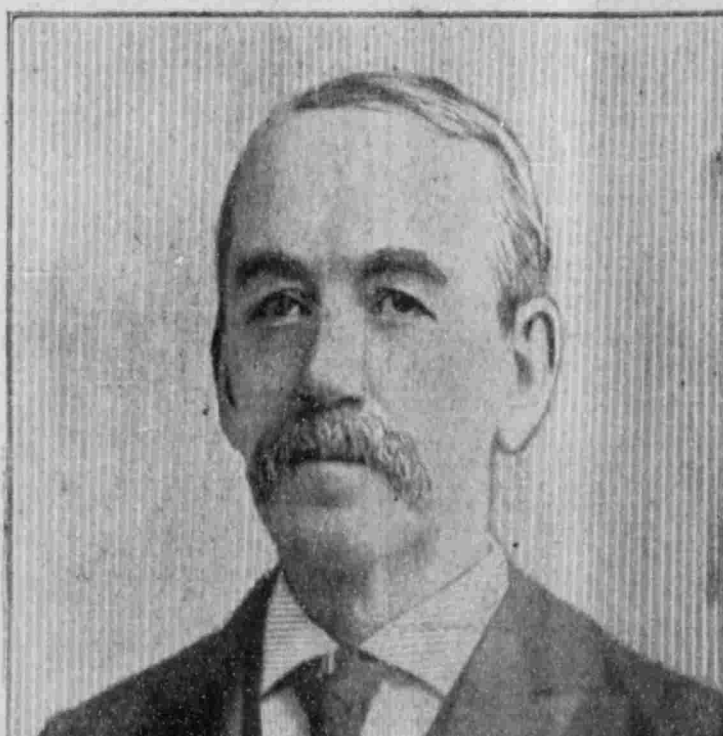
and he asked for an American flag. He appointed Christians as presidents of the various districts and put in a Moro guard to carry out their orders.

Another datto of this same region is a bloodthirsty fellow named Utto, who fought the Spaniards for years, but who is now a friend of the Americans. He is an old fellow, having passed his three score and ten. He has one wife, the daughter of the sultan of Mindanao, who is about twenty-four years old, and his concubines are said to number sixty. His wife is keen in fine style. She has no end of diamonds and walks in gold-slipers.

QUEER AMERICAN CITIZENS.

I wish I could take you through the crowd of American citizens whom we found awaiting us on the wharf at Parang-Parang. They were queer creatures to be considered nephews of our own Uncle Sam. I can tell you that I was glad that I had American soldiers with me as I passed among them. There were scores of dark-faced men, each wearing a great knife at his side. There were half-naked boys, with serpentine swords called kris, which are used by these people for dismembering their enemies, and there were others who carried the long swords known here as cutlans, which are especially used for cutting off heads. Some of the men were armed with spears of steel, with bamboo shafts, and

HUNDREDS OF INSURGENTS SLAIN BY GEN. BELL'S MEN.



The forces under command of Gen. W. H. Bell in the Philippines are seeing active service indeed. Recently twenty of his cavalrymen met a force of fifty bolomen and in the engagement shot every one of them. General Bell's force is in the province of South Camarines, and their fighting experiences are not yet over.