

## AMONG THE MALAYS.

Queer Features of Life and Business in the Backwoods of South Asia.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Singapore, Straits of Malacca.—This is the land of the Malays. Singapore has a large number of them and the peninsula which here joins into the Indian ocean forming the tail of southeastern Asia is their home. The Siamese farther up are almost altogether of Malay extraction and all the islands of this vast archipelago through which I have been traveling are more or less pure Malay. The purest of all, however, are those on the Straits of Malacca and about the Malay peninsula, and this is perhaps the best place in the world for the study of the race. It is just now an especially interesting study for us. The Malays are the cousins of our Filipinos, and their character today is not far different from that of the Tagalos and the Visayans.

### THE DRONES OF SOUTH ASIA.

It may be that the Philippines have become more industrious by their change of environment, but if not they will never be a great working race. The Malays are the drones of this part of the world. They originally came from Sumatra and owned Singapore when the English took possession of the island. As a result they should be the richest of the nations, whereas they are the poorest. The profits of the change of ownership have gone to the Chinese and East Indians and the Malays seem content that they should hold them.

I had a talk with the sultan of Johore, the Malay ruler of the state on the mainland opposite Singapore. He has a rich country, which raises vast quantities of pepper and coffee and which produces gold, silver and tin. He tells me that he has to get Chinese coolies to work his plantations and that his own people will not labor. The hotel where I am staying in Singapore recently lost two of its Chinese waiters. Among the applicants for their places were two young Malays. They offered to do the work for the same as the Chinese, but said they could not come earlier than 8 o'clock in the morning, that they should need from 11 until 1 for their noonday sleep and would want to close the day's work at about 7 in the evening. They were of course dismissed without further question.

### LOOK LIKE FILIPINOS.

The Malays of this part of the world look much like our Filipinos. They are perhaps a little taller, but they have the same muscular complexion and the same straight lighting plant and independent walk. Their hands and feet are small. The most of them look well-bred; they are very proud and haughty and are quick to resent an injury. They remember an insult a long time, and will revenge one after years of waiting. I was told in Manila that it was impossible to trust a Filipino. The English merchants said that they often made good servants, but that they required much watching than a mule. One man told me of a number of instances where Filipino bookkeepers and other clerks had been scrupulously honest for ten years and upward, and then absconded with the property of their masters. The same is said to be the character of the Malays of the strait.

### MOHAMMEDANS.

Our Mohammedans are now confined to the Sulu Islands and Mindanao, the inhabitants of which are Malays of Jororo extraction. The tribes to the northward were converted by the Spaniards and their religion is a rude form of Catholic Christianity. The Malays here are Mohammedans. They use the Koran and worship the mosque. They believe in polygamy and the richer of them have a number of wives. They do not, however, keep their women in seclusion, as in Turkey, although I now and then see one going about with her face half hidden. The most of them are too poor to have separate apartments in their huts for the women and harem life is confined to the rich.

### MALAY VILLAGES.

I have visited some of their villages. The ordinary houses are thatched huts about fifteen feet square. The walls are of made boards or of bamboo and a thatch of palm leaves. Many of the houses have but one room, the people eating and sleeping where the cooking is done. The kitchen furniture is an iron pan and a coconut ladle with perhaps a pot for soup and stew. The bed is a mat spread on the floor and the family squat on their heels or sprawl at full length when resting. The dress of the poorer classes is as mean as their houses. They wear a sort of a bag-like skirt or sarong much like that used in Java. Some of the men have jackets and some are bare to the waist. The women usually wear jackets and sarongs. The richer people wear trousers under their sarongs, but this is only in cities like Singapore or persons of authority like a sultan or rajan. Small children seldom have any clothes whatever and I have yet to see a baby which was not as naked as when it was born.

The lack of clothing, however, causes no suffering in this part of the world. We are here just eighty degrees from the equator and the thermometer stands at just about eighty Fahrenheit all the year round. The sun rises and sets at the same hour each day the year through, and the flowers always bloom and the trees are always green. The chief question is how to keep cool rather than how to get warm, and so the naked babies thrive.

**SMOKE AND CHEW THE BETEL.**  
All the Malays of this part of Asia smoke and chew betel. I have seen little boys absolutely nude with cigarettes in their mouths, and the girls learn to smoke almost as soon as they are able to crawl. The betel habit is even worse. It consists of chewing the nut of the Areca palm mixed with tobacco and lime. This turns the teeth black, swells the tongue, puffs out the lips and makes them crack. As the people chew they spit and their expectorations are the color of blood. If you have ever had a tooth pulled and tried to cleanse your mouth afterward you have gone through some of the experiences of betel chewing as far as saliva is concerned.

The betel nut is about as large as a black walnut. It is of a soft spongy nature and has a bitter astringent taste. It is sold here in all the markets and with it red three and tobacco. Every Malay gentleman and lady carries a betel box and it is only courteous to offer your neighbor a chew. When a man is married one of his presents to the bride is a betel outfit and I have told that babies are sometimes given betel before they are weaned. The

chewing is said to take away hunger and fatigue. The habit once acquired is seldom given up, and I see women chewing who are so old that they have to pound the nut to a powder in order that they may masticate them with their toothless gums. I can imagine no more disgusting sight than one of these leathery old hags chewing the betel and expectorating, as it were, blood in puddles.

The chewing is done by young women also and those of all classes. During a visit to Bangkok I bought a betel nut which is used by the ladies of the king's harem. It is just about as big as a tea cup and the king's wives in using it lift it up to their lips. This chewing is also common in the Philippines, but not so disgusting as it is here on the edge of the equator.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF MALAYSIA.

I am surprised at the development going on in this part of the world. I have written of Singapore and the \$200,000,000 worth of exports and imports which come in and go out of the Straits every year. This is only one of the things that is going on down here on the edge of the equator. There are now about a dozen newspapers published in this region. Singapore has two dailies in English, two dailies in Chinese, two in Malay and one or two papers in Tamil.

A little further up the Strait is Penang, with a population of over 100,000, and more than \$100,000,000 a year. Johore is doing considerable business, and there are half a dozen other states which are exporting coffee, tea and tin.

Penang is an island fifteen miles long and nine miles broad, with large rice, sugar and pepper estates. It is now building a railway through the state of Penang, which will be connected by ferry. The railroad will be 317 miles long. It is planned to extend it to Burmah. A railroad is proposed here in Singapore. It is to cross the island and then to begin again at Johore and extend on upward through the peninsula to Siam and possibly to China. A branch will go off to Burmah, and the probability is that some day Indo-China and East India will be connected by iron tracks with Singapore.

### RAILROADS IN SIAM.

At present considerable railroad building is going on in Siam. The king there is very enterprising, and he is slowly but surely pushing railroads to the northward. He has just finished one 166 miles long to Korat, and will have another hundred-mile road completed this year. I have recently met some Americans who have been selling electrical machinery in Bangkok, and according to their statements that city is now one of the liveliest of the far east. It has an electric lighting plant and electric street cars. It is the center of two railroad systems, with machine shops and foundries, and it is thoroughly up-to-date in many of its equipments. It has twenty-six rice mills now run by steam. Seven of these mills have electric light plants, some of which were shipped there from the United States. A number of the rice mills are Chinese, only four being European. The Chinese mills have large capital, and they are managed on as good business principles as any mills in the United States. Bangkok has three daily newspapers and about two scores of smaller ones. The railroads are well built, and some of them are paying dividends.

### BANGKOK AND THE GERMANS.

Bangkok is rapidly growing. It is said to have in the neighborhood of 800,000 people and to be the center of distribution for the products of at least 5,000,000 people. It has good hotels, large banks and importing and exporting houses, with large capital. It is a town of telegraphs and telephones, clubs and libraries, business men and missionaries, but, but not least. At present it is sandwiched between the possessions of the French in Indo-China and the English in Burmah and both nations would like to grab it. At the same time the Germans are slowly, but surely, working their way into its business and any attempt of the other powers to take possession of it will be resented by them. About two years ago Prince Henry of Prussia made a visit to Bangkok and it is said that the emperor of Germany keeps up a personal correspondence with Chulalongkorn, the king of Siam, which is much helping German interests. The Germans have recently bought the Scottish oriental line of steamers sailing between Bangkok and China and other parts of the far east, and they are pushing their trade in every possible way.

### COFFEE PLANTATIONS.

There are a large number of Europeans who have recently engaged in coffee raising on the Malay peninsula. In the protected native state of Selangor there are 100 such estates, varying in size up to 2,000 acres each. Most of the planters are setting out rubber trees in addition to their coffee, and some are planting coconuts. They use Indian coolies as laborers. They are said to be making money.

There are other plantations in Johore, Pahang and the Negri Sembilan. Have you ever heard of these states? They are all more or less governed by England, and they constitute a large part of the Malay peninsula. They raise pepper, coffee and gambler and some of them produce a large amount of tin. Some have sugar plantations and some do a big business in tapica, teak wood and rattan.

### ON A SAGO PLANTATION.

There is a great deal of sago produced in this part of the world. It comes from one variety of palm trees which grows in the jungle and which is also set out in plantations. The sago is made from the pith, which is very large and porous. The trees are cut down in the woods and the trunks split open from one end to the other, so that the pith can be scooped out. After this it is carried to the factory and run through graters into a sort of pulp. The pulp is allowed to stand in water

The Ancestors of the Filipinos—Who They Are and How They Live—The Malays the Drones of the Pacific—Their Mohammedan Customs—A Look at Their Villages—They Smoke and Chew the Betel—New Railroad Developments in Malaysia—Electric Lights in Siam—The English Making Money in Coffee—Something About Sago and Tapioca—Tigers at \$50 a Head and Cobras at Fifty Cents.

for some hours and the fiber leaves the sago and goes into the water. After this the water is changed until finally nothing but the sago is left. It is now in the form of a starch, which is dried in the sun. After drying it is broken up and ground into a flour, which is the sago flour of our markets.

Tapioca, which is also raised here, comes from the root of the tapioca plant. It is handled in much the same way as sago. The roots are cultivated, requiring about eighteen months to grow the crop. After gathering, the roots are cut into pieces, ground up and boiled to get out the poison. A great deal of the product goes to the United States.

### COBRAS AND TIGERS.

Nearly every one of these settlements on the Straits of Malacca has its botanical garden, and not a few have zoological accompaniments. I went out the other day to the garden in Singapore to look at the snakes. The country is full of them, and it has some of the deadliest known to man. The government gives a reward for the poisonous varieties, paying from 50 cents to \$5 per head, according to size and character. I saw a man bring home to the officials in a bag in order to collect his fees. He had thirty-nine, and every one of them was venomous. He pulled snakes out of the bag with his bare hands and cracked their heads against the stones as he showed them to the policemen, and I wondered that he was not bitten. The government pays \$5 for snakes of fourteen feet and upward.

### THE HOME OF THE TIGER.

The Malay peninsula is the home of the tiger. Every now and then a baby is eaten and frequently men and women. Not long ago the statistics showed that 200 people were annually killed on the Singapore Island by tigers, and during a visit to the peninsula, I was shown the tracks of a tiger in the mud near a saw mill by which we drove. The

tiger had been about the mill the preceding night, but had gone away without eating up any of the Malay babies in the village near it and without playing with the quietest buzz saw. The government reward for a full-grown tiger is \$50 and for a tiger cub \$15.

### COBRAS WHICH SPIT POISON.

Speaking of snakes, the reward is fifty cents for the cobra, which is to be found everywhere. The cobra is a brownish-gray snake, about five feet in length. It is sluggish in its movements, and can easily be killed, but one must be very careful to keep out of the way of its venom. When attacked it raises its head and spreads it out in the shape of a hood, while it spits out poison with a noise like an angry cat. It can throw its spittle a distance of eight feet, and if a bit of it happens to fall upon a sore or upon the eye it is sure death. It is the cobra that the Indian snake charmers use largely in their exhibitions. They do not seem to be afraid of it, and apparently handle it with impunity. Not long ago an Englishman looking at such a show told the Hindoo that he knew the poisonous glands had been extracted, and that if the cobra did bite it could not hurt him. The snake charmer warned him to keep away, saying it was not so. The Englishman laughed and grasped the cobra in his hand. It bit him and he died within a few hours.

This is also the home of the python and other great snakes of many kinds, some of which are to be found in the water. One twenty-five feet long and eighteen inches in circumference was caught the other day on the deck of a steamer lying at the wharf. It had probably come in with the cargo and had climbed up the chains from the water. In my voyage to Singapore the captain showed me a snake swimming in the water some distance away from our vessel. It was, I judge, at least thirty feet long. The captain ran for his rifle, but before he could shoot the monster had dived under the water and we saw it no more.

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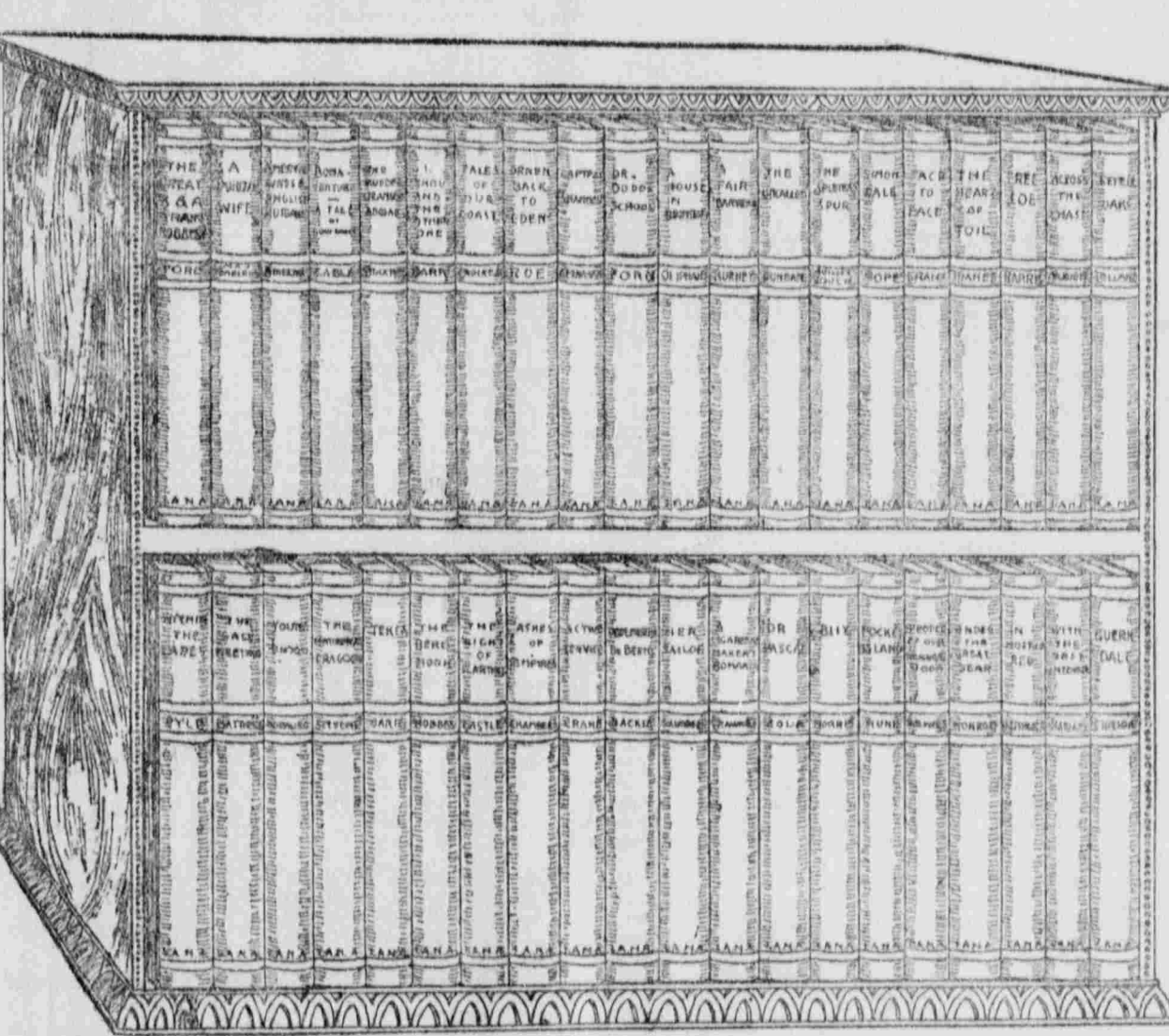
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