

## VIII

### THE "CULTURE SYSTEM"



WHILE the Dutch East India Company held the monopoly of trade and production in Java, farmed out the revenues, and exacted forced labor and forced delivery of produce, this tropical possession yielded an enormous revenue. With the company's monopoly of trade with Japan, and only Portugal as Holland's great rival in the ports of China, the company made Amsterdam the tea- and spice-market and the center of Oriental trade in Europe. The early Dutch traders not only cut down all the spice-trees on the Molucca Islands, and forbade the planting of clove-, cinnamon-, and nutmeg-trees, save on certain Dutch islands, but they burned tons of spices in the streets of Amsterdam, in order to maintain prices in Europe and realize their usual profit of three hundred per cent.

The Dutch East India Company acquired control of Java through pioneer preëmption, purchase, conquest, strategy, and crooked diplomacy, and, finally, as residuary legatee by the will of the Mohammedan emperor

at Solo. The company then claimed the same sovereign rights over the people as the native rulers, who had exacted one fifth of the peasant's labor and one fifth of his crops as ground-rent, the land being all the inalienable property of the princes. When the colony passed from the company to the crown of Holland, Marshal Daendels at once turned such feudal rights to profitable account and instituted public works on a great scale. With such forced labor he built the great double post-road over the island from Anjer Head to Banjoewangi,—that road upon whose building twenty thousand miserable lives were expended,—so that difficulty of communication no longer interfered with the delivery of products at government warehouses on the seashore. He further established government teak- and coffee-plantations, but the natives who were forced to cultivate them were no more tyrannized over nor oppressed than they had been under their own princes, the change of masters making small difference in their condition. Previous to Daendels's time all the coffee came from the Preangers, whose princes, having yielded their territories by treaty in the middle of the last century, retained sovereignty and their old land-revenues on condition of paying the Dutch East India Company an annual tribute in coffee, and after that selling the balance of the crop to the company at the fixed rate of three and a half florins the picul (133½ pounds).

Although the East India Company practically ended its rule in 1798, the States-General canceled the lease in 1800, and the colony passed to the crown of Holland, the same trade monopoly continued until the happy

interval of British rule (1811-16), and there was a continual movement of natives from the Dutch to the native states up to 1811. Under Sir Stamford Raffles's enlightened control the Java ports were made free to the ships of all nations, the peasants were given individual ownership of lands, great estates were bestowed upon native chiefs, and a bewildering doctrine of liberty and equality before the law was preached to the people. Free trade, free culture, and free labor were decreed at once. The same treaty of London (August, 1814) which restored Java to the Dutch (August, 1816), at the close of the Napoleonic wars, secured the freedom of the ports; but the Dutch quickly resumed the old system of land-tenure by village communities paying ground-rent in produce and labor through their *wedana*, or head man, who answered to a district chief, who in turn reported to the native prince acting as regent for the Dutch government. Dutch residents "advised" these native regents, who ruled wholly under their orders and were mere middlemen between the Dutch and the natives. These regents were always chosen from the greatest family of the province, and the Dutch *contrôleurs* directed the chiefs and *wedanas*. The Dutch retained the excellent British police and judicial system in the main, while having more regard for the native aristocracy, their prejudices and their laws of caste. British philanthropy had introduced the British India ryot system of separate property in the soil and a separate land-tax, along with equality of rights, duties, and imposts, while abolishing all monopolies, forced labor and productions. The natives, like true Orientals, preferred

their own old communal land system, with yearly allotments of village lands and the just rotation of the best lands, to any modern system of individual property, and to what was most dreaded by the native, individual liability. The Dutch resumed the old land system, exacted the old one fifth of produce as land-rent, and obliged the peasants to plant one fifth of the village land in crops, to be sold to the government at fixed prices; but they only demanded one day's labor in seven, instead of one day in five. The lands which Sir Stamford Raffles had given to the chiefs and petty princes soon passed into the hands of Europeans or Chinese; and except for this one tenth of the land held by private owners, and two tenths held by the Preanger regents, the rest of the island became crown land, subject to lease, but never to be sold. The Preanger princes resumed their payment of a revenue in coffee and the sale of the surplus crop to the government at a fixed price. Marshal Daendels's plantations, so long neglected, were put in order again and cultivated by seventh-day labor. Each family was required to keep one thousand coffee-trees in bearing on village lands, to give two fifths of the crop to the government, and deliver it cleaned and sorted at government warehouses established all through the coffee districts.

But with the open ports, the abolition of the government's spice monopoly in 1824, and the expenses of a protracted war with the native ruler of Middle Java (1817-30), the revenues still only met the expenses; and there was great concern in Holland at the decrease of the golden stream of Indian revenue, and conse-

quent satisfaction in England that its statesmen had handed back the island, that might have proved only an embarrassment and intolerable expense instead of a profit to the British crown. The King of Holland had established and guaranteed the Netherlands Trading Company, which acted as the commission agent of the government in Europe, importing in its own ships exclusively, selling all the produce in Europe, and conducting a general business in the colony. The partial failure of this company, which obliged the king to meet the guaranteed interest, brought about a new order of things destined to increase the colonial trade and crown revenues.

As private enterprise could not make the Java trade what it had been, Governor Van den Bosch, who originated the "culture system" as a means of relieving the distressed finances, was sent out from Holland in 1830, with power to grant cash credits and make ten-year contracts with private individuals who would assist in developing the sugar industry. Sufficient advances were made to these colonists to enable them to erect sugar-mills and to maintain themselves until, by the sales of their products, they were able to repay the capital and own their mills. The government agreed that the natives of each community or district should grow sufficient sugar-cane on their lands to supply the mills' capacity, and deliver it at the mills at fixed rates. The natives were obliged to plant one fifth of the village lands in sugar-cane, and each man to give one day's labor in seven to tending the crop. The village head man was paid for the community three and a half florins for each picul of



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sugar made from their cane, and the natives who worked in the mills were paid regular wages. The mill-owner sold one third of the finished product of his mill to the government, at rates rising from eight to ten florins the picul; the mill-owner paid back each year one tenth of the government's cash advanced to him in sugar at the same rate, and was then free to ship, as his own venture, the balance of his sugar to the Netherlands Trading Company, which held the monopoly of transport and sale of government produce. Enormous profits resulted to the government and mill-owners from the sales of such sugar in Europe, and during one prosperous decade the crown of Holland enjoyed a revenue amounting to more than five million dollars United States gold each year from its Java sugar sales. The whole east end of the island and the low, hot lands along the coast were green at their season with the giant grass whose cultivation has forced or encouraged slavery everywhere throughout the earth's tropic belt. Slavery itself ceased in Java by royal edict in 1859, but sugar-culture went on under the admirable Van den Bosch system so profitably that mill-owners did not grumble at having to sell one third of their product to the government at a merely nominal price.

The great success in sugar led the government to extend the culture system's method to other crops. Would-be colonists competed for such profitable contracts, and all young Holland cherished the ambition to sail away to the East and make fortunes on Java plantations. A choice was exercised to secure the best class of young men as colonists; education, culti-



vation, and gentlemanly manners were made essentials, and it was known that no absenteeism would be tolerated, that the planters were expected to settle in Java in permanence, and that leaves of absence would be granted during the ten-year contracts only for actual illness. By providing military bands and subsidizing an opera, by establishing libraries and fostering the museum of the Batavian Society, and by encouraging a liberal social life among the higher officials, everything was done to secure all the advantages of civilization and to make life tolerable in the far-away tropics.

Early experiments had been made with the tea-plant in Java, and the government initiated tea-growing with great anticipations. Tea-plants and -seeds were brought by botanists from Japan as early as 1826, and later from China, together with skilled cultivators and workmen to instruct the natives. Crown lands were leased on long terms, and cash advances made during the first years of hill-clearing and planting. The government obliged the planters to produce equal quantities of green and black tea, and four grades or qualities of each kind; the planters were to repay the government's cash advances in tea, to sell the whole crop to the government at a fixed rate, and to pay the workmen fixed wages. Tea-growing was not profitable at first, as there was difficulty in securing a market in Europe for the bitter, weedy Java leaf, until, by a great reduction in the selling-price, its cheapness gained it a sale in Germany. The discovery of the wild Assam tea-plant in India, and the results obtained by grafting it on the Chinese plant, marked a new

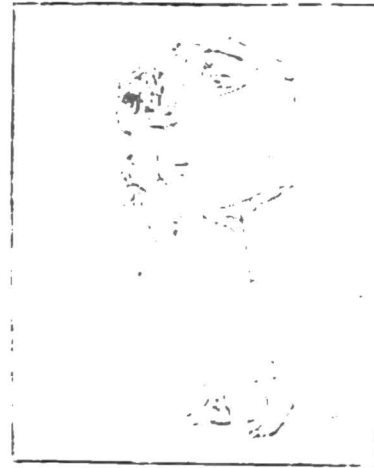
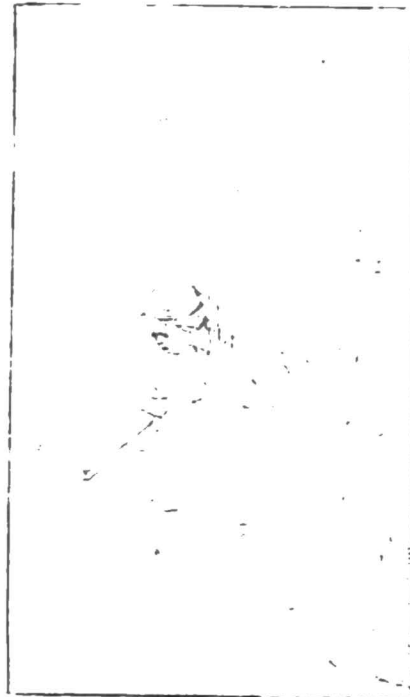
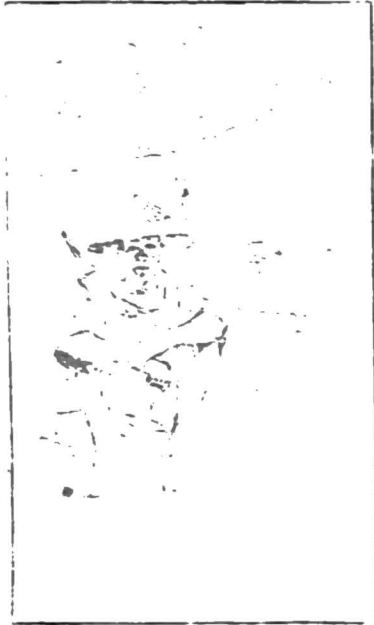
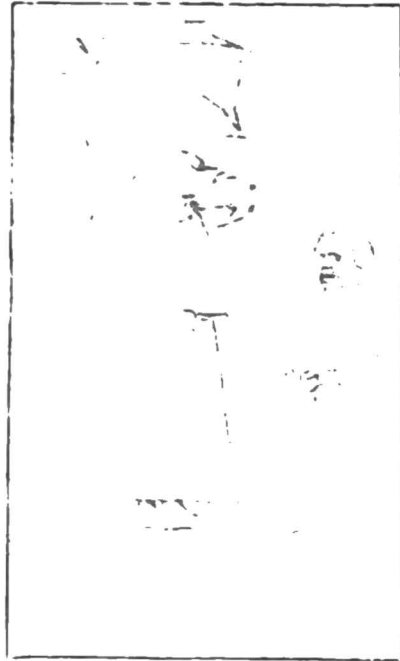
departure in tea-growing, and with better understanding of new methods and the aid of machinery in curing the leaf, tea-gardens became profitable ventures. After fostering the industry to success, the government refused further contracts after 1865, and the tea-planters were free to dispose of their crops as they wished. All through the hill-country of the Preangers tea-bushes stripe the rolling ground for miles, and new ground is being cleared and leased each season. Java teas have greatly improved in quality, and win medals and mention at every exposition; but they have India and Ceylon as formidable rivals, in addition to China and Japan, and their market remains in Holland and Germany, and in Persia and Arabia by way of Bombay—this Mohammedan trade an inheritance of those early times, when the Dutch drove the Moormen out of Ceylon and the far Eastern trade.

While the culture system was succeeding with sugar and tea, the government coffee-plantations were extended, and more and more hill-country cleared for such cultivation. Coffee-culture was carried on by the government without contractors' aid. Each native was obliged to plant six hundred Arabian or Mocha coffee-trees and keep them in bearing, and deliver the crop cleaned and sorted at the government warehouses at a fixed price—nine and twelve florins the picul previous to 1874, although forty and forty-five florins were paid in the open market of the ports. By careful supervision and by percentages paid to native officials for any superior quality in the berries produced in their district, the coffee from Java government stores was superior to anything else sold in Europe,

and maintained its average steadily. Coffee was indeed "the pivot of the Netherlands colonial régime," a staple of greater economic value than spices had been. In 1879, the year of the greatest production of the government plantations in Java, some 79,400 tons of coffee were shipped to Europe. Blight and scale and insect pests were afterward to reduce the shipments to but 17,750 tons in 1887.

Indigo was at first cultivated on the same terms as sugar, but the government soon dispensed with such contracts, bought back the fabriks, and continued the industry without contract aid, obliging the natives to plant indigo on all village land not required for rice, and deliver the crop to the mills at fixed prices. Cinnamon, pepper, cinchona, and cochineal were grown by the natives in the same way, under merely official supervision, and delivered to the government for a trifling price.

In 1850 the government sent agents to Peru to obtain seeds of the cinchona-tree, and after fifteen years of effort and risk the indefatigable botanists and explorers secured the treasured seeds of the red-barked kina-tree. The records of those expeditions, the lives ventured and lost, are the romances of travel and exploration; and Sir Clements Markham's and Charles Ledger's narratives are most fascinating tales. The first little nursery of trees in the Buitenzorg Botanical Garden and in experimental gardens on higher ground near Bandung furnished the seeds and plants from which have sprung the great kina-plantations, or cinchona-groves, both government and private,



SCENES AROUND THE MARKET.



whose red branches show in definite color-masses on every hillside of the Preangers, while the spindling young trees shade acres of tea-, coffee-, and cocoa-plants in their first growths. Java now produces, from government and private plantations together, one half of the world's supply of quinine, Ceylon and India furnishing the balance. Ship-loads of bark are sent to the laboratories or chemical factories of Europe, which produce the precious sulphate on which rest England's and Holland's conquest of the Indies and all European domination in the farther East, and laboratories are now building for manufacturing the sulphate from the bark in Java.

Poppy-culture has always been strictly prohibited, although the natives are greatly addicted to opium-smoking, especially in the middle or Hindu provinces. With all their zeal for revenue, the Dutch have resisted the example of the British in India and the Chinese in Szechuen and the western provinces of China, and have never let the land bloom with that seductive flower. The sale of opium is a closely guarded government monopoly, conducted at present under the *régie* system, the government itself importing all that is consumed in the colony and selling it from fixed offices throughout the island.

Salt-works and tin-mines were managed in as systematic and profitable a way as crops and cultures. No private individual was allowed to make or import salt into the colony. The government still holds the salt-supply as a monopoly, and there are large salt-works on Madura Island, where the natives are re-

quired to deliver fixed quantities of coarse salt at the government warehouses at the rate (in 1897) of ten gulden the *kojan* (1853 kilograms). The government manages the tin-mines on Banka Island in the Java Sea, while the mines of the neighboring Billeton Island are leased to private individuals.