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GAROET AND PAPANDAYANG



RAIN blurred the landscape for all of the half-hour run from Tjibatoe down to Garoet, and we lost the panorama of splendid mountains that surround the great green Garoet plain, embowered in the midst of which is the town of Garoet, a favorite hill and pleasure-resort of the island. We did catch glimpses now and then, however, of dark mountain masses looming above and through the clouds, and of flooded rice-fields and ripening crops, with scarecrows and quaint little baskets of outlooks perched high on stilts, where young Davids with slings lay in wait for birds. Boys leading flocks of geese, and boys astride of buffaloes made other pictures afield, and in the drizzling rain of the late afternoon we were whirled through the dripping avenues to the Hotel Hork, home of Siamese royalties and lesser tourists, health- and pleasure-seekers, who visit this volcanic and scenic center of the Preanger regencies.

Our sitting-room porch at this summer hotel, with an endless season, looked on a garden, whose formal

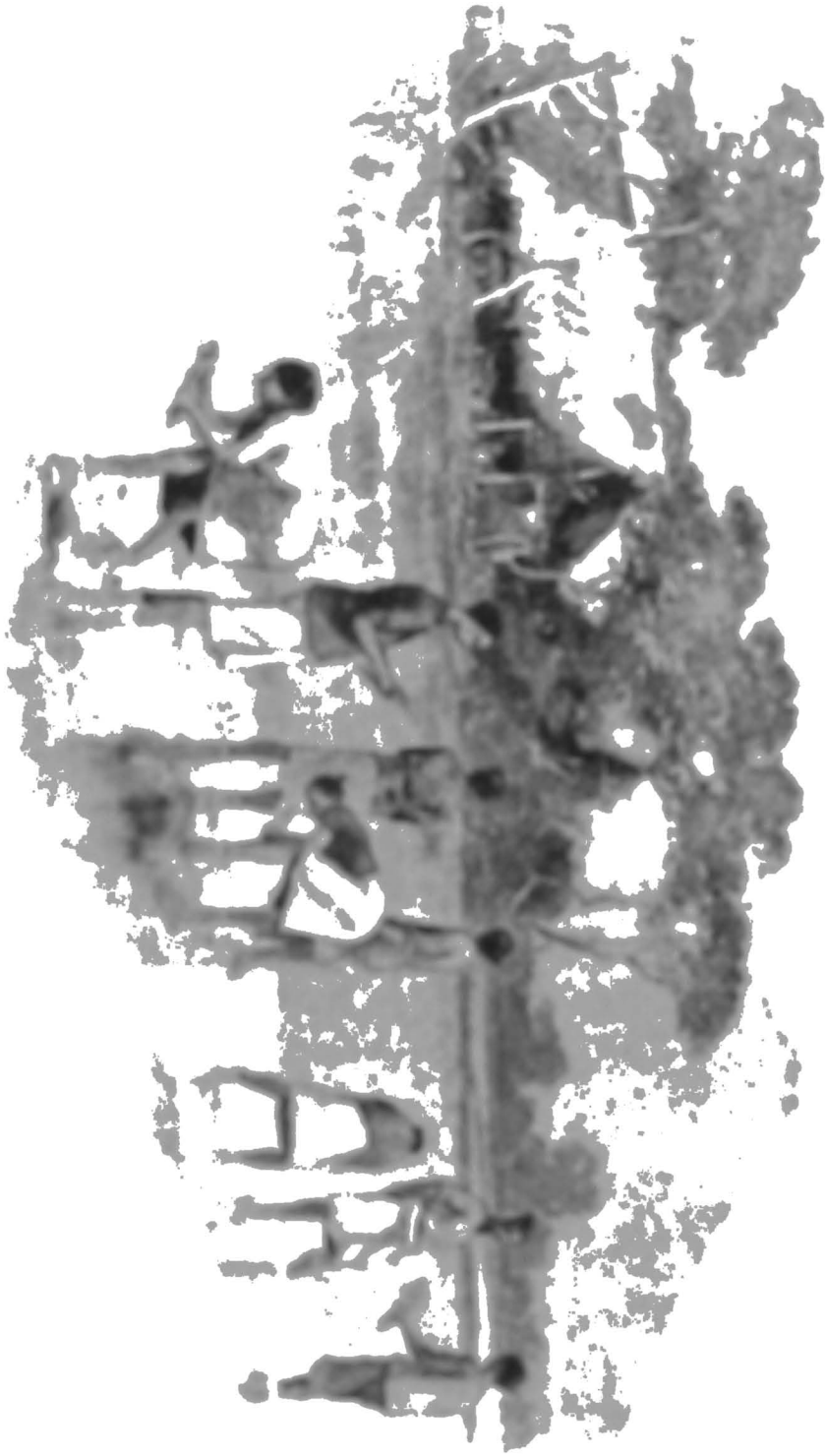
flower-beds, bordered with stones and shells, classic vases, and other conventions of their kind, reminded one at once of by-places in Europe; and so also did the bust of Mozart and the copy of Thorwaldsen's "Venus,"—until one noted their protecting palm- and mango-trees. This Garoet hotel is one of the institutions of Java, and the *Vrouw van Hork* and her excellent Dutch housekeeping are famed from Anjer Head to Banjoewangi. All the colonial types were represented at the long table d'hôte, and every language of Europe was heard. There were always nice neighbors at table, able and anxious to talk English, and the cheery Dutch ladies were kindness and friendliness personified. At no other resort on the island did we receive such a pleasant impression of the simplicity, refinement, and charm of social life in the colony. But, although two thousand feet above sea-level, in a climate of mildly tempered eternal spring, the ladies all wore the sarong and loose dressing-sacque in the morning, as in scorching Batavia or lowland Solo. Even on damp and chilly mornings, when a light wrap was a comfortable addition to our conventional muslin gowns, the Garoet ladies were bare-ankled and as scantily clad as the Batavians; and there were shock and real embarrassment to me in seeing in sarong and sacque the dignified elderly matron who had been my charming dinner neighbor the night before.

There is an interesting passer at Garoet, and besides the lavish display of nature's products, there are curious baskets brought from a farther valley, which visitors compete for eagerly. The town square, or overgrown village green, is faced by the homes of the

native regent and the Dutch resident, and by the quaint little messigit, or Mohammedan mosque. The last mufti, or head priest of the prophet, at Garoet was a man of such intelligence and liberality that he had but one wife, and allowed her to go with face uncovered, to learn Dutch, and to meet and freely converse with all his foreign visitors, men as well as women. Travelers brought letters to this mufti and quoted him in their books, but since his death the more regular, illiberal order has ruled at Mohammedan headquarters.

The great excursion from Garoet is to the crater of Papandayang, a mountain whose extended lines (fifteen miles in length by six in breadth) match its syllables; which has been in vigorous eruption within a century; and which still steams and rumbles, and, like the Goenoeng Goentor, or "Thunder Mountain," across the plain, may burst forth again at any moment. At the last eruption of Papandayang, in 1772, there was a great convulsion, a solid mass of the mountain was blown out into the air, streams of lava poured forth, and ashes and cinders covered the earth for seven miles around with a layer five feet thick, destroying forty villages and engulfing three thousand people in one day. The scar of the great crater, or "blow-out hole," near the summit of the mountain, is still visible from the plain, and the plumes and clouds of steam ascending from it remind one of its unpleasant possibilities. We made a start early one rainy morning, and drove twelve miles across the plain, along hard, sandy white roads, continuously bordered with shade-trees. The frequent villages were damp and cheerless, and the little basket houses, that

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the people weave as they would a hat, were anything but enviable dwellings then. The sling-shooters' sentry-boxes throughout the fields—perches where men or boys sat to pull sets of strings that reached to scare-crows far away—suggested too much of clammy, rheumatic discomfort to seem as picturesque as usual—strange little Malay companion pieces to the same boxes on stilts that one sees perched in the rice-fields of Hizen and the other southern provinces of Japan.

At Tjisoeroepan, at the foot of the mountain, we changed to clumsy djoelies, or sedan-chairs, each borne by four coolies, whose go-as-you-please gait, not one of them keeping step with any other, was especially trying so soon after coming from the enjoyment of the swift, regular, methodical slap-slap tread of the chair-bearers of South China. Despite their churning motion, the way was enjoyable; and, beginning with a blighted and abandoned coffee-plantation at the base of the mountain, we passed through changing belts of vegetation, as by successive altitudes we passed botanically from the tropic to the temperate zone. The bleached skeletons of the old coffee-trees, half-smothered in undergrowth and vines, interested one more than the beautifully ordered and carefully tended young coffee-trees in newer plantations—sad reminders of those good old days before the war (the Achinese war), the deficit, and the blight. Beyond kina limits there were no more clearings, and then the tree-fern appeared—wan skeletons of trees at first, where much thinning out had left them in range of scorching sunlight; but in the shade of greater trees in the thick of the jungle they stood superb—great, splendid, soft,

drooping, swaying, gigantic green fronds, a refined, effeminate, delicate, sensitive sort of palm, the tropic's most tropical, exquisite, wonderful tree. The upper regions of Papandayang are all clothed with real jungle, the forest primeval, with giant creepers writhing and looping serpent-like about the trees, and doing all the extravagant things they are expected to do. Ratans, or climbing palms, enveloped whole trees with their pendant, gracefully decorative leaves; orchids swung in tasseled sprays, starred mossy trunks and branches, and showed in all the green wonderland overhead and around; and in each ravine, where warm streams sprayed the air, a whole hothouse full of blooming, green, and strange loveliness delighted the eye.

We met strings of coolies descending with baskets of sulphur on their backs, the path was yellow with the broken fragments of years' droppings, and infragrant, murky sulphur-streams crossed and ran beside the path, in promise of the stifling caldrons we were fast approaching.

We had a magnificent view back over the Garoet plain, with its checker-board of green and glinting fields, marked with the network of white post-roads and dotted with the clumps of palms that bespoke the hidden villages, and then we passed in through a natural gateway or cutting in the solid mountain-side made by the last eruption. The broad passage or defile led to the *kawa*, or crater, a bowl or depression deep sunk in rocky walls, with pools of liquid sulphur bubbling all over the five-acre floor and sending off clouds of nauseous steam. These pools, vats of purest molten gold, boiled violently all the time, scattering

golden drops far and wide from their fretted, honey-combed edges. There was always suggestion of the possibility of their suddenly shooting into the air like geysers, and deluging one with the column of molten gold; or of the soft filigree edges of the pools crumbling and precipitating one untimely into the lakelet of fire and brimstone. Steam jets roared and hissed from all parts of the quaking solfatara, and from the rumblings and strange underground noises one could understand the native legends of chained giants groaning inside of the mountain, and their name for Papan-dayang, "The Forge." The sulphur coolies stepped warily along the paths between the pools; our shoe-soles were not proof against the steam and scorch of the heaving ground beneath us; and carbonic-acid gas and sulphureted hydrogen were all that one could find to breathe down there on the crater's floor—the undoubted Guevo Upas, or "Valley of Poison."

It is said that one can see the shores both of the Indian Ocean and the Java Sea from the summit of Papan-dayang, which is seven thousand feet above their level. Although the skies were cloudy and doubtful around the horizon edges, we were willing to take the brilliant noonday sun overhead as augury, and attempt the climb. As there was no path beyond the crater's rest-sheds for the coolies to carry us in djoelies, we started on foot straight up the first steep slope of the crater's ragged wall, through tangles of bushes and the rank bamboo-grass. We drove our servant on ahead, and the poor indolent creature, cheated of his expected lounge after his arduous pony-ride up the mountain and his midday rice-feast, turned plaintive counte-

nance backward, as he picked his reluctant way bare-footed through this prickly underbrush.

“What for go here?” he bleated.

“To get to the top of the mountain and see the two oceans.”

“Dis mountain no got top,” wailed the unconscionable one; but we remembered the waist-deep water he had conjured up to discourage us from Chandi Sewou; nor had we forgotten the Tjilatjap sandwiches with which he had comforted himself such a few days before, and we said, “Go on!”

Then, remembering our perpetual hunt for and expectation of great snakes, he turned mournful countenance and wailed: “*Slanga! slang!* [“Snakes! snakes!”] always live dis kind grass.”

“Very well. That’s just what we want to find. Be sure you tell us as soon as you step on one or see it moving.”

But, after pushing and tearing our way through bamboo-grass and bushes to the first ridge, we saw only other and farther ridges to be surmounted, with great ravines and stony hollows between. We took such view of the cloudy plains and ranges to northward and southward as we could, seeing everywhere the murky, blue, misty horizon of the rainy season, and nowhere the silver sea-levels, nor the lines of perpetual surf that fringe the Indian Ocean. We saw again the mosaic of rice-fields and dry fields covering the Garoet plain; and looking down upon the foot of an opposite mountain spur, we could study, like a relief-map or model tilted before us, a vast plantation cultivated from tea to highest coffee and kina level.

Nowhere in the slopes below could we see the vale of the deadly upas-tree, that was last supposed to occupy a retired spot on Papandayang's remote heights. The imaginative Dr. Foersch, surgeon of the Dutch East India Company at Samarang in 1773, made the blood of all readers of the last century run cold with his description of himself standing alone, "in solitary horror," on a blasted plain covered with skeletons, with another solitary horror of a deadly upas the only larger object in sight. The Guevo Upas, or "Valley of Poison," was first said to be on the plain southeast of Samarang, but that region was explored in vain; then it was put upon the Dieng plateau, and found not there; and last the valley was said to be on the side of a high mountain far away in the almost unexplored Preanger regencies. Dr. Horsfield, in his search for volcanic data, routed the upas myth from the Papandayang region and exploded it for all time, and the Guevo Upas has gone to that limbo where the maelstrom and other perils of ante-tourist times are laid away. There is a deadly tree in Java, the antiar (*Antiaris toxicaria*), whose sap is as poisonous as serpent venom if it enters a wound, and will produce deep, incurable ulcers if dropped on the skin; and skeletons of animals may have been found beneath and near it. Erasmus Darwin immortalized the deadly upas, or antiar, in his poem, "The Botanic Garden," and this antiar is the only actual and accepted upas-tree of the tropics. It is quite possible that some valley or old crater on the mountain-side, where the carbonic-acid and sulphurous gases from the inner caldron could escape, would be strewn with skeletons

of birds and animals, a valley of death to man and beast, and as deadly a place, for the same reasons, as the celebrated grotto at Naples; but no tree could live in those fumes either; and the solitary tree on the "blasted plain" of skeletons, and the Dutch doctor in his "solitary horror," have to be abandoned entire—a last disillusionment in Java.

When we returned from above, our djoelie coolies were squatted under the tiled shed of refuge built for visitors and sulphur-miners, and were as curious a lot of mixed types and races as one could find in an ethnological museum. While the Malays have, as a rule, but scanty beards and no hair on breast or limbs, two of these men were as whiskered and hairy as the wild men of Borneo, or the hirsute ones of Ceylon, the faces narrowed to the countenance of apes by the thick growth of hair, and their breasts shaggy as a spaniel's back. These wild men came from some farther district, but our medium could not or would not comprehend our queries and establish the exact spot of their birthplace by cross-questioning the man-apes themselves; and the missing links sat comfortably the while, submitting their disheveled heads to one and another's friendly search and attentions.

We were reluctant to descend Papandayang at the rapid gait the coolies struck for going down hill, but they whisked us through the different belts of vegetation and down to the serried rows of coffee-trees in seemingly no time at all. The head man of Tjisoeroepan had posted the village gamelan, or orchestra, in the little rustic band-stand of the green; and their tinkling, mild, and plaintive melodies reached us

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through the trees long before we were in sight of them. The musicians played a long program while the djoelies were put away, carts and horses brought round, and the very moderate bill itemized and paid—too modest a bill altogether to need an accompaniment of slow music.

We reached Garoet as the delayed afternoon shower began falling; but the lovely moonlight evening under the shade-trees of Garoet streets was to be remembered, as were the later hours on the porch, with the iron bust of Mozart looking at us from his tropical garden bower. In the middle of the night we heard commotion on our porch, as of bamboo-chairs thrown over and dragged about. "The snake!—at last!" was the first thought and cry; and as the thrashing continued, it was evident that a whole den of pythons must be contorting outside. "A tiger!" and we peered through a crack of the latticed door and saw our Tissak Malaya basket scattered in sections over the garden path, and monkeys capering off with our store of Boro Boedor cocoanut-palm sugar. And this petty larceny of the garden monkeys was our only adventure with wild beasts in the tropics!