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IN A TROPICAL GARDEN



THE Buitenzorg passer proper is housed in a long, tiled pavilion facing an open common, on which the country folk gather with their produce twice a week, and, overflowing, stretch in a scattering encampment down the broad street leading from the gate of the Botanical Garden. The permanent passer, or regular bazaar in the covered building, is stocked with the staples and substantials of life, and is open every day. The town tailors have their abode under that cover, and squat in rows before their little American hand-sewing machines, and sew the single seam of a sarong skirt, or reel off a native jacket, while the customer waits. It is the semi-weekly, early morning, outdoor market of chattering country folk that most delights and diverts a stranger, however. The lines of venders, strung along the shady street and grouped under palm-patched umbrellas in the open, provide horticultural and floral exhibits of the greatest interest, and afford the most picturesque scenes of native life. The long street of the Tjina kampong beyond is

dull and monotonous by comparison, for when Dutch rules force the Chinese to be clean and orderly all picturesqueness and character are gone from their quarter. All the tasseled lanterns and strips of vermilion paper will not "tell" artistically without their concomitant grease and dirt.

As a very new broom, a clever child pleased with the toy of a new employer, Amat, our mild-mannered Moslem servant, was a treasure and delight during those first days at Buitenzorg. He entered gleefully into the spirit of our reckless purchase from the heaps of splendid fruits poured from the great horn of plenty into the open passer. He gave us the name of each particular strange fruit, taught us the odd tricks and sleight-of-hand methods of opening these novelties of the market-place; and it was quite like kindergarten play when he unbraided and wove together again the ribbed palm-leaf reticules in which *dukus* and such small fruits are sold. We carried baskets of strange fruits back to the hotel, and Amat added every vegetable curio and market's marvel he could find to the heaps of fruits and flowers. Our veranda was a testing- and proving-ground, and there seemed to be no end to the delights and surprises the tropics provided.

Tons of bananas were heaped high in the passer each day, the great golden bunches making most decorative and attractive masses of color, and their absurd cheapness tempting one to buy and to buy. The Java *pisang*, or banana, however, is but a coarse plantain with a pinkish-yellow, dry pulp, of a pumpkiny flavor that sadly disappoints the palate. Yet it



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is nature's greatest and most generously bestowed gift in the tropics, and it was pleasant to eat it picked ripe in its native home, instead of receiving it steam-ripened from Northern fruiterers' warehouses. Every tiny village and almost every little native hut in Java has its banana-patch or its banana-tree, which requires nothing of labor in cultivation, save the weeding away of the old stalks. It was intended as a humane concentration of benefits when nature gave man this food-plant, four thousand pounds of whose fruit will grow with so little human aid in the same space of ground required to raise ninety-nine pounds of potatoes or thirty-three pounds of wheat; both those Northern crops acquired, too, only by incessant sweat of the brow and muscular exertion. The pisang is the tropical staff of life for whites as well as natives, as wholesome and necessary as bread, and an equivalent for the latter as a starchy food. It comes to one with the earliest breakfast cup, appears at every meal, arrives with the afternoon tea-tray, and always ends the late dinner as the inevitable accompaniment of cheese, the happiest substitute for bread or biscuits, tropical gourmets insist.

The lovely red rambutans (*Nephelium lappaceum*) we would have bought for their beauty alone—those clusters of seemingly green chestnut-burs, with spines tinted to the deepest rose, affording the most exquisite color-study of all the fruits in the passer. The spiny shell pulls apart easily, and discloses a juicy, half-transparent mass of white pulp around a central core of smooth stones. The duku, looking like a big green grape, a fresh almond, or an olive, contains just

such another ball of pulp within its leathery rind, and both fruits much resemble the fresh *lychees* of China in flavor. The *salak*, or "forbidden fruit," is a hard, scaly, pear-shaped thing, which very appropriately grows on a prickly bush, and whose strange brown rind reminds one of a pine-cone or a rattlesnake's skin. This scaly, snaky shell prejudices one against it; but the *salak* is as solid as an apple, with a nutty flavor and texture. It is not unpleasant, nor is it distinctively anything in flavor—nothing unique or delicious enough to make one seek hard or long for a second taste of it. The *jambua*, the eugenia or rose-apple (*Eugenia malaccensis*), is a fruit of the same size and shape as the *salak*, and in spite of its exquisite coloring it impresses one as being an albino, a skinless or some other monstrous and unnatural product of nature. Its outer integument, thinner than any nectarine's rind, shades from snow-white at the stem to the deepest rose-pink at the blossom end, and it looks as if it were the most fragrant, delicious, and juicy fruit. One bites into the fine, crisp, succulent pulp, and tastes exactly nothing, and never forgives the beautiful, rose-tinted, watery blank for its deluding. The *carambola* (*Averrhoa*), the five-ribbed yellow "star-fruit," popularly known in real Cathay as the "Chinese gooseberry," is a favorite, fragrant study in spherical geometry, and the cutting apart of its triangular sections is the nicest sort of after-dinner amusement and demonstration; but its fine, deliciously acid pulp is usually known to one before he reaches Java. Its relative, the *bilimbi*, is the sharpest of acid fruits, and lends an edge to chutneys and curried conglomerates.

The breadfruit and its gigantic relative, the *nanko* (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), or jackfruit, which often weighs thirty and even forty pounds, and is sufficient load for a man to bring to market on his back, are the vegetable mainstays of native life; but as both must be cooked to a tasteless mush to be relished, one is satisfied only to look at them in the passer. That swollen monstrosity, the *nanko*, grows goiter-like on the trunk of a tree, and is supported in ratan slings while the great excrescence ripens. One must speak of the breadfruit with respect, though, after all that scientists have said, philosophers and political economists have argued, concerning it. Since ten breadfruit-trees will support a large family the year round, and a man may plant that many within an hour and need give them no further care, Captain Cook observed that such a man has then "as completely fulfilled his duty to his own and future generations as the native of our less genial climate by plowing in the cold of winter and reaping in the summer heat as often as the seasons return."

The prickly durian (*Durio Zibethinus*), which is almost as large as the *nanko*, has a pulp a little like that of a cantaloup melon, only smoother and more solid—a thick, creamy, "almondy-buttery" custard, which is agreeable to the palate, but offends the nose with an odor of onion and stale egg. It is spoken of with bitterness and contempt by most Europeans, is extolled as "the king and emperor of fruits" by Wallace and a few other intrepid ones, and the little English children in Java, who all are fond of it, call it "darling durian." In 1599 Linschott declared it

to surpass in flavor "all the other fruits of the world." Crawfurd said that it tasted like "fresh cream and filberts," a description which conjures up the cloying modern fantasia of English-walnut kernels in a mayonnaise. Another great one has said that "to eat durians is a new sensation worth a voyage to the East to experience"; and Dr. Ward, in his "Medical Topography of the Straits," says: "Those who overcome the prejudice excited by the disagreeable, fetid odor of the external shell reckon it delicious. From experience I can pronounce it the most luscious and the most fascinating fruit in the universe; the pulp covering the seeds, the only part eaten, excels the finest custards which could be prepared by either Ude or Kitchener." One sees the monster retailed in segments in every passer; the natives are always munching it inconveniently to windward of one, and they not only praise it, but write poems to it, and respectfully salute the tree they see it growing on. This fruit of discordant opinions hangs high upon a tall tree, and is never picked, but allowed to fall to the ground when it becomes perfectly ripe. A falling durian is justly dreaded and guarded against by the natives, who tell of men whose shoulders have been lacerated and heads half crushed by the sudden descent of one of these great green cannon-balls. Its unpleasant odor is said to come with age, and they tell one that a freshly fallen durian is free from such objection; but the watched durian never falls, I found, after maintaining the attitude of the fox toward the grapes for a reasonable time before a durian-tree.

The papaya, a smaller custard-fruit, with unpleasant

little curly gray seeds in the mess, is like a coarse, flavorless melon, but is highly extolled as a febrifuge and tonic. The much-heralded and disappointing cherimoyer is grown too, and mangos ripen in every yard; but the Java mangos are coarse and turpentine, of a deep pumpkiny hue. Pineapples, the *nanas*, or Portuguese *ananassa*, grow to perfection all over the low, hot country; but one is warned to be careful in eating them, and they are called the most dangerous, the most choleraic and fever-causing of tropical fruits. The native orange on this south side of the equator is not orange at all, even when ripe, but its peel is a deep, dark, beautiful green, and its flavor unequaled. The big *Citrus decumana*, the pomelo of China, the *pumplemoos* of Java, the Batavian lime in British India, the shaddock of the West Indies, and the grapefruit of Florida, appears in the passers, but is coarse, dry, and tasteless, save for the turpentine flavor, which does not lurk within, but stalks abroad.

The fruit of fruits, the prize of the Indies and of all the Malay equatorial regions, where the tree is indigenous, is the mangosteen (*Garcinia mangosteen*), and the tourist should avail himself of November and December as the months for a tour in Java, if only to know the mangosteen in its perfection. The dark-purple apples hang from the tall trees by woody stems, and the natives bring the *manggis* to market tied together in bunches of twenties like clusters of gigantic grapes. It is delight enough to the eye alone to cut the thick, fibrous rind, bisect the perfect sphere at the equator line, and see the round ball of "perfumed snow" resting intact in its rose-lined cup. The five white segments sepa-

rate easily, and may be lifted whole with a fork, and they melt on the tongue with a touch of tart and a touch of sweet; one moment a memory of the juiciest, most fragrant apple, at another a remembrance of the smoothest cream ice, the most exquisite and delicately flavored fruit-acid known—all the delights of nature's laboratory condensed in that ball of *neige parfumée*. It is fortunate that the mangosteen is a harmless and wholesome fruit, and that one may eat with impunity, laying store for a lifetime in his one opportunity. I often wondered how it would be if the mangosteen were a dangerous or a forbidden fruit; if it were wicked or a little of a sin to eat it; if mangosteens could be obtained singly, at great risk or expense; or if they should be prescribed for one as a tonic, something antimalarial, a substitute for quinine, to be taken in doses of one, two, or ten before or after each meal. The mangosteen cannot be transported to the temperate zone of Europe,—not even with the aid of modern ships' refrigerating-machines and when coated with wax,—as in less than a week after leaving the trees the pulp melts away to a brown mass. By the alternation of seasons the mangosteen is always in market at Singapore, as it ripens north of the equator during the summer six months of the northern hemisphere's year, and during this rainy season of Cochin China is carried from Saigon successfully as far north as Shanghai and Yokohama. The offer by the leading British steamship company of thirty pounds sterling to the ship-captain who will get a basket of mangosteens to the Queen is still open. The tree grows throughout the Malay Peninsula and



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Archipelago, and groves have been successfully planted in Ceylon, so that there is hope that this incomparable fruit may finally be acclimated in the West Indies, and fast steamers make it known in New York and London. The mangosteen is tinned for export at Singapore; but the faded segments floating in tasteless syrup give one little idea of this peerless fruit in its natural state.

It had been my particular haunting dream of the tropics to have a small black boy climb a tree and throw cocoanuts down to me; and while we sat admiring the rank beauty of the deserted garden around Raden Saleh's tomb, one afternoon, the expression of the wish caused a full-grown Malay to saunter across the grass, and, cigarette in mouth, walk up the straight palm-stem as easily as a fly. The Malay toes are as distinct members as the fingers, and almost as long; and clasping the trunk with the sole of the foot at each leaf-scar, that Malay climber gripped the rough palm-stem as firmly with his toes as with claws or extra fingers. It was so easily and commonly done that palm-tree climbing soon ceased to be any more of a feat to watch than berry-picking; but the first native who walked up a palm-tree for my benefit held me rapt, attentive, while he picked the big nuts and sent twenty-pounders crashing down through the shrubbery. We paid him well, and carried two of the nuts home with us; and from them the servant brought us tall glasses, or schooners, filled with the clear, colorless, tasteless milk, and a plate full of a white, leathery stuff—tough, tasteless too, and wilted, like cold omelet without eggs—the saddest sort of a feast of fresh cocoanuts.

We found all the countless common fragrant flowers that are so necessary to these esthetic, perfume-loving people heaped for sale in the flower-market of the passer, along with the oils and the gums and spices that give out, and burn with, such delicious odors. Short-stemmed roses and heaps of loose rose-petals were laid on beds of green moss or in bits of palm-leaf in a way to delight one's color-sense, and, with the mounds of pale-green petals of the *kananga*, or ylang-ylang-tree's blossoms, filled the whole air with fragrance. We dried quantities of *kananga* flowers for sachets, as they will crisp even in the damp air of Java, and retain their spicy fragrance for years; but the exquisite white-and-gold "Bo-flowers," the sacred *sumboja* or frangipani (the *Plumeria acutifolia* of the botanists), would not dry, but turned dark and mildewed wherever one petal fell upon another. This lovely blossom of Buddha is sticky and unpleasant to the touch when pulled from the tree, and the stem exudes a thick milk. After they have fallen to the ground they may be handled more easily, and fallen flowers retain the spotless, waxen perfection of their thick, fleshy petals for even two days. One wonders that the people do not more often wear these flowers of the golden heart in their black hair; but the *sumboja* is a religious flower in Java, as in India, and in Buddhist times was almost as much an attribute and symbol of that great faith as the *oltus*. This Bo-flower is still the favorite offering, together with the *cham-paka*, or Arabian jasmine, in the Buddhist temples of Burma and Ceylon, and is often laid before the few images of that old religion now remaining in Java.

All through the Malay world, however, it is especially the flower of the dead, associated everywhere with funeral rites and graves, as conventional an expression or accompaniment of grief, death, and burial as the cypress and the weeping willow. For this reason one rarely sees it used as an ornamental tree or hedge, even in a European's garden or pleasure-grounds, and its presence in hedges or copses indicates that there are graves, or one of Islam's little open-timbered temples of the dead, within reach of its entrancing fragrance. Our Malay servant would never accept our name of "frangipani" when told to spread out or stir the petals we tried to dry in the sun. He stoically repeated the native "sumboja" after me each time, very rightly resenting the baptism in honor of an Italian marquis, who only compounded an essence imitating the perfume of the West Indian red jasmine, which breathes a little of the cloying sweetness of the peerless sumboja. After but a few trials of its syllables, "sumboja" soon expressed to me more of the fragrance, the sentiment and spirit, of the lovely death-flower than ever could the word "frangipani." Chinese Buddhists seem not to have any traditions or associations with the Bo-flower, as in South China, where the tree is grown in gardens, it is only the *kai tan fa*, or "egg-flower," those hideously matter-of-fact people noting only the resemblance of the lovely petals to the contrasting yolk and albumen of a hard-boiled egg.