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BATAVIA, QUEEN OF THE EAST



WHEN one has driven through the old town of Batavia and seen its crowded bazaars and streets, and has followed the lines of bricked canals, where small natives splash and swim, women beat the family linen, and men go to and fro in tiny boats, all in strange travesty of the solemn canals of the old country, he comes to the broader avenues of the new town, lined with tall tamarind- and waringen-trees, with plumes of palms, and pyramids of blazing Madagascar flame-trees in blossom. He is driven into the long garden court of the Hotel Nederlanden, and there beholds a spectacle of social life and customs that nothing in all travel can equal for distinct shock and sensation. We had seen some queer things in the streets,—women lolling barefooted and in startling dishabille in splendid equipages,—but concluded them to be servants or half-castes; but there in the hotel was an undress parade that beggars description, and was as astounding on the last as on the first day in the country. Woman's vanity and man's conventional ideas evi-

dently wilt at the line, and no formalities pass the equator, when distinguished citizens and officials can roam and lounge about hotel courts in pajamas and bath slippers, and bare-ankled women, clad only in the native sarong, or skirt, and a white dressing-jacket, go unconcernedly about their affairs in streets and public places until afternoon. It is a dishabille beyond all burlesque pantomime, and only shipwreck on a desert island would seem sufficient excuse for women being seen in such an ungraceful, unbecoming attire—an undress that reveals every defect while concealing beauty, that no loveliness can overcome, and that has neither color nor grace nor picturesqueness to recommend it.

The hotel is a series of one-storied buildings surrounding the four sides of a garden court, the projecting eaves giving a continuous covered gallery that is the general corridor. The bedrooms open directly upon this broad gallery, and the space in front of each room, furnished with lounging-chairs, table, and reading-lamp, is the sitting-room of each occupant by day. There is never any jealous hiding behind curtains or screens. The whole hotel register is in evidence, sitting or spread in reclining-chairs. Men in pajamas thrust their bare feet out bravely, puffing clouds of rank Sumatra tobacco smoke as they stared at the new arrivals; women rocked and stared as if we were the unusual spectacle, and not they; and children sprawled on the cement flooring, in only the most intimate undergarments of civilized children. One turned his eyes from one undressed family group only to encounter some more surprising dishabille; and meanwhile servants were hanging whole mildewed wardrobes on



A JAVANESE YOUNG WOMAN.

clothes-lines along this open hotel corridor, while others were ironing their employers' garments on this communal porch.

We were sure we had gone to the wrong hotel; but the *Nederlanden* was vouched for as the best, and when the bell sounded, over one hundred guests came into the vaulted dining-room and were seated at the one long table. The men wore proper coats and clothes at this midday *riz tavel* (rice table), but the women and children came as they were—*sans gêne*.

The Batavian day begins with coffee and toast, eggs and fruit, at any time between six and nine o'clock; and the affairs of the day are despatched before noon, when that sacred, solemn, solid feeding function, the *riz tavel*, assembles all in shady, spacious dining-rooms, free from the creaking and flapping of the *punka*, so prominent everywhere else in the East. Rice is the staple of the midday meal, and one is expected to fill the soup-plate before him with boiled rice, and on that heap as much as he may select from eight or ten dishes, a tray of curry condiments being also passed with this great first course. Bits of fish, duck, chicken, beef, bird, omelet, and onions rose upon my neighbors' plates, and spoonfuls of a thin curried mixture were poured over the rice, before the conventional chutneys, spices, cocoanut, peppers, and almond went to the conglomerate mountain resting upon the "rice table" below. Beefsteak, a salad, and then fruit and coffee brought the midday meal to a close. Squeamish folk, unseasoned tourists, and well-starched Britons with small sense of humor complain of loss of appetite at these hotel *riz tavel*s; and those Britons further

criticize the way in which the Dutch fork, or most often the Dutch knife-blade, is loaded, aimed, and shoveled with a long, straight stroke to the Dutch interior; and they also criticize the way in which portions of bird or chicken are managed, necessitating and explaining the presence of the finger-bowl from the beginning of each meal. But we forgot all that had gone before when the feast was closed with the mangosteen—nature's final and most perfect effort in fruit creation.

After the riz tavel every one slumbers—as one naturally must after such a very “square” meal—until four o'clock, when a bath and tea refresh the tropic soul, the world dresses in the full costume of civilization, and the slatternly women of the earlier hours go forth in the latest finery of good fortune, twenty-six days from Amsterdam, for the afternoon driving and visiting, that continue to the nine-o'clock dinner-hour. Batavian fashion does not take its airing in the jerky sadoe, but in roomy “vis-à-vis” or barouches, comfortable “milords” or giant victorias, that, being built to Dutch measures, would comfortably accommodate three ordinary people to each seat, and are drawn by gigantic Australian horses, or “Walers” (horses from New South Wales), to match these turnouts of Brobdingnag.

Society is naturally narrow, provincial, colonial, conservative, and insular, even to a degree beyond that known in Holland. The governor-general, whose salary is twice that of the President of the United States, lives in a palace at Buitenzorg, forty miles away in the hills, with a second palace still higher up in the

mountains, and comes to the Batavia palace only on state occasions. This ruler of twenty-four million souls, who rules as a viceroy instructed from The Hague, with the aid of a secretary-general and a Council of the Indies, has, in addition to his salary of a hundred thousand dollars, an allowance of sixty thousand dollars a year for entertaining, and it is expected that he will maintain a considerable state and splendor. He has a standing army of thirty thousand, one third Europeans, of various nationalities, raised by volunteer enlistment in Holland, who are well paid, carefully looked after, and recruited by long stays at Buitenzorg after short terms of service at the sea-ports. After the Indian mutiny the Dutch were in great fear of an uprising of the natives of Java, and placed less confidence in native troops. Only Europeans can hold officers' commissions; and while the native soldiers are all Mohammedans, and great consideration is paid their religious scruples, care is taken not to let the natives of any one province or district compose a majority in any one regiment, and these regiments frequently change posts. The colonial navy has done great service to the world in suppressing piracy in the Java Sea and around the archipelago, although steam navigation inevitably brought an end to piracy and picturesque adventure. The little navy helps maintain an admirable lighthouse service, and with such convulsions as that of Krakatau always possible, and changes often occurring in the bed of the shallow seas, its surveyors are continually busied with making new charts.

The islands of Amboyna, Borneo, Celebes, and Sumatra are also ruled by this one governor-general of the Netherlands Indies, through residents; and the island of Java is divided into twenty-two residencies or provinces, a resident, or local governor, ruling—or, as “elder brother,” effectually advising—in the few provinces ostensibly ruled by native princes. A resident receives ten thousand dollars a year, with house provided and a liberal allowance made for the extra incidental expenses of the position—for traveling, entertaining, and acknowledging in degree the gifts of native princes. University graduates are chosen for this colonial service, and take a further course in the colonial institute at Haarlem, which includes, besides the study of the Malay language, the economic botany of the Indies, Dutch law, and Mohammedan justice, since, in their capacity as local magistrates, they must make their decisions conform with the tenets of the Koran, which is the general moral law, together with the unwritten Javanese code. They are entitled to retire upon a pension after twenty years of service—half the time demanded of those in the civil service in Holland. All these residents are answerable to the secretary of the colony, appointed by the crown, and much of executive detail has to be submitted to the home government’s approval. Naturally there is much friction between all these functionaries, and etiquette is punctilious to a degree. A formal court surrounds the governor-general, and is repeated in miniature at every residency. The pensioned native sovereigns, princes, and regents maintain all the forms, etiquette, and barbaric splendor of their old court life, elaborated

by European customs. The three hundred Dutch officials condescend equally to the rich planters and to the native princes; the planters hate and deride the officials; the natives hate the Dutch of either class, and despise their own princes who are subservient to the Dutch; and the wars and jealousies of rank and race and caste, of white and brown, of native and imported folk, flourish with tropical luxuriance.

Batavian life differs considerably from life in British India and all the rest of Asia, where the British-built and conventionally ordered places support the same formal social order of England unchanged, save for a few luxuries and concessions incident to the climate. The Dutchman does not waste his perspiration on tennis or golf or cricket, or on any outdoor pastime more exciting than horse-racing. He does not make well-ordered and expensive dinners his one chosen form of hospitality. He dines late and dines elaborately, but the more usual form of entertainment in Batavia is in evening receptions or musicales, for which the spacious houses, with their great white porticos, are well adapted. Batavian residents have each a paradise park around their dwellings, and the white houses of classic architecture, bowered in magnificent trees and palms, shrubs and vines and blooming plants, are most attractive by day. At night, when the great portico, which is drawing-room and living-room and as often dining-room, is illuminated by many lamps, each lovely villa glows like a fairyland in its dark setting. If the portico lamps are not lighted, it is a sign of "not at home," and mynheer and his family may sit in undress at their ease. There are weekly concerts

at the Harmonie and Concordia clubs, where the groups around iron tables might have been summoned by a magician from some continental garden. There are such clubs in every town on the island, the government subsidizing the opera and supporting military bands of the first order; and they furnish society its center and common meeting-place. One sees fine gowns and magnificent jewels; ladies wear the heavy silks and velvets of an Amsterdam winter in these tropical gardens, and men dance in black coats and broadcloth uniforms. Society is brilliant, formal, and by lamplight impressive; but when by daylight one meets the same fair beauties and bejeweled matrons sockless, in sarongs and flapping slippers, the disillusionment is complete.

The show-places of Batavia are easily seen in a day: the old town hall, the Stadkirche, the lighthouse, the old warehouse, and the walled gate of Peter Elberfeld's house, with the spiked skull of that half-caste rebel against Dutch rule pointing a more awful reminder than the inscription in several languages to his "horrid memory." The pride of the city, and the most creditable thing on the island, is the Museum of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences ("Bataviaasch Genootschap von Kunsten en Wepenschappen"), known sufficiently to the world of science and letters as "the Batavian Society," of which Sir Stamford Raffles was the first great inspirer and exploiter, after it had dreamed along quietly in colonial isolation for a few years of the last century. In his time were begun the excavations of the Hindu temples and the archæological work which the Dutch government and the Batavian

Society have since carried on, and which have helped place that association among the foremost learned societies of the world. The museum is housed in a beautiful Greek temple of a building whose white walls are shaded by magnificent trees, and faces the broad Koenig's Plein, the largest parade-ground in the world, the Batavians say. The halls, surrounding a central court, shelter a complete and wonderful exhibit of Javanese antiquities and art works, of arms, weapons, implements, ornaments, costumes, masks, basketry, textiles, musical instruments, models of boats and houses, examples of fine old metal-work, and of all the industries of these gifted people. It is a place of absorbing interest; but with no labels and no key except the native janitor's pantomime, one's visit is often filled with exasperation.

There is a treasure-chamber heaped with gold shields, helmets, thrones, state umbrellas, boxes, salvers, betel and tobacco sets of gold, with jeweled daggers and kris-es of finest blades, patterned with curious veinings. Tributes and gifts from native sultans and princes display the precious metals in other curious forms, and a fine large *coco-de-mer*, the fabled twin nut of the Seychelles palm, that was long supposed to grow in some unknown, mysterious isle of the sea-gods, is throned on a golden base with all the honors due such a talisman. The ruined temples and sites of abandoned cities in Middle Java have yielded rich ornaments, necklaces, ear-rings, head-dresses, seals, plates, and statuettes of gold and silver. A room is filled with bronze weapons, bells, tripods, censers, images, and all the appurtenances of Buddhist worship, characteristic examples of

the Greco-Buddhist art of India, which even more surprisingly confronts one in these treasures from the jungles of the far-away tropical island. A central hall is filled with bas-reliefs and statues from these ruins of Buddhist and Brahmanic temples, in which the Greek influence is quite as marked, and Egyptian and Assyrian suggestions in the sculptures give one other ideas to puzzle over.

The society's library is rich in exchanges, scientific and art publications of all countries; and the row of reports of the Smithsonian Institution, the Geological Survey and Bureau of Ethnology, are as much a matter of pride to the American visitor as the framed diplomas of institutes and international expositions are to the Batavian curator. The council-room contains the state chairs of native sovereigns, and portraits and souvenirs of the great explorers and navigators who passed this way in the last century and in the early years of this cycle. Captain Cook left stores of South Sea curios on his way to and fro, and during this century the museum has been the pet and pride of Dutch residents and officials, and the subject of praise by all visitors.

The palace of the governor-general on this vast Koenig's Plein is a beautiful modern structure, but more interest attaches to the old palace of the Waterloo Plein, the *palys* built by the great Marshal Daendels, who, supplanted by the British after but three years' energetic rule, withdrew to Europe.