

DOWN AMONG THE SULUS

Travels in Our Mohammedan Archipelago of the Southern Philippines.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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Jolo, Island of Sulu, May 22, 1900.—I am still in the land of the Moros. I have sailed westward from Mindanao, and for the past week have been traveling among the islands of the Sulu archipelago which dot the sea in a great crescent from Mindanao to Borneo. There are two hundred of these islands, some mere dots upon the face of the sea, others composed of mountains and plains, covering an area equal to that of several hundred good-sized farms. Some, such as Basilan, Sulu and Tawi Tawi, even approach the dignity of countries, running from ninety-five square miles in Tawi Tawi to three hundred and thirty square miles in Sulu, with Basilan coming between at an area of two hundred and sixty-three square miles.

The Sulu islands are among the most curious, wild and romantic of our Philippine possessions. They are inhabited chiefly by Moros of the most savage order, governed by datus, and all subject to the sultan of Sulu, with whom the government has made a special treaty, giving him a monthly salary from the United States treasury. His rule is such, however, that we have had to place troops at a number of stations throughout the archipelago. The chief garrison is here at Jolo, but there are soldiers also at Siasi, Bongao and Basilan.

BASILAN, SIASI AND BONGAO.

Basilan is only a few hours' ride by boat from Zamboanga. It has a population of something like a thousand or so, and its capital, Isabella, contains about eight hundred inhabitants. It is a beautiful island, with good soil and having mountains covered with timber. The Spaniards used it as a naval station, and built there dockyards, barracks and a hospital.

The island of Siasi is the most important of the Tawil group, embracing about a score of islands and islets. It is situated about forty miles from Sulu, and its capital, Siasi, vies with Jolo as one of the commercial centers of the archipelago.

The town of Siasi is the only port in the Sulu sea at which steamers can come directly up to the docks. The main street of the town, in fact, is built out over the sea. Its houses are up on posts standing out above the water, and some of the people go from house to house on stilts, stepping from their stilts to the first floor of the houses and leaving them outside until they are ready to depart. The town is very pretty, being well shaded with coconut trees and doing a considerable business in copra, sugar, rice and shells. We have a company stationed at this point.

Another company is quartered at Bongao to keep watch over the two datus who live there and the people of the Tawil group. This group has about forty islands, the most important being Tawi Tawi, a long oval island ninety-five miles in circumference and about three hundred and eighty-five square miles in area. It is very mountainous, lacks water and has almost no cultivated lands.

The island of Bongao is a huge rocky mass rising about one thousand feet almost straight up out of the sea. At one end of it there is some low land, the sea about Bongao bay, and upon it are the barracks of our soldiers. There is a fort, and some other buildings. It is said that the pirates used Bongao as a resort in the past, it being especially well fitted for defense, and the jungle on the mountain forming a good place for retreat when attacked. Bongao is only a few hours' ride from Borneo.

OUR PEARL ISLANDS.

These islands are all more or less surrounded by pearl fisheries. The chief business is in the shells of the pearl oysters, which are gathered from the bed of the ocean near the islands. There is an English company at Jolo which is shipping quantities of these shells to Europe. They receive from the poorest variety about \$50 a ton, with the additional profit which now and then comes from the pearls in the oysters, some of which sell for hundreds of dollars apiece. General Bates told me that he had been called on by the sultan, who offered him a pearl as big as the end of your little finger as a present. He says it was worth about \$5,000, but that as he was a government official he did not want it, but a right to accept it, and hence, to the surprise of the sultan, refused.

THE SULTAN AND HIS PEARLS.

The sultan and the datus have the right to the largest pearls which are gathered by the Moros, and it is said that the sultan has a great fortune in pearls stored away in his palace. A German Jew once called upon him the other day and asked him to sell him some of his pearls, but he found his majesty well posted on values as himself and went away sorrowful. The company which is now doing most of the business is composed of Englishmen. They have a special arrangement with the sultan. They own about thirty schooners and make regular excursions to the pearl fishing grounds. They use divers who wear diving suits, and carry on the business after modern methods. The shells are used in manufacturing knife handles, buttons, paper cutters and other such things. I am told that not one-tenth of the money made from the fishing comes from the pearls themselves. The shells are the most valuable, the pearls being merely a by-product. The pearl fishery, however, in all the pearl fishing centers, in the western Australian fisheries, for instance, the returns for the shells in one year were \$100,000, while the pearls gotten during the same time sold for \$150,000.

The fishing goes on about the islands of Basilan and in other grounds in the western part of the archipelago, such as at Bongao and Tawi Tawi, as well as in the seas not far from Sulu. The seas have not yet been carefully prospected, however.

AMONG THE DIVERS.

The method of diving for pearls as followed by the natives is exceedingly simple. They use no diving suits, but are naked into the water, using heavy stones to their feet to help them sink to the bottom. They usually choose grounds where the pearl oysters are not more than forty feet below the surface. The oysters are attached to the rocks, and the divers cut them loose with his knife and puts them in a net bag. He then gives the signal by jerking the rope about his waist, and is dragged to the surface by the divers and swimmers. They have trained themselves to holding their breath under water, and some can remain below the surface for about ten minutes at a time. The business is exceedingly dangerous, for there are numerous sharks, and a

man is liable to lose a leg or an arm, if not his life.

After the shells are gathered they must be cleaned, and the oysters shucked out before they are ready for sale. They are often piled up on the shore and left there to decay, in order that the pearls may be squeezed out. Not all of the oysters have pearls in them, but a very poor shell may sometimes contain a very fine pearl, so that great care is used in handling the product.

HOW PEARLS ARE FORMED.

Pearls, you know, are caused by some foreign substance working its way into the flesh of the oyster. It may be a grain of sand, a small pebble or other foreign matter. The oyster tries to protect himself from it by putting a coating of pearl about it, and this coating goes on and on until at last we have a pearl.

Indeed, I am told that pearls are now being made in Japan and China, by taking the oysters from the sea and carefully opening them just wide enough to slip a particle of sand between the leaves of the shell. The oysters thus treated are planted and fed and within a short time each begins to grow a pearl. It is said that the French bore holes through the oyster's shell and insert a little sliver of glass and about this the oyster grows a pearl.

I have seen something of the pearl fisheries of different parts of the world. Some of the best until recently have been in Ceylon, but more are now being discovered in the Persian gulf, where about \$2,000,000 worth are taken out every year. The fishing there is done by naked Arabs, who plug up their noses and ears before they go down into the water, and like the Moros here, the great stones to their feet to enable them to remain down the more easily. In Panama the diving is done by the native Colombians. They find both pearls and shells, and some of the shells are exceedingly fine. Not long ago a sea captain made a contract with the natives of Panama bay to clean the barnacles from the bottom of his ship. They did so, and among the shells fastened to the hull found an oyster containing a pearl worth \$5,000. The captain claimed that the pearl should be his, but he was not able to persuade the Colombians to give it up.

THE ISLAND OF SULU.

During the past week I have coasted around the island of Sulu. It is one of the most beautiful of the Philippine group, made up of mountains and valleys covered with rice, grass and here and there spotted with forests. From the ships the hills make me think of the mountains of West Virginia rather than tropics, save that many of the peaks are extinct craters and you can everywhere see that the land is volcanic. The grass appears to be very rich. It grows so luxuriantly that in riding through the country I have often found it above my head when I sat on my pony. The trees on the mountains are large, some of them being of mahogany, teak and other hardwoods. There is but little cultivation anywhere. The island is about ten miles wide and thirty miles long, and the most of it is wild when the Moros came over from Borneo and took possession of it centuries ago.

OUR SULO CAPITAL.

The town of Jolo has about 1,000 population. It may be called our capital of the Sulu Islands, for it was built by the Spaniards and consequently belongs to Uncle Sam. The town is one of the most beautiful of all the settlements of the Philippine Islands. It is more like a botanical garden than a town. Its wide streets, paved with white sand, cross one another at right angles. They are shaded by great trees, the limbs of which meet and intertwine overhead, making a series of arbors which enable you to walk with safety through them at midday, although you are on the edge of the equator. Here and there through the town are small parks filled with tropical trees and flowers. The city has running water, and ditches have been made through the streets which half circle the trees and irrigate them. The main street ends in a pier running out into the ocean. The upper end of it is a plaza or drill ground, where the soldiers parade morning and evening, and where the band frequently plays.

One of the curious features of the town is its wall. This consists of one thickness of brick built on a concrete base a yard high. It could be easily battered down by a cannon, but it was intended to protect the Spaniards from the inces and arrows of the Moros, for this reason you see cracks or holes in it at intervals, each crack just wide enough for a gun to be poked through. For the same reason the mortar on top of the wall is filled with broken wine bottles, so placed that they will cut the fingers of any one who tries to climb over.

UNCLE SAM'S PROPERTY.

Uncle Sam has a limited title to the lands of the Sulu archipelago. He does not own property here as in other parts of the Philippines, his title being limited by the treaty made with the sultan. He succeeds, however, to all that the Spaniards owned. This consisted of a number of towns scattered over the island, which were used as military posts. He owns here not only Jolo inside the wall, but the land for a radius of about a mile around the town. This line is marked out by block houses, in each of which our soldiers

are now quartered, and the Moros are not permitted to settle inside the radius. The circle contains excellent land, and in the growth which Jolo will have through the development of the agricultural resources of the island of Sulu it will be worth a great deal for building lots, as it comprises the only section upon which more houses can be built.

The buildings of Jolo are nearly all of two stories, each having a shop on the ground floor, and living quarters above. The oyster shell window, common to the north, is used here, and the architecture is about the same style as that of the better houses of Luzon. There are large barracks for the soldiers, a well constructed fort, so that the troops are quite as comfortably quartered as they could be at home. The business of the town is done almost altogether by the Chinese, there being a few Moro merchants in the whole town.

EARLY MORNING AT JOLO.

One of the queerest places in Jolo is the market. It is largely patronized by the Moros, who are the chief peddlers and market sellers. The business begins at 6 o'clock in the morning and it ends before 8. It begins at 6 because the gates are not open before that time. I got up at 5:45 yesterday morning to see the crowd of market people enter the city. The sentinels were pacing the streets. There were two soldiers at the gate, and in front of the gate I saw the tower which rises above it, two other soldiers were sleeping in their hammocks. The town was quiet. I could hear only the barking of a dog, the crowing of cocks, and the moaning of the soldiers. I crawled under a hammock and mounted the steps of the tower, and from its window looked down outside of the wall.

Below me stood as motley a crowd as you will find in any part of the world. The only one I have seen which will compare with it is that which gathers at the gates of the capital of Korea on market mornings. There the crowd was of yellow-faced, almond-eyed natives, dressed in white gowns. Here the people are dark-faced, straight-eyed, half-naked Malays. Stand with me on the tower and let us look at them together. There is a Moro with a half a dozen chickens. He is clad in a jacket and dirty white drawers, but he wears a white turban and has a gorgeous red belt at the waist. Beside him stands a black-faced boy in a breech cloth. He has six green coconuts fastened to each end of that pole, which rests upon his shoulders; he is bringing them to the market for sale. Further over are two Moro women, half hiding their faces. They have red cotton cloths wrapped about their lean persons. They are barefooted and almost bareheaded, and you fear that the wind will blow off their gowns. Each has a basket of vegetables on her head, which she balances there without touching it, waiting for the gate to open. In the same crowd there are plaited Chinese, carrying baskets of lettuce and vegetables on their heads. There are Mohammedans with bunches of oranges and Moro boys loaded down with bananas, durian and bread fruit. What a variety of hats. Here is one just below us, which is as big as a parasol, and by its side, hiding the head of a woman, is another the size of a soup plate.

But there! The bugle sounds! The crowd wakes up, as it were. The gates open and all rush for the market.

QUEER MARKET SCENES.

Let us follow and see how they buy and sell down here in our Mohammedan land on the edge of the tropics. We are in a low building consisting of walls of stails about a hollow square. But few of the stalls are in use; the most of the peddlers have squatted down on their heels in two long rows, facing each other, with their wares in front of them spread out on the ground. Some have laid green banana leaves on the sand of the court and upon them have placed little piles of eggs, fruit, betel nuts and vegetables of various kinds, while others have laid their wares in the dirt. All are chewing the betel or smoking as they wait for their customers.

CAN THESE BE AMERICAN CITIZENS?

Cast your eyes up and down through the market. Could you ever conceive such people as American citizens? They are more fantastic and more native than you ever imagined. Let us notice them as they squat down before us. Here, under our feet, is a dark-faced woman with hair like a negro. Here, under our feet, is a white-faced woman with hair like a negro. Here, under our feet, is a dirty brown cotton cloth as big as a sheet, which she has so loosely wrapped around her shoulders that it has fallen down. She has a rag about the waist which barely reaches her knees. Her face shows little intelligence. The eyes are beamed and down the corners of her mouth are streaks of the black ink of the betel. She opens her lips and you see that her teeth are as black as your boots. She is as dirty and ugly as any old woman of the African wilds, and it makes one almost glad to think her sister. As I look at her she sees my note book and begins to primp, combing up her wool and drawing in her dirty brown rags over her bosom.

Further on are more women of the same class, although some are better dressed, and not a few are quite clean. All are chewing the betel, and every woman and man has a cigar in her or his mouth. The men are by far the best dressed. Many of them wear tight trousers of bright colors. Some have red sashes and all urban more or less gay. Some wear red felt caps, such as you see in Egypt, but all are disgusting.

THE NIGHT CATS.

A Famous Body of South African Scouts.

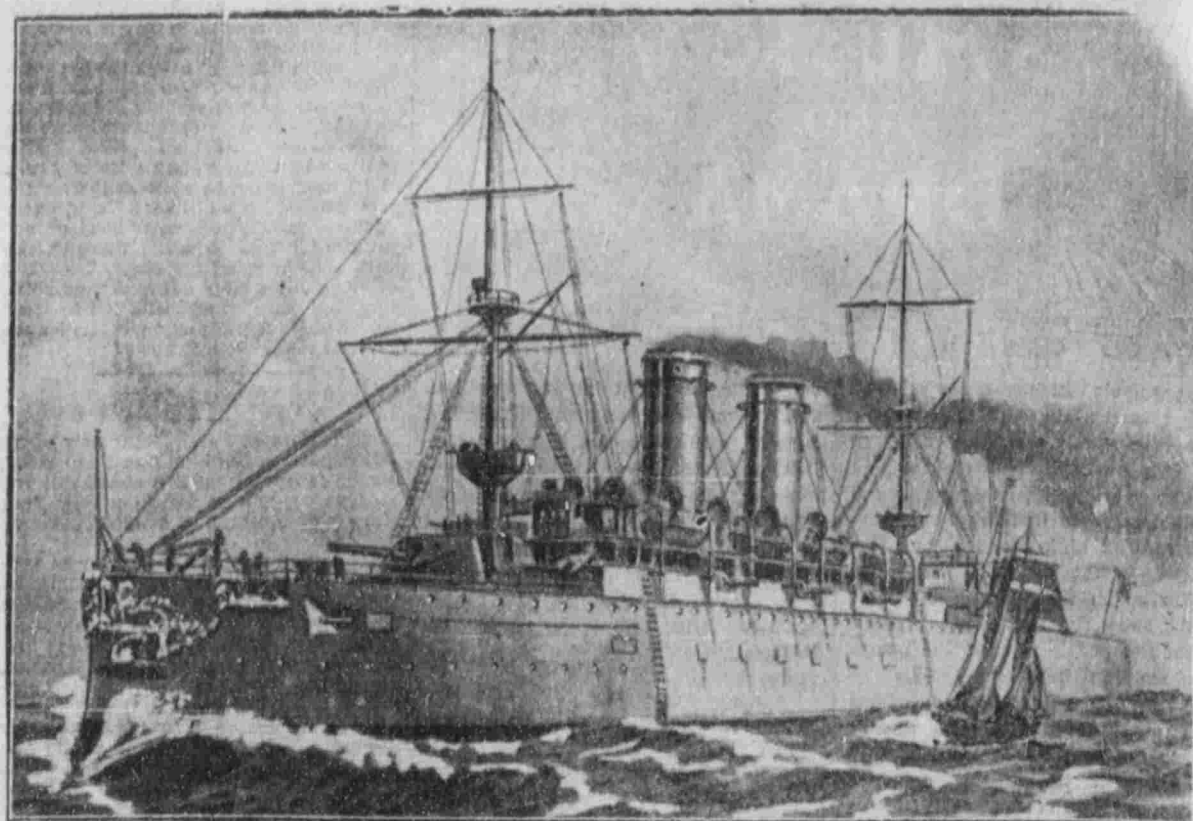
In a hilly country like South Africa, when fighting an ever-moving, well-mounted foe like the Boers, the only possible way for an advancing general to gain accurate information of the enemy's movements is by fairly flooding the country with cavalry scouts. This was the method adopted by the Germans in the war with France. The terrible Uhlan scouts, in 1870, spread terror throughout the country. In small parties of perhaps half a dozen men, the Uhlans would dash into the villages and towns, seize the mail, and order him to instantly prepare for the regiment following, and to give all information required, on pain of death to himself and destruction to his village. The Uhlans became the most dreaded troops in France. The moral effect on the enemy when hosts of cavalry are continually worrying them, and spying on them, is very great—far in excess, indeed, of the actual execution they effect.

It is, of course, immeasurably more difficult to discover the whereabouts of an irregular, guerrilla, and mobile army

like the Boers, hiding in rock-covered hills, than it would be in a case of a better trained army in a more open country. An enemy who invariably takes up strong positions, who does not remain when defeated to be cut to pieces, but disappears like magic on wiry ponies from his slow-moving foes, must be over-matched by cavalry if he is to be whipped—bodies of regular or irregular horsemen who sweep over the country before and behind him, attacking here, threatening there, and then away to play general havoc elsewhere, and so keep up a perpetual state of unrest.

For this work no type of men are better suited than the British Yeomanry, or the British rough-riding colonists—Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, Natal men, Cape men, and others who have volunteered from all parts of the world, and who have been formed into irregular cavalry, such as the Imperial Yeomanry, the South African Light Horse, Baden-Powell's Horse, Major Rimington's Imperial Corps of Guides—there are twenty odd different irregular forces fighting under the British flag.

These magnificent rough-riders are well mounted, good shots and keen of sight. They ride light; and as they scour the country before their heavy army, not a beast or a human being, not a suspicious rock, or a dangerous mountain pass, escapes their attention. Many of the South African colonial scouts know the country like the palms of their hands; their instincts tell them where to look for the enemy, and how to take him unawares. These men will go out for weeks at a time on scouting



This is one of the fastest vessels in the Dragon's navy. Already it has proved serviceable in small fights with pirates. Unless it be captured speedily by the allied fleet, it may work havoc among the foreign quarters of China's seaboard cities.

expeditions, and will think nothing of doing sixty or eighty miles in the twenty-four hours. They can sleep, as can all good scouts, at any moment, awaking at any time desired; but they will not be caught napping. Major Rimington's Corps of Guides may be taken as typical of what a body of scouts should be for work in such a country as South Africa. Major Rimington calls his men his "Catch-em-alive-o's," while they have come to be known generally as "The Night Cats," because of their night marches and the

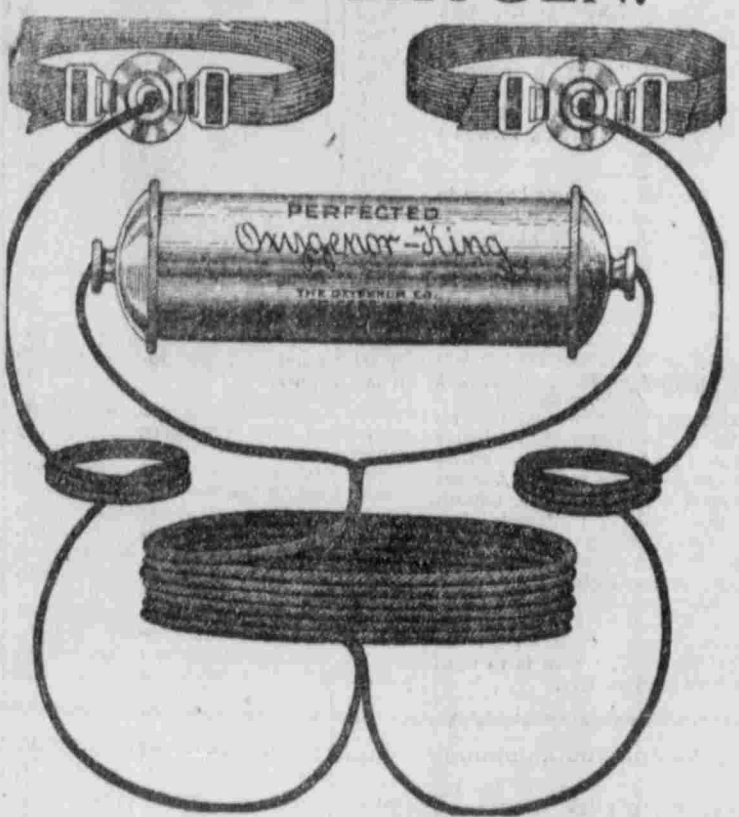
cat-like stealth of their movements. Every man in Rimington's Guides is obliged to speak Boer or Kaffir, and many know both dialects. One of the qualifications is that every man shall be thoroughly acquainted with some part of the country. The men are armed with carbines and pistols, officers and men wearing the same dust-colored uniform, almost indistinguishable even at short distances. Scouting is the most important duty that can fall to individual men in time of war. The scout—referring now to

the picked man who is sent out alone, perhaps for miles in advance of a reconnoitering party—carries his life in his hands. He is alone against the enemy, acting on his own responsibility, with no officers or comrades to hearken or order. He has the greatest chance of distinguishing himself; at the same time, it would be easy for him to turn away from danger, and no one would be any the wiser. He must be a strong, brave man, to carry through his work successfully, and he must be as wary and as cunning as a weasel.

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Gratefully yours,
MRS. VIVIAN STRAWBRIDGE,
22 E. First South Street, Salt Lake City.

I heartily endorse the above, and will add that the Oxygenor has greatly benefited me on different occasions while suffering from insomnia, rheumatism and nervous trouble. One thing I have found out, and that is; it cures whether you have faith in it or not. It surely is a wonderful discovery. I consider it a great recuperator and life giver.

Very Respectfully,
T. J. STRAWBRIDGE,
Missionary.

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Until Recently President of the Salt Lake Business College.

Salt Lake City, Utah, March 30, 1900.

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N. B. JOHNSTON.

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