

2

MALAYAN SYMPHONY

*Also by the same Author*

THE BORDER OF BLADES

ROSHANARA OF THE SEVEN CITIES

KILL: OR BE KILLED

DRUMS OF SACRIFICE (3rd impression)

THE PATH OF IVORY

WATCHERS IN THE HILLS

FIFTY-TWO STORIES OF WILD LIFE AND ADVENTURE





A BALINESE BELLE



*W. Robert Foran*  
1955

# MALAYAN SYMPHONY

*Being the impressions gathered during a  
six months' journey through the Straits  
Settlements, Federated Malay States,  
Siam, Sumatra, Java and Bali*

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W. ROBERT FORAN

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*Illustrated with Photographs  
by the Author and others*

HUTCHINSON & CO.  
(Publishers) Ltd.  
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TO  
MY FRIEND  
J. DUDLEY BENJAFIELD, M.D.  
TO WHOM I AM INDEBTED FOR  
MUCH KINDNESS

M  
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FOR  
DN 6417

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## PREFACE

IT has been a pleasant task to recall the joyous journeys outlined in the following pages. For six months, while engaged upon a special journalistic mission, I travelled by car and railway through the major portion of Malaysia—British Malaya, Siam, Sumatra, Java and the Island of Bali. Having been given a free hand as to choice of routes, I went just where the fancy dictated. It was a grand experience, but devoid of thrilling adventures.

I am fully aware that this record, compiled from my diary and very full notes made on the spot, does not take the reader off the beaten track. Anyone who is blessed with sufficient means and the time to indulge a taste for seeing other lands or strange peoples, can travel over exactly the same roads. Yet I managed to visit places and see curious ceremonies which are not included in the average traveller's itinerary. My own delightful experiences may prove helpful to others who are keen to follow the same route. Indeed, I hope they will. I feel confident none would find this part of the world less fascinating.

Let me add that I have not been guilty of any "traveller's tales": not even strained the truth, striven after effects or sensationalism. I have written solely of those things seen with my own eyes, or else learned from men of wide experience and living in these countries. Indeed, I went to considerable trouble to insure accuracy in all things relating to the laws and strange customs or rituals of the various native races with whom I came in contact. I am greatly indebted to many people—too many for mention here—for invaluable help and information regarding these and other matters.

The opinions expressed are my own, based on first impressions only. I have tried earnestly to be both honest and fair-minded; but it is quite possible that a deeper understanding might cause me to reconsider some of the views formed in my travels.

If the following account of my journeys through Malaysia tells you something new and interesting, inspires you to go and see these countries for yourself, and possibly entertains you even for a fleeting moment—then, indeed, I am well repaid. Personally, I know of few more charming and picturesque lands.

W. ROBERT FORAN

PADWORTH, BERKS,  
*April, 1935.*

## NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

THE Dutch use "oe" for the "u" in spelling all Malay words. The British method of spelling Malay words and places has been adhered to throughout with the exception of the chapters on Sumatra, Java and Bali. In the latter, the Dutch spelling of place-names has been adopted to simplify identification.

# MALAYAN SYMPHONY

## PART I

### BRITISH MALAYA

#### CHAPTER I

##### THE "CALL OF THE EAST"

THE dull rumble of the traffic floated up to my ears through the open windows, punctuated at intervals by blatant motor-horns or shrill cries from newspaper vendors. I sat at my desk, dumb and motionless, staring out with blank eyes over an uncompromising maze of roofs and chimney-pots. A yellow haze of smoke cloaked the sharp outlines of the ugliness of the view, while a pale afternoon sun strove to pierce the gloom. It was an uninspiring outlook, contributing nothing to ease my deep depression of spirit.

My mind was far removed from London. I was conjuring up delightful memories of scenes witnessed in past wanderings about the world. It was an afternoon in late September, and London was sunless and cheerless. My soul ached for the warm sunshine and clear atmosphere of tropical lands; to be freed from the irksome shackles that bound me hand and foot, to be set down among strange peoples in distant lands. The *wanderlust* was strong within me. The world stretched wide before me—north, south, east and west. It beckoned over the vast spaces, and I wanted to respond to that alluring invitation. I felt myself imprisoned. Rebellion at my lot was gnawing savagely.

In imagination, I could hear the silver-toned pagoda bells in Burma; the musical notes of the mule-bells on the roads in Yunnan; the tinkle of a woman's anklets in the Chadni-Chauk of Delhi; the soft-footed patter of a Chinese ricksha-coolie in Shanghai; the strident call to prayer intoned by a muezzin from a lofty Arab minaret in the Persian Gulf; the chug-chug of a stern-wheeler nosing its way up the Nile between Khartoum and Refaj; the thunder of the foaming cascades of water over the lip of the majestic Victoria Falls; the coughing, grunting roar of a lion, menacing and challenging,

on the Athi Plains of Kenya ; the monotonous rhythm of the *ngoma* drums in Zanzibar ; and the kiss of the Atlantic Ocean against the bows of a mail-steamer ploughing its way southwards to Cape Town.

All were old familiar friends in my travels, and I positively ached to renew their acquaintance. I felt terribly desolate in the midst of London and its teeming millions. You can experience a devastating sense of loneliness in the heart of a big city, yet are never conscious of being so in the vast, unpeopled wastes. I have been so desperately lonesome in London, New York and Chicago that I could have sat down and howled with misery, or else drowned my sorrows in strong waters ; but have always found peace and contentment when quite solitary in the wild regions of Africa or elsewhere. There is ever a deep and satisfying sense of novelty to uphold you, which is entirely absent in the big cities. Many will know exactly what I mean : must have suffered in just the same way.

A year in London had brought me to the verge of dark despair. Boredom gripped me by the throat with an iron stranglehold, yet I was powerless to escape from the toils. An insistent voice whispered in my ear : " Pack up your trunk—and go ! "

I would have given much to obey ; yet questions of finance made it impossible. Here was I, marooned in a grubby and prosaic office in the heart of London, condemned to pursue a deadly sameness of daily routine, when every fibre of my being urged me to spread wings and fly far afield. I knew myself hopelessly out of tune with the immediate environment : just flogging mind and body to perform their allotted daily tasks. Dreams and memories were poor substitutes for realities. I wanted something much more colourful than a vista of drab London roofs to gaze upon. Gad—what a life !

At some time or another in their lives, most people have had an urgent desire to wander abroad. Indeed, many must have wished to seek more than just pleasurable travel : an escape from the utterly commonplace. Surely everybody has experienced an honest curiosity to see with their own eyes what lies beyond their narrow daily horizon ; to get away from the rush and turmoil of modern city life, with its crude shams and sheer banalities ; to witness life in its primitive state ; to know something of romance and adventure under blue skies and warm sunshine ; and to explore the quiet backwaters of distant lands ?

A tantalizing little bug is the *wanderlust* ! It is rather like malignant malaria : never wholly eradicated from your system and liable to attack unexpectedly, but generally when funds are at real low ebb.

On this particular day it had bitten me badly. I knew the symptoms far too well for any possible error in my diagnosis. There was within me an imperative urge to heave up my anchor and set sail



*Photo by*

THE ROADS AND JOHNSON'S PIER, SINGAPORE

[Nakajima]



*Photos by*

*[Nakajima]*

1. BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF SINGAPORE
2. RAFFLES SQUARE, SINGAPORE

into the unknown—anywhere, just so long as it was far removed from London and an escape from deadly monotony.

Means and health permitting, it is good for all to travel and see something of the world in which we dwell; to broaden our horizon and cease to be parochially-minded; and to learn, at first-hand, of the many strange countries and the queer people who inhabit them. There is no better tonic for jaded nerves than, for a spell, to enjoy freedom from our usual house of bondage; to be relieved of the dreary sameness of our ordinary existence; and to wander abroad with no more exacting masters than personal inclinations and the limits of our financial resources.

To-day it is so very easy to see the world. There is no end to the variety of our choice of routes, and all may be travelled simply and comfortably. The modern fashion of world-cruises has helped materially to widen our knowledge of the earth, though giving only a rapid surface skimming. If you are prepared to eschew luxury, the world can be travelled at no great cost. There is really no limit to the opportunities for cheap travel.

The majority of the former dark spots of the earth are now flood-lit; the rough places have been made smooth. Many thousands of miles of railways and metalled motor-roads have dealt a shrewd blow at romance and adventure. The "Darkest Africa" of David Livingstone is a thing of the past and relegated to the dusty bookshelves of the Victorian era. "Luxury Cruises" now even call at the loneliest isle—Tristan da Cunha. To-day practically no part of the world remains outside man's knowledge, and its accessibility is becoming increasingly simplified. The gates of the world have been thrown open wide to all who care to enter. To many—and I count myself among them—this must be a source of profound regret, for nearly all the sugar has been eaten off our cake.

Modern progress in methods of transportation by air, sea or land, however, has been unable to smother all the charms and characteristics of some of the distant corners of the world. Though much of the romantic adventure of discovery is now denied, yet there still remains a great deal for us to enjoy. Other lands and the customs of their people will never fail to provide novelty and instruction, even for the most satiated globe-trotter.

In modern times there is discernible a marked disposition among travellers to abide temporarily in countries which offer unusual fascination, coupled with an equitable climate. As the human race grows more and more air-minded, and the facilities for air-travel are widely extended, it will become popular to spend one's annual vacation in distant lands rather than at seaside resorts nearer home.

Such reflections were passing through my mind when the insistent ringing of the telephone bell at my elbow recalled me to mundane things. Reluctantly, I picked up the receiver and answered the call.

The voice of an acquaintance spoke to me from a distant office-building, and his words framed a seductive temptation. Instantly, I was all attention and my pulses raced.

"Can you undertake a mission for us in the East—Malaya?" he asked. "If so, come round and see me as soon as possible. We can then settle terms; and I'll give you our instructions."

"I should jolly well say I *could*!" I answered emphatically, without a second's hesitation. "I'll be round right away, before you've had time to change your mind. When d'you want me to sail?"

"Embark at Marseilles—two weeks from now."

"My Fairy Prince, I salute and thank you!"

I found myself clutching a silent telephone and grinning happily. All my gloomy outlook on life had evaporated like the morning mists before the sun, and the world seemed a mighty pleasant place. Honestly, I did not care whether it rained or snowed—not even if London suffered from a black-out through fog. "*Malaya . . . !*" I whispered to myself.

Now, how the devil did he know that I was longing to be in the East again; and at just that particular moment? Was it due merely to the long arm of coincidence; a case of mental telepathy; or just my lucky day? Malaya, too, of all places!

Once, many years earlier and when homeward-bound from China, I had spent a few cheery hours in Singapore; but British Malaya and the adjacent countries were new fields for me to explore. I had always wanted to investigate thoroughly that portion of the globe, and wander about it from end to end; but opportunity had been strangely remiss in presenting itself. Now the door was thrown wide open miraculously, and I could escape from durance vile. What stupendous luck!

I replaced the receiver, grabbed up pen and paper, and wrote a hurried note resigning my appointment. This despatched by messenger, I seized hat and overcoat. Within a few seconds I was outside that dingy office, face wreathed in smiles, and headed for the street. Ignoring the lift, I raced down the stairs with the light-hearted agility of a markhor in the Himalayan ranges. Halfway down, I almost collided with a journalist friend, who was plodding his way upwards.

"What's your hurry, and why the gladsome smile? Got a 'scoop'—or what?" he demanded, in surprised and suspicious tones.

"I'm Sinbad the Sailor, and off to Malaya two weeks hence," I laughed. "God knows why, or for how long, but I'm on my way."

"Lucky hound! Singapore, eh?"

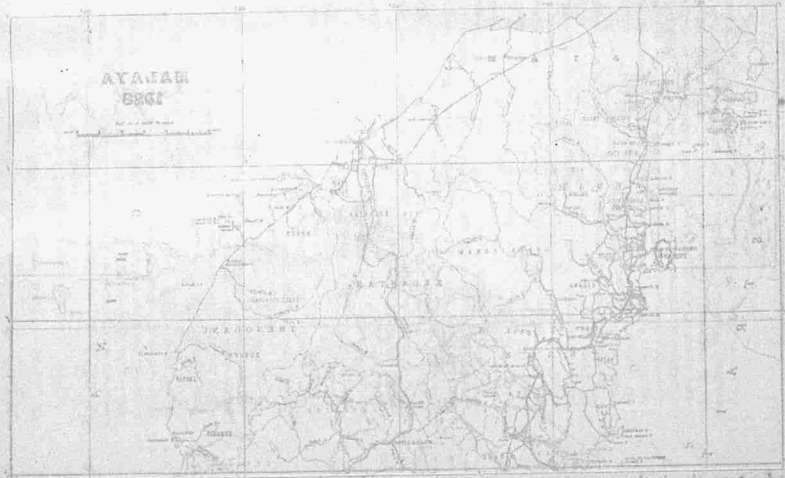
"Bright lad—get to the top of the class. Sorry I can't stop to gossip—too much to be done yet."



AYALAH  
8861

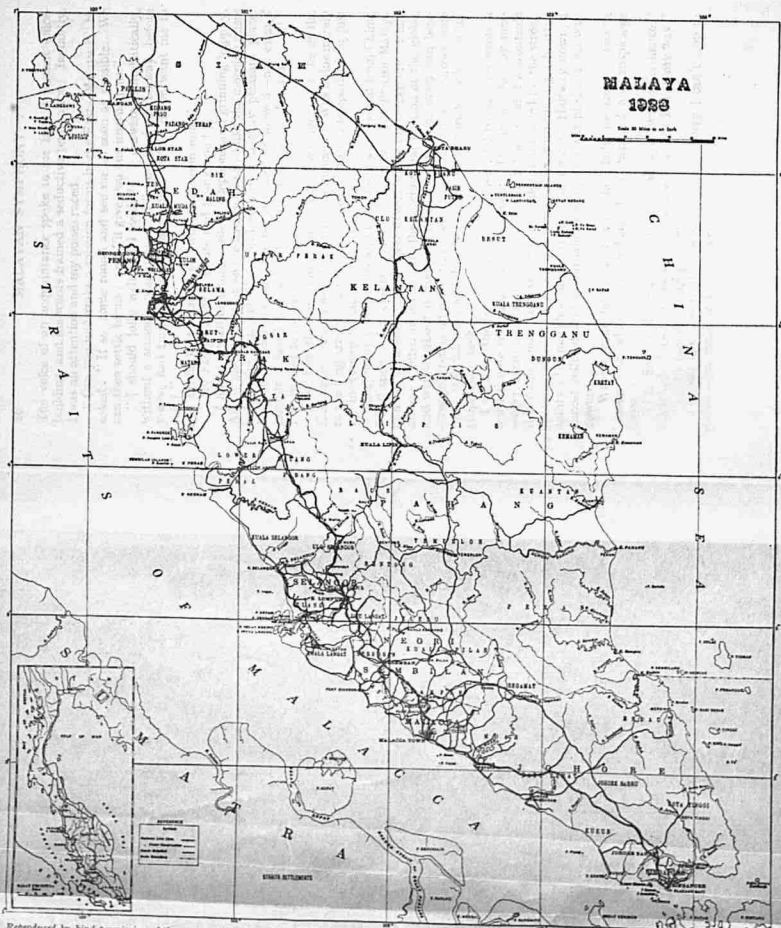
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"Go to Hell!" he growled, as I sped downwards.

"No—Malaya!" I corrected.

A moment later I was on the pavement, hurrying through the crowds to my Fairy Prince. I left my friend staring after me, eyes and mouth wide open; and, doubtless, a bitter pang of jealousy biting him. I was selfish enough not to care two hoots for his resentment at my good fortune. The "Call of the East" sounded loudly in my ears, to the exclusion of all else; and, at such times, one is naturally selfish in viewpoint.

From London to Singapore is a long stretch—approximately 9000 miles by the sea-route; but this distance, under modern conditions of travel, need not make anyone hesitate about undertaking the journey. Distance has been bridged. What is a mere bagatelle of 9000 miles by sea, when you can fly the Atlantic in a day, or telephone from London to Hollywood, India or Japan?

The interview with my Fairy Prince was brief but satisfactory. It took only a few minutes to transform a fanciful dream into a delightful reality, for the trip to Malaya was now certain. My orders were equally pleasing.

I was to sail to Singapore on the next outward-bound Rotterdam-Lloyd steamer, embarking at Marseilles. After arrival in Singapore, I was to travel widely through the Malay Peninsula, the Kingdom of Siam, Sumatra, Java and as much of the Dutch East Indies as feasible. Nothing to do but move about at will, observe closely, and faithfully record my impressions in a series of articles; and take photographs of scenes and people of genuine interest. A most engaging programme this was, indeed! The more so, as someone else piped the tune and I was given a free hand to plan my itinerary. I would not have changed places with a soul in London.

"How long may I roam?" I asked.

"In any case, three months; possibly, even six. Depends entirely upon the value of the material you can send us."

"Better—and best!" I chuckled.

Now, you can travel far and see a great deal in three to six months, thanks to modern facilities. I had no intention of allowing the grass to grow under my feet, and was determined to miss nothing.

As I well knew, Malaya offers an unusually attractive variety of interests to the stranger within her gates. In this respect, the countries peopled by the Malays and their neighbours are indeed generous. Side by side, you may find primitive aborigines and people with a culture dating back many centuries. There are ancient Hindu temples, modern Moslem mosques, and picturesque Chinese joss-houses; oceans of orderly rubber plantations; tin mines of all types; virgin forests and thickly cultivated valleys of immense fertility; big game hunting and excellent fishing; and, indeed, all

things likely to suit the widely divergent tastes of those in search of that "something new." What more could man or woman want?

All those things one can see, and still more. You may travel over first-class motor-roads or on comfortable railway systems; and rest in luxurious hotels or Dak-bungalows. There is also the assurance of a safe progress among alien races, who not so long ago were pirates and even cannibals in certain areas.

On the appointed day I left London for Marseilles, overland. From Paris I shared a coupé in the *wagon-lit* with a Greek millionaire from Cairo; and in the next coupé, with a lavatory compartment dividing us, were two French ladies. One was portly and of ripe age; the other slim, *petite* and most attractive.

Wishing not to be delayed in my shaving and washing, I rose with the lark. The Greek millionaire was still asleep, and I crept silently into the lavatory compartment but found it liberally decked with intimate articles of lady's underwear. This was rather a poser. My first thought was to retreat hastily, thinking one of the ladies had established a prior claim. I listened for a few minutes, and could hear no voices or movement in the next coupé. With sudden decision, I bolted the far door. Obviously they had used the compartment as a wardrobe and were still sleeping.

Every hook was occupied with dainty garments, leaving me nowhere for my dressing-gown and clothes. Carefully collecting the fair unknown's "undies," I pushed them into a cupboard under the wash-basin until they could be restored to the hooks. Rather amused, I proceeded to shave and wash. When I came to retrieve the dainty underclothes, however, I was horror-stricken. The basin had emptied over them. Everything was soaked and covered with soap suds. I pushed them back into the cupboard, unbolted the far door and softly retreated. A few minutes later, I was on my way to the dining-car to escape from the gathering storm.

Just before we reached Marseilles I ventured to return to my coupé. All hell's furies had been loosed. I heard the riot long before the compartment was gained and realized the storm was raging. One of the train staff was striving to soothe the lady unsuccessfully, but her shrill voice drowned his words. Her language was unprintable. I sympathized with the lady in her predicament, also deeply regretted being the unwitting cause of the mishap. Yet how was I to know that the basin emptied into a tank in the cupboard? Besides, she should not have tried to monopolize the lavatory compartment as a wardrobe or dressing-room.

I crept swiftly into my coupé and shut the door. The Greek millionaire stared at me accusingly, and his lips moved to ask the inevitable question. The air was electric.

"What's all the trouble?" I asked innocently.

He explained what had happened, adding that the lady had no

other garments with her. He asked if I was responsible for damaging her clothes. I admitted it frankly ; and, in my turn, explained.

"It is best that we go," he suggested, rising to his feet.

He was right. The discomfited French lady's anger was soaring and her shrill protests drowned the hum of the train's progress. We crept out of the coupé and fled back to the dining-car.

At Marseilles, we got porters to retrieve our baggage and kept well out of sight. As I walked down the platform, my ears echoed with the angry abuse of the little French lady. I quickened my pace. I wonder how she solved her difficulties ? I shall never know.

At noon I embarked ; and two hours later was on my way to Singapore.

## CHAPTER II

### THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MALACCA

SABANG, the small Dutch coaling-port on the island of Pulau Wè at the north-eastern extremity of the Straits of Malacca, had been left astern at noon on the previous day. We had been a day there, while filling our bunkers; and my recollections of the place are none too happy.

Like Singapore, it is a free port. The harbour was constructed in 1887 to serve as a coaling-depot and convenient transshipment point for merchandise destined for northern Sumatra. Such freight is taken by steam-ferry to Kota Rajah, a port on the mainland and twenty miles distant. Sabang is effectively sheltered against the heavy swell of the Indian Ocean and the high winds of the Monsoon seasons, and a modernly equipped harbour. It boasts of a wireless station, a large floating dock, and excellent wharves and warehouses.

The commercial world and Malay community occupy the low-lying ground near the harbour; but the club, hotel and residential section are situated on the high bluff overlooking the blue waters of the little bay. Everything ashore was vividly green; and each garden was a riot of flowers in full bloom.

Sabang is only a small place and offers little of interest to casual visitors. The small Dutch community, however, is the soul of hospitality and makes passengers on their mail-boats cordially welcome at the club. On the night of our arrival they arranged a special dance and invited all on board. There was only one other British passenger, a pilot destined for Christmas Island, and we were both included in the invitation. A young Dutch bride on board urged us to go, but neither was in the mood for dancing and decided to stroll about the township.

The Dutch girl in question was quite the prettiest on our steamer and, though a bride, was travelling alone. I had heard she was married in Rotterdam just before sailing, which struck me as odd for the bridegroom was noticeable by his absence. Curiosity compelled me to elicit an explanation.

"I was married by proxy," she smiled. "My husband is meeting me in Batavia."

"Proxy?" I asked; for this was a new one on me.

She explained that she would be married again on arrival in Java; but, before sailing, had been through a ceremony of marriage in

Holland with a man who stood as proxy for the bridegroom now in Java. This first ceremony was quite binding under Dutch laws. There is something to be said for this novel arrangement ; for more than once I have known brides, going abroad to be married, change their minds on the voyage and marry a fellow-passenger at a port of call *en route*. The Dutch plan obviates any such back-sliding, and consequent heartburns.

The Christmas Island pilot accompanied me ashore on a tour of investigation. The principal points were soon exhausted, and we fell back upon the deserted hotel. Beyond a large stock of Dutch and German beer, this little hostelry had nothing much to commend it. There was a billiard-table of sorts ; but the slates were cracked, the cover torn, the balls so battle-scarred and the cushions so leaden that a game was more like a dreadful nightmare than billiards. Harry Tate's fantastic table had nothing on Sabang's : Stevenson and Inman would have achieved none of their colossal breaks on this derelict. The only break I accomplished proved an expensive one.

In a praiseworthy effort to score off the red into the top right-hand pocket, my ball took-off like a well-tuned aeroplane and sailed neatly through the shut window instead of into the pocket. The resulting crash brought the Dutch host on the scene, angry and insistent upon collecting damages. I explained what had happened, went on to demonstrate that it was an accident, and sent another ball through a second pane of glass. That was the last straw. The hotel proprietor would not hear a word against the table and insisted on being paid for the damage done. The figure quoted was exorbitant.

"I don't want to buy the table," I protested with some heat.

"It is for new glass to the window," he growled.

"For this one, or the whole hotel ?" I inquired sarcastically.

He pointed to the broken window-pane and repeated his demand for compensation. The charge would have reglazed the entire hotel, and then left a handsome profit ; but we could not move him to a more reasonable view. Finally, I compromised on a fifty-fifty basis ; but only after protracted argument. This settled, he demanded payment for a hundred-up at billiards. The scores had not yet reached twenty-five for either of us, so this was rubbing it in. However, we paid under protest, and returned to the ship. It would have been better to have gone to the dance in the Club, for that game of pseudo-billiards cost me about three pounds sterling.

I was glad when we left Sabang.

At dawn next day we should make a brief call at Belawan-Deli, which serves Medan, the capital of Sumatra. There would remain but the last lap of our journey to Singapore—some 354 miles.

Just over five weeks ago I had been eating out my heart in a Fleet Street office ; and now was being borne smoothly over the

placid, faded-blue waters which divide Sumatra from the Malay Peninsula. On our starboard beam could faintly be seen the range of mountains that form the backbone of Sumatra; at times they were blue-grey, at others purple-tinted. Somewhere on the port bow, beyond the distant horizon, was Penang and the palm-fringed shores of the western coast of British Malaya.

Next morning, just as the first pink tinge of dawn began to flood the sky, we anchored some distance off Belawan-Deli, but too far away to see anything of this rising port. Here we set down some of our Dutch passengers and picked up a lesser number for Singapore and Java, the transfer being effected by fussy but powerful tugs. The whole process occupied about two hours.

After leaving Belawan-Deli, the colour of the sea changed suddenly from the faded blue to an apple-green. The surface was without a ripple. The only movement was the gentle heave of its broad bosom like the deep breathing of a slumbering giant. A cool, refreshing breeze stole up from the west and off-set the torrid heat of the equatorial zone during the afternoon. Later, after the flaming orb of the sun disappeared in a blaze of glorious colouring, the air became unexpectedly chilly; and a light overcoat made just the difference between comfort and discomfort. Yet we were steaming approximately across the Equator!

I maintained an enraptured vigil on deck after dinner. The many guiding beacons on coast or island flashed and winked invitingly, as if bidding us welcome to Malaya. We passed innumerable steamers either homeward-bound or engaged in the coastal trade.

Once there sailed by, almost within a stone's throw, the elegant and picturesque outlines of an old-fashioned Chinese junk. Its red-brown, quaintly designed sails bellied to the night-wind, while it rose and fell smoothly to the swell. From the high poop came the sound of music and voices raised in song; and the call of the look-out came distinctly to me from across the water.

This old-world craft's beautiful yet fantastic appearance breathed an air of romance. The junk stood out clear-cut in the brilliant light of a full moon, which made the Straits of Malacca a shimmering sheet of liquid gold and silver. I was reminded of pictures seen of Vasco da Gama's ancient caravels that journeyed round the Cape of Good Hope, blazing a new ocean-highway to India and the Far East. Utterly indifferent to our existence, this hardy descendant of the old-time mariners of the Orient wallowed on its way to comb the lesser ports for lucrative trade or cargo.

Romance—who said it was dead and buried? You may find it in the Straits of Malacca, almost every hour and every day. That is to say, if you are not entirely devoid of imagination. A voyage through these waters is never dull or uninteresting; on the contrary, it provides ample food for thought. The Straits of Malacca form the



highway between East and West, and are never empty of either steam or sailing vessels. What a motley collection of shipping ploughs its way up and down this narrow sea ! Modern liners both small and large ; oil-tankers and weather-battered freighters ; full-rigged ships and Chinese junks ; schooners and Malay fishing-boats can always be seen. You get variety and quantity : a more picturesque edition of the English Channel.

The Straits of Malacca have filled countless pages in the almost forgotten history of the world ; and yet may be destined to fill as many more. Chinese, Malays, Portuguese, Dutch and British, each in their turn, have held the key to this sea-highway—the historic town and port of Malacca.

It is impossible to forget or belittle those stern struggles for mastery over these regions and for the monopoly of the trade during the past centuries. As you steam up or down these Straits, their history seems very much alive. Are the days of the piratical Malay *prahus* really ended ? you ask yourself. Though you know they are, yet you find yourself almost wishing they might suddenly put in an appearance.

Until the invention of steam, the trade of merchant sailing-ships was much harassed by Malay pirates, whose *prahus* infested these waters. Piracy was the only pleasant and really profitable career in those ancient days for any Malay imbued with an adventurous turn of mind. Most of those who dwelt on the coast and islands hereabouts possessed this trait to the Nth degree. It offered them all the glorious uncertainties of war, sport and pillage ; therefore, piracy was a popular form of livelihood. A Malay is by natural instinct a true sportsman, a born adventurer, a skilful fisherman, and always thoroughly at home in any kind of craft on ocean or river. Is it any wonder that he took to piracy as easily as a duck swims ?

It is easy to picture those brown-skinned buccaneers returning to their villages, laden with rich loot and not a few miserable captives. All would be eager to whisper, with no mock modesty, their deeds of prowess into the attentive ears of admiring belles in the *kampongs* (villages). What blood-thirsty villains they must have looked ; and what stirring tales must have bubbled from their lips ! Most probably the stories of their piratical adventures lost nothing in the telling. Yet who can blame them, when a bevy of gentle-eyed, comely Malay maidens hung upon every word and loudly applauded their heroic deeds. It was a good life while it lasted—and a profitable one.

In those olden times it was no uncommon thing for junks or sailing vessels to set out from Malacca or Singapore, and never to be seen or heard of again. The Malay *prahus*, rowing thirty men aside, attacked them when becalmed in the Straits of Malacca or when at anchor off a small trading settlement along the coast. When they had overpowered the crews, their captives were either massacred

or carried off into slavery. Merchantmen ran grave risks in those waters.

The British pioneers on the Malay Peninsula did what they could to suppress this evil, but, until the advent of steamers, it was impossible to do so entirely. The first encounter between the paddle-steamer *Diana* and a fleet of five *prahus* is a matter of historical record. The story is not without humour.

When the Malay pirates first sighted the *Diana*, the black smoke vomited from her funnel deluded them into thinking she was a sailing-ship on fire. The *Diana* was the first steam-driven vessel they had ever seen; and how were they to know all was not as it seemed? Joyously they approached her, encouraged greatly by the thought that not only was the ship on fire, but also becalmed. Here was a God-sent and helpless victim: a ripe plum all ready for picking. They put their backs into the oarwork, therefore, and sent the *prahus* racing across the still waters.

The first *prahu* was permitted to range alongside without any attempt at interference from the crew of the *Diana*. Surely this paddle-steamer was the progenitor of the famous "Q" mystery-ships employed in the Great War against the German submarines? Suddenly a well-directed broadside from the *Diana* sank the *prahu* and its rowers. This loss, however, did not seem to depress the crews of the others, for they deemed it merely an unfortunate accident which was to be expected. They still advanced to the attack, confident that the hour of their victim was at hand.

When the ship, which they believed to be a sailing vessel on fire, began to sail towards them and against the wind, their bold, adventurous spirits received a nasty shock. This was not playing the game according to Malay standards of piracy! The crews of the four remaining *prahus* were so horrified at such a wholly unnatural proceeding that they turned about and rowed desperately away. It was all very well for a ship to sail before the wind, but for one to progress against it could only be the work of the devil.

One by one, the *Diana* overtook and sank each *prahu* in turn. It is said that none of the Malay pirates survived, so the belles in the *kampongs* never heard the amazing story of the ship which was on fire and yet could sail against the wind. That spicy little adventure in the Straits of Malacca was the beginning of the end of piracy in those waters. The adventure completely died out of fashion among the Malays.

Before I went below at midnight, the twinkling lights of Malacca showed faintly on our port beam. The end of the long voyage was almost within sight.

Shortly after sunrise I stepped out on to the promenade deck and scanned the horizon ahead for a distant glimpse of Singapore;

but had to possess my soul in patience. Word went round that we should not dock until mid-morning. The Great and Little Kerimuns, Pulau Batam and Pulau Blakang Mati—which my map assured me hedged in the Island of Singapore—had yet to thrust themselves above the rim of the sea. We were still in the ever-narrowing Straits of Malacca, with Pulau Kukub faintly seen ahead and Pisang Lighthouse fast dropping astern.

After breakfast, however, the long-expected landmarks began to appear above the horizon, ever growing more distinct. Next, we came abreast of the Sultan Shoal Lighthouse, and then of Salat Sembilan (the Seven Islands). Singapore is just like that: merely one of the many islands of an extensive archipelago, but standing on the northern fringe of it.

The entrance to the harbour from the westward is infinitely more attractive than that from eastwards. I have seen many lovely harbours in the course of over thirty years of world-travel—Sydney in Australia, Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika Territory, Kilindini and Mombasa in Kenya Colony, and Pago Pago in Samoa instantly recur to mind. The western passage into Singapore compares favourably with them.

Shipping from the west enters the harbour proper and the docks at Tanjong Pagar through a narrow strait. It is hedged in by green islands and red rocks, while attractive bungalows, perfectly in tune with their setting, nestle cosily among the tropical vegetation. I registered an impression of scenic splendour immediately we came within measurable distance of the port. There was an air of serenity about the general outlook which was delightfully restful and the harbinger of still better things to come.

The deep-water anchorage beyond this narrow strait has been renamed Keppel Harbour, in memory of Admiral Sir Harry Keppel, who was the first to discover its potentialities; but early in the last century it was known as New Harbour. The Portuguese adventurers of an earlier period were, perhaps, more apt in their christening, for they labelled this the Straits of Singapore. Now Blakang Mati Island stood on our starboard bow and Fort Pasir Panjang was immediately abreast on the port side.

I stood entranced. The wondrous beauty of the panorama steadily unfolding itself ahead was a sedative for ocean-weary eyes. The waters of Keppel Harbour were jade-green, and I gazed over them upon a veritable fairyland. This was indeed a perfect re-introduction to Singapore. A deep sigh at my left elbow caused me to look in that direction. A Singaporean, who had come aboard at Belawan-Deli, stood beside me at the rails, eyes glued on the ever-changing scene, and face all wreathed in smiles.

"By Jove!" he whispered softly. "Isn't that a gem? Bet you've not seen finer anywhere. I can never look at it without

experiencing a feeling of ecstasy. Home again—and a damned good spot, too ! ”

“ I know exactly how you react to it,” I agreed readily. “ It certainly is wonderful—exquisitely beautiful.”

That statement won his heart completely. He began to explain the various points of interest as they crept into our line of vision, and I was grateful for this kindly help in identifying the spots. There was much to see ; still more yet to learn.

Blakang Mati, a hilly island which is strongly fortified and accommodates a considerable garrison, extends for a distance of roughly two miles immediately south of Singapore. It forms a natural breakwater for the wharves. In the curving sweep of its coastline, and still on the south of Keppel Harbour, is the smaller island of Pulau Brani, where are some tall chimneys of the tin-smelting works of the Straits Trading Company. The bulk of the tin smelted in the Malay Peninsula is treated there.

My companion drew my attention to a quaint Malay fishing-village nestling under the lee of Pulau Brani, the houses all palm-thatched and standing on stilts in the sea. He explained that this curious amphibious village was inhabited by the descendants of a Malay tribe of sea-gypsies who, from time immemorial, had lived in boats and picked up either an honest or a piratical livelihood from the sea. No doubt their forefathers found life infinitely more amusing and adventurous.

On our port beam could now be seen the promontory of Bukit Chermin. The water surrounding it was remarkably transparent, which accounts for the name—Chermin in the Malay language signifying “ glass.” A little further onwards was Pulau Hantu (the island of ghosts), a jungle-clothed and hilly islet ; and then began the first of the long series of wharves in the Keppel Harbour docks. The King’s Dock, one of the largest graving-docks in the world, was on its eastern extremity. Mount Faber overlooks them. From its summit, on a clear day, there is a magnificent panoramic view obtainable, which more than repays the stiff climb upwards. Then came the succession of docks and wharves at Tanjong Pagar, stretching for more than a mile towards the city.

On nearing our berth, we were surrounded by a swarm of frail dug-out canoes, in which perched Malay boys and elderly men. They paddled dexterously beside us, while squatting on their heels and shrilly pleading for silver coins to be thrown for them to dive after. It was astonishing to see how expert they were, both in handling their little craft and in retrieving the coins. One old man was smoking a cheroot and, time and time again, dived overboard with the red-hot end in his mouth. As he emerged from the muddy waters, he withdrew the cheroot and puffed away at it contentedly. His trick did not pass unrewarded. The manner in which these

Malays dived and then regained their seats in the frail canoes, without once overturning, was remarkably clever. I noticed several of them bailing with their feet while paddling with their hands.

Presently I stood upon the wharf at Tandjong Pagar, my month's sea-voyage at an end and my land travels just about to begin. Already I felt in my bones that this would be a delightful experience ; nor was disappointment to clutch me by the throat.

Ever since leaving Sabang, I had striven hard to remember what Singapore looked like. My recollections of the earlier visit were dim and vague, for twenty odd years impose too great a strain upon the clearness of fleeting impressions of any city. Naturally I knew there was a Raffles Hotel. One associates the port and hotel as a matter of course, just as one connects Shanghai with the proud distinction of owning the longest bar in the world. Beyond Raffles Hotel my memory refused to function. The city was, to all intents and purposes, virgin soil to be studied and explored.

Here I was in Singapore once more, while the city dangled alluringly before my eager eyes like a particularly choice fly in front of the nose of a hungry trout. Yet no trout ever spawned rose more greedily to bait than I did in Singapore. I gobbled bait, hook and line !

## CHAPTER III

### THE "GATE OF THE FAR EAST"

SINGAPORE has rightly been styled the "Gate of the Far East." This is no idle claim. It stands on the sea's high-way between China, Japan and Australasia in the East, and India and Europe in the West. It is in actual fact and geographically the half-way house.

To this great port come ships from every corner of the earth to discharge vast quantities of merchandise for distribution all over the Malay Archipelago, Siam, and even further afield. It serves as the clearing house for all the trade passing through the Eastern seas; and its commercial importance can best be judged by a study of the enormous tonnage of merchant-vessels in its harbours, the congestion on wharves and in warehouses.

Long years ago Singapore reached the front rank among the ports in the East; and to-day has no intention of yielding pride of place to any other in those regions, despite most strenuous competition. At the present time, Singapore can justly claim to be not only one of the great ports of the far-flung British Empire but of the whole world. Its supremacy appears to be impregnable. Within the past decade or so, Singapore has acquired immense political and strategical significance through the construction of the Naval Base on the island. Soon it will be one of the most important air-ports between Europe and Australasia, if it has not already become so.

Shortly after its birth as a British Colony, Singapore made its name as a first-rate trading centre. Thus did the splendid dream of the astute Sir Stamford Raffles become *un fait accompli*. As history has proved conclusively, this great Imperialist was a man of "long, long thoughts" and endowed with a far-sighted outlook. Raffles had vision and the capacity to give practical effect to it. As Lieutenant-Governor of the small outpost of Benkoelen in Sumatra, he pointed out to the East India Company the essential need of owning a simple commercial station, protected by a small garrison, at Singapore. He emphasized that this must inevitably force free trade upon the Dutch or else divert the commerce of those regions to the British flag.

His sound advice, and strong advocacy of this plan, was a long time in taking root. It was not until 1819 that he was allowed to

negotiate and sign a treaty with the Sultan of Johore, whereby the island of Singapore was ceded permanently to Great Britain. Then, at long last, the Union Jack was hoisted "on the site of the ancient maritime capital of the Malays." That was an epoch-making occasion for the British Empire: one which was fraught with far-reaching consequences.

"It is a child of my own," wrote Raffles in prophetic vein, "and bids fair to be one of the most important [Colonies] and, at the same time, one of the least expensive and troublesome we possess. Our object is not territory but trade; a great commercial emporium and a fulcrum whence we may extend our influence politically as circumstances hereafter may require. One free port in these seas must eventually destroy the spell of the Dutch monopoly."

All this has come to pass during the last 116 years. But it took Great Britain's statesmen three years to recognize the fact that Raffles's dreams of the future for Malaya were destined, when put into effect, to work out the commercial salvation of England on those Eastern waters. Better far, however, that wisdom should prevail tardily than never at all.

Year by year, Singapore has continued to grow and expand until now possessing one of the most imposing waterfronts east of Suez, with only Shanghai as a potential rival. Its inhabitants are not unmindful of all they owe to Raffles, for his name has been perpetuated in innumerable ways. This is only fitting, for the names of Raffles and Singapore are synonymous. It is not often, however, that a true prophet finds honour in his own land.

A handsome statue of the port's great founder stands in an open space before the Victoria Memorial Hall, facing the open roadstead. An endless procession of ships of all the nations in the world pass in review before it. As I stood to admire this statue, I was reminded immediately of that of Cecil Rhodes in Bulawayo, "Looking Northwards"; while, year by year, his great dream of Britain's colonization of Africa from the Cape to Cairo grows measurably nearer to reality. Both men were outstanding Imperialists, wide of vision and actuated by an indomitable purpose. To them the Empire owes an immense debt of gratitude. History has set the seal of greatness upon the enterprising spirit of both men.

It is not surprising that the people of this great city and port are as proud of the memory of Raffles as of their magnificent home. Singapore, as it stands to-day, is a memorial more enduring than bronze or granite to its founder.

The very cosmopolitan character of Singapore's population furnishes still another proof of its vast importance as the key to the Far East. Singapore is of the Orient, yet not of it. The casual visitor to the city may be pardoned for thinking he is in a port of China. There is certainly some degree of justification for such a

lapse in historical and geographical knowledge. Indeed, some of the earliest letters I got from London were addressed to me at "Singapore, China."

The essentially Chinese character of the city is a dominant feature, and quite inevitably creates a permanent impression on the mind. As I wandered through the streets, and more particularly off the main thoroughfares, I was struck at once by the overpowering predominance of the Chinese over all other races. Judged by outward and visible signs, I might just as well have stepped ashore at Shanghai, Hong Kong or Canton. The real Malays appear to have been engulfed in the rising tide of the Chinese invasion. They are greatly outnumbered in all the towns throughout the Peninsula.

After all, John Chinaman has always been identified prominently with the growth and prosperity of Singapore. Within four months of the settlement's foundation by Raffles, the population was principally Chinese. From the very beginning of its history, the most important trade was with China; and the Chinese have always acted as the middlemen in the commerce of this port.

In view of the fact that Singapore lies midway between China and India, it is only natural that there should be a jumble of races congregated there. A flood of immigration from all parts of the East has always swept into Singapore; but chiefly it flowed from China. The Chinese have sought peace and prosperity under the British flag in Malaya, and gone there in their tens of thousands. At the 1931 Census it was disclosed there were roughly 1,750,000 Chinese in British Malaya; while the Chinese population of Singapore municipality was nearly one-fifth of the gross total. The political unrest and upheavals in their native land cannot be said to be wholly responsible for vastly increased immigration from all parts of China. Malaya is the land of opportunity. The most unskilled Chinamen can easily earn his ten dollars a month there, as against—if he is lucky—two dollars in his homeland. That, combined with the sense of security and justice under the British flag, has drawn the Chinese to the Malay Peninsula in a steady flow.

There are English-speaking, Straits-born Chinamen—a class by themselves—who have never seen the land of their forefathers; and who do not speak any other language but English, Tamil or Malay. There are also genuine immigrants from China who know no other language but that of their native land. Is it surprising that the racial heterogeneity of Malaya is regarded as unique? It is known that there are eight different classifications of Chinese in the Malay Peninsula; and there is a continual stream of immigrants from India, Java, Siam, Sumatra and other neighbouring territories.

This perpetual flood of Chinese immigration may yet prove a force that must be reckoned with; but such a necessity has not yet arisen. John Chinaman is no fool. You can trust him to know when



he is well off. It is true that, for some few years past, the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) was active in British Malaya; but Sir Cecil Clementi, the Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States, informed the local leaders of the movement that it would be tolerated no longer, and thereupon definitely banned the Kuomintang. This action was heartily welcomed by both Straits-born and China-born Chinese residents throughout the Peninsula, who for some years had been subjected to a form of blackmail and intimidation by the Kuomintang agents.

The great majority of the Chinese people in Malaya desire only to be left alone, to pursue their lawful vocation and make money in peace. They appreciate the security, freedom from "squeeze," and the opportunities to accumulate wealth which they enjoy under British rule. Speaking generally, the Chinese community in the Malay Peninsula can be described truthfully as contented and law-abiding.

The real Malay is not so much in evidence in this southern portion of the Peninsula. Such as are seen, generally are employed as fishermen, policemen, or as drivers of motor-vehicles. A few Malays act as domestic servants, but even in this work are fast being ousted by the Hylam "boy" of China. The aboriginals of Malaya are not found in or near Singapore.

I was much struck by the fact that the streets of the city, for the most part, were lined with shops bearing Chinese names either in English or Chinese characters. Above them live thousands upon thousands of Chinese in crowded tenements, painfully reminiscent of the slum areas in large European towns.

The enormous number of children seen everywhere the Chinese congregate is not the least astonishing feature of their tenacious grip upon the Malay Peninsula, and Singapore in particular. A cheery Chinaman told me, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, that all Chinese couples liked to rear large families. I gathered from him that it was a national trait and the favourite hobby of their married people! If I am to believe the evidence of my eyes, he spoke but the simple truth.

It is, in fact, something more than a national hobby—these step-ladders of children in every Chinese household. Among this race of people there can be no scope for the activities of birth control specialists. John Chinaman—and, it is to be presumed, his complacent spouse—is much too partial to raising platoons of yellow-skinned, almond-eyed counterparts of himself ever to listen seriously to the advocates of such doctrines. He is very thorough in raising a family, being rivalled only by the homely rabbit. Maybe there is some justification for the oft-repeated cry of the "yellow peril." Let it be said, however, that the last Census proved that the

increase in Chinese population in-Malaya was not due to an excess of births over deaths, but to an excess of immigrants over emigrants.

On my first day ashore in Singapore, I was under the impression that some great national or religious festival was being celebrated in the Chinese quarter of the city. From the upper windows of the houses in these streets densely populated by Chinese, I could see suspended long bamboo poles, each one being profusely decorated with a confusing array of multi-coloured cloths. The blue of China—everything seems blue in China!—largely predominated; but an age-grimed white ran it a fairly close second.

Inspection at near range, however, revealed that the articles fluttering in the breeze above my head were no more than wearing apparel. Puzzled, I sought an explanation from an English resident who was kindly showing me the sights of the city.

"What's the general idea? Is it a 'Flag day' in Chinatown?" I asked, pointing to the clothing arched above the street.

"No—laundry day!" was the laconic reply. "The Chinks always dry their home-wash like this. Rather a cute idea, what?"

It certainly was both novel and practical. Even if it did somewhat mar the fading beauty of these quaint Oriental streets, yet necessity is the mother of invention. The harassed mothers of large Chinese families, who lived in those crowded tenements, had no back gardens available for hanging out their washing to dry. As all Chinese garments are of the same square-cut shape, it is simple to pass a bamboo pole through the wide sleeves or trouser legs, thus exposing all of the article to sun and wind. This plan dispensed with lines or clothes-pegs.

If sometimes an extra puff of strong wind lifts the clothes off their lofty perch and deposits them in the insanitary drains or upon the heads of innocent passers-by, there are plenty of children in each rabbit-hutch of a house to retrieve them. They can be immersed once more in the wash-tub. After all, soap and water are cheap; and time is of no great consequence to a Chinese woman!

Singapore's streets are always seething with life. The noise is indescribable. London, New York, Paris and other great cities are bad enough; but they are a haven of peace in comparison with Singapore. The Malay drivers of motor-vehicles have a failing which is highly objectionable. The horns or buttons of the mechanical hooters on cars and lorries prove quite irresistible to their childish minds. Their itching fingers are never off them for more than a few seconds at a time. They behave exactly like infants provided with a drum or cornet to amuse themselves, and make full use of this golden opportunity to render life hideous for others. It does not matter in the least to these native drivers that there is no real occasion to give warning of their approach. They argue that the hooter was provided for use, and are not niggardly in sounding

it. They are an infernal nuisance in the city's streets, for they create Bedlam by day and night.

Frequently I saw a long row of taxis on a stand, and each driver was entertaining the neighbourhood with his share in a motor-horn symphony. Some sat upright, putting heart and soul into their contribution to the cacophony of sound; others smoked cigarettes and lolled back in their seats, while keeping *their feet* pressed heavily on bulb or button. The noise produced by this amateur jazz-band can best be imagined than described. It must have been a nerve-racking experience for the occupants of adjacent offices, even as it was for those who passed through the street. The constant sounding of a dozen different varieties of motor-horns and buzzers cannot be recommended as a musical entertainment.

Sleep at night in the hotels, until you grow accustomed to this infliction (if you ever do), is practically an impossibility. Until two or three o'clock in the morning this hellish nightmare never ceases. Two hours later, the obliging church-bells of the city begin to toll forth their summons to prayer, while the impromptu symphony of the motor-driver's orchestra is resumed with renewed vigour. Three to four hours of sleep at night was about as much as I managed to get during the first few days in Singapore. In such a climate, this can lead only to the grave, murder or a lunatic asylum.

Nobody seems to concern himself with any serious attempt to abate this perpetual nuisance, though all are ready enough to condemn it in strong terms. Apathy, that curse of the East—*tid' apa* (never mind)—is mainly responsible for nothing being done to curb this infernal racket by day and night.

The vehicular traffic in Singapore is no less astonishing for its quantity and variety than that of the masses of craft in the roadstead or on the congested river. Everyone appears to own a car in Singapore—be they European, Eurasian, Chinese, Indian, Malay or Javanese. The tally of the Malay and Chinese operated taxis and buses must run into four figures or more. Motor-lorries, private and public cars and buses, horse or bullock-drawn carts, man-hauled trucks, electric trams, the thousands of Chinese hauled jinrickshas, and a vast multitude of bicycles flood the streets. Almost every day, the busiest sections of the city resemble the congestion of the London streets during the General Strike, when any kind of conveyance was brought into use.

In Raffles Square, during working hours, a solid mass of cars is parked; and in the vicinity of the hotels and clubs, or other popular resorts, there are long lines of other parked motors. Singapore has acute traffic problems, too; but is solving them satisfactorily. The greatest problem of all is to drive about the city without running down a wandering Chinese pedestrian, ricksha or cyclist. Road rules convey nothing to them. They wander about from side to

side, or in the centre of the road, with a blissful indifference to their own danger or that of others. Gradually, however, they are being instilled with a modicum of "road-sense."

Beyond the heart of the city the former rubber estates are gradually but surely being absorbed in building developments. The erstwhile rubber-belt on the island is being thrust back relentlessly to make room for the urgent need for housing accommodation—and yet still more. Land in the heart of Singapore has soared in value until now it is worth more than a site in the vicinity of the Strand or Piccadilly. Consequently, rents are still unduly high despite economic depression. The plain truth of the matter is that building operations are unable to keep pace with the rapid growth of the population.

Nothing is really old upon the surface of Singapore, except only its past history and memories. After all, what is a mere century of time? Where now stands the modern city, a hundred odd years ago was a widely extending mangrove swamp. Yet the old pioneers bethought themselves of the future, and both planned and built with commendable foresight. There is still ample space for further development. Mangrove swamps are being reclaimed steadily, and the new-made land turned to man's service. All this space, unquestionably, will be required for buildings now or in the near future.

Although the island lies so near to the Equator, the climate is healthy even if somewhat enervating. There is always a cooling breeze from seawards; and, at night-time, it is generally wise to wrap up when out driving. Blankets cannot be dispensed with always. There exists an erroneous idea that Singapore is truly tropical; but there is very great difference between its climate and general characteristics and those found in Mombasa. The two ports, however, are approximately equidistant from the Equator. Sub-tropical would be nearer the truth for Singapore.

Plentiful and frequent rains keep everything fresh and green. Those who dwell in this fruitful vineyard can indulge, all the year round, in every form of outdoor sport on real turf which is not sun-parched. The vivid green colouring of the vegetation throughout the island is not the least of the many delightful charms offered. There are no seasons in the year when the land is not garbed in green. That is why, perhaps, most people carry away with them a strong impression of exquisite tropical beauty. Yet the word "tropical" used in connection with Singapore is really most misleading.

Just before my return to England, the rich green of the island was blended with the gorgeous scarlet blooms of the Gul Mohr and the Flame of the Forest. The general effect was very lovely. It is rather surprising how people in the East, even those with many years' residence to their credit, habitually confuse these two splendid trees.

Granted that they are very much alike in general appearance, still they do possess easily distinguishable features.

The Gul Mohr (*Ponciana Regia*) is a spreading tree with long horizontal and crooked branches—rather like an opened umbrella. It bears flowers of a bright red colour, but with one petal streaked with yellow. This flower often reminds you of the common nasturtium in English gardens, except that the red colour is so much deeper.

On the other hand, the Flame of the Forest (*Putea Frondosa*) is a smaller tree and usually has a crooked or irregular trunk. It also bears bright red flowers, but with no hint of any yellow in them. The presence of the yellow streak on one petal, or its complete absence, provides the surest means of correct identification.

Singapore has a habit of growing upon you. I found it no easy matter to place a finger upon its specific appeal to my affections; but the more you get to know it, the more you like the place. Both the city and its environments possess marked individuality.

In my travels about the world, I have always found a greater delight and profit in studying the human element rather than the physical. A great curiosity takes me into odd places and corners seldom visited by casual visitors; and invariably I find a deep storehouse of unusual treasures. I like to learn, at first hand, about the customs, habits and daily lives of strange peoples. Scenic marvels, beautiful or historic buildings, and suchlike, possess much in common everywhere; the only real difference is in form or quality. But the human interest side of travel is much more varied and specific.

There are many odd and curious corners in Singapore which well repay exploration. It is there you can find things that the hardened residents frequently do not know even exist at their doorsteps. Tourist agencies have only a stereotyped programme to offer their clientele, and a little leaven of originality would not come amiss. Too often their clients are beguiled into pursuing the shadows and avoiding the substance. The resulting loss is considerable from the traveller's point of view, for they see only the surface and nothing beneath it.

I have always refused, when travelling abroad, to be hide-bound by set plan or programme. I infinitely prefer to discover for myself pleasures which may not appeal to all. In this, perhaps, I am not singular. The fact remains that human nature can prove far more interesting to the intelligent traveller than the commonplaces of city or countryside.

Definitely I can state that my greatest joy has always been found in poking curiously about the native sections of all Oriental cities. Without exception, my enterprise has rewarded me in generous measure.

So also was it when in Singapore.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LIGHTER SIDE OF SINGAPORE

**H**ILL STREET, nestling under the shadow of Fort Canning, is a beehive of Chinese commercial activity. In Singapore it represents the equivalent to London's Oxford Street. Both in Hill Street, and in those cutting across it at right angles, can be found and purchased most of the typical silks, laces, linens and curios of the Orient. There is infinite variety of choice from which to make your selections ; and the goods offered for sale had their origin in many different lands.

During my brief sojourn in Singapore, Hill Street drew me constantly like a magnet. I always found it fascinating to wander up and down this crowded thoroughfare ; to poke my inquisitive nose into dirty little shops, each crammed with a weird assortment of goods ; and to haggle for things wanted or unwanted. I know of few more intriguing ways of filling in a dull hour or so.

Despite the Government's efforts to revive and encourage Malay gold and silver work, laziness and a newly-acquired passion for European cheap wares have doomed this Malay craft to fade into oblivion. It is a thousand pities that this should happen.

A few Chinese have factories in Singapore, where imitation Malay ware is produced by Chinese artisans ; but their output is poor stuff in comparison with the genuine work of the Malay people. The latter is not easily discovered to-day, and always in the nature of a rare find. There is, however, an abundance of Malay silverware to be seen on sale, but nearly all of it is fabricated by the energetic Chinese craftsmen and retailed to the unsuspecting as the work of Malays. The Chinese carry out this deception in a most open and shameless manner ; and, for this reason, it is always advisable to consult an expert before concluding any bargain.

I spent a number of amusing and interesting hours in browsing through these quaint shops. In the ordinary Chinese general merchant's shop you can buy chinaware unprocurable outside of the Orient, for the simple reason it is so cheap that export trade could not be made profitable. For a few cents only I bought in Singapore the little blue and white spoons, made like an egg-shaped ladle, with which the coolies eat their rice ; and for a Straits dollar became the owner of an armful of queer but beautifully coloured bowls and plates. All were absolutely given away at such a low cost.

This chinaware is all very primitive in character, and manufactured in China solely for the use of the poorer classes in that ancient land. Certainly it was never intended for export to European markets. All of it has a charm peculiarly its own ; and there is an engaging simplicity in perfect blend of colouring which must appeal strongly even to the most aesthetic tastes. The rice-pattern blue and white bowls, cups and saucers, plates and ladles are among some of my most valued treasures brought back from the Malaysian journey. Yet they cost me only a few dollars in Singapore. The furthest West I have seen this rice-pattern chinaware is in Rangoon, which seems to be the limit of its market.

Rummaging in the Chinese pawnshops for rarities is still another delightful, and often profitable, pastime. I picked up some rare curios at bargain prices in some of these *Pajak Lelap* (drowsy pawnshops) where the pledged articles sleep out the course of their tickets or until such time as redeemed. It is when the former occurs, and the articles are exposed for sale, that a real bargain-day is at hand. The variety of choice is wide and catholic enough to suit even the most exacting bargain-hunter or curio collector.

If luck favours you, it is quite possible to buy cheaply the most gorgeously-hued *sarongs* of silk ; genuine jade bracelets ; silver, gold and silver-gilt Malay or Chinese ware ; all kinds of bizarre jewellery ; quaintly patterned *kris* (Malay daggers) ; brasswork from every land in the Orient ; opium-pipes, which have been pawned in a sudden access of virtue or to pay a pressing gambling debt ; rare chinaware lodged as security by a wealthy Chinaman, who has been squeezed hardly in some business venture ; and a motley collection of other articles, some valuable and others frankly mere rubbish. It is a fascinating game to turn over these heaps of pawned goods in search of some rare treasure. Who knows what may be unearthed ?

At first, it is true, you may be greeted by the pawnbroker with a chilling indifference ; but with patience, civility and persistence, you will succeed finally in breaking down this attitude and be shown all kinds of queer things. In due course a bargain is struck to the mutual satisfaction of vendor and customer. After my experience in combing the pawnshops in Singapore, I never missed an opportunity to visit them in the towns and villages visited in my wanderings. Often my time was wasted ; at others, my finds were disappointing ; and, on still other occasions, I became the owner of a valuable work of native art at small price. You can never be sure if luck will smile on you or not.

The Chinese box-wallah (pedlar) is an institution everywhere throughout the East. He is an entirely different stamp of man to the pawnbroker, possessing a keen sense of humour and a greater degree of the milk of human kindness. The box-wallah is generally

a bland and cheerful scoundrel, who speaks a number of Eastern languages fluently and passably good English. He is a first-class salesman always—courteous, patient, seldom accepts a rebuff seriously, and can blarney with the best.

The box-wallahs haunt the hotels and ships, or else plod round the residential section of a town with their bales and baskets of merchandise. At their heels staggers a semi-naked, expressionless Chinese coolie, weighted down with even heavier loads. These are types familiar to all who live in the East—from China to India. They are, in fact, the "Wandering Jews" of the Orient: part and parcel of the daily routine of existence. Without their constant presence in our midst, surely the world must be at an end!

Sunday morning is the box-wallah's favourite time for making a personal call at your residence, for then the *Tuan* does not go to his office and is holiday-making. Any other day in the week will serve for the hotels or to visit the *Mem-Tuans* at their bungalows. He is the most persistent of all traders. Nothing is too much effort, and no time too long, if there is the least likelihood of completing a sale ultimately. Credit he will give readily, if so desired. He knows to a cent your financial worth, and is certain that a *Tuan* will keep his word and pay what and when agreed. Rarely indeed is his trust in the European misplaced.

On a Sunday morning, soon after my arrival in Singapore, a fat and cheerful Chinese box-wallah visited my host's bungalow in Tanglin. We were taking it easy on the veranda after a late breakfast. We assured him, both individually and collectively, that we had no wish to buy anything; that we were just off to play a round of golf; and that, incidentally, we had no cash on us or in the bungalow. It was futile protesting. He ignored our obvious subterfuges, deliberately opened up his packages, spread out their contents alluringly, and held up first one and then another article for us to admire.

He never took his eyes off our faces, except for a fleeting instant while finding some other bait, but watched carefully for the first hint of our interest being aroused. His smile was infectious. I became conscious that my resolve to buy nothing from him was weakening. Good humour, civility and an unlimited store of patience are his chief aids to success in business. A prospective customer is as weak and defenceless as a babe in his expert hands. The Chinese box-wallah is in a class by himself among salesmen. They could sell you anything, given time.

John Chinaman held up before my eyes a particularly lovely piece of drawn-thread work on fine linen. Despite myself, I was tempted to take it into my own hands and examine the handsome tablecloth more closely. The workmanship was exquisite, I could see. He anticipated my wish, and thrust it on to my lap with an



ingratiating smile. Now he warmed up to his task, for he knew well that I was really interested.

"Velee good, *Tuan*—velee cheap," he tempted softly.

I hesitated and was lost. Assuming an air of indifference which I did not feel, I asked: "How much, John?"

He studied my face thoughtfully, and then smiled in a most friendly fashion.

"Five dollars, *Tuan*," he announced casually.

I shook my head decisively, and held out the tablecloth towards him.

"Two dollars—and not a cent more, John. I don't want it; besides, have no money."

Still that patient smile hovered on his lips, just as if he was humouring a refractory child.

"Four dollars, fifty cents," he suggested hopefully.

I shook my head again, and replaced the cloth on his pile of goods. Promptly, he thrust it back at me.

"Four dollars?" he grinned up at me. "Velee good work—velee cheap."

"Two dollars, and I'll buy," I came back.

"Four dollars," he insisted; and his smile was now a trifle hurt.

After a further fifteen minutes of this chaffering, I fell a victim to his persistence. We split the difference at three dollars. To this day I do not know if I made a good bargain or was woefully rooked. All I do know is that the tablecloth was not wanted, though still treasured and giving good service; but the game was worth it, even if I did pay too dearly for my purchase.

Another ten minutes of temptation followed, but my host and myself resisted all his wiles. John Chinaman began to pack up. It does not really matter to him how small or large may be your custom, just so long as a sale is made. He will come again to see you, as inevitably as Christmas each year. You have duly been elected to the circle of his regular patrons, willy-nilly; and there you will remain. It is perfectly useless making a bolt for it when he calls upon you. He will merely return to the attack on some other day, and will continue assaulting your citadel until you finally capitulate. If one of his huge bales contains naught to tempt, the silent coolie, who always squats patiently offstage for the cue to appear, will bring another pack in the same manner as a conjurer produces a cabbage or rabbit out of a silk hat. You might just as well surrender to the first onslaught, for you will succumb eventually and find yourself the owner of some of his admirable tablecloths, bed-spreads, silks and laces—the former generally a study of sprawling dragons in blue thread.

You must bargain with him. He enjoys the game every bit as much as you do, for John Chinaman is a born gambler. Time is

absolutely of no consequence to him. The box-wallah will generally meet you about halfway over the price, for they start bargaining high and leave a margin for selling at a reasonable profit. They are anxious to add you to their list of regular patrons and are prepared to make sacrifices to attain this end. I have always found it a real pleasure to trade with the Chinese box-wallah, for they are so cheery and ready to crack a joke. Nobody could be more obliging. You have only to hint at wanting some special article, which may not be in his stock, and he will procure and bring it to your bungalow as sure as fate. Then you feel compelled to buy.

One night my host took me to a Malayan theatre. I would not have missed that treat for worlds. The play of the evening was the Malay version of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." I gathered that it is a prime favourite among Malay audiences. It certainly does permit of more scope for the clownish element than the more serious dramas of Shakespeare, in which they also delight.

The performance was excruciatingly funny, and I laughed until my ribs ached and eyes watered. Though not understanding the dialogue, or the ripe jests and often unprintable quips, the pantomime of the players made it fairly simple to follow. The Malays are clever mimics, and the clown of this troupe portrayed a Chinese coolie to the very life. The quaint accent and gestures of the average coolie, together with their hazy knowledge of the Malay language, were so faithfully depicted that I was deceived into thinking the clown was actually a Chinaman. My host disabused me, however. I enjoyed that amusing night in Malay theatreland so much that I never willingly missed any other chance to witness Malay, Tamil or Chinese plays.

We were the only Europeans in that very cosmopolitan audience. The theatre was filled with Eurasians, Chinese, Malays, Indians and Javanese. Most of them either smoked, or munched monkey-nuts, industriously throughout the performance; but were a rapt and appreciative crowd. None laughed more heartily at the life-like caricature of the coolie than did the Chinese members of the large audience.

Those who have never had an opportunity to witness a Malay version of *Hamlet*, *East Lynne*, or *Cinderella*, have missed a rare and unforgettable experience. I spent one hilarious night in the front seats of a Malay theatre, and watched *Hamlet* staged and produced according to Malay ideas and tastes. The occasion will long linger pleasantly in my recollections.

The Chinese players often erect their stage high above a street in Chinatown, and the audience gathers round in much the same manner as children before a "Punch and Judy" show. No one seems to object to this blatant obstruction of the public thoroughfare, and the stage may remain in position for the best part of a week without

protest. Like most things Chinese, the productions staged are much as they were played hundreds of years ago. As a race, the Chinese have not much liking for changes in their age-old arts. They are strictly conservative in their outlook, which tends to provide a rare degree of charm to their theatrical performances. Their theatre will always repay a visit.

The Malayan opera, or *Wayang Malayu*, represents a most important part in the life of the people of the Peninsula. I can honestly commend the efforts of the local producers, for the *Wayang Malayu* is anything but a dull entertainment. The range of their repertoire is wide, but largely consists of the European pantomime type; but William Shakespeare, and their own plays based on ancient Malayan mythology, are constant favourites.

Singapore, as a city, has enough life and colour to satisfy even the most exacting. It also has heat, dust and many strangely pungent odours

The Singapore River challenges attention and positively declines to be dismissed summarily from notice. The river, as such, would be insignificant were it not for the hundreds of craft packed so tightly on its surface that there is scarcely any fairway left. The picturesque Chinese cargo-barges, sampans, and Malay *prahus* cluster as thick as ants upon a honey-pot; but there is no sweetness in that river! It insists on making its presence known through the agency of an original and abominable stench at low tide; and at high tide, though somewhat less offensive and overpowering, is yet not all violets.

The nauseating odours which arise from its muddy depths make you feel positively sick. There can be no equal to them anywhere else, unless it be in the native section of the town of Srinagar in Kashmir. I was assured that European residents in Singapore grow accustomed to this infliction in course of time. They need to do so, since they have to cross over it by the Cavenagh Bridge when going to and from their daily labours. If they can harden themselves to the persistence of that overpowering stench, they are indeed fortunate: more so than I was. The crossing of that bridge always filled me with acute repugnance, and was made possible only by vigorous smoking of pipe or cigarette.

Beach Road, a purely Chinese and Malay quarter of the city, is interesting if only for its rabbit-warren of hovels, Chinese artisans' shops and factories, movable open-air restaurants, licensed opium-shops, pawnbrokers, second-hand clothes and junk dealers, and the hordes of strange people who throng this evil-smelling artery of Singapore, both by day and night. Here are to be found some of the best examples of local brasswork.

In Rochore Road, which is one of the many streets connecting Beach and North Bridge roads, are located most of the bird and

animal shops. Rochore Road is famous throughout the East for its animal dealers, and the Mecca for all collectors of wild birds, reptiles and other creatures for zoological gardens in the West. In that thoroughfare you can buy almost anything from a Java sparrow to a full-grown Malayan tiger. Almost every shop displays many cages of doves, whose value is estimated according to the volume of their cooing notes and the number of rings on their legs. Others have cages filled with a variety of wild beasts for sale; and in one shop I saw a baby Sumatran rhinoceros. Birds, snakes and pythons, monkeys, and all kinds of jungle beasts are brought to Rochore Road for sale to the collectors from Europe. Rare birds and animals vie with monstrosities for pride of place.

If you are blessed with a nose impervious to horrible smells, then a walk up Rochore Road is vastly interesting.

One of the amenities of Singapore is the popular seaside resort at Sea View, where there is excellent sea-bathing and a comfortable hotel. Its local name is Tanjong Katong, but all Europeans know it as Sea View. Near this resort are the European and Chinese Swimming Clubs, where exceptional good bathing is obtainable. Not so long ago, however, you bathed at risk of life and limb from a vagrant shark. Such fatalities were not common, but did occasionally happen.

Only a few years ago, a party of four men and a girl were bathing in the European Swimming Club's pool, and swam out to the diving-platform off-shore. It was agreed that they should race back to the beach, the girl being given a hundred yards' start. She dived in and started to swim strongly. Just as the men were about to follow, they suddenly heard a shriek and saw the girl throw up her hands. Their horror-stricken eyes caught the flash of a shark's body in the water as it attacked the swimmer. All four dived in and raced as fast as possible to her aid; but, before they could reach her side, the shark had bitten off a leg just above the knee and disappeared from sight. With great difficulty, they managed to get the gravely-injured girl ashore. She was unconscious on being carried up the beach, where a doctor was waiting to attend to the terrible injury. Though everything possible was done to save her life, the shock and loss of blood were so great that she died a few minutes after rescue from the water.

After this tragedy, the Club fenced in the bathing area with a stout *pagar* for the protection of its members against such brutal intruders.

While I was in Singapore, a Dutch girl had a most amazing adventure, and escaped death only by a miracle. She was a passenger on a Dutch liner to Batavia, which left Singapore about ten o'clock at night. The girl went down to her cabin soon after the steamer left the docks, intending to go to bed at once. She had the cabin to herself. When almost undressed, the beauty of the lights of Singapore attracted her interest and she leaned out of the square port-hole to view them better. At that moment the ship suddenly changed

her course eastwards, and gave a violent, heavy roll in doing so. It caught the girl unawares.

Before being able to save herself, she slipped out through the port-hole into the sea head first and clothed only in silk underclothing. As soon as she came to the surface, the girl started to shout shrilly for help. Her cries were not heard on board. Soon the vessel had left her far behind and was fading from sight. Terrified, she started to swim and float in turns, hoping that some passing boat might see and rescue her. As it happened, the girl had only learned to swim about four months earlier in Holland.

Throughout the long hours of that dreadful night she managed to keep afloat, heroically refusing to give in. Her terror was increased by the knowledge that the waters were alive with sharks. Fortunately, though strange fish occasionally bumped into or brushed past her, no shark appeared or attacked.

Just as the dawn appeared, two Chinese fishermen saw her and rowed over to where she was swimming spasmodically. They hauled her on board, giving her water to drink and some boiled rice to eat. The girl could not talk any language they knew, or even understand what they said. By signs, she tried to persuade them to row back to Singapore; but, with callous indifference to her plight, they shook their heads and resumed their fishing.

All through that terrible day, the wretched girl crouched down at the bottom of the boat, subjected to the full rays of an Equatorial sun and with no covering to protect her save the filmy silk underclothes. The terrible sun burned, scorched and blistered her whole body, the effect being infinitely worse owing to the salt soaked into her skin from the sea-water. She suffered unspeakable torments. At times, she told me afterwards, consciousness left her; at others, she shivered to think what the Chinese fishermen might do to her. Throughout that day the sun blazed down upon her, burning and blistering her semi-naked body from head to foot.

At long last, just before sunset, the fishermen started to row back to the harbour. By this time the girl was unconscious and in delirium. When they reached the harbour, the fishermen reported the circumstances to the nearest police-station, and prompt action was taken. It chanced that I was motoring past the police-station, and my car was impressed for duty as a temporary ambulance. Wrapping her carefully in a rug, we made her as comfortable as possible on the back seat and drove rapidly to the European hospital. Doctors and nurses instantly did everything possible for the patient.

It seems an incredible tale, yet it is perfectly true. I heard the full details of that ghastly night and day adventure from the girl's own lips in hospital, as soon as she had recovered sufficiently to receive visitors. There could be no doubt as to the truth of her statements, for most of her body was swathed in bandages as the

result of the long exposure to salt-water and a tropical sun. How she managed, a weak and inexperienced swimmer, to keep afloat all through that dreadful night, she could not tell me. "I was not intended to drown," she smiled at me.

The age of miracles is not yet dead!

The road out to Sea View does much to spoil the delights of this popular resort. You must proceed via Beach Road, and through a barrage of smells of infinite variety and nauseating qualities. There is only one other route available—a drive by a circuitous road, which takes you half-way round the island. Notwithstanding, many Europeans and wealthy Chinese dwell at Tanjong Katong, and drive twice or more each day through a series of smells such as rival even the Singapore River at its worst. They are either long-suffering or foolish! If you could escape the pestiferous evil of that drive to and fro, then Tanjong Katong (or Sea View, call it what you like) might be written down as a delightful asset to Singapore. As it is, the approach entirely kills its many charms.

Starting from the centre of the city by way of Beach Road, it is well to adjust your gas-mask or handkerchief to the nose. The first odour to overpower you is the strong fishy smell from the Clyde Terrace Market. This, however, is *Eau de Cologne* compared to what will follow in rapid succession. Take heart, if you can, for it is only a five miles drive to Sea View.

Comes then a most objectionable aroma from the drains in the native quarters, which are used for all kinds of insanitary and wholly unauthorized purposes in addition to draining the livestock shops in Rochore Road. Next the powerful stench from a number of rubber and pineapple factories assails you forcibly; and follows a strong gas attack from the Municipal gasworks. The latter are situated in Lavender Street. Was this unconscious or deliberate witticism, or merely a touch of subtle irony? Whoever was responsible for the naming of this street had his little joke!

Then envelop you the smells emanating from still more rubber and pineapple factories, quickly rendered ineffective by the powerful and sickly effluvia from the fever-laden mangrove swamps close to Sea View. That drive offers no pleasing prospects either going or returning—nasally speaking.

Once you are through this dreadful barrage of smells, Sea View has much to offer in compensation for all endured in getting there. The sea-bathing is really first-class, the air refreshingly cool from ocean breezes, and you can lunch, tea or dine on green lawns while listening to the rhythmical boom of the breakers. The star-decked canopy of the night is your roof for dinner, and the nodding plumes of palm-trees your background. Sea View always struck me as an ideal place—once there; but, at the back of my mind, always lurked the terror of that drive back to Singapore.

You may forget Sea View ; but you can never forget the road leading to it.

There are other drives about the island which are much more entrancing. You travel over splendidly surfaced roads. Two of these stand out conspicuously in my recollections of Singapore—that round the East Coast road to Changi Beach, and the other to "The Gap." It was the latter drive which made the most eloquent appeal to my love of the beauties of Nature, though there is really little to choose between them. Both are superlatively lovely.

"The Gap" drive is, perhaps, everyone's favourite, if one may judge by the number of cars always seen halted there. But their occupants are not necessarily engaged in admiring the grand views. The majority seemed to be engrossed with each other ; and certainly this provides an ideal setting for Cupid to get in his most deadly work.

At an hour approaching sunset, my host and I often drove out to "The Gap" during my stay in the city ; and, on arrival there, revelled in the wonderful panoramic views obtainable from the highest point on the motor-road. The distant blue hills and the coast line of Sumatra stood out in bold relief ; as also did the many islands which plentifully stud the Straits of Malacca near Singapore. The fiery disc of the setting sun slipped lower and lower towards the rim of the western horizon, and the whole canopy of the sky was a mass of the tenderest shades of colouring imaginable.

Now the purple tints of the far-away hills were splashed with ever-changing hues in response to the magic touch of King Sol. What a master-artist he is at landscape painting ! The purple and grey silhouettes became flecked with golden lights, and then tinted with soft rose shades ; and the emerald sea was swiftly streaked with liquid streams of gold, silver and carmine.

The haze of approaching night, suffused with blushing rose, served only to enhance the loveliness of the diminutive palm-tree tops feathering above the placid surface of the water. Far out in the Straits, a steamer was making her way homewards and leaving a sooty trail in her wake. The elongated smudge on that gorgeous canvas failed utterly to detract from its perfection ; rather did it add to the delicate artistry of the picture. The rose-reds, pale pinks, paler blues and the golds changed softly, almost imperceptibly, into orange, pearl and jade-green. Night was falling fast. In a few more minutes it would be lighting-up time. I felt deep dismay at the thought.

Now, as I sat entranced and silent, gazing out over the Straits of Malacca into the heavenly picture of deliciously soft colour-effects, the sun suddenly disappeared behind the barrier of gaunt hills. The brief period of twilight was gone. The lights below me, and along the coast, now twinkled in the growing blackness of the night.

Heaving a deep sigh of regret, my host gave a soft-uttered command to the Malay driver to proceed down hill homewards. Speech seemed a desecration.

Such a view at sunset should be good enough for even the most blasé of mortals. The tropical glories of it must long be treasured in the memory and provide a subject for delicious dreams. It furnished me with an incentive and inspiration for my future wanderings through the land of the Malays.

It is with the memory of "The Gap" at sunset that I fain would leave Singapore. That, anyway, is quite unforgettable.



## CHAPTER V

### JOHORE BAHRU

**A**S Singapore is an island, the choice of routes to the mainland is limited. Two alternatives are offered. You can either motor over a first-class road and cross the Causeway into the State of Johore, or else use the Federated Malay States Railway. Both traverse practically the same route, but the motor-road is infinitely preferable. I elected to travel by car.

I left the city by the tree-lined Bukit Timah road. It was crowded with cars and the ubiquitous Ford motor-buses; while many slow-paced bullock-carts and a multitude of pedestrians provided a severe test for my driving skill. All motor-traffic in Malaysia is obsessed with a mania for high speed, in which they are not peculiar. Accidents are of frequent occurrence, which is not surprising. That I reached my destination without being involved in a smash was due more to luck than my ultra-careful driving.

The road is cut straight through the heart of the island, running parallel almost the entire way with the railway; first on one side of it, and then on the other. For fourteen miles, until you reach Woodlands near the Straits of Johore, you see endless vistas of rubber plantations; many of them are of considerable age and productiveness, but rubber has fallen upon evil days. Things in the industry are not what they once were. Rubber factories, at intervals, strive to overpower the sweet fragrance of the countryside. Forest and jungle in patches, tree-clad hills behind them, swiftly flowing brooks under solid bridges, coco-nut plantations and other agricultural lands serve to break up the scenery. It is seldom other than beautiful, and certainly never monotonous.

The road twists sharply to right or left with a most disconcerting frequency for the driver who does not know the way. Dangerous corners are not rare. It was a thrilling drive, rendered the more so by the inexperience and foolhardy actions of Malay or Chinese drivers on the road. I saw a number of derelict vehicles reposing in the ditches: mute evidence of the native driver's lack of caution and ignorance of the most elementary traffic rules.

Just at first, when driving through Malaya, I found it required a strong effort to compose my nerves in an outward semblance of indifference to the dangers avoided every few minutes; but, in course of time, I became case-hardened. Adventure drives with you

between Singapore and the Johore Causeway ; and on every road throughout Malaysia. At times, it is far from being a comfortable companion.

An endless procession of cars, filled to overflowing with Malay, Chinese or Tamil passengers, streamed past me at forty to fifty miles an hour. Countless Ford buses hugged the crown of the road and added considerably to the excitements of that drive. All were set on reaching their goal with the least possible delay and by the most direct route. If you chanced to be in their way—well, your luck was out ! They stopped for nothing, except only when wrecked.

I confess to breathing a sigh of relief when finally Woodlands was reached without accident. I sped down the winding descent to the railway, and found the road barred at the entrance to the Johore Causeway. My car was inspected cursorily by a Malay police constable, but permitted to proceed after a minute or two. I made my way across the Causeway ; and, at the far end, drove into the State of Johore. Now I was on the Malay Peninsula, and had left the Straits Settlements behind.

Once again my car was halted by a Malay official of the Johore State customs. He glanced casually inside it, grinned and waved me onwards. If I had chanced to have a dog or a spare tin of petrol in the car, duties would have been levied ; or, if returning to Singapore the same day, I should have had to deposit them with this official for the time being. The Customs barrier is rather a farce, but none the less welcome for the absence of annoying restrictions.

The view across the water to Singapore Island was restful. The green grassy lawns and foliage of the trees, the gay splashes of colour contributed by tropical flowers, the white or dingy-brown sails of Malay or Chinese craft spread wide to catch the wind, and the limpid blue depths of the channel formed a wonderfully effective picture. I sat for a long time, both before and after dinner, gazing out from the hotel veranda upon a scene which delighted the eyes to behold.

After breakfast next morning, I started forth to explore Johore Bahru. Selecting a ricksha from among the half-dozen that sought my patronage, I endeavoured to explain to the Chinese coolie where I desired to be taken.

" *Jalan trus* (drive straight ahead) ! " I commanded.

The ricksha-coolie grinned and started off at a steady trot, while I congratulated myself on having made him understand my needs. Anyway, my newly learned Malay words had caused him to leave the hotel and head for some destination unknown. The rest was on the lap of the gods. We trotted along the water-front for some distance, but I wanted to ascend the hill overlooking the Straits of Johore. I halted my human transport-machine, and tried to make my desires known to him. I tried in simple English, French, Urdu,

Arabic, Kiswahili and even "kitchen" Kaffir. All without avail. Eventually, I grunted disconsolately and waved a hand towards the hill-road. He understood at once.

It was a never-failing source of wonder to me how much a grunt, or series of grunts, accompanied by a wave of the hand could convey to these simple souls, who earn a modest but hard livelihood by man-hauling other human beings about the towns in Malaya. This ricksha business, however, is a degrading and inhuman mode of locomotion. Perched high on two wire-spoked wheels, you watch the wretched coolie pant and sweat through the tropical sunshine. Always they move along at a steady trot. The black patch of sweat on the blue blouse—often they wear only dirty white or blue shorts, and are naked above the waist—spreads and spreads until he is wet through. I always experienced a sense of shame when riding behind one of my fellow-men under such circumstances. Man was surely never intended to work between the shafts of a vehicle.

I have been assured that the lives of those engaged in this work can be written down as worth five years at best. Nearly always their lungs become affected; and deaths from pneumonia or tuberculosis are quite common among the ricksha-pullers. From an insurance point of view, the Chinese ricksha-coolie is a really bad proposition. If it was in my power, I would abolish all rickshas. Yet it must be admitted they are a most useful means for getting about towns in the Orient. In my next reincarnation, certainly I have no desire to be reborn as a ricksha-coolie. If given any choice in the matter, I would prefer to be a pampered lap-dog in the household of a wealthy widow.

We proceeded on our explorations at a smart pace. It was a pleasant enough progress along well-kept and beautiful roads. But the distress of the ricksha-coolie finally forced me to abandon my jaunt. I had not the heart to continue so misusing a fellow human being. A grunt and a wave of my hand in the general direction of the hotel brought me back there; and I gave the sweating, heaving coolie treble what he asked as the fare. It was spoiling the market for others, no doubt; but did help to salve my conscience.

Next I hired a Malay taxi-driver to show me round the town. He knew no English, save (as I discovered at the end of the drive) the simple and expressive words: "T'ank you!" This time I had taken the precaution to arm myself with a small pocket phrase-book of the Malay language. Even this proved to be a mixed blessing. The fault was more mine than that of the phrase-book, but this did not assist me to overcome difficulties and was poor consolation.

Laboriously I picked out, and read aloud, a long sentence from this friendly little book. The Malay words were printed conveniently

as they should be pronounced. In the local tongue my simple directions seemed incapable of being conveyed except by a long sentence. Somehow it was safely delivered. My Malay driver, ever courteous and polite, did not display any signs of amusement at my bad pronunciation and slow delivery. That was kind and generous of him. In effect, I gave him laboured instructions to "drive round Johore Bahru and show me places of interest." To reduce that to a simple command in Malay, it amounted to this: "*Pergi jalan pusing keliling, unjok sama sahya macham macham tempat yang bagus bagus!*" As I heard these words stumbling from my lips, they sounded in my ears exactly like a long string of strange oaths. Yet they proved effective. With a broad grin on his face and a nod of his head, the Malay driver headed his car towards the hill overlooking the waterfront.

Once more I embarked upon my pilgrimage round the capital of the State of Johore.

Now the transfer of my wishes to the driver, through the medium of the booklet, was a matter of comparative ease; but the reverse process, and by a more direct method, certainly was not so. When we arrived opposite a very handsome building with four picturesque towers, I made due enquiries as to its exact nature. It had every appearance of being the *Astana* (palace) of the Sultan; but I wanted to be sure.

It was then that the fun really started in earnest. I soon discovered the correct sentence in the book, but this did not help materially. I was playing a very one-sided game. I could deal out a sentence; the driver could play his answer; but I could not take his trick. Contract or Auction Bridge was simplicity itself to this game of cross-sentences. The third player, myself, was the dummest of all dummies. Though just able to make the driver understand what I wanted to know, yet it was impossible to fathom the nature of his reply. Both smiling in keen enjoyment of this ludicrous impasse, we abandoned the game as hopeless. I left that building in the firm belief that it *was* the palace of the Sultan of Johore.

Later, I bought some picture postcards—the best guide of all, I find—and was enabled to identify this and other places in Johore quite correctly. Instead of the palace, I had viewed the Abu Bakar mosque. This is regarded as one of the most imposing and beautiful buildings devoted to the worship of the Moslem faith in the Far East. The main hall is illuminated by electricity from lovely and immense chandeliers; and even overhead electric-fans are provided for the faithful of Allah. Moslems worship here in unaccustomed luxury.

With a wave of the hand, we proceeded onwards round the many beauty spots of Johore Bahru. The game of cross-sentences was

carried on, with varying success, during several subsequent hours. Moreover, it was not entirely without profit for I managed to see a great deal of the town and its suburbs. The picture-postcards later threw light on my wanderings and provided the necessary index.

Another building which I had mistaken for a second palace of the Sultan, according to the postcards housed the principal government offices. The *Makam*, or Mausoleum, is a splendid edifice in the centre of well-kept grounds. The view from the summit of the hill on which it stands is magnificent and inspiring at sunset.

On the following day, I explored still further afield. I found a quaint village of Malay fisherfolk along the coast, which was most attractive and interesting. The houses were built over the water on wooden stilts or piles thrust deep down into the mud. On these were erected the platforms on which stood the small houses. All were thatched with palm-leaves. Sometimes the walls were made of rough boards, but more often comprised sticks or bamboo poles lashed together. A narrow bridge of wooden slats, erected also on poles over the water, led up to the front door of the house. At high tide, however, the houses can only be reached by means of boats. The stilts, on which the houses stand, also serve as moorings for their fishing-fleet. On the mud, beneath the houses, rests the accumulated debris thrown out by the dwellers—crockery, kitchen waste, old tins, filth and decaying fish—waiting for the next full tide to perform the offices of sanitation.

Whole villages of these amphibious houses stretch along the shores of the Straits of Johore; and also around the town itself. I found them nearly everywhere on the sea-shores of the Malay Peninsula.

It was low tide when I arrived at this queer village, and I spent some time watching the Chinese fishermen at work. It was all most interesting. A heavy rowing-boat, deeply laden with nets and blue-clad, straw-hatted men, approached the beach and anchored in shallow water. The crew nimbly jumped overboard and began to haul out enormous quantities of netting. This had floats fixed at regular intervals. Several of the men began to pull one end of the net towards the sandy shore, while the others climbed back into the boat.

Now the row-boat proceeded out, in a semi-circular direction, into the small bay, its greatest distance from the shore being about a quarter of a mile. Continually the net was paid out into the water by a couple of men standing up in the boat. When back again in shallow water, two men leaped overboard and arranged the net in position. As the boat approached still closer to the shore, all but one man jumped into the sea. The net was now quite submerged in the water; and the single rower, after anchoring the boat close to the beach, joined his wading comrades.

While this manœuvre was being carried out, the first party of fishermen had been busily engaged in hauling the net towards the beach. It appeared to be rather a strenuous labour, but they waded into the sea up to their arm-pits and pulled on the net with straining backs. Slowly the semi-circle of netting narrowed its frontage and came nearer inshore. Finally, all hands drew the net into a small circle, shaking it upwards and downwards exactly as if tossing pancakes. Then, all working in unison, they collected the net and shook the wriggling fish into the boat. On this particular occasion, the results seemed to be poor for so much effort and preparation.

The Chinese fishermen next set to work to collect and disentangle their net, piled it in regular heaps in the bow of the boat, and then all re-embarked. Up came the anchor. They gave way with a will on the oars, and now set a course for another part of the bay. I watched them cast and haul in their net no less than six times in three hours. They were still hard at work, though the tide was rising steadily, when I drove onwards to watch some types of Malay sea-fishing.

At the second village the stake-net method was being employed. This is an entirely different proposition to that already described. Both are interesting. The former method is an active one; while the latter is passive. I saw the long V-shaped dark lines lifting and falling with the swell of the sea, looking exactly like a flock of birds flying in duck formation. The shimmer of the sun's rays upon the surface of the water makes them rise in the air upon your vision when viewed from a distance.

These V-shaped lines are solidly set in the sea-floor, however, and are labour-saving devices which appeal strongly to the temperament of the Malays. The trap is made from a large number of long poles cut in the mangrove belt, and these are disposed in a broad V-shape in the sea at a spot which is known to be much frequented by fish. The long poles are fixed in the floor of the sea in such a manner that each waggles to and fro slightly to the action of the water. At the point of the V is set a long bag-net with a wide mouth. The fisherman then ties his boat to one of the stakes and goes off to sleep. He can afford to await future developments, for he knows the fish will surely come into his net—given time.

Arising refreshed from his slumber when the tide is low, he finds the poles, on which the net is suspended, are strained to the breaking point with the weight of fish caught. He hauls in his net and inspects his catch. There are so many fish that he can afford to be selective. What he does not wish to retain is promptly returned to the sea, while the larger species and the big crabs are placed tenderly at the bottom of his boat. Now his day's work is done, and he rows homewards. It is all very simple but wonder-

fully effective, for the catches are always heavy. Everywhere I went along the coasts of the Malay Peninsula, and even in some of the larger rivers, there were hundreds of these V-shaped stake-nets. This is quite the most popular method of fishing employed by the Malays.

The roads in and around Johore Bahru were as good as any found on Singapore Island ; which is indeed high praise. Many were made of laterite, its dull red colour blending restfully with the surrounding green of the foliage. The majority, however, had oiled surfaces and were as smooth as a billiard-table to ride over. Johore State is a progressive little kingdom.

Almost everywhere I saw the orderly ranks of the Para rubber trees : mile after mile of estates in all stages of productiveness. The symmetry of the trees, each with its tapping cup in position, reminded me of thousands of patients in a hospital ward and all being fed on soup by means of feeding-cups. At other times, these serried ranks of tall and graceful trees resembled an army of infantry soldiers in extended formation. Every tree is spaced with mathematical exactitude ; and every European controlled estate is a pattern of neatness and cleanliness. Now that the rubber industry is at low ebb, and restricted output is found urgently necessary, many of these large estates have been forced either to close down or mark time on tapping. It is to be hoped that another rubber boom is not far distant, for Para rubber has for years been one of the chief exports of the Malay Peninsula.

The greenness of everything was a remarkable feature. A recent heavy downpour of tropical rain emphasized this, and had flooded streams and ditches with muddy water ; while every tree was festooned with glittering raindrops, giving an impression of diamonds. The cathedral-like silence of the vast acreage under rubber was most striking.

Perhaps my deepest impression of Johore Bahru was this vivid green of everything. In no other tropical or sub-tropical country in which I have travelled had there been such sweeping breadths of green lawns. Set in circling clumps of feathery bamboos, the beautiful spread of the Traveller's palms, banana and graceful rubber trees, and the nodding plumes of the tall coco-nut palms, these lawns were always most effective and pleasing. I was equally impressed by the serene tranquillity everywhere, the real cleanliness, the courtesy and contentment so patent on every hand. In the Orient, you expect to have your nasal organs assailed by pestilential odours, and seldom are disappointed ; but in Johore Bahru all is sweet-scented.

Outside the town there is a well-planned racecourse, with an excellent polo-ground in its centre. The Sultan of Johore is a keen sportsman with a passion for horse-flesh. He is also an ardent

hunter after big game, and has to his credit a record of many splendid tigers. No striped jungle-cats, however, are allowed to be shot in the State without his express permission ; and this is rarely given. He prefers to tackle them all himself.

The Sultans of Johore, in the past, have contributed largely to the history of Singapore. Formerly they owned the island. It is interesting to note, however, this island was held of such little account by the reigning Sultan in 1703 that he offered it as a free gift to Captain Hamilton, the commander of a British merchant-vessel. Incredible as it may seem, this generous present was declined, though Captain Hamilton expressed the belief that it was a "proper place in which to settle a colony, lying as it does in the centre of the trade and accommodated with good rivers and a safe harbour, so conveniently situated that all winds serve shipping both to go out and come into these rivers." Captain Hamilton was a man of no real Imperial vision obviously, otherwise he would have had more sense than to refuse such a very remarkable gift.

It was also a Sultan of Johore who signed a treaty with Sir Stamford Raffles, and ceded the island of Singapore to Great Britain. That was an epoch-making event in the history of the British Empire.

Johore Bahru, as a township, may be considered by many to be no more than a "Sleepy Hollow" ; but it is certainly not lacking in enterprise or backward in development. It is impossible to visit this well-governed State in Malaya without being deeply impressed with its spirit of keeping abreast of the times. Backed by his British advisers, the Sultan had made it a model Eastern kingdom.



## CHAPTER VI

### MALACCA—THE "MOTHER OF MALAYA"

**F**RRIENDS advised me to travel from Johore Bahru to Malacca on the railway, shipping the car there to meet me. They said the motor-road was long and wearisome. I was glad afterwards that this advice was disregarded, for my journey was without accident and quite comfortable. The metalled highway offered a wider view of the south-western section of the Peninsula, also of rural life among the Malays. Indeed, it did much to prepare me for what was to follow.

I took to the open road, therefore, and motored to Batu Pahat on the Simpang Kanan River, thence along the coast to the little port of Muar at the estuary of the river of that name, crossed the frontiers of Johore and the Malacca Settlement, and thus reached my destination without untoward incident. There was much to see that proved novel; and always my journey was interesting. Time did not press, and I wanted to see all that was possible of the country. You cannot judge any land by its towns.

Having read deeply about the past stirring history of Malacca, I went there quite prepared to like the place and its environments. I was not disappointed. That is equally true of everywhere I travelled in Malaysia.

The old-world town and ancient port of Malacca grips the imagination almost from the first moment you set eyes upon it. The history of Malacca is that of Malaysia. Its renown was great long before Penang or Singapore were more than insignificant fishing-villages. That is why I like to think of it as the "Mother of Malaya," for almost everything in Malaysia can trace its beginning to this Settlement.

You must know something of its glorious past record if you wish to really understand the great part it played in the dead centuries and all it represents to-day. It is quite impossible to divorce history from Malacca. There the nations of the East and West strove for possession of the key to the gateway of China. Malacca's laterite soil is symbolical of the red blood which has been shed there. Malays, Chinese, Siamese, Portuguese, Dutch, then the British have fought to secure control of the Straits of Malacca and a port of entry into a land which, under a wise and able administration during the past hundred years, has prospered even

beyond the most optimistic dreams of those who first had faith in its future.

Malacca passed into British hands in 1824. As far back as 1409, however, there are reliable references to the town and port in Chinese historical records. The first inhabitants are believed to have been a seafaring tribe—the Cellates; and certainly a primitive settlement was there before the destructive victories of the Menjapahit Empire in Java made Malacca a rallying point for Malay refugees. The complete destruction of both Singapore and Palembang (Sumatra) by the Menjapahit Empire is supposed to have occurred in 1377; and it is generally believed only after that date did the influx of Malays lead to Malacca becoming a place of some importance.

If the chronicles of the Chinese historians are reliable, Malacca's fame dates back well over five hundred years. In 1409, a Chinese historian wrote that the town was a collection of native huts, surrounded by a high stockade and possessing four gates. He described in detail the bridge over the river, which played such an important part in 1511 during D'Albuquerque's conquest of the town. The official connection between the Kingdom of Malacca and the Chinese Empire was broken off after the Portuguese conquest of the former. However, the Chinese influence has remained an active force to the present day.

The domestic history of this town during the fifteenth century tends to show that it more than held its own against the aggressions of the Kingdom of Siam, which proved an arbitrary and dangerous neighbour. Malacca expanded from a small settlement at the mouth of the river into a populous trading-centre frequented by merchants from China, India, Arabia, Java and Persia. Then a succession of palace intrigues and a state of degenerate tyranny combined to leave this little Malay kingdom an easy prey to the first determined attack. The Portuguese were the first to take advantage of this golden opportunity.

Vasco da Gama's discovery of a new sea-route to India and the Far East round the Cape of Good Hope brought the fleets of Portugal to the Orient. His countrymen were actuated by an entirely different spirit to that of the Dutch and English merchant-adventurers, who followed quickly on their heels. The former came primarily as crusaders: the latter as traders. The advent of the Portuguese in the East was another phase in their gigantic struggle against the forces of Islam. They planned deliberately to cut off the trade from the East through the Red Sea, which maintained the strength of the Mediterranean Khalifat, and divert it round the Cape of Good Hope to Lisbon. It was an ambitious scheme, but destined to prove effective.

With this main object in view, in the middle of 1509 Diego Lopez

de Sequeira arrived off Malacca with a fleet of five ships and anchored in the roadstead. He saw that the location and natural advantages of Malacca were ideal for their first settlement ; but his adventure ended disastrously. The Malay king was deeply offended by de Sequeira's method of handing over gifts ; and his people were even more angered by the unwitting affront to their ruler. They attacked the Portuguese without any warning, overpowered and put them to ignominious flight, and de Sequeira sailed away. He left a number of his followers dead on the shore, and others as prisoners in the hands of the Malays.

Two years later Don Alfonso D'Albuquerque arrived from Goa with a fleet of eighteen ships and anchored off Malacca. He was determined to avenge the massacre of the Portuguese pioneers. After protracted negotiations with the Malay king, D'Albuquerque lost patience and attacked with all his forces. A desperate fight ensued, but the Portuguese were forced to retire to their ships at dusk. A second attempt was successful. D'Albuquerque consolidated his victory by constructing a Keep and fortified enclosure on the hill overlooking the roadstead. Thereafter, for one hundred and thirty years, Malacca was governed by the Portuguese.

The first Dutch navigators arrived about 1606, and visited Johore. They concluded a satisfactory trading agreement with the Sultan of that State, and were welcomed by the other native rulers who were not overawed by the Portuguese. In the same year a Dutch fleet anchored off Malacca and ineffectually bombarded the fort and town. The Sultan of Johore threw in his lot with the Dutch and sent a fleet of armed *prahus* to aid them ; but the unexpected arrival of a powerful Portuguese fleet compelled the invaders to abandon their project after an inconclusive naval engagement. They withdrew to Johore and made no further attempt to capture Malacca for thirty-four years.

In 1640 the combined Dutch and Johore forces attacked the town from land and seawards, successfully blockading the Portuguese garrison. Manuel de Souza Canthino, the Governor of Malacca, put up a stout resistance for close on a year, but was finally compelled to surrender on a guarantee of safe conduct for the survivors. Some idea of the courageous defence of the place can be realized from the fact that the population numbered 20,000 souls, but only 3000 survived on capitulation. Canthino died two days after surrendering, and was buried in the Church of San Domingo. While most of the survivors were sent to Batavia, some of the married Portuguese and Goanese, together with their families, were permitted to remain in Malacca.

These latter people were the forbears of the present Portuguese elements found in Malacca to-day. The names of some of the principal Portuguese captains are still borne by their descendants.

For over four centuries these people have studiously preserved their religion: even speak Portuguese when *en famille*. Their habits and characteristics are still strikingly and conservatively those of the country of their ancestors' origin. Many of them may be found holding positions of trust in almost every department of the British government service: posts which, in many instances, have been filled by father and son for centuries past. They regard themselves as the real aristocrats of Malacca.

In 1795, after but a slight show of resistance, Malacca surrendered to a small British squadron under Captain Newcome. The settlement was formally occupied in the name of William, Prince of Orange; but the local Dutch officials continued in office under the supervision of the British Resident. The town and port had so long ceased to be of any real commercial importance that the walls of the old fort were actually destroyed in 1807. Arrangements were even made to remove all the population to Penang; but Sir Stamford Raffles intervened and saved the place for Great Britain. He had not then founded Singapore and was still a junior official in Penang. Happening to be on sick leave in Malacca, his far-sighted vision caused him to write a well-reasoned and vigorously worded protest against the evacuation of the place. His report turned the scale in favour of Malacca's retention by Great Britain.

Towards the end of 1810, Raffles was appointed to Malacca as Agent for the Governor-General of the Malay States. His chief purpose was to obtain information and prepare the way for the British conquest of Java. Malacca became the advance base of the expedition which finally conquered Java towards the end of 1811.

Though nominally restored to Holland, the Dutch occupation of Malacca virtually was not resumed until the end of 1818—just on twenty-three years after its capture by Great Britain. The conduct of the British Government in restoring Java and Malacca to the Dutch may be judged either as an act of supreme folly, quixotic generosity or even elementary justice. It depends on how one interprets historical facts and deduces therefrom Great Britain's honourable obligations.

The Dutch had scarcely returned to Malacca when the founding of Singapore by Raffles left them hemmed in between the two British strongholds at Penang and Singapore. Malacca was also isolated from all the main centres of the Dutch East Indies. The exchange of the small British settlements at Benkoelen, Natal and Tapanoeli, in Sumatra, for Malacca on the Malay Peninsula was the obvious solution. In March, 1824, the Treaty of London was signed, whereby Malacca and its dependencies were ceded to Great Britain in exchange for the settlements in Sumatra. The Dutch engaged to keep clear of the Peninsula and make no treaty with Prince, Chief or State thereon.

So much for the ancient history of Malacca. If I have recounted it briefly, there seems ample justification. Malacca has played an important role in building up British Malaya, and its history is, in effect, that of Great Britain's empire-building in those regions.

In Malacca I came to grips once again with the relics of those hardy Portuguese adventurers from Lisbon or Goa, whose tracks I had trodden on the eastern coast of Africa and in the Persian Gulf. Here their ancient buildings still defied the ages and elements, even as at Mombasa, Mozambique and elsewhere.

Shortly after dinner on the night of my arrival in Malacca, I climbed to the summit of St. Paul's Hill. In the soft radiance of a tropical moon, I walked quietly within the roofless shell of the age-old Church of Nossa Senhora d'Annunciada. Time has dealt more gently than man with this ancient ruin. Though the sun and tempests of the centuries have been at work, yet you can still see the outline of the main building and the groined arches of windows or doorways. Many of the windows have been bricked up and new doors opened out to suit the convenience of the Dutch successors of the Portuguese.

I seated myself upon an ancient tombstone—a "memento of mortality unto living passengers" such as myself—and dreamed of the past. The moonlight turned all within that empty hulk of a fane to silver-grey. From the base of the hill drifted upward to my ears echoes of the life in the town, breaking softly upon the grim silence and serene peace of the place. There had settled over this old, maimed and much misused church a silence that I was loath to break. Overhead the golden moon and winking stars showed brilliantly through the roofless shell, lighting up the scattered graves and tombstones. They are chiefly of the Portuguese conquerors, for those of the Dutch period have been removed to Christ Church for better preservation.

Here once rested the body of St. Francis Xavier, Apostle of the Far East, before its final translation to Goa in 1553. His first visit to Malacca in 1547 was not a great success. On his return there he publicly cursed Malacca and its godless inhabitants. Standing at the church door, he removed his sandals and solemnly declared the town accursed. Then, with passionate earnestness, he excommunicated Don Alvaro D'Ataide, the Portuguese Captain-General, for refusing him permission to proceed on his apostolic mission to China.

St. Francis died on the *Sante Croce* in 1552, and his body was placed in a roughly hewn coffin and buried on the island of Sancian. Nearly three months later the coffin was opened and, though lime had been packed around the body, there was no sign of decomposition. The remains of the saint were taken to Malacca and buried in a winding sheet in this Church on the summit of St. Paul's Hill.

A brass plate on the south wall of the chancel commemorates this. In December of the following year, the body was again exhumed and found to be excellently preserved. Conveyed to Goa, it is still frequently exposed for the veneration of devout Roman Catholics and is said to be in a state of perfect preservation even after the lapse of nearly four hundred years.

A soft turf covers the floor of the ruined church, except where flat tombstones are found. It deadens the sound of footsteps. All was now in deep silence, the noises of the town hushed, and the voices of the choirs of past ages replaced by the tuneful twitter of sparrows or the whistling flight of the spine-tailed swift. I lost myself in fanciful reverie, my eyes closed and senses dulled.

How long I sat on that old tombstone, peacefully dreaming, I am unable to say. Suddenly the silence was broken. A deep, guttural voice echoed through that grass-carpeted ruin, and my ears caught the sound of the rattle of steel upon stone. Instantly I awakened, every sense alert and distinctly startled. My eyes searched the grim shadows, expecting momentarily to see the ghosts of the past. What was it that I had heard? The voice and language were strange: beyond my understanding. Yet there was nothing to be seen; and now there was not even a sound above the sighing of the night-wind in the roofless fane.

Was it only a dream? I asked myself. It must have been. Obviously I had been dozing, for my pipe had fallen from my mouth on to the stone slab of a tomb at my feet. Yet I still like to think that the spirits of Malacca's former conquerors had returned to this battered shell of a church to talk over their plans and aspirations. I regretted having moved. Imagination or not, perhaps I might have listened to stirring tales of heroic deeds performed in old Malacca: even seen the ghosts of those great Portuguese soldiers who made Malaysia so that Great Britain could reap the rich reward. If only I had been content to remain still and dream on—that might have come to pass. I would have given much to have been in their company.

The spell was broken. Though I waited patiently for close upon an hour, yet nothing else happened. At last, I rose to my feet with reluctance and made my way slowly down the hillside to my hotel. As I walked, I pondered upon ancient times and the glorious deed performed by those old-world adventurers.

Definitely you cannot divorce Malacca from history! The town is rich in fading memories, each marking some distinct phase in the grim struggles of those small but heroic bands of Portuguese, Dutch and British merchant-sailors who had a finger in the pie. On the crumbling ruins of the ancient town there has arisen a new Malacca, content with the present and inspired by an abiding faith in the future.

Yet for half a century or more after the British finally assumed control over its destinies, according to many observant travellers, the town remained a paradise unafflicted by the strenuous fight for existence. In 1845, Logan recorded that "the most striking characteristic of the inhabitants is that they have nothing to do apparently. I really saw no one at work all the time I was in Malacca. . . ." Again, some thirty years later, Thompson found no marked change in this patent lack of industry and enterprise. He described the place as a quaint, dreamy Dutch-looking old town. It was a spot, he wrote, "where leisure seems to sit at every man's door; drowsy as the placid sea, and idle as the huge palms whose broad leaves nod above the weather-beaten, snug-looking houses." Some ten years later, Miss Bird repeats this charge in her book, *The Golden Chersonese*. She states that "the feature of Malacca is that it is featureless! It is a land where it is always afternoon—hot, still and dreamy. Existence stagnates. Trade pursues its operations invisibly. Commerce hovers afar off in the shallow sea."

Would they write in the same strain to-day? I doubt it. The position has changed materially, and for the better, since rubber was introduced into Malaya and became one of the three major industries. The greater part of the Settlement of Malacca is covered with huge rubber estates, which still hope for a revival of the booms that swept the Peninsula from time to time in the past. They are shouldering the present economical depression courageously, their faith in the future undimmed. The sun may shine again upon them. Fortunately, the new era of prosperity came to a population blessed with infinite traditions and strongly rooted in the past ages. Even the various rubber booms were absorbed without destroying the attitude of decent and orderly calm in the pursuit of wealth. This provides one of the abiding charms of Malacca. The rubber industry's decline is being met without undue moaning at an evil fate. Malaccans refuse to be shaken from their calm and optimistic outlook upon life, either by booms or depressions in commerce.

Modern Malacca is still quite a small town, with extremely narrow streets. Apart from historical associations and the wealth of ancient relics, it is an enchanting little spot—serene, beautiful, quaintly sedate and picturesque. It possesses an individuality which is peculiarly personal—unlike that of any other place in Malaya. Side by side with its age-blackened ruins and buildings, there stand more modern structures in true keeping with the real spirit of their surroundings. Others, which have been scrapped for various reasons, have been reconstructed in their ancient style of architecture. It is just this artistic touch which makes all the difference.

The railway station is a short quarter of a mile from the centre of the town. All traffic must pass over the modern, picturesque bridge spanning the river, which has replaced that erected by the Malays in earliest times. That first bridge wrote its name in blood upon the historical records of the Settlement.

There is a strangely cosmopolitan community in Malacca. On the streets can be seen all the types and races in the Peninsula, though the true Malays are not so much in evidence within the township's limits. The Chinese, however, are as ubiquitous as everywhere else in British Malaya; and give the impression of dominating—numerically, financially and commercially—all other races. After my experience in Singapore, I was not in the least surprised.

Many of the principal Chinese families of Malacca took part in opening up and developing both Singapore and Penang, but maintained their family-houses in Malacca. They seem to have recognized that, even though Singapore and Penang might offer all the advantages of a tropical Glasgow or Liverpool, this little old-world town was a much more pleasant place in which to make their permanent homes. So their wives and families dwelt there while the head of house was gaining sufficient wealth to retire and join them. In this ideal, restful spot they spend the evening of their years in a reasonable state of luxury. They are the "idle rich" of Malacca. This might account for the strictures passed upon the community by earlier travellers, for the characteristics of the place are definitely more Chinese than Malayan.

Jonker and Heeren streets are the two most distinctive thoroughfares, both being entirely devoted to Chinese residents. The houses in these streets are two hundred or more years old, though their appearance does not indicate this.

Heeren Street—the local Mayfair—harbours all the best and most richly adorned houses of the wealthiest Chinese families. It is long, narrow, and supposed to be straight; but whoever laid it out suffered from a warped vision. On both sides the street is flanked by small-fronted houses that might well have been transplanted *en bloc* from either Canton or Shanghai. Those situated on the south side extend far backwards to the sea, over which some are built on piles driven into the mud.

The five-foot ways of the fronts have a veranda, closed off from next door by a brick partition. The latter is endowed with a window, either oval or round or square in shape; and the verandas themselves are supported by plain wooden piles after the style employed in Chinese Joss-houses. The front of each house is painted with pictures, and still further embellished by pottery figures in all the lovely tints that are the hall-marks of Chinese porcelain work. Alas! this street—as also Jonker Street, its parallel neighbour—is





1. CHINESE GRAVE, BUKIT CHINA, MALACCA

3. RAILWAY STATION AT KUALA LUMPUR

2. ROAD THROUGH VIRGIN FOREST—SEREMBAN TO  
KUALA PILAH

4. PAPAN TIN MINE, KINTA VALLEY, IPOH



1. MATRIARCHAL MALAY'S HOUSE, REMBAU VALLEY
2. CHINESE ROCK-TEMPLE (GUNONG RAPAT), IPOH
3. ELEPHANT AND MAHOUT AT KUALA KANGSAR

rapidly becoming modernized ; but the old-style Chinese buildings still retain their own distinctive charms.

I walked up and down Heeren Street on a number of occasions, and yet never was able to discover any two houses alike in design or ornamentation. A strong note of originality pervades this thoroughfare. Even the Joss-house (temple) differed in style of architecture from its near neighbours.

As I passed on my way, I managed to obtain several good views through wide-open doors into the interiors of private dwellings. The magnificence of the fittings and furnishings was most impressive. The latter looked good and solid. I was covetous of some of those old Chinese blackwood screens, chairs, tables and sideboards, all of which were hand-carved handsomely with dragons and other Chinese symbols. The collector of ancient Chinese furniture would find a gold mine here, if he could afford to pay for such treasures.

In marked contrast to the somewhat ornate exteriors, the inner rooms were delightful. Separating the hall from the open courtyard beyond, there were delicately carved screens either of blackwood or lacquer work. They made my mouth water, for probably many had been brought from China some centuries ago and had been in possession of the family for even hundreds of years prior to that. The court-yards themselves were shaded by trees, and behind them were the sleeping quarters of the family.

Jonker Street is merely an anæmic edition of the more important neighbour. Its greatest attraction is the magnificent old Dutch farmhouse situated at the end of the street, bearing the date 1673 over the doorway. The architectural design is almost identical with that of ancient Dutch homesteads at the Cape of Good Hope—Paarl, Groot Constantia and Cape Town. It was every bit as charming, too.

Chinese immigration from Amoy and the adjacent area of Fukien must have begun at a very early period. Even now there are to be found in Malacca some families proudly tracing direct descent from ancestors who settled in the Malay Peninsula three or more centuries back. It is a local boast that in no other part of Malaya can there be found Chinese families of such ancient and honourable lineage.

Between St. John's Hill and Bunga Raya lies Bukit China, a long series of low hills which are thickly studded with Chinese graves and tombs. In the days of the Portuguese dominion there were buildings—churches, convents and monasteries—on these hills ; but absolutely no trace of them exists now, unless it be the old military well next to the modern Chinese Joss-house on the western extremity of Bukit China. It is possible that this is the sole survivor of that olden ecclesiastical settlement.

Bukit China's ancient tombs mark the Chinese connection with Malacca, which dates back prior even to the Portuguese conquest

in 1511. Yet it is disappointing to find that the oldest link with the earliest Chinese pioneers should be less in architectural value than that of either the Portuguese or Dutch. This is a grave, situated behind the Sam Po Kong Joss-house on the slopes of Bukit China. It marks the final resting place of Tin Yap, and is an unpretentious monument of laterite cement with an inset coral tablet bearing an inscription. The wording thereon is now illegible, except for two Chinese characters meaning "Meng Emperor." This tomb is most probably more than four hundred years old.

Tin Yap was the first Captain of Chinese, an official position created by the Portuguese, adopted by the Dutch, and still surviving under British rule. The Captain of Chinese governs his compatriots according to their own peculiar and intricate national customs; that is to say, in so far as British laws are not transgressed. He corresponds to a headman of any community, and wields quite considerable power among the Chinese.

Tin Yap was succeeded in office by Captain Li. The latter's grave is a simple mound, surrounded by a swamp, on Bukit Tempurong—one of the small hills adjacent to Bukit China, but forming part of this vast Chinese cemetery area. Li's grave is constructed of granite, and provides an excellent example of a Chinese tomb of that period. It is said that the Geomancer, who, according to Chinese custom, was invited to advise upon the site and construction of the grave, prophesied that, if it was made three feet in depth, Li's son would greatly benefit; but, if made deeper, then his son-in-law alone would prosper. Whether by accident or design, the grave was actually made half a foot deeper. As had been foretold, the son-in-law rose in power and became a very wealthy man; while Li's son fell upon evil days.

There is a popular local tradition among the Chinese that, on opening Captain Li's grave, two fish—a male and a female—were found alive inside of it, and both escaped to the adjacent swamp. Nobody could explain this legend to me, which seems a great pity! The Chinese set great store by it, however, and believe this had something to do with the Geomancer's prophecy.

Chan Lak Koan, Li's fortunate son-in-law, has left behind him a monument to his prosperity in the shape of a beautiful Joss-house, known as Cheng Hoon Teng (Bright Cloud of the Pavilion). It is dedicated to Kwan Im (the Goddess of Mercy), and stands in Temple Street at its junction with Jonker Street. At this temple's gate sit the usual assemblage of beggars—aged crones for the most part, accompanied by small children hired for the purpose of exciting compassion. With hands outstretched, they await charity from the votaries of the Joss-house and seldom go unrewarded.

Within the temple of the "Bright Cloud of the Pavilion" there reigns a tranquil silence, broken occasionally by the mumbled

prayers of kneeling women devotees. The image of Kwan Im is a small bronze figure, said to have belonged originally to a neighbouring Hindu temple. One night, so a local Chinaman told me, this quaint image was *miraculously* (the italics are my own) translated to its present abode in the Joss-house. Restitution, of course, had to be made. Thereafter the Goddess of Mercy was guarded zealously by the incensed Hindu worshippers. Twice again did this restless goddess desert her legal home—also miraculously, so the Chinese insist—and disappear from the ken of the Hindus. Each time the statue was found to be in residence at the Chinese Joss-house. After this third "miracle," the Hindu community disowned the fickle goddess and washed their hands of her. She has remained in the Joss-house permanently since then. The Hindus decided that a goddess so patently inconstant in her affections was not worth bothering about. Chinese "miracles" won the day.

An interesting feature of this Joss-house is a large painting of the founder's father-in-law, Captain Li. He is depicted in the costume of the Meng dynasty. There are also two statuettes—one of Chan Lak Koan, and the other of his wife.

The temple has six distinct chambers, all devoted primarily to family worship. Reverence for ancestors, with appropriate offerings, is the keystone of all Chinese religious practice. It pervades not only the public temples, but also the private lives and homes of the Chinese people. Ancestral worship is the chief factor in their daily existence.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN AND AROUND MALACCA

I HAD promised myself another visit to St. Paul's Hill in the hours of daylight, for there was still much to be explored there and which the nocturnal expedition held hidden from my prying eyes. I climbed again to the summit on the following afternoon, and once more entered the pathetic ruin of the ancient church.

The view from the summit over the sea is gorgeously beautiful. You face a long bay studded with emerald-green islands, each decked with feathery-topped coco-nut palms. Most of them are awash at high tide. Immediately at the base of the hill can be seen a riot of red roofs crowning the green, blue, white and terracotta houses of the jumbled township. In the roadstead rode at anchor some small costal steamers and many picturesque Chinese junks; and, beyond them, I could just make out a small fleet of Malay fishing-boats.

Not a breath of wind stirred. The blue of the sea was without a ripple, the grey and white clouds stationary in the limitless blue vault of the sky, and even the usually restless plumes of the palm-trees motionless. Everything appeared to be asleep in that still, moist and balmy heat. From the main portion of the town, behind the hill, there came but faint sounds of activity. Nature and mankind were enjoying their afternoon siesta.

At one time there were a number of buildings on St. Paul's Hill in addition to the ruined church; but now the British Residency is the only other occupant of this pleasant green-turfed hillock. The Residency stands back in an old-world garden, surrounded by carefully tended green lawns, gay flower-beds and shrubbery. It occupies the site of the former Church of St. Anthony and the convent of the Augustinians.

This hill was once enveloped by one of the strongest forts ever constructed by the Portuguese in the East. Designed and begun by Don Alfonso D'Albuquerque immediately after his conquest of Malacca in 1511, the nucleus of the fort was a Keep. It was built to overlook both sea and river, so as to guard the Portuguese communications with their fleet in the roadstead. From this, a strong enclosure with six bastions was erected all round the hill. The circumference of these defensive works, it is believed, measured about five hundred and twelve paces.

The more important bastions were those of San Pedro, the foundations of which were brought to light when the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank building was being erected ; San Jago, named after the patron saint of Portugal, which had a gateway that still overlooks the *padang* ; Madre de Deos, the largest of all, which occupied the site of the present Survey offices ; and San Domingo, which was near where now stands the High School.

There is a popular, but erroneous, local belief that these fortifications were in a state of good repair when Malacca was taken over from the Dutch by the British, but were then destroyed at considerable cost. Yet Valentyne, who visited Malacca about 1725, definitely states that the fort was then in a semi-ruined condition. However, the actual destruction of this fort in 1807 was greatly resented locally, and the British were severely criticized for this act of vandalism. Munshi Abdullah (1796-1854), who was one of Malaya's foremost native scribes, wrote that "the glory of Malacca was its fort and, having destroyed this, the glory had gone out of it. Like the corpse of a woman, the husband no longer glories in her face."

The fortified gateway, which was formerly part of the bastion of San Jago, alone survives the wrecking of this ancient monument. It is constructed of laterite stone—a curious conglomerate, believed to be of volcanic origin, which is quarried extensively in the neighbourhood. This strange stone possesses the peculiar property of being quite soft when first dug out of the ground, but hardens like rock when exposed to the air. The arms of the East India Company appear over this gateway, together with the date 1670—a Dutch date. The inner and outer side of this relic are similar, except that the outer face possesses a bell-turret.

There is much to see in Malacca ; much to delight the hearts of all keen historians and archæologists. Yet it is seldom visited by the majority of people touring the Malay Peninsula. History is written large upon the face of the town and its environments. There are a multitude of ruins ; also some ancient buildings still serving useful purposes and in fair state of preservation. They all help to tell part of the story of Portuguese and Dutch occupation. You are unable to look upon these monuments of the past without a sense of being deeply stirred. Over all there broods the solemn spirit of the dead ages. You cannot escape this, for everything in Malacca is tinged or coloured with it.

I spent a number of delightful hours exploring this old town more intimately and widely than do most people ; also made several fascinating excursions into the country-side.

One morning I began my ramble afoot at the modern bridge over the Malacca River, but paused there to gaze up and down the crowded waterway. Flanked by white-washed, squat and

red-roofed houses, nestling among green trees and colour-splashes of tropical flowers, there was beauty as far as the eye could see along the river. The surface of the waterway was crammed tight with Chinese junks, sampans and Malay craft. Some had sails set to begin a journey up-river or seawards. The browns, reds, sepias and white vied with each other ; and, at my feet, the muddy stream flowed swiftly to the sea. Towering above it, the dim grey ruins on St. Paul's Hill were etched against the blue skyline ; and further inland the twin towers of the French mission church of St. Francis Xavier added a delightful touch to the tranquil loveliness of that scene.

The road over the bridge leads directly to the Stadthaus, erected by the Dutch and still employed by the British as government offices. It stands at the base of St. Paul's Hill, divided from the old building of Christ Church by a narrow lane. The Stadthaus displays a modest, almost severe nobility of character, yet is a solid and well-proportioned building. It recalls the less ornate period of Dutch architecture.

Erected on the site of the original Portuguese Keep, the foundations of which supplied the material for its construction, it was first used as a residence by the early Dutch Governors of the little Colony. It contains some spacious rooms. There are many fine examples of Dutch wood-carving, still excellently preserved, on ceilings and doors of the Stadthaus. Some of the chairs still used in the modern District Court belong to this period of the Dutch occupation of Malacca, and are remarkable for their purity of design and splendid execution. Later in my travels, I was destined to find their counterparts in Batavia.

The red clock-tower in front of the Stadthaus, however, is quite modern ; but an exact replica of the one erected by the Portuguese on the same spot. The two weather-vanes at either end, as also that on Christ Church, are not devoid of beauty. The modern clock-tower fits in admirably with the general colour scheme and architectural design of its surroundings. It was a happy thought to eschew modernity and retain the antique general characteristics.

Christ Church belongs to the Dutch period also, and was built by them in 1750. Until its completion, they worshipped in the old Portuguese church on the summit of St. Paul's Hill. It can be claimed, without fear of contradiction, that Christ Church is the best expression of Dutch architecture and religious sentiment to be found in Malaysia. In plan it is a plain rectangle ; and, apart from the rounded heads of doors and windows, is a study in straight lines.

The splendid ceiling beams of this church, each cut from a single tree and eight feet by twelve inches square, form a span of level ceiling seldom attempted in modern architecture. The walls are



massive in comparison with the weight of the superstructure ; and are of laterite stone as high as the plinth and thereafter of brickwork. The combination is rather attractive in appearance and does nothing to detract from the general effect. The roofing is of Dutch tiles.

There is no marked division between the nave and the chancel, such as I have seen in churches in Holland ; but the various grades of approach to the altar, and the latter itself, are entirely modern in character. Formerly, I was told, the pulpit stood at the east end. The iron rings from which the canopy depended can still be seen there in the ceiling. The present pulpit with its desk (a splendid piece of brasswork dating from 1777), the sanctuary rails, altar table and chairs are all of the Dutch period ; as also is the old-fashioned choir gallery in the west side.

Christ Church can boast of the possession of a really fine collection of antique silver vessels, of both the Dutch and early English periods, which to-day must be of considerable value. Among its many treasures may also be mentioned the Dutch bible, dated 1762, and the brass lectern in the pulpit centre which is engraved on both sides in Dutch characters.

Between the river's mouth and St. Paul's Hill is the sea-front of Malacca. Beneath the hill are the old-fashioned houses built by the Dutch officials ; and between them and the blue sea are exquisite stretches of emerald lawns shaded by huge, dark-green foliaged trees. The whole is emphasized and thrown into bold relief by the red-brown sea wall against which laps the sighing tides of the Straits of Malacca. From the seaward end of the jetty a perfect panorama of this old-world settlement unfolds itself. A dark shadow to the right marks the gateway of the bastion of San Jago ; and then a long line of clubs, convents, schools, the Rest-house and private dwellings extends along the sea's edge. Finally, a fringe of coco-nut palms bend drunkenly in weird contortions over the water.

The eighteen-pounder at the shore end of the jetty bears the date of 1803, and also the monogram of King George III. Close by it is a small obelisk, strikingly simple, but no less arresting, which commemorates those who fell during the Sungei Ujong War of 1875—officers and men of the 1st Gurkha Light Infantry, H.M.'s Tenth Foot (now the Lincolnshire Regiment) and the Arab Contingent. This little obelisk stands for more than a mere memorial to one of Britain's forgotten minor campaigns.

Within measurable distance of each other—a quarter of a mile at most—stand permanent records of the labours of the Portuguese on St. Paul's Hill, the Dutch at the Stadthaus and Christ Church, and the British in this simple obelisk. Those stone creations of man's hands represent Malacca's chequered history in concrete terms.

Later in my wanderings that morning I chanced to ascend the

narrow Fort Terrace road, which is on the site of the wall of the destroyed fortress. My footsteps faltered and then abruptly halted before an old cemetery. Herein I found the graves of the British soldiers who were killed or died of disease in the Naning War of 1831. They were commemorated by a small obelisk. Others of this gallant band sleep their last at Alor Gajah, midway between Malacca and Tampin Junction.

All of the tombs in this little grave-yard, standing beneath the gaunt shadows of the ruins on St. Paul's Hill and at the corner of a backwater of narrow lanes, are of the English period and mostly of British troops. This disused cemetery appears to suffer seriously from neglect. It looked terribly forlorn and shabby. Those who rest therein deserve better treatment at the hands of the country they served and for which they died. Our duty to the fallen, however, is soon forgotten.

Though the fortress built by the Portuguese on St. Paul's Hill was a strong one, they were not content with just that single citadel. They erected another on St. John's Hill, only a short walking distance away. This latter was constructed in brick and stone. As it now stands, there is no means of really determining whether the fortress is more Portuguese than Dutch in conception. Some local Goth stole the original inscription over the main entrance, and there is no record of what it told. However, St. John's Fort is generally believed to be part of a chain of strongholds which protected the seaward approaches to Malacca. All things considered, it is still in an excellent state of preservation.

I devoted the whole of that afternoon to a close study of the plan of these aged, weather-beaten ruins. The investigation proved most instructive. The site is a more commanding one than that of St. Paul's Hill, and provides an ideal position for strong defensive works. It testifies to a sagacity that is a trifle unexpected after viewing other Portuguese fortifications scattered along the eastern seaboard of Africa. Whoever was responsible for selecting St. John's Hill for a fortress was a master of strategic values. In the hey-day of its youth, this citadel must have been a very solid affair of stone and brickwork, thickly coated over with cement.

One discovery at these ruins proved most intriguing. I had formed the impression that the fortress was erected mainly to defend the ancient settlement from attacks from the sea; but a more careful inspection of the gun-emplacements and casemates disclosed the fact that the old cannons faced landwards and not seawards. This was somewhat startling, and called for more intensive study. Finally, I came to the conclusion that these gun-emplacements must have been the work of the Dutch, subsequent to their defeat of the Portuguese garrison. It would seem, therefore, that the Dutch conquerors of Malacca did not fear attack from seawards as much

as from landwards. Who, then, could they have expected to invade them from the interior—except only the Malays?

If this surmise is correct—and I see no logical reason for questioning the accuracy—it would seem that the Portuguese built the fortress originally, and that the Dutch later made such alterations in the structure as were more suitable for defensive measures against the only enemies they really had cause to fear. Furthermore, it is a matter of historical record that the Dutch were strongly attacked by the Bugis on several occasions between the years 1756 and 1784. In the latter year, the Malay forces besieged the town on all sides for a period of three months; and St. John's Hill fortress was constantly subjected to determined assault. The siege was only raised when a Dutch fleet providentially arrived to the relief of the hard-pressed garrison. Most of these attacks are known to have been delivered from the landward side, though a fleet of twenty-four Bugi *prahus* were anchored off the town in the open roadstead.

The views from the summit of St. John's Hill fully repaid me for the stiff climb upwards. It was a clear, still and cloudless afternoon, and I could see clearly for over thirty miles across country. To the west was the ruined shell crowning St. Paul's Hill; to the east, in the far distance, the blue-grey shape of Mount Ophir in Johore State stood up boldly above the intervening flat expanse of rice-fields, rubber plantations and coco-nut palms; and, seawards, there was a superb panorama of the roadstead and coast-line.

In my opinion, this supplied a clear answer to the riddle as to why the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally the British fought for possession of Malacca and set such great store by holding it. Surely the reason was obvious. The commanding heights above the roadstead were ideal for defensive works; and the groups of islands in the bay furnished effective shelter for shipping in the anchorage. In the direction of Tranquerah, across the Malacca River, ran the Portuguese pallisades which, though they appear on the plan of the town of that period, are now quite untraceable. Whoever held Malacca, held the key to Malaya. The place commanded the seaway east and west, and dominated all shipping using it. Here was a naval base of first-class worth and importance, and the ancient conquerors of these regions were not slow to recognize this fact.

On my way back to the town, I paused awhile at the old Portuguese church of St. Peter, which is believed to be almost contemporary with the fortress on St. Paul's Hill. However, it contains but few relics of the past with the exception of two holy water stoups of antique stone design. Similar ones can also be seen in the Stadthaus. The date on the bell above this church is 1698, and there is also an inscription in Latin. It has long since been restored to its first form of worship, for a Roman Catholic mission occupies the property.

A little way off the Bungah Rayah road, and closer to the town, there is the shell of the old church of San Lourenco ; but this is thought to have been known by another name in Portuguese days. Now it is an utter ruin, the pillars and walls alone standing erect. Within this shell exists one tomb, which has defied identification. If there was any inscription upon it, this is wholly illegible now ; but the probability is that the grave is of the Portuguese period of occupation.

As you wander about Malacca in modern days, it is impossible to wholly forget Don Alfonso D'Albuquerque and his co-adventurers, or their works ; the Dutch colonists ; or even the earliest British pioneers in Malaya. It is true they belong to the dim past ; but wrote their names large in the stirring history of the Far East, and not least upon that of the Malay Peninsula. Names may be forgotten after the passage of centuries : even after a comparatively few years. The works of these hardy adventurers, however, keep alive our memory of them.

Malacca provided me with many happy hours, also with an unexpected slice of fortune. I was advised to engage a Malay syce—all chauffeurs in Malaya or India are called "syce," even though the motor has replaced the horse in the service of man. I let it be known such a man was required. The result was that, next morning when I came down to breakfast, I found a small army of eager applicants awaiting interviews. Among the crowd, my eyes picked out a cheery-faced and intelligent-looking Malay. I called him forward. He advanced with a most disengaging smile and greeted me with courtly grace. In good plain English, he claimed to have often driven a Buick (such as was my car). It took only a couple of minutes to arrange terms satisfactory to both. Tambéh was his name.

From that moment I was adopted by him and became his special protégé. I was never quite sure in my own mind whether Tambéh adopted me or vice versa ; but am quite positive there could not have been a more faithful, honest or cheery helper on my wanderings. All my language pitfalls were smoothed over, and my days made easy and comfortable. Not only did Tambéh speak and understand English with tolerable fluency, but he was blessed with more than the average intelligence and proved untiring in his desire to give complete satisfaction. I learned that he had lived in London for a year or two, and for fifteen years was a quartermaster on mail-boats carrying the Red Ensign. Only recently he had returned to Malacca, and just concluded a temporary job as syce to a wealthy Chinaman. I accepted his service on face value, ignoring the bundle of testimonials offered for perusal. I never had cause to regret this somewhat rash act.

Before we left Malacca, Tambéh drove me out to Tanjong Kling,

where the great camp of the British expedition to Java was situated in Raffles's time. The suggestion was Tambeh's, and happily filled in my last afternoon.

On the road there we passed many brightly clad Malays in quaint hooded bullock-carts, drawn by diminutive and nimble-footed local oxen. The latter beasts all had an excusable hump. The day was hot and the glare on the road seered the eyes, but the patient oxen plodded on their way without protest. The Malay of Malacca looks happier, and is usually a more handsome type, than those seen elsewhere on the Peninsula. This is possibly due to the fact that, for just over a century, he and his forbears have known peace, prosperity and security under beneficent British rule. Whatever the real reason, the fact remains. Nowhere else did I see such obvious contentment among the Malay inhabitants; not that the people in other parts of the country were otherwise. Only in Malacca, this seemed more patent.

I halted beside the roadway for a space to watch a Malay gardener cutting the grass on the lawn before a private bungalow. He was using a scythe-like instrument with a short blade, and swung this round his head with a circular motion as if flogging the green lawn. It was done with effortless ease and amazing proficiency. Later, I found that this is the accepted method of grass-cutting throughout Malaya, though in the towns they often employ an ordinary scythe. The lawn-mower of Western civilization is not much in favour. They prefer to cut the grass with the scythe, then give it a close-shave with the mowing-machine. I was so intrigued that I felt impelled to try my hand at this novel method. I failed dismally. The only result was to severely gash the lawn instead of cutting the grass; so I retired from the contest.

The scenery in the countryside around Malacca was always peaceful and picturesque, often really beautiful. It was typical of the natural loveliness of Malaya, with which I was soon to grow familiar. The fields of flooded rice plants were a vivid green, the foliage of the trees a darker shade, and brown palm-thatched homesteads nestled under trees beside sparkling brooks of clear water. Away in the blue wash of the distance were purple mountains plentifully wooded to their crests. The area obviously supported a large population. The Malays in the rural districts appeared to be much more energetic than the townspeople of Malacca. Yet I had been told that the average Malay considers himself too fine a gentleman to bemean himself with manual labour.

During the course of that drive about the country district near Malacca, I saw more wild bird life than anywhere else on the Peninsula. Alas! the gorgeously plumed Argus pheasant, with sweeping tail-feathers generously marked with eyes like the peacock, is rapidly being exterminated. Once or twice in my travels I heard

the curiously plaintive "Kuuu, kuuu, kuuu" call of this timid but beautiful bird of the jungle. Not once, however, did I get a glimpse of the "all-eyes," as the Malays call them. In the primitive forests and jungle-lands, the Argus pheasant is even more wary than the peacock. At times, you may encounter their circle of stamping-grounds, even hear their plaintive cry, but never do more than that. It is a great pity the Argus pheasant is so rare and elusive, for he has few, if any, peers in bird-life.

The villages and isolated houses on either side of the roads commanded more attention than a mere cursory glance in passing. I halted once beside a small village and walked over to inspect it more closely. I was made cordially welcome, and treated with courteous hospitality by the inhabitants. The people of Malaya have a natural instinct for courtesy to strangers.

They build their houses of wood, and roof it over either with the leaves of the *atap* or *nipah* palm; but some of the richer Malays employ red tiles. The greater majority of the houses consisted of uprights of timber, cut in the jungle and dragged from thence by a domestic water-buffalo; while the walls were of interlaced rattan. The wood uprights sometimes were set upon square stones resting on the ground; at others, driven into the ground. The windows were merely horizontal slits in the walls, protected by a shutter of *atap* leaves or rattan. Along one side of the house ran a covered veranda, usually raised up some five feet from the ground—as also was the flooring of the house. The latter is gained by means of a fixed ladder. Giving on to this is the front door, which generally runs back along the wall on rollers in order to economize space. Where there are young children in a household, a railing is fixed across the doorway to prevent them getting out of the house or falling off the platform to the ground.

I was invited into one of these houses, and found it very dark inside. There was no skylight in the high-pitched roof, and the blinds were down over the windows to keep out the hot afternoon sun. A partition divided the house into separate rooms, and a shelf up in the roof offered a convenient retreat for the unmarried girls on the approach of a strange man. It is on this overhead platform that the girls sleep at night.

Tambeh explained these things to me, also many other Malay customs as well. He proved a most intelligent mentor and guide throughout my travels in Malaysia.

He pointed out a small window in the wall, which gave this shelf some measure of light and air. He told me that this was really intended to enable the bashful maidens to watch, themselves invisible, all strange male visitors to their parents' house. This coign of vantage is rather unfair to possible suitors, for no man likes to buy a bride like a pig in a poke. She might really be beauti-

ful; on the other hand, she might be very much the reverse. The girls, however, can pick and choose, while the man's selection is hampered by being unable to estimate the worth of the bride offered him.

As for furniture, there was nothing beyond the sleeping-mats and mosquito-curtains of the family. But in most houses there is a raised bed-platform for the husband and wife.

At the back of the house there was another veranda, which served as a covered-way to the outside kitchen. The near vicinity of a Malay's house has every appearance of being dreadfully untidy and indescribably filthy. It is mainly a refuse dump. The house which I visited was no exception to this rule. Daily rains and tropical sunshine, however, are efficient disinfectants and help materially to keep down the epidemic outbreaks of disease which follow inevitably upon the heels of wholly insanitary modes of living.

On the last night of my visit to Malacca, I experimented by riding through the native portions of the town in a ricksha hauled by a Chinese coolie. I did not have to tell him where to take me, for he seemed to have guessed my intentions from the first moment I engaged him.

The narrow thoroughfares were thronged with Chinese—men, women and children—and a much lesser number of Malays. Their good nature and ready courtesy was much in evidence. The painstaking industry of the Chinese artisans and craftsmen in the small shop-factories was astonishing. The hour was late—ten o'clock—but every shop and factory was brightly illuminated, and the workers within plied their trades with unflagging zeal. If ever a race deserved to prosper as a reward for hard toil, then surely it is the Chinese.

The streets were busy enough, the market-place crowded, the shops selling goods steadily, and the Chinese all working overtime; but, despite these patent facts, I sensed a dullness somewhere. Was it merely the consequences of a staple industry or comfortable prosperity which conveyed the collective impression of backwardness or lack of energy? Perhaps I interpreted the general picture wrongly. I am far from feeling convinced that, in the light of facts which subsequently came to my knowledge, my first impressions were true ones.

My memories of Malacca, however, must remain green for all time. Of all the places I saw during my journeys about Malaysia, there are but few others which created such a permanent imprint upon my mind.

Singapore has long since robbed Malacca of much of its former greatness. Yet the place is the real cradle of all that is best in British Malaya, and must always be regarded as the true "Mother of Malaya."

## CHAPTER VIII

### NORTHWARDS TO KUALA LUMPUR

**I**N company with Tambéh, I shook the red dust of Malacca from my feet and took the open road northwards. I was now headed through the States of Negri Sembilan and Selangor, with Kuala Lumpur as my main objective.

Directly Tranquerah was left behind, we followed a red laterite road, bordered on each side by graceful palms and acres of vividly green rice-fields, and shortly gained the main road to Alor Gajah. Now the scenery was mostly that of silent forests or Para rubber. Tamil coolies were already at work, collecting the milk-white latex from the little cups affixed to each tapped tree, emptying the juice into huge pails.

At this stage of my journey, I began to appreciate the important part rubber-growing has played in the prosperity of the Malay Peninsula. Hitherto I had not grasped the full significance of this great industry, which is now under a temporary cloud of depression. On either side of the road I gazed upon vast acres neatly planted with these graceful trees. At times, the plantations gave way to primeval forest, when the road was engulfed between two high walls of dense jungle and grim giants.

Our passage across the frontier into Negri Sembilan State was barred by a padlocked gateway, over which presided a smiling and courteous Malay customs official. He interrogated me in Malay, which was beyond my comprehension; so I smiled affably and shrugged my shoulders. He advanced resolutely to the car and suspiciously inspected the contents, favouring me with a fishy stare. Tambéh, the ever resourceful, talked volubly to the Malay official, then turned and explained: "This man say have you any rubber?"

What an utterly ridiculous question to ask, I thought. Rubber, indeed! Why should a perfectly harmless European motorist carry raw rubber about the Peninsula? I promptly denied the charge, being supported by Tambéh with a scornful speech in Malay. The customs official slowly unlocked and swung open the gate, graciously waving us onwards.

The amusing part of this little roadside incident was that the barrier only consisted of the locked gate astride the road. There was no fence on either side of it. Anyone so minded could have walked



or driven round, smuggling his rubber into the next State for profitable disposal.

Was I not in British Malaya all the time? I asked myself. This Federated and Unfederated States business left me a trifle bewildered. The administration of the Malay Peninsula is certainly confusing. Let me explain. The Straits Settlements are British Colonies, and comprise the Islands of Penang and Singapore, the Province of Wellesley, and Malacca. Until quite recently, the Dindings formed a small part of the Straits Settlements, but now have been retroceded to the State of Perak. To these must be added the Islands of Labuan and Pangkor, the Cocos, Christmas and Sembilan Islands outside the Peninsula. The Federated Malay States are under British protection and administration, consisting of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang; and the Unfederated Malay States, which are British protected but only advised in administration, comprise Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, Johore and Perlis.

The Governor of the Straits Settlements also acts as the High Commissioner for the Federated and Unfederated Malay States. In the Straits Settlements he is assisted by a Legislative Council; but in the Malay States there is a Federal Council and, in each State, also a State Council. The whole is briefly termed British Malaya. It is a complicated system of control. There is a proposal afoot to substitute a less cumbersome machinery of government; but it is not easy to devise one which would be entirely suitable to all concerned.

Between Alor Gajah and Seremban is the beautiful Rembau Valley. This area was once peopled by the naked aboriginal jungle-folk of the Peninsula—the Semang. The Malays drove them back into the forests on arrival in the country from Sumatra; and it was with the Semang that the refugees from the conquered kingdom of Palembang made those covenants by which they first obtained possession of Rembau and other portions of Negri Sembilan State.

The Malays in the Rembau Valley, also in a few other isolated regions of Negri Sembilan, have strange customs. Their origin is somewhat obscure, but tradition says that the ancestors of the present population came from the kingdom of Menangkabau in Sumatra, then intermarried with the women of the aborigine stock. Through marriage they acquired title to the land. Like the Menangkabau, the Rembau Valley Malays follow the matriarchal system of government and inheritance, but more modified in form. Later, I had an opportunity of closely studying this matriarchal institution in Sumatra, where it is found in purest form.

The Semang have retired into the forests and jungle-belts, even keeping themselves apart from the wild Sakai people. The latter prefer high ground, often above 5000 feet altitude; but the Semang are people of the low hills, plains and valleys. There has been a

certain amount of interbreeding, but not sufficient to change the general character of either race. The oldest people on the Peninsula are the Semang, who are of Negrito stock and have probably lived in Malaya for thousands of years. The Sakai are a mystery people, none knowing whence they originated. They are certainly non-Negritic and non-Malay, and speak a language akin to Mon-Khmer as well as possessing physical affinities to that race which once peopled Siam and the greater part of Indo-China. It is generally believed that the Sakai are remnants of Mon-Khmer tribes, who fled southwards from the conquering Thai, or Siamese, and never returned to civilization.

The Semang are a much simpler folk than the Sakai, and the real nomads of the jungle regions. In general appearance they are black and short (being seldom over five feet in height), hair crisp and woolly, faces adorned with a broad nose and thick, protruding lips, and generally sturdily built. One marked characteristic of the Semang is that of wide feet and a walk from the hips with a swinging jungle gait. Like the Sakai, they use the blowpipe for darts. This is their chief weapon. They are both veritable Stone-age folk, desperately shy and living far more primitively than the cannibal tribes of New Guinea.

The Malays of Negri Sembilan, especially in the Rembau and Kuala Pilah districts, have worked out their own salvation. The result is an unending succession of rubber plantations and rice-fields, where formerly thrived only orchards of fruit trees. When the bottom dropped out of the coffee industry in Malaya, it was not these people who were left lamenting. Until rubber also fell upon evil days within the past decade, fluctuations in the price of copra and rubber did not concern them very closely. They solved the riddle of how to be happy and contented, and have created out of the savage jungle-lands a most beautiful and bountiful agricultural country. If rubber is at a discount, there is still rice. Their wants are few. These Malays are polite, intelligent and easy in mannerism. I found them charming people, blessed with a keen sense of humour, for a joke was quickly understood and appreciated; but they expected the same treatment as they accorded to others. A Malay, whatever else he may be, is always a gentleman.

The drive through the Rembau Valley was a delightful experience. The sombre, green-clothed hills in the background offered an admirable foil to the graceful loveliness of the rubbered scenery. Loveliness? There may be cynics who will protest at such a word being employed in connection with Para rubber trees. Without any exaggeration, I never found them driving me to the point of desperation by their deadly monotony. On the contrary, they were nearly always beautiful and a never-failing source of joy. Never was this more so than when the early or late sunshine cast its lights

and shadows through the orderly lanes of trees on their weeded carpet of brown earth. Often I found myself speculating as to how many different shades of green were visible. There seemed to be legion. The dim aisles caught and reflected the sunshine in a fascinating manner; while the colour effects on trees and foliage were wonderfully beautiful. The Para rubber tree is leafy and very green of foliage, with a flower which contributes a pleasant aroma to the innumerable sweet perfumes of the countryside. On the trunks are drawn delicate patterns in greyish bark, splashed with patches of bright yellow moss. My eyes never grew weary of the sight of rubber trees.

I was lost in admiration of them, when one tyre of the front wheels burst with a loud report—just short of Pedas station. I would not have drawn attention to this minor mishap save only to give point to an astounding fact. I motored for several thousand miles over British Malayan roads, and this was the sole tyre trouble experienced. If this is not a perfect recommendation for the Malayan roadmakers, then I know not how to express great appreciation. In the light of later experiences in Sumatra and Java, this point seems worth stressing.

Seremban is the headquarters of the British Resident of Negri Sembilan, also the official capital of the State. From here is administered the federation of nine States—Negri Sembilan, in the Malay tongue, means "Nine States"—constituted in 1895. The Sultan, officially styled the Yang di Pertuan Besar, resides in his *Astana* (palace) at Sri Mentani, midway between Seremban and Kuala Pilah.

I had heard much about the delights of Malaya's "Brighton"—Port Dickson; and, after lunch, motored over to see it for myself. I went by one road and came back by another. Shortly after starting, a sharp shower cooled the air and festooned the trees with raindrops that glistened like diamonds in the sun. There was a fragrant smell from the damp earth, trees and jungle. Artistic Malay *kampongs* (villages) dotted the landscape; while hundreds of Tamil men and women trailed along the road. The Tamils of southern India constitute the major proportion of the employees on planters' estates, playing an important part in the labour supply of Malaya. They are to agriculture what the Chinese coolies are to the tin-mining industry. The Malays consider themselves superior to manual toil in the service of others, so labour is imported for the rubber, copra and tin-mining industries.

Port Dickson has been described as a health-resort. I was told, however, that malaria-infected convalescents inoculated the place with that dread tropical scourge, so it is not quite the "health-resort" claimed. However, there are compensations. It is a sleepy, charming and restful little seaport, set in beautiful surroundings and offering splendid bathing facilities from golden-yellow sands. My first glimpse of Magnolia Bay could not be

bettered. The water was as smooth as glass and as blue as a sapphire; while the sandy beaches—a rarity on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula—beckoned invitingly. I much enjoyed a swim.

Throughout my drive to and from Port Dickson I had seen only two birds; one of which was bright red, and the other gay-hued and of infinite variety in colouring. I do not know their names, and never saw their like again. Bird or animal life was rarely seen in my travels, thanks to man's destructive nature.

Next morning, after an early breakfast, I set out with Tambek to drive to Kuala Pilah—a distance of twenty-five miles. On the outskirts of Seremban I came in touch with the tin mines for the first time. This one did not appear very active. The world economic depression has hit tin almost as hard as rubber in Malaya; and, in any case, tin-mining in this State is definitely on the decline.

Soon the road began to climb up into hills crowned with primeval forests and tangled jungle-growth. At the summit of the hills is the Bukit Putus—Bukit is the Malay word for "pass"—reached by a winding road of easy gradients. We climbed steadily through gorgeous tropical vegetation and giant trees. To leave that road and plunge afoot into the silent, tangled mass would be to court disaster, for there are no paths and the jungle is the lurking place of savage beasts. Nothing could stale the infinite variety and calm repose of that grim forest scenery, dull the sense of gratitude to the builders of this road through the deep jungle recesses, or detract from such a herculean task. It had been well done.

The road had a weedless, smoothly metalled surface, and an orderly alignment that was utterly at variance with the density of the jungle-growth on either flank. Yet the latter seemed unconscious that the very heart of it had been cut through and its throbbing life ruthlessly exposed to the vulgar stare of humanity. Blue, black, red, yellow, white and multi-coloured butterflies flitted unobtrusively through the flickering blue and black shadows or grey-toned lights in the forest. Shrill-voiced insects screamed at us from the dark, sinister depths; and the sharp report of branches suddenly released, as monkeys sprang from limb to limb, sounded exactly like whiplashes being cracked over driven stock.

All shades of green were visible, mixing with the brown or grey-tinted trunks of the giant trees in perfect blending. All harmonized with the red soil. The forest here was quite unforgettable: the more particularly when seen just before topping the Bukit Putus. In the distance it displayed the tenderest shades imaginable of greens, reds, terra-cottas, sepias, browns and silver-greys; often, too, splashed either with orange or red-tinted foliage. The journey was worth while if only for that wonderful forest-road. It twisted endlessly through that still mass of jungle and mammoth trees, and ever there was something new to compel unstinted admiration.



*Photos by]*

*[S. Kurita, Seremban*

1. MALAY SUBJECTS PAY HOMAGE TO THE HEIR OF THE YANG DI PER  
TUAN BESAR (SULTAN) OF NEGRI SEMBILAN STATE
2. MALAY FESTIVAL NEAR SEREMBAN, WITH CEREMONIAL WATER-  
BUFFALO (NOTE THE TROUSERS)



1. MALAY MOSQUE KUALA LUMPUR  
2. F.M.S. RAILWAY HEADQUARTERS, KUALA LUMPUR  
3. ROYAL MOSQUE AND CENOTAPH, KUALA KANGSAR

Almost before I realized it we had covered the two miles of ascent, crossed the summit of the pass, and ran smoothly down two more miles of forest-banked road into the famed Terachi Valley. This is a typical Malay countryside. The valley provides a huge vista of beautiful pictures by Nature—always an inspired artist.

Kuala Pilah is a pretty enough spot, but inclined to be a stagnant backwater. A branch of the railway serves it from Gemas junction, but even this touch of modern progress has not achieved a great deal. Yet I was tremendously glad to have made that brief excursion. Beyond Kuala Pilah is the Pahang State. I gazed at it over the valley of the Muar River, feeling a strong urge to adventure forth across its savage border. Pahang is larger than the other three Federated States combined. That portion of it alongside the frontier of Negri Sembilan is mainly forest, vast jungles and mountainous regions. There are no roads. The only paths are narrow, tortuous tracks through the jungle-growth shared by beasts and rare human adventurers. Mostly it is an unexplored area. Of late years, however, a strenuous effort has been made to open up this State by means of roads and railways. Its inaccessibility is being conquered by degrees; while planters and miners have already exploited areas which could not have been worked with profit a few years ago.

Throughout my journey to Kuala Pilah I had been shocked by the dearth of any sign of wild bird or animal life. On my return, just over the Bukit Putus, I spied a small but amusing family of monkeys in the trees at the roadside. They were the first seen since leaving Singapore. I halted to watch their lively gymnastic feats, but nothing would induce them to make my closer acquaintance. I tried bribing them with bananas, but without avail. They were terribly shy and suspicious, shrieking loudly in angry protest at my intrusion on their forest privacy. These weird little creatures had long hairless tails, old-fashioned and wizened faces, and fur of a greeny brown colour flecked with grey.

The road into Kuala Lumpur, chief town of the State of Selangor and capital of the F.M.S., was delightfully picturesque. Immediately after leaving Seremban, it climbed upwards through jungle scenery, plentifully mixed with rubber trees, coco-nut palms and rice-fields. Having breasted the crest of the Bukit Setul, the road dipped down towards Mantin. Forest-clad hills in the background added charm to that splendid roadway, rounding off a gorgeous picture. The varying shades of greens, browns, greys and yellows in the foliage were a never-ending source of wonder. There is nothing to stale a journey through Malaya.

Between Mantin and Berenang, the latter being the frontier village of the States of Negri Sembilan and Selangor, there was an unending succession of hairpin bends which one soon grows

to associate with all roads in Malaysia. On the way to Kajang we passed hundreds of semi-naked Chinese coolies, all carrying heavy loads of agricultural produce to local markets. The loads were suspended in slings from either end of a bamboo pole, borne on bare shoulders. They travelled at a steady jog-trot, half-run and half-shuffle, with heads bent and bodies sweating profusely. Often their cumbersome loads swung across the roadway, and they seemed reluctant to give way to motor-traffic.

At varying intervals were mounds of delicately flavoured pine-apples, piled high beside the road and awaiting transport to nearby factories. Before the advent of tin and rubber, pine-apples were the chief product of Malaya. The industry still flourishes. The Chinese factories tin them in millions for export overseas, and do a profitable trade. The fruit is rather anæmic, but the flavour delicious.

Between Kajang and Kuala Lumpur we sped through the small village of Cheras and the suburb of Pudu, the latter five miles outside the capital. There was a magnificent panorama of Kuala Lumpur from this point. Shortly we were in the town and confronted with many handsome buildings bordering wide roads. Exceptionally beautiful and picturesque was the Malay mosque, surrounded by water and with graceful palms leaning over it.

Very few of the comparatively new Colonies of the British Empire enjoy the proud distinction of an excellently planned and well-chosen capital city. The F.M.S. are a hundred times blessed in this dual respect. Whoever planned the town in the first instance had great depth of vision, and an eye for the future as much as for the present; those who carried out the plans had real imagination. The result is a splendid achievement. Not only is the site of Kuala Lumpur chosen admirably, but the roads, buildings, parks and all things which make or mar a town, are highly creditable. The climate, too, is remarkably good for a supposedly tropical country. Indeed, the F.M.S. have just cause for feeling proud of their "Garden City" capital.

In Kuala Lumpur there is a very mixed population. The Malays, as at other towns, are in the minority; and the Chinese seem to dominate all things.

Golf is played over the site of what was once a Chinese cemetery for poor coolies. The graves were never marked by tombstones, and Time has levelled the surface of these ancient mounds. The area now makes a first-class golf course.

The Chinese have many quaint customs and superstitions regarding their dead. For instance, they believe that the first person met after death is the devil himself; and, if unable to buy their freedom at this meeting, they become the devil's slaves for eternity. A curious example of this belief came to light a few years ago in



Kuala Lumpur. The police were called to a cheap Chinese lodging-house and found a Chinaman with his throat cut. It was obviously suicidal. A handkerchief was tightly bound round his right hand and the bloodstained knife on the floor. On untying the handkerchief a pack of cards was found gripped in the man's fist. Having lost all his money in gambling, he decided to kill himself; but, having no cash to buy freedom from the devil, he proposed to make a gamble of it and so went to his death with cards ready. Unfortunately he died without the precious pack of cards, for the Police had removed them from his hand. It must have been a shock to encounter the devil and find the cards missing!

The government buildings in the capital sometimes verge on extravagance. The Moorish style of architecture is the most favoured, and fits in well with the general scheme of the surroundings. If viewed at sunset, the dying tropical sun lights up these handsome buildings and makes them look like part of a "rose-red city half as old as Time." Yet modern Kuala Lumpur is only about fifty years old. Once it was a two-street Chinese trading-post; and, in 1872, the Chinese Captain paid down a hundred dollars cash for each head of his enemies brought to the market-place.

Two of the most remarkable buildings in Kuala Lumpur are the headquarters offices and the combined station-hotel of the F.M.S. Railways. I must admit that the hotel was a revelation. It is built over the station; is clean, comfortable and well-appointed; and each bedroom has its private bathroom. Throughout there are electric lights and overhead fans; while the meals and service are above reproach.

The railway station must be the most beautiful in the world, and certainly unique in style and architecture. At first, it is difficult to realize the real purpose of the building, and one may be forgiven for writing it down as a mosque. Again the design is Moorish, painted snow-white, and with turret towers like minarets at each end in pairs. Immediately opposite are the palatial headquarters offices of the F.M.S. Railways, also Moorish in style. I was assured that this building was more ornamental than useful. Both the offices and station-hotel seem gross extravagance when one remembers the long neglect to supply Pahang, Trengganu, Kelantan and the eastern parts of Johore with much-needed railway services.

I drove out one afternoon to see the Batu Caves. They are seven miles from the capital, and approached by a good, well-shaded road. Often giant trees, lining the roadway, arched overhead, while through their leafy bower the sunlight gently filtered. The road headed straight for the base of some huge limestone cliffs, which gleamed white in the distance. We crossed the wide Klang River by a modern bridge, and my attention was caught by an amusing scene in the river-bed. Some Malays were industriously

washing their patient cattle in the shallow water, the native grooms being earnest in their application of soap, brush and water. The gentle-eyed, humped cattle stood perfectly still and seemed to hugely enjoy the bathing-parade, while the Malays crooned songs to them.

On arrival at the base of limestone cliffs, I climbed up the steep, rocky path to the entrance of the chief cave, in which a number of *yogis* (Hindu ascetic) have made their abode. Their small shrines adorn almost every niche in the rock-face, and candles burn before each. The main cave is really a double one, sloping down to the second hall, which is roofless and open to the sky. Yet the dome of blue is so far above your head that there appears to be but a small fissure in the rock-ceiling. From overhead the water drips without cessation; and moss-growths have painted the limestone rocks in green-blue metallic shades, contrasting favourably with the pure white of the massive walls. Many of the rocks have been hollowed out by the action of water over a long period of time; while from the roof, high above, depend weirdly shaped icicles of lime. The floor of the main cave rings hollow beneath the tread, arguing that other unknown depths could be found. I came away from the Batu Caves with a sense of having been sent on a wild goose chase. I consider the place grossly overrated.

On the following morning I motored to Dusun Tua, a drive of sixteen miles through the valley of the U Langat River. No mining is permitted above the river, so that the water comes down from the hills with crystal clarity and scintillates in the sun's rays. Like Tennyson's brook, the U Langat River "bubbles into eddying bays." The road, nearing Dusun Tua, runs parallel to this sparkling, tree-lined river; and then ends abruptly in a small Malay *kampong*. Behind the *kampong*, across the swiftly flowing river, are the Rest-house and hot sulphur springs. People bathe in and drink the waters. The former I can understand, but the latter leaves me cold. I was assured these sulphur springs possess health-giving properties comparable to the waters of Bath or Harrogate. I accepted their word for this. Anything more vile or like a dose of rotten eggs than tepid sulphur water would be difficult to find.

The Rest-house stands in a clearing in front of dense forest, on a bay formed by an eddying pool of the river. Stretching to the river from the veranda are green lawns. The thick jungle-growth had been cut down and paths made among the colonnades of giant trees or jungle aisles, where the sun's shafts pierce through the topmost foliage and flicker bewitchingly at your feet. The sulphur springs are in a pretty dell among the trees, quite close to the river bank. The fumes rise in fleecy clouds of vapour above the cement wall enclosing the springs; and the hot water flows in a narrow stream to join the U Langat River just below the white-painted suspension bridge.

On the return to Kuala Lumpur the rain threatened and the hills were all robed in white floating draperies of filmy clouds ; but their green, brown or purple summits towered above the low-lying belts of lace-like mists. In the early morning or late afternoons you can nearly always see these misty clouds lazily winding their white wreaths above the blue distances.

Before leaving Kuala Lumpur, I drove to Port Swettenham, which serves Kuala Lumpur and surrounding districts. The road followed the railway, running parallel to it as far as Klang. At Petaling I had the first genuine introduction to a tin mine in active operation ; yet even then could not escape rubber. The mine was surrounded by sombre, silent Para rubber trees—a mere oasis in the vast acreage under the rival industry's sway. Two dredges were at work, combing the thick mud and pea-soup waters of a mine worked by Chinese pioneers many years ago. When they abandoned it, the workings quickly filled with water. Even the dredges' machinery seemed to be hushed, as if fearful of disturbing the slumbrous stillness of the adjacent rubber estate.

Klang used to be the port ; but Port Swettenham, closer to the estuary, has now supplanted it. In the fourteenth century, Klang is said to have been subject to the Menjapahit Empire in Java ; and its past history records many changes both for better and worse. Yet in just over half a century under British rule, European and Chinese capital combined to create a rich, settled and flourishing country out of the former jungle-swamps and pirate-infested estuaries. In Klang is the chief palace of the Sultan of Selangor—quite an attractive building in a modern Saracenic style of architecture.

It is five miles from Klang to Port Swettenham. A good road and railway feed and drain the latter, which is well-sheltered, has many good wharves, and is conveniently situated in regard to Kuala Lumpur. Soon after its creation, the wisdom of the expenditure upon this big undertaking was definitely proved. The harbour lies at the landward end of an estuary in which meet the Klang and U Langat Rivers. Work was started there about thirty-five years ago. The original site was a tidal flat, covered with mangrove growing in muddy salt-water. This area had to be reclaimed. There is now sufficient water to wharf the largest ocean-going steamers plying to and from the Far East. In its earliest history Port Swettenham was most unhealthy ; but, thanks to the vigorous methods employed to stamp out malaria, it now affords a classic example of what energy and applied science can achieve in a determined assault upon the sources of disease.

Beauty cannot be found here. Port Swettenham is far too engrossed with commercial enterprise to be troubled about its personal appearance. The works of Nature concern it not.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE COPRA AND TIN BELT

**I**F the major and dominating note throughout the pleasant symphony of Malaya is Para rubber, there are other chords in that orchestration of amazing productiveness which are almost equally insistent. After visiting Teluk Anson and Ipoh, I knew that tin and copra were indeed strong rivals for supremacy as the major industry. On my journey up-country from Kuala Lumpur, I passed an ever-increasing number of tin mines sandwiched in between agricultural lands or most uncompromising belts of wild jungle.

It had rained during my last night in Kuala Lumpur, and now the early morning sun wreathed the blue lines of hills to the right of the road with the customary low-lying fleecy clouds. I was traversing a park-like road through the jungle to Kuala Kubu, intending to climb to the famed "Gap." It was the second spot so named which I had encountered in the Peninsula; and I was to see still a third. Originality in nomenclature may be a characteristic of the Malays, but certainly not of the British.

Kuala Kubu lies in a cup in the hills and on the banks of a little river which later develops into the Sungei Selangor, with its wide estuary at Kuala Selangor. There was a remarkable variety of scenery on the way there; but the virgin forest appealed to me most of all. Here and there a bank of earth had slipped after the heavy rains—the jungle's perpetual reminder of its age-old right of way now disputed by mankind. Neglect the road for a month, and the jungle will have covered the bare soil; continue to ignore this encroachment, and it will advance still further across the metalled surface; and, finally, creep forward to eat into the formation. The jungle never forgets. It has the longest memory in the world. Unless you are always on guard, it will soon regain its own.

Kuala Kubu is the starting place of the main road which crosses the mountain range into the eastern portions of Pahang State. It climbs into these hills with a steady gradient of about 1 in 30 for fifteen miles through dense forest to "The Gap." The latter is the crowning glory of that marvellous drive. It marks the boundary between the States of Selangor and Pahang; but there is only the magnificent view, bracing climate and comfortable Rest-house to repay you for the journey there. It is all-sufficient. From "The Gap" there is a descent of some thirteen miles through virgin

forest to the little village of Tras ; and another ten miles onwards is Raub. At the latter is an old-established gold mine. From that point the road proceeds to Kuala Lipis on the Lipis River, branching off a few miles short of that town to Kuantan on the China Sea. Thus may you traverse the heart of the State of Pahang.

On my return to the Rest-house at "The Gap" from Raub, I found another lone traveller had arrived. He proved to be a cheery planter from an estate beyond Raub, having been into Kuala Lumpur to purchase provisions. He told me that a tiger had been an infernal nuisance in his neighbourhood, and invited me to join him in attacking the brute. I gladly consented. He was kind enough to lend me his spare rifle, for I was armed with nothing more deadly than a camera.

My host declared that big game hunters in Malaya found it much more difficult to bag a tiger than in India. Hunting them was nothing like so simple and always more dangerous, though plentiful enough in some localities of the Peninsula. I gathered that our chances of finding and slaying the marauder were remote. Owing to the density of the tropical jungle, it is impossible to beat for tigers, so the only hope of success is to sit up over a kill. My planter friend did not seem optimistic about bagging this brute.

I accompanied him back to his estate, where our arrangements were perfected. He planned to follow the Indian system of tying up a live bait, then sitting over it on a *machan* built in a tree. A site, known to be frequented by this particular tiger, was selected with great care ; and then a domestic buffalo was tethered to a tree as bait. Two *machans* were constructed in adjacent trees, overlooking the wretched buffalo. Towards sunset we walked out to this spot and climbed into our respective *machans*, hoping that the tiger might come our way. I spent a wearisome and uncomfortable night on the cramped platform, and never as much as saw or heard a tiger in our vicinity. At dawn we packed up and quit.

Discussing this barren night's adventure with an experienced hunter in Malayan jungles, some weeks later, he explained that the tiger had far too much game at its disposal in the forests to pay heed to domestic animals. A tethered live bait, he insisted, would be ignored most probably for weeks on end. His own experiences definitely proved it was rare for any such bait to attract a tiger to a hunter's rifle. One lives and learns. In light of this information I regretted that beastly night wasted on the *machan*. I have often wondered if my planter friend ever did bag that tiger or if it stills prowls about his vicinity.

After returning to Kuala Kubu and rejoining the road northwards, we crossed the pretty little Bernam River. Now the country was more open, and the frontier of the State of Perak was passed at Tanjong Malim.

Between there and Tapah Road both the railways and main trunk road cut straight through primitive jungle and forest. This was the first part of Malaya, which I had yet encountered, where the obsession of the grim forest began to weigh upon my mind and demand an optical rest. Tree after tree flitted by, bringing no sense of individuality with it. Creepers flashed into flaming flowers here and there, serving to break the deadly monotony of that silent, forbidding wall of giant trees ; but this relief was only of momentary duration. Wearied at length by the unending procession of green banks and black shadows, I tried to project my mind through the gaps where the eye could not pierce the gloom. What lurked beyond that tangled mass of vegetation ? What grim tragedies were being staged therein by the savage beasts, preying one upon the other ? I knew not : could only guess.

Suddenly, on the east of the road, appeared clear alleyways through the trees. We were passing the Trolak Forest Reserve, which hugs railway and road onwards from about half-way beyond Tanjong Malim. These alleyways had been cut by the Forest Department's satellites, the Reserve being marked by posts for the edification of the Chinese timber pilferer or Malay gutta-percha thief.

This vast area of forest is full of *getah taban* trees, which produce the gutta-percha of commerce. It is said that in the whole area of the 27,000 odd square miles of the Federated Malay States there does not exist one single full-grown tree of this species, so thorough were the Malay and Dyak gutta-percha collectors in searching them out. These ruthless despoilers had no eye for the future, only for the immediate present ; and mutilated every single specimen found.

To-day, all the known areas where these trees still exist are strictly preserved. The Trolak Forest Reserve is one of these sacred spots ; and here the choking undergrowth is kept back so that this valuable tree may have a better chance to live and flourish. With its long, shiny green leaf, showing old-gold on its underside when ruffled by the wind, it is one of the most lovely trees found in the jungles of the Peninsula.

Here in this Reserve, the long aisles of infinite distance stretch through the forest, lit by chequered flecks of light, patterns of fine gold let down by the sun through chinks in the ceiling of the jungle. The struggle for life by the bushes, creepers and young trees is here restrained ; and the hand of man, so seldom an improver of Nature's work, has granted a measure of relief from the tyrannical oppression of the unpruned virgin forest.

Few travellers through the Malay Peninsula take the time to visit Teluk Anson. Yet the whole of the surrounding district is a magnificent planting area, which has not got all its eggs in the one basket. It is not even dependent upon the English planter alone.

Immigrant Malays, chiefly Javanese, have planted thousands of acres of coco-nuts, which thrive exceedingly along the coast. To anyone genuinely interested in agricultural matters, Lower Perak furnishes a valuable field for intensive study. Its hospitable soil welcomes with equal impartiality both Para rubber (*Hevea Brasiliensis*) and coco-nuts (*Cocos Nucifera*).

I have seen coco-nuts growing in many tropical lands, but confess to have accorded them but scant interest. The palm trees were invariably graceful and beautiful; the meat and milk of the nuts delicious; and the fibre provided many of the world's needs. Those facts I know and appreciated fully; but there my interest in *Cocos Nucifera* evaporated. At Teluk Anson fortunate chance supplied me with a new and more lively concern in the copra industry. Here I learned many amazing facts about coco-nuts. Above all, I began to appreciate how really wonderful is Mother Nature in all her works.

On my way home from Singapore, I discovered still another fact about copra, which proved anything but pleasant. I voyaged to Marseilles on a Japanese liner, which carried a large cargo of copra in her hold. From this emerged millions of tiny, black, flying insects. They invaded the entire ship. No corner was immune from their pestilential intrusion. They even mixed themselves with the food, shared one's berth at night, and were extremely vicious biters. This was a veritable plague, which increased in intensity during the hot weather but diminished immediately we reached the cold weather zone. They made the passage of the Arabian and Red Seas so unbearable that even the unusual blessing of a strong headwind paled before this evil. The journey up the Red Sea was a nightmare. The copra bug, small but with marked personality, will always be associated in my mind with bad dreams. To think that coco-nuts could produce such little devils!

At Teluk Anson I learned to set new store by the occasional light groves of feathery-topped palms that intruded themselves into the rubber areas. Hitherto they had merely added a touch of beauty to the tranquil scenery. Now I found this copra industry was a force to be reckoned with, and had a big place in the scheme of production in Malaya. It ranks as third in the country's great industries.

I was cordially invited to pay a visit to a coco-nut estate by the manager, and there learn at first hand something about copra. I accepted joyfully. If rubber is orderly in its serried ranks of trees, the coco-nut palms are no less so. At this estate (Teluk Bahru) the palms were set in marshalled ranks; and you could wander down avenue after avenue of slim, irregular trunks, always shaded from the bright sunshine. Above your head, the slender fronds quiver in the light breeze, with the round green or brown nuts clustering beneath them.

It is from estates such as this whence come copra and many of the world's other commodities. I learned that the trees are responsible for supplying the markets with coco-nuts to eat, oil and vinegar ; also cover for houses, wearing apparel and fuel in Malaya. There are still other by-products. Yet the above list should serve to convince the sceptic, if there be such, that a coco-nut tree is not just a touch of beauty in the areas in which grown, but a prolific producer of man's necessities.

My host and hostess were kindness itself, sparing no effort to satisfy my thirst for knowledge. From them I collected a mass of information about coco-nuts and copra ; and, in an hour, knew more about these things than ever before. It proved a most interesting and instructive day at the Teluk Bahru estate.

I was shown the copra (the flesh in the nuts) being dried. Nothing is ever wasted. Even the husks, divorced from the nut by expert Tamils using a long steel sword, are used for burning in the kilns which dry the meat. From these husks are also manufactured the coir-mats on which you wipe your feet on entering a house. When the meat is dried, the shells are cleaned and sold to the rubber estates as cups in which to collect the latex as it flows in a milky stream from the tapped trees. Badly split and valueless shells find their way as fuel into the kilns.

The most interesting thing of all, perhaps, was to watch the nuts being picked. A half-naked Tamil shot nimbly up the tall stem of a palm. In the ascent, he rapidly clawed his way upwards while looking for all the world like a wooden monkey being jerked on a stick. In descending, he just slid down the tree. The whole performance was accomplished with amazing speed. His ancestors could have done nothing else but climb palm trees in like fashion for untold ages, or surely he would not have been so skilful. Before I could count twenty, he had cut loose a few nuts from the massed clusters, which fell to the ground with a bump and then bounced about like footballs for a few seconds. The Tamil had regained the ground before the movement of the nuts had ceased. It was really an astonishing performance. I take off my hat to that coolie from southern India, for he was a master of his craft.

The nuts dropped down were in various stages of growth, and each in turn was split open for my inspection. I was shown a golden-yellow frond of seeds. With the aid of these exhibits, it was explained to me how the coco-nuts grew, also how each female nut reproduced her own species. From seed to nut, from nut to tree, and from tree to seed again, and so on—all was made abundantly clear. I was loath to leave this interesting estate, but had planned to be in Ipoh next day.

The scenery between Tapah Road and Ipoh, the latter the centre of the tin-mining industry in Malaya, was quite some of the finest



yet seen on my journey. It provided a strange series of sharp contrasts. The road, running at the base of blue hills, dived down into the justly famous Kinta Valley. Everywhere it was scarred by active tin mines and abandoned workings. Jungle and rubber, swamps carpeted with red, white or pale lotus lilies, green rice-fields, and tin mines followed each other in reckless fashion. Mostly it was a land of tin mines.

Near Batu Gajah the countryside was flooded, and even the jungle was awash in places. It was steaming hot. The hills were draped in black rain-clouds and lower belts of filmy white mists. It looked unhealthy and I thought a deluge threatened ; but the rain held off.

Ipoh is a town full of interest, the more especially in the environments. It has grown fast, is well-planned and laid out, and takes pride in many handsome buildings. The whole of its life revolves round the rich tin-mining area in the Kinta Valley.

The country about Ipoh is one of magnificent limestone hills. The view from the racecourse towards them, and the higher hills of the main range beyond, is at all times really beautiful but far more impressive when a distant thunderstorm rolls majestically along them. I chanced to see them under just such conditions. The black-blue clouds were lowering above the white-splashed cliffs, and the whole colour scheme was shot through and through with those violet vapours into which, at length, the darkness would melt the dying day.

In these selfsame hills there is much worth seeing. Best of all, from the artistic point of view, are the Chinese rock temples at Gunong Chiroh, Gunong Rapat and Sungei Raia. The Gunong Chiroh temple is close to Ipoh and should be seen first. To reach it, you pass some marble quarries on the left of the road. Ipoh supplies the finest marble to be found in all Malaysia, being used for roads, flooring and buildings. The excellent quality of this marble has rapidly gained wide recognition throughout the East.

Nature has so obligingly disposed the approach to Gunong Chiroh that a ricksha can pass along the track between the rock on the left and the stalactite dropping to meet the rising stalagmite on the right ; but motors must keep to the road, which passes a few yards below this point and between the pendant white rock-face and the yellow-watered Kinta River. The latter is the bearer of silt washed out of the tin mines.

The first little shrine is a Tamil creation, and the exterior is not impressive ; but, if you look behind the altar, you will see, with a shock of surprise, a tiny glimmering flame far down the black passage in the rock. Being much intrigued, I ventured forward to investigate. Finally, I reached a second altar, which seemed to bar the way to further progress ; but there was just space to squeeze

past it and go along a narrow, gloomy runway in the rock. I tripped over chance stalagmites, avoided obtrusive stalactites, and breathed heavy-scented incense fumes. At last, I reached the tiny glimmering flame fitfully illuminating two little gods, which glistened with votive oil and were decked with sacred white blossoms. These were the statues of Naga—the Cobra, and of Ganesha—the elephant-headed. Scarcely envying them their "twilight of the gods," I picked my way back carefully to the open air and breathed deep of its sweetness.

The Chinese temple was just round the corner, under the cliff where the caves—much defiled by the detestable initials and names of all nationalities scratched on its face—have been cleverly adapted to the use of shrines. A curious feature is the natural stairway gradually formed by the lime-bearing water, which oozes out of the white rock and trickles down over the flight of steps it has created for itself. This shrine, however, is not quite so interesting as that at Gunong Rapat. Some may disagree with this view.

I spent the next morning in motoring round the tin mines in the Kinta Valley. The expedition proved absorbingly interesting and provided much food for serious thought. Here is situated the richest tin producing area in the world. Three miles out of Ipoh, on the Gopeng road, are the limestone cliffs in which is the rock temple of Gunong Rapat. The ramifications of the caves have been adapted cunningly to the use of this temple. It was here that, some years ago, proofs were discovered in the soil within the caves that they had once been inhabited by races of prehistoric men.

Halting my car at the roadside, I climbed to the topmost shrine, high up on the cliff's face. From there I looked out over the Kinta Valley through a natural window in the rock and feasted my eyes upon that wonderful scenery. In the far distance was the Kledang range of mountains, clearly defined in the bright sunlight. Above the valley, the blue dome of the sky was almost cloudless. A great force of men had turned this erstwhile peaceful valley into a beehive of human activity; and now it throbbed and echoed to the ceaseless movement of machinery.

When viewed from the road, the temple of Gunong Rapat looks exactly like a white doll's house clinging precariously to the face of the steep cliff. Yet that quaint and picturesque exterior merely cloaks the dim recesses of the caves within. The white cliffs curiously reflect the red of the laterite soil below and seem to be blushing rosily.

The third rock temple, on the banks of the yellow and flooded Sungei Raia, was but a poor imitation of the others. I was bitterly disappointed. This temple did not live up to what I had been told about it, and certainly could not hold a candle to the others already seen.

I now concentrated my attention on the tin mines. The first of any great size were those of Kramat Pulai and the French Tekka : both operated hydraulically. Close to the latter were the Eu Tong Sen and Kloo Soo Cheow mines. The whole of this area, and even much further afield, was being worked by armies of the industrious Chinese—both men and women. I wondered if they ever ceased labouring. At a later date, I saw some tin mines being worked at night with the aid of overhead electric lighting ; and thus got the answer to my question.

Opposite to the two big Chinese mines were the Gopeng Consolidated and the Kinta Valley workings. On every hand your eyes stared at a scarred landscape and flooded quarries ; and these, in addition to the multitude of flumes, launders and pipe-lines, comprised the bulk of the scenery in the valley. It was anything but beautiful, yet intensely interesting.

Here the Chinese coolies fought, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, to reap the rich tin harvest from the bowels of the earth. That their labour was not wasted was only too patent. This was further emphasized by a study of the statistics of the Malay Peninsula and of the Company's annual reports. I had seen the gold mines on the Rand, and been down some of the largest ; but here things were very different. Gold is garnered from the very depths of the earth in the Transvaal ; but tin-mining in Malaya is very largely a surface operation.

Records exist of tin-mining by Malays, Siamese and Chinese in the Peninsula at the time when the first Cornish mines were opened up centuries ago ; but the production of " Straits Tin," as it is commonly called, was not appreciable until the opening up of the Larut area in the State of Perak by Chinese miners. Mining operations were then carried on under the gravest difficulties. The country was in a state of anarchy, and faction fights between the numerous clans of Chinese were of frequent occurrence. Under British rule, however, tin-mining began to prosper and has continued to do so with occasional periods of depression on the markets. The richness of such fields as those in the Kinta Valley or at Batang Padang in the State of Perak, as well as the mining areas in Selangor, has long been world-renowned.

Primitive Chinese methods in mining have been gradually dropped. They possessed no elaborate machinery, but excavated and washed the surface deposits with water, employing large gangs of coolies for this purpose. Workings were generally limited to some twenty or thirty feet in depth, for only primitive pumps were available for keeping the mines dry. Fortunately for those early miners the tin deposits were extraordinarily rich and the ore was quite easily won from the ground. Sixty years ago, the output of tin from the entire Malay Peninsula was estimated at less than 450

tons. Twenty years ago the Federated Malay States exported nearly 52,000 tons of tin, the bulk being produced by Chinese mines. This was equivalent to about 56 per cent of the world's output. The quantity gradually declined for a time, mainly owing to falling prices and the Great War. In 1924, however, the export of tin reached a total of 44,042 tons. Since then the industry has suffered its ups and downs, while prices for the ore have fluctuated. By a policy of restriction of output, it is hoped to place the industry on a more stable basis.

The Chinese deserve great credit for their pioneer work and amazing enterprise. Willing to take risks which might appear to be highly speculative, it was not uncommon for them to make huge fortunes out of tin. A striking instance of this occurred a few years ago in the Silibin district near Ipoh, where a Chinese woman financed half a dozen coolies to work a small mine. At first little, if any, profit was made; but three weeks before her sub-lease was due to expire, a pocket of almost pure tin oxide was struck. A scene of intense activity followed. A continual relay of coolies was employed in loading tin straight from the mine into awaiting bullock-carts. When the sub-lease finally expired, a considerable fortune had been amassed by the fortunate woman. She had gambled against long odds—and won. There have been a great number of similar incidents, for the Chinese delight in any form of a gamble.

Half the tin from Malaya is still produced by the Chinese, but, with a few notable exceptions, their workings are small and primitive. Year by year, however, modern mining methods and machinery have been more extensively employed. The day of the open-cast mine is now at a discount; and soon is likely to disappear altogether. In that type of work, trucks are run on inclined haulages and bring to the surface all the material which has been excavated by hand. This method was employed to work deep deposits of exceptional richness. When these were exhausted, bucket dredges were installed to work the flat and flooded portions of the property.

The mining of alluvial deposits presents many varied problems, but the principles are the same throughout—from primitive Chinese workings to the most elaborate hydraulic or dredger mines. The alluvium is excavated and, if necessary, puddled with water to set free the tin. The mixture is then passed into a stream of water flowing in a ditch or sluice provided with adjustable wooden slats or riffles. The quantity and velocity of water is so adjusted that the force is quite sufficient to carry away the lighter waste while leaving behind a concentrate of the heavy tin oxide in the riffles. This concentrate is removed periodically, rewashed, and freed from its last impurities. After being bagged, either dry or wet, it is ready for sale to the smelting companies. Only after the process of smelting does it assume the familiar appearance of tin. Before

smelting, the inexperienced would not recognize the concentrates as tin and would be puzzled to explain why such store was set upon it.

In the hydraulic system, introduced for the treatment of hilly ground, a river is impounded high up in the hills by a big dam ; and a steel pipe-line is constructed from this to the property to be worked. The pipe-line is so designed that, on reaching the mine, the water, due to gravity, has attained a pressure of from 100 lbs. to 200 lbs. to the square inch. It is distributed to the various face workings and discharged by monitors, or swivelling nozzles, against the hillside. These powerful jets of water rapidly cut into the very stiffest clay. Thus the hillside is broken down, puddled, and run into sluice boxes where the concentration of the valuable mineral is made.

From the Rest-house at Gopeng I obtained a magnificent panoramic view of the Kinta Valley. As far as the eyes could see, the whole countryside was upturned, pitted, scarred and alive with swarms of Chinese coolies. The latter were all dressed in blue linen blouses and wide trousers ; and on their heads were large, shade-giving palm-leaf hats. The great splash of the Ulu Gopeng workings stood out conspicuously ; while the hills formed a delightful background. Gopeng village nestles in a narrow valley below the hills.

I drove on from Gopeng to Batu Gajah, so as to complete my tour of the tin mines in the Kinta Valley. The road was flooded in many places by the overflowing of the Sungei Raia and Kinta Rivers ; and we splashed, at times, almost axle-deep through the flooded roadway.

In quick succession, I visited the Malayan Tin Dredging Mine, Rotan Dahan and Pusing villages. Beyond them was the Kledang range of hills. Papan and Lahat villages followed, and then came the Ipoh Tin Dredging Mine, the famous Lahat Tin Mine, and Chendai Menglemb Mine and village. There were many other smaller mines scattered about, but those mentioned were the chief ones. Tronoh, a bit further away, is the largest open-cast mine in the world ; but there was not time to visit this, and I had to give the place a miss.

That drive round the Kinta Valley was quite the most instructive journey I undertook while on the Peninsula. The immense variety in the types of mines, as well as the different methods employed in working them, came as a complete surprise. Side by side, I had seen mines being operated primitively by blue-clad, large-hatted Chinese coolies, who were working industriously with long-handled hoes to break down the mounds of soil for puddling, and also elaborately operated mines under modern methods and machinery. Man and mechanical power vied with each other ; and both pitted themselves against the dredges working over the flooded and abandoned mines.

Here, in the Kinta Valley, vast wealth was painstakingly being won from the earth. There is an engaging simplicity in the crude Chinese plan of operations, which I found even more attractive than the powerful machinery plants in use at other mines. It is true that the former's system was old-fashioned, but the Chinese are nothing if not conservative. Their outfit in many of the mines which I visited was extremely simple, crude and inexpensive; but obtained the desired results. After all, they wanted no more than that. The Chinese mines are not supported by wealthy companies, but mostly privately owned by one man or a small syndicate.

Having seen the Kinta Valley, I could appreciate the force of what I had been told: namely, that about half the world's supply of tin is produced in the Malay Peninsula.

## CHAPTER X

### IPOH TO PENANG

MY last night in Ipoh was devoted to visiting the local Chinese and Malay theatres—a most amusing experience. The former, as do the Tamils, stage their own dramas; but the Malays cultivate an exotic theatre which is unconsciously funny. All three well repay a visit. The Chinese have little liking for variety, especially in theatrical productions, and carry their dramas with them all over the world, unchanged during a thousand years or more. As a result, their performances are novel in character. Most Chinese plays are operatic, with talking and singing parts; but the greatest artistes are those who can sing and dance equally well.

The drama, as such, has been known to the Chinese since about the year 1300, when first introduced by the Mongols; but the ballet has been popular since the time of Confucius. The old plays written hundreds of years ago, are still those of modern times. Everyone in the audience knows the plot and most of the lines of a play before he goes to the theatre. In consequence, acting largely consists of making formal gestures to represent certain actions and emotions—not always too intelligently. There seemed to be no real attempt to make the play realistic. All gestures have become crystallized to such an extent that there is a very definite one for each emotion portrayed. Thus the whole interest of the play rests upon the presentation of what is really a slow but stately ballet, designed rather to delight the eyes than to excite responsive emotions. Soon I found myself more entertained by, and in greater sympathy with, the audience and crowds on the stage than in the actual play.

The costumes were gorgeous in the silks and colourings, and the players obviously well-schooled. The stage seemed crowded uncomfortably. The players occupied the centre of it, the orchestra filled one side and a group of small boys packed the opposite flank. The latter chattered constantly, being frequently despatched with messages. The scene shifters carried on their labours with a delightful casualness, often in the midst of some impassioned song or oration. There was an air of easy freedom about this show, which had its comic aspect.

I went on to witness *Hamlet*, produced and acted by Malays in their own theatre. This was staged with all the accessories of the Malay heroic drama, its many peculiar conventions being highly

amusing. Everyone seems to have his or her own idea as to how *Hamlet* should be staged and played, but the Malays are more original than most. If not told in advance that *Hamlet* filled the night's bill, I should not have known the fact. However, it was all enjoyable and my frequent laughter was genuinely spontaneous. I sat through the entire performance, despite the late hour at which it started and the long time taken to ring down the final curtain.

At dawn I took the road to Taiping. One type of agricultural enterprise melted into another, only to emerge again less than a mile onwards, being followed rapidly by various kinds of tin mines, rubber estates and virgin forests. As a background, there was always the sombre-tinted hills or the unexpected colouring of fantastic limestone cliffs.

I lunched at the Rest-house in Kuala Kangsar, a really beautiful little town with every reason to feel proud of itself. Grouped happily beside the wide Perak River, at the point where the Kangsar River debouches, the place is subject to floods on account of occupying a strip of low-lying ground. Here is the seat of the Sultan of Perak, who has three palaces in the town. All overlook one of the fairest reaches of the Perak River and are more like French chateaux than Malayan *astanas*.

The first place to attract my attention was the native Public School—the first of its kind in the Malay Peninsula. It is based on the British model. Little Malay boys of the wealthier classes, when attaining school age, are sent to Kuala Kangsar to complete their education. The youngest students are often not more than eight years old. Every effort is made to administer this praiseworthy school on the same lines and in keeping with the best traditions of our greatest Public Schools. The buildings stand back from the road, being surrounded by a generous expanse of playing fields. Beside them is a handsome Malay mosque, known as the Royal Mosque. In the grounds is the Cenotaph, erected to the memory of the men of Perak who gave their lives in the Great War.

There are the two other splendid mosques overlooking the Perak River. Not one of the three in Kuala Kangsar would look cheap or tawdry beside the most renowned in India. The two on the bluff stand cheek by jowl; the larger one massive and gorgeously decorated, with four fine turret towers and a great dome rising up from the central roof; and the other small, fragile looking, and pure white in colouring. Each is of an entirely different type of architecture. Both are gems.

The road climbs up from the plains into hilly country after leaving Kuala Kangsar. Just short of Padang Renjas are some more weirdly-shaped limestone cliffs, sometimes pure white and, at others, either red or greyish-blue in colouring. Thereafter jungle-land and wild-looking gullies broke up any tendency to monotony; and beside



the swiftly-flowing, crystal clear streams, were always clumps of graceful bamboos. Often the road crossed over or ran beside a clear-watered rivulet, which either gurgled rapidly along its course or fell in foamy cascades over huge boulders to find its way down deep gorges into the fertile valley far below.

A little further onwards the lonely bulk of Gunong Pondok stood up boldly. Its massive sides were split into deep crevices, and coloured alternately white or rusty-red. This strange tree-covered limestone rock is fully 2000 feet high and dwarfs everything around it. Such limestone rocks and cliffs are found frequently scattered about the Peninsula; also in southern Siam. Each provides a home for millions of bats, who dwell in the many caves and fissures. Gunong Pondok is also believed to be the sanctuary of the *serau* or wild goat (*Nemorhaedus sumatrensis*), which is now rarely seen and almost extinct. It is on record that a local European planter stalked and shot several of this rare beast on the lower rocks of Gunong Pondok in 1907. These were probably the last specimens to be bagged in the Malay Peninsula.

Now I was driving steadily upwards to the summit of the Bukit Gantang, the scenery being strongly reminiscent of that in the Shan States of Upper Burma. The road passed high above rushing streams which fed a turbulent river deep down in the valley to the left, foaming downwards over immense boulders in savage gorges. The thunder of these waterfalls was constantly in my ears, drowning even the purr of the engine of my car.

This region is famous tiger country. The pug-marks of tigers along the road or railway track are quite commonly seen; yet though keeping a sharp lookout, I had not the luck to see one. Near Bukit Gantang, some years ago, a tigress and two cubs walked along the railway track and gained the platform of the little station. They stretched themselves to sleep under the ticket-window of the booking-office. In the morning they were gone, but the imprint of the folds of the skin of the tigress was plainly visible on the dry dust, as also were the broad pugs of her feet and the lesser ones of the two cubs. The movements of all three were clearly recorded on the ground, and it was seen that she walked off with a cub on either flank. Fortunately, no travellers came to the little station that night to demand tickets for a journey up or down the line.

Soon we had topped the pass and began to run down the far side of the hill into the Larut Plains, whereon stands Taiping. All was very peaceful. On reaching the Larut Plains, once more I was in the area of tin mining. Here dredges were hard at work upon flooded mines, long since abandoned by the original Chinese pioneers.

The best feature of Taiping, undoubtedly, is the park and its lovely lakes. With the gaunt hills as a background, they enjoy a

glorious setting. When first I saw them, the rain-clouds were threatening over the Larut Hills and casting their shadows on the limpid blue waters of the lakes. The light was soft, and the effect really marvellous. To the east of the town, beyond the lakes, is a splendid waterfall. It makes a vivid white splash on the face of the blue-green hill down which it foams and cascades. Someone had a brain-wave and selected this ideal spot for cleverly constructing a swimming-pool.

Taiping is the Chinese word for "everlasting peace." The town lies on the edge of the Larut Plains, amid alluvial tin-mining land which, for over sixty years, has been turned over and over again by Chinese miners, and still is being turned over and now dredged. Tin-mining goes on even within the township's limits.

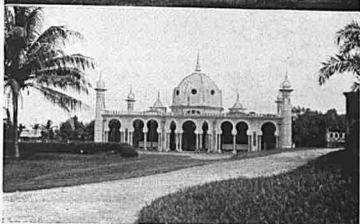
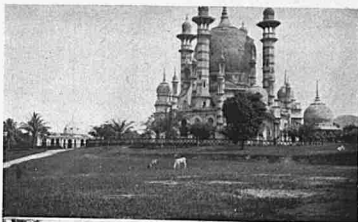
I stood and watched one of these bucket-dredges at work, just to see how it was done. The district surrounding Taiping, which is really the capital of the State of Perak, has an interesting mining history. It dates back to pre-British days and to a Chinese mining camp. In those days it was vigorously exploited by Chinamen, who employed thousands of coolies in open-cast mines; but, as the surface deposits were exhausted, the mines were forced to close down. Less than twenty-five years ago these tin-fields had practically been abandoned. With the introduction of the bucket-dredge, a renewed interest was taken in all flat areas. The Taiping flats were prospected by European mining experts, who found the tailings, together with the virgin soil situated at too great a depth for the Chinese to reach with their primitive methods, would yield good profits if worked with bucket-dredges.

Dredging is particularly suitable for working swamps, where the cost of keeping dry an open excavation would prove prohibitive. Almost any flat land can be dredged, provided that the ground does not carry excessive quantities of timber, boulders or heavy clay.

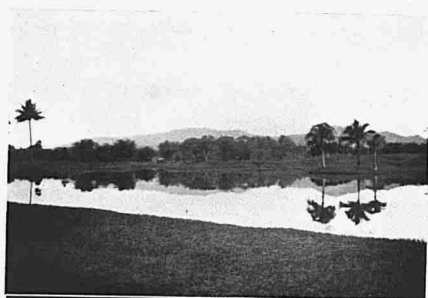
When a dredge is erected, the pontoon on which it floats on the water is built on the dry ground and launched into the dredge pond, which is a small excavation filled with water to a depth of some eight to ten feet. Steel superstructure is next constructed on the floating pontoon; engines, boilers, winches and pumps are then installed; sluice boxes made ready; and then the ladder and bucket-lines are set in place.

As the endless chain of buckets rotates, each one digs into the edge of the pond while the dredge is moved from side to side by means of wire-ropes. The ladder is then lowered, allowing the buckets to cut at a deeper level, thus gradually deepening and widening the working face. A complete cut having been made, the dredge is pulled forward by a head line. This operation is repeated *ad infinitum*.

The material lifted in the buckets passes into a revolving cylindrical screen, where it is broken and puddled by powerful jets of



1. MALAY MOSQUES IN KUALA KANGSAR
2. THE SMALL WHITE MOSQUE, KUALA KANGSAR
3. THE UNIQUE RAILWAY STATION AT PENANG



1. REFLECTIONS—PUBLIC GARDENS, TAIPING
2. MONASTERY GARDEN, WAT POH, BANGKOK
3. GUARDIAN YAKS, WAT POH, BANGKOK

water. The sand and tin released by this process passes through holes in the screen to the sluice boxes, where the tin is recovered. Stone and lumps of clay roll to the end of the screen and, together with the tailings from the sluice boxes, are dumped astern.

A dredge digs ground in front of the pond and dumps it, after treatment, at the stern. In this manner, the dredge, as also the pond in which it floats, can move forward over the land. As fast as the unwanted material is dumped behind, the water spreads ahead.

It was most fascinating to watch these dredges at work in and around Taiping; the more so as one of the mining engineers courteously explained the process to me.

Taiping, the modern town, is certainly picturesque, even if small in size. It has a few good public buildings, and a handsome mansion overlooking the lakes for the British Resident. It is also blessed with good roads, which are splendidly shaded by tall avenues of Angsena trees. These give out a sweet scent. In the European quarter, the bungalows sit amid perpetual freshness of green and a riot of gorgeously-coloured flowers. If Kuala Lumpur is a "Garden City," then Taiping is no less so. It is often claimed to be the prettiest town on the Peninsula. This is not without considerable justification.

That evening I watched the sun set over the hills; and it was worth coming many miles to witness. The trees and hills were displayed in their true colours. The sun was shining, happily for me, full upon them so that each gaunt tree showed up clear-cut against its million brothers. Early next morning the scene was utterly changed. The hills were then all clad in dark, bluish-grey shadows and wreathed in a creeping pall of white, low-lying mists. I shall always associate Malay with fleecy scarves of white mists above vivid green carpets.

Those who had sung to me the praises of the Public Gardens at Kuala Lumpur would not have dared to do so if familiar with those of Taiping. They are the most beautiful gardens in all Malaya; and not the least charming thing about them are the placid lakes which complete the grand picture. In my estimation, not even Penang, Singapore or Kuala Lumpur can outrival them. They approximate to the Royal Lakes at Rangoon, though but a humble imitation of them.

In a setting of green lawns and flowering plants, a chain of lakes stretches out across a huge park. In their midst are little islands. The edge of the water is fringed with vast numbers of bamboos, palms and other trees, which, as also the distant range of hills, are clearly mirrored in the placid surface of the lakes. The reflections are more clearly defined than the actual trees and hills. Yet the latter are fully forty miles distant. Round the outer flank of the

encircling road is a sentinel line of "Rain trees," whose flat tops and widespread branches give out a welcome shade in the hot hours of the day.

Taiping is worth a visit, if only for the joy of seeing those lovely lakes and gardens, with the Larut Hills beyond them. I saw it best, perhaps, by moonlight, on my last night in Taiping.

After dinner I engaged a Chinese ricksha-coolie and went round the lakes. He understood—how I could not guess—just what I wanted to do; and in consequence, all fell out as wished. Yet wonder of wonders, we conversed only by grunts and hand-waving. If I can judge by results, then we both seemed to be pretty good grunTERS and made ourselves thoroughly understood.

The park by moonlight was a supreme joy, for the lights and shadows were enthralling. Above the busy chirping of crickets and the raucous, deep-throated croak of bull-frogs in the lakes or swampy ground, there drifted to my ears the distant warbling notes of some Malay Caruso serenading his lady-love. From the native quarters came the sweet sounds of a reed-pipe and the rhythmic throb of a native drum.

Whatever else I may forget about Malaya, I can never forget the town of "everlasting peace" set in the midst of the tin-fields of the Larut Plains and endowed with such beautiful spots as the public gardens.

The road between Taiping and Prai proved uninteresting after what I had already seen. At Prai I crossed the straits by steam-ferry to George Town, the capital of the Island of Penang. The journey takes about half an hour.

Something like 23,000,000 Straits dollars were expended in an attempt to create a port at Prai for large ocean-going steamers. The Prai wharves proved a "white elephant." Seven years after the work was started it was discovered that only 23 feet of water stood over the bar, owing to excessive accumulation of siltage. No satisfactory method of dealing with this acute problem could be devised. It was a crushing blow.

It might be thought that this expensive failure would have sufficed to satisfy even the most extravagant nature, the more particularly the Federated Malay States Railways which fathered the Prai Wharves scheme. Yet there is still another on Penang Island, though not quite such a costly one.

As you approach the railway-jetty at George Town, you are instantly impressed by the appearance of an imposing white building, with a high clock-tower, just beyond the pier. The Town Hall—and a remarkably handsome one, too—I assured myself; but was wrong in my guess. This most conspicuous landmark in George Town, whether viewed from sea or land, is actually the railway station.

It is complete in every single particular, save one. There is a station-master, booking office, spacious hall, hotel, restaurant and railway offices: all the things, in fact, which you might expect to find at any important terminus of a railway. But the most important details of all self-respecting railway stations have been omitted. There are no trains, locomotives, signal-boxes, tracks or platforms. This may seem incredible, yet the truth.

As a railway station, in the ordinary accepted meaning of the term, it is no more than an elaborate piece of camouflage. Search the world over and you will not find its like. I do not know what that futile building cost, for nobody liked to mention the subject or hear it discussed. You grow inquisitive at the risk of being severely snubbed.

I had been advised that Penang, no less than George Town, would fascinate me more even than Singapore, Malacca or other delightful spots on the Peninsula. I cannot agree. To my way of thinking, Penang and the country seen in the little States of Kedah and Perlis were the real disappointment of British Malaya. I do not deny that Penang has beauty and some degree of charm; but does not measure up to what I had been led to expect.

Like Malacca, Penang glories in ancient history; but does not appear to make the most of it. This is a matter for regret. Singapore has its Raffles; Malacca its D'Albuquerque; and Penang its Francis Light. A stranger in Penang, however, may well be forgiven if he does not appreciate, as undoubtedly he should, all that Captain Francis Light achieved.

History tells us that, in the middle of 1592, Captain Sir James Lancaster, being in need of a rest for his men and to refit his ships, came "to an anker in the very good harbourough between three islands." This is the earliest mention of Penang Island that can be traced among English writers on Malaya. Captain Francis Light, however, is the real founder of Penang, but was not prominently in the picture until the year 1771. Then he wrote to Warren Hastings in India, and suggested that Penang was a desirable repairing harbour in Malayan waters and also a conveniently placed "magazine for the Eastern Trade." It was not until fourteen years later that the Governor-General in Council chose Penang in preference to Ceylon.

The island then belonged to the Sultan of Kedah; but, for the payment of an annual sum of six thousand Straits dollars, Kedah ceded it to the Honourable East India Company. Captain Francis Light took possession of the island with a small force on August 11, 1785. The next day he renamed it Prince Edward's Island; and such is still its official designation. Captain Light was a vigorous, enlightened Empire-builder. He died in Penang in 1794, when his little settlement was already in a highly flourishing condition. His

body rests in the old cemetery at George Town ; and an inscription to his memory can also be found in St. George's Church.

The port of Penang is excellent, even if only a roadstead with deep water anchorage for large vessels. It is protected by the island and mainland from the monsoon squalls which visit the Straits of Malacca. It was here that, during the early stages of the Great War, the German raider, the *Goeblen*, crept in one morning in the guise of a British cruiser. It drew alongside a Russian cruiser which was lying at anchor, and sank her with a broadside at close range. In her escape from the roadstead, the *Goeblen* met and sank a gallant French destroyer, which was coming into Penang and promptly gave battle to her big enemy.

The Chinese have a strong grip upon Penang, and nowhere is this more marked than in Leith street. On either side of this little thoroughfare, there are a number of splendid Chinese houses, the exteriors of which are decorated with a wealth of ornament thrown up in magnificent colouring by the bright sunlight. You see the dragons rampant upon the roofs, the strange figures in chinaware and pottery, and the quaint pictures in panels on the outside walls—just as in Heeren and Jonker streets of Malacca.

There are plenty of beautiful drives in and around George Town. The curious Chinese temple at Ayer Itam is only four miles away, the approach to it being through an unprepossessing collection of squalid huts. There is a granite stairway leading up to this temple, which is really not just one building but a series of temples up the face of the hillside. On the different terraces tortoise and gold-fish disport themselves in still pools of water, surrounded by roses, marigolds, gaillardia and chrysanthemums in pots. Above the terraces, seemingly in endless procession, tower the customary sloping roofs and raking gables of all Chinese temple architecture. On every hand are shrines. Temple surpasses temple in magnificence ; and the brasswork blazes and flashes in the sunlight. From the topmost terrace of all, you look out over George Town and the straits from above the flamboyant temple roofs.

The most beautiful place in all Penang is the Waterfall Garden, three miles out of the town. It can be reached by a good road, so there is no excuse for overlooking this very charming spot. The natural loveliness of the site—a green hollow nestling at the base of the hills, with a leaping cascade of water at its far end—has been used as a foundation for giving Penang a perfect gem of Nature's best art. Here man's hand has improved and not spoiled Nature's handiwork.

On the hills towering above George Town are several government and private residences, also the Crag Hotel where one may escape from the torrid heat of the sea-level. The hill's summit is just over 2,000 feet high and affords magnificent views over the island,



sea and mainland. You can reach this eyrie by means of the Penang Hills railway, which is built in two different sections and approximately a mile and a half in length. You are forced to change trains halfway up the track, owing to the steep gradient; and the journey upwards is a slow and tedious business, for the speed does not exceed four miles an hour. This is Penang's *only* railway.

Penang is not wholly devoid of beauty and interest, but left me unimpressed. I had been spoiled, perhaps, by what had been seen already in my travels through British Malaya.

Inquiries at Penang forced me to the conclusion that any thought of motoring through to Bangkok, in Siam, must be abandoned. I was assured that it was next to impossible to make the trip, though a few had done so. I finally decided to leave Tambeh and my car at the E. and O. Hotel in Penang, to await my return from Siam, and proceed to Bangkok by the railway.

From Prai onwards to the frontier of Siam, at Pedang Besar in the State of Perlis, is dull travelling after the remainder of British Malaya. Alor Star is the only place of any size and importance, and lately has gained renown as an air-port between East and West. This section of the Peninsula gives the impression of having been woefully neglected. Yet, perhaps, I am guilty of an injustice in saying or thinking so. After all, it is scarcely fair to judge a district or State when viewed only from a railway-carriage window. Further away from the steel-road there may be rich developments, of which one has no knowledge.

It is only fair to emphasize that Perlis State belonged originally to Siam, and was taken over by Great Britain under the treaty signed in Bangkok on March 10, 1909. The same can be said of the State of Kedah. The latter has the distinction of being a very ancient Malay kingdom, dating back to the ninth century or even earlier. Perlis, on the other hand, was subject to Kedah until the Siamese conquered both States and set up an independent Sultan over the former.

Sufficient time must be given to the British administrators to bring these backward States into line with the others. That they are in a fair way to achieve this may be gathered from the fact that the internal revenue of Perlis, small State as it is, was increased by over 400 per cent in the twelve years after the British first acted as advisers to the reigning Sultan. Every year since it has shown a marked advance.

My wanderings through British Malaya actually ended at Pedang Besar on the Siamese frontier. I had then concluded just over eight weeks' travel in the Malay Peninsula—a period of unalloyed joy, filled with new and pleasant sensations, and offering many novel surprises. I had learned a great deal; also unlearned many

grossly erroneous beliefs. It is a fascinating and uniformly interesting country, marching forward boldly to wider and greater civilization. British Malaya is a land of immense possibilities, crammed with unusual interests, and inhabited by a race of people who, from rulers to humblest subjects, are a nation of gentlemen by natural instinct. I ended my journey through this charming land with an unbounded admiration for the work of my fellow-countrymen and immense faith in the future of the country.

Malaya grips you from the first moment you set foot on its soil, and holds your affections ever afterwards. Now I understand why all those who have lived in the Peninsula speak of the country in terms of abiding love. Like them, I found it impossible to resist the magical fascination of this sunny land.

## PART II

### SOUTHERN SIAM

#### CHAPTER XI

##### THE JOURNEY TO BANGKOK

FOR many years I had longed to visit the kingdom of Siam, but no opportunity presented itself. It was in a thoroughly contented frame of mind, therefore, that I left Penang for Bangkok.

Until within the past twenty years or so, there was only one means of reaching the capital of Siam; and that by steamer from Singapore, Saigon or Hong Kong. Since the completion of the southern section of the Siamese State Railways, and its connection with the railway system in British Malaya, travel into this fascinating little kingdom has become quite a simple matter. From Singapore to Bangkok by rail is only 1200 miles, and can be covered in fifty-two to fifty-three hours.

The journey to Prai from Singapore occupies only twenty-three hours; and two hours later you continue your journey northwards on the "International Express" of the Siamese State Railways, arriving in Bangkok on the following day. Until recently the entire journey was done inside sixty hours, but the Siamese have knocked seven to eight hours off that time. It used to take thirty-four hours between Prai and Bangkok, but the introduction of Deisel electric engines on this express has reduced this time to twenty-six or twenty-seven hours. Roughly 720 miles of the 1200 from Singapore is covered by the Siamese train, and the average speed over the distance is really good when all things are considered.

This may sound a more formidable journey than it is in reality. However, I may state emphatically that travel is infinitely more pleasant and less tiring on the Siamese train than on many of the famous European and American Continent long-distance expresses. In sober truth, the journey to Bangkok will always be remembered for its smooth running, often beautiful vistas of scenery, and the interesting people encountered.

It was at Prai that I got my first real insight of modern developments in Siam; and the excellence of the "International Express"

took me completely by surprise. The change over from the Federated Malay States system was all to the good. The Siamese train was sheer luxury. It put me in good humour for the trip to Bangkok.

I have travelled over the great majority of the world's railway systems and, apart from those in Europe, America and Canada, only experienced one better train service. This sole exception is the "Desert Express" between Khartoum and Wadi Halfa—a magnificent effort of the Sudan Government Railways. I am inclined to question if that train has a peer anywhere in the world.

Having purchased my ticket, reserved a berth on the train and booked my luggage at the dormant Penang railway station, I boarded the ferry-steamer and crossed the Straits to Prai. The "International Express" was all in readiness.

It left Prai punctually on time and arrived in Bangkok absolutely according to schedule next day. Punctuality is one of the many strong features of the Siamese State Railways. Neither in going to Bangkok nor in returning to the frontier, at Pedang Besar, did the train fail to be on time; and let this fact stand to the credit of the Commissioner-General of the Railways and his efficient staff.

I shared a two-berth sleeping coupé with an officer of the Royal Air Force, on leave from India and anxious to see something of Siam. He proved a very charming travelling companion. We soon made friends and joined forces throughout our visit, and found our tastes were in common. The train was very full, every berth being occupied.

Throughout the journey northwards, the service of the Siamese staff on the train was both courteous and efficient. The restaurant-car and food were absolutely first-class, the track splendidly laid and the cleanliness really astounding—the latter due to the Deisel electric engine. Dust, coal-grit and smuts were noticeable for their absence. The contrast between the Malay and Siamese railway systems was most marked; the balance of the scales leaning heavily in favour of the latter.

I was particularly impressed by the studious politeness not only of the train staff but of all officials in Siam. As a race, the Siamese are never servile but always perfect little gentlemen. They all appeared to speak passably good English. This was a great relief to my mind, for I had been wondering how I should fare in Siam with a complete ignorance of the language. I might have spared myself any mental worry on this account. A knowledge of the English tongue is one of the most pleasing features of Bangkok. I very soon discovered that it was freely used and understood among the educated classes throughout the little kingdom. This was another great surprise.

We crossed the frontier at Pedang Besar. Here polite Siamese Customs officials boarded the train and asked if we had anything to declare: the more particularly, any firearms and ammunition.

This was about the only thing in which they seemed at all interested. They accepted the word of all European passengers without question, and attempted no examination of our baggage. All the annoying little incidents entailed in crossing most international frontiers were here non-existent. The magic word "tourist" works wonders in Siam, serving as a seal to your passport.

It was at Pedang Besar that I made acquaintance with the tical and its satellites, the salung and satang—the coinage of Siam. The tical is a word of foreign origin, and has now been changed to the gold *baht*, which equals a hundred satangs. The Siamese money-changers at this point obtain their rate of exchange by daily telegram from Bangkok, and the message is posted up conspicuously outside the station-master's office for all to read and inwardly digest. There is no deception. You may rest assured of being given the same rate of exchange here as could be obtained on that day at any bank in Bangkok. Certainly there will not be more than half a point difference between the two rates. This was a joyful experience, and one not encountered elsewhere in the world. I gave the Siamese full marks for this kindly consideration of the visitor to their country.

At this point, too, the Malay *sarong* gave way to the *panung* garment of Siam. The presence of some jaundiced-robed, shaven-headed Buddhist monks on the platform of the station confirmed the fact we had arrived in Siam. Malaya is essentially a Moslem country, whereas Siam is Buddhist. I also learned here how the custom arose for Siamese women to wear their hair short like the men. Practically all do so. As a consequence, in the rural areas, it is not easy to distinguish between the two sexes; both are equally diminutive, while the women are inclined to be flat-chested.

This custom originated when the Burmese attacked and defeated Siam more than a century ago. The women, fired with a lofty patriotism, insisted on taking their place in the ranks of the defenders of their country; and, in order to resemble the male soldiers, these little Amazons sacrificed their tresses. This practice has continued ever since.

The dress of the Siamese is entirely different to that of the Malays; and they are a much smaller race of people, with more Chinese than Malay types of features. The original name of the country was Sayam or Maung-Thaï; while the Siamese call it Thaï, which means "the free." Maung-Thaï, therefore, implies "the land of the free." There is really no particle of Malay about the genuine Siamese people, but much more of the Chinese.

In Siam the women wear the *panung*, as do the men, for a lower garment; but mostly their upper clothing consists of a simple bodice, supported by two straps over the shoulders. At some places, however, the women only wore a *panung* and left the upper portions of their bodies naked. Often the bodice does not meet the *panung*,

but leaves a belt of naked flesh exposed to view. Some women favour a *pahom* instead of a bodice. This is a scarf wound round under the arms and covering the breast, but leaving the back and stomach naked. The men either wear nothing at all above the waist or else a linen jacket.

A *panung* is a piece of material about seven feet in length and two-and-a-half feet broad. When correctly worn, it gives the effect of extremely exaggerated plus-fours; yet is a graceful looking garment.

In Bangkok, however, it has become increasingly common to see men and women dressed in European clothing. Often the Siamese women of the upper social classes may be seen combining the latest Parisian creations and footwear with the *panung*, which strikes an incongruous note.

Neither sex is endowed by Nature with much physical beauty; but all are sturdily built, even if small of stature. Their faces, especially among the peasant classes, are often positively hideous. This is heightened by the revolting practice of constantly chewing betel-nut mixed with lime, which has the effect of blackening their teeth and making their mouths look like a red smear. The use of this mixture is fast dying out among the educated classes, who now appear to be completely dominated by European influences.

After leaving Pedang Besar, we travelled at first through a flat and decidedly uninteresting stretch of country. This was so similar to the States of Kedah and Perlis that it failed to arouse a particle of enthusiasm. The first place of any importance beyond the frontier was Haad Yai junction, from which point a branch line proceeds through Patani to Pasir Mas in the British Malay State of Trengganu. Within recent years Pasir Mas has been connected with the eastern section of the Federated Malay State Railways at Kuala Lipis, in the State of Pahang, thus providing an alternative route from Gemas to Bangkok and traversing the States of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan.

Otapoo, the next important station beyond Haad Yai, is the junction for the line to Singgora, formerly known as Songkla. This latter town and port was founded about a century ago by a band of Chinese pirates. In course of time, they abandoned their unlawful ways and settled down to the pursuit of peaceful trading and agriculture. To-day Singgora is the hub of a lively trade in rice and other agricultural products; also the headquarters of the Lord-Lieutenant of the Southern Provinces of Siam.

From this point the railway traverses another stretch of flat and uninteresting country, skirting the western shore of the Singgora Sea until Petalung. From the latter place a road runs westwards to Trang—a small town on the south-west branch of the Southern Siamese Railways—and passes through well-preserved parks, the

property of the King of Siam. Roads in this country are a novelty outside of Bangkok itself ; though the increasing popularity of motor cars in Siam has forced a keener interest in the development of road communications. Beyond Petalung, the rivers and streams begin to flow in an easterly direction, and never again are met flowing westwards unless mere meanderers in flat country. All of them eventually empty into either the China Sea or the Gulf of Siam.

From Kao Choom junction another small branch railway serves Nakon Sritamaraj. This ancient town is situated seven miles from the shores of the China Sea, and probably owes its existence to the amenities of the bay near at hand. The safe anchorage which this affords first attracted the Portuguese and then the Dutch from Malacca. Each established trading-posts in the small kingdom of Nakon. After the British had driven the Dutch out of the Malay Peninsula, the kingdom of Nakon became first a feudatory and then a full-fledged Province of Siam.

Ronpibon is the centre of an extensive tin-mining area, and a town of some size and importance. A short distance northwards is Tung Song junction, from which spot another branch line runs to Trang and Kan Tang on the west coast. Here the cool breezes from the China Sea pleasantly cooled the hot atmosphere. The country hereabouts was more attractive than further south, the railway climbing up through beautiful well-cultivated valleys and wooded hills to the summit of the Chong Kao pass. Immediately before the summit of this pass is gained, the train passes through the only tunnel on the Southern Siamese Railway.

Chumphon is the largest and most important town in the southern peninsula of Siam. Four miles away is the mouth of the Klong Tatapao, a small river which flows into the Bay of Chumphon ; and, immediately south, is Ban Sang Dad, the site chosen for a proposed canal across the Isthmus of Kra, in imitation of the Panama Canal. The scheme was that the Klong Chumphon should be utilized at this point ; while the actual canal should start at Kra, on the western coast, and end at the mouth of the Ban Sang Dad River, in the Bay of Chumphon on the east coast. This bold plan would have entailed no greater distance than a little over thirty miles, and would have considerably lessened the journey by sea from the Far East to the Indian Ocean. Such a canal would have formed a more natural geographical frontier for the Malay Peninsula than the existing one ; though it is doubtful if the Siamese would have viewed the matter in the same light. The Klong Chumphon canal project never came to anything, and was abandoned on the score of being too costly an undertaking.

Soon after leaving Chumphon, we commenced to climb up to the wide expanse of the long-grassed plateaux of Bang Son and Maprit.

These plateaux were reminiscent of East Africa, the more particularly on account of the curiously-shaped ant-hills scattered about in every direction. In the far distance could be seen the dim outline of the range of mountains which mark the frontier of Tenasserim (Burma) and Siam. Shortly after arriving on this vast plateau I saw a small herd of eight elephants under a huge tree. They were dreaming and immobile, less than five hundred yards from the railway track. The presence of these beasts, and the nature of the terrain in which they roamed, revived treasured memories of certain areas in East and Central Africa. I do not know if these were wild, or domesticated elephants out grazing, but am inclined to think in the wild state and not subjected to man's wishes.

On the surface there appeared to be mighty little difference between this section of Siam and many parts of eastern Africa. The plateaux were well-watered, thickly wooded and covered with tall grass; yet there were no signs of human habitation. The region looked inviting enough for settlement or agricultural development; but, as the Siamese had left it severely alone, the soil or the grass must have been valueless. Viewed from the train, however, it looked first-class cattle or sheep country. Appearances were probably deceptive. Trust the local inhabitants to know a good pastoral or agricultural area when they see one!

Throughout this strip of country could still be seen the wide track of the disastrous typhoon which swept over this district some years ago. Its capricious antics devastated many acres of trees and flattened out the jungle; later, fires started among the wreckage and completed the havoc wrought. The charred remains were still plainly visible for miles on either side of the railway.

I experienced only one minor adventure on this journey, which was not devoid of humour. I had risen at dawn, so as to miss nothing worth seeing; went along to the bathroom; shaved and enjoyed a shower-bath. I was under the impression that the door had been bolted securely; but apparently was mistaken, or else the bolt was faulty. I was stripped, facing the door and drying my body, when the door suddenly opened and a lady stood framed in it. Both were so overcome with astonishment and so embarrassed, that we remained mute and petrified. A second later, the lady uttered a startled ejaculation and fled in confusion, leaving the door wide open. At her departure I made sure that the door *was* securely bolted; and hastily completed my drying and dressing. When I rejoined my travelling companion and related the incident, he was convulsed with laughter. I do not know who was the most startled—the lady or myself.

Later, when we went into the restaurant-car for breakfast, I saw the intruder seated at a table with another girl. Both blushed furiously—and lowered their heads. By a strange coincidence the



only vacant seats were those facing them, and the head-waiter conducted us to them. Being careful to conceal the fact that I recognized them, we struck up an acquaintance over the meal. They were two Australian girls, travelling round the world on their own; and a charming couple they proved, too. As they were staying at the same hotel in Bangkok, we saw a great deal of them and shared some of our excursions. Our original and unconventional introduction was not mentioned, naturally; but I often chuckled to myself when thinking about the train incident.

At Huay Yang we had the first glimpse of the blue waters of the Gulf of Siam. It was only a short peep and no more than that, for the dense jungle-growth quickly hid it again from our view. Shortly afterwards the train came to a halt at Prachuap Kirikan, one of Siam's most popular seaside resorts. It is from this point that a route was surveyed to connect up with the Burma Railways. No doubt, this scheme will be proceeded with when things are favourable; but, for the time being, the project seems to be hanging fire.

Hua Hin, on the shores of the Gulf of Siam, is the local "Brighton." Formerly a modest little fishing village, the late King Rama VI made it into a popular and fashionable bathing-resort. Both King Rama VI and ex-King Prajadhipok greatly favoured Hua Hin, each maintaining a summer palace and spending a considerable period of the year there.

I enjoyed a week-end here, during my stay in Bangkok. Hua Hin is blessed with a cool, bracing climate, while there are many opportunities to indulge in all kinds of sport. There is a first-class hotel and an excellent golf course; while furnished bungalows can also be rented by those who wish to spend some weeks at this seaside resort. There is a lovely sand beach, hedged in by dark-coloured rocks and blushing with masses of pink shells; while it would be difficult to excel the bathing in the sapphire waters of the Gulf of Siam. Year by year, Hua Hin has grown in popularity, not only among the Siamese but also residents in British Malaya; and the partiality of the Siamese monarchs for the place has given an impetus to intensive development schemes. It can be reached quickly by express trains from Bangkok, and in less than a day from Penang.

Between Hua Hin and Petchaburi there is a huge alluvial plain, through which great limestone cliffs protrude themselves at intervals. They are not unlike those around Ipoh in general character and formation; while the colouring is almost identical.

On the dizzy peaks of some are precariously perched tiny Buddhist temples. It is amazing how these shrines came to be built, or how the material used in their construction was ever hauled up the precipitous faces of those giant cliffs. That these supreme

difficulties were overcome ingeniously is conclusively proved by the presence of the completed temples on the summits of the hills. Gazing up at them, I wondered if any devout Buddhist ever climbed those immense pinnacles of limestone rock to offer prayers to the Lord Buddha. The Siamese guard of the train assured me that monks lived at these temples and served the shrines therein. It must be a lonely existence. There can be nothing else for them to do save pray and lose themselves in devout contemplation before the image of the Buddha. Procuring supplies of food must also be an acute problem, calling for great physical effort in climbing back to the summit of their eyrie.

Suddenly the whole character of the country's face changed, and now we were travelling through wide-flung acres of tall sugar-palms and rice-fields; while close beside the railway, often running parallel to it for miles, were narrow *klongs* (canals). As there are practically no roads in rural Siam, these *klongs* are used for general travel and transportation of freight from one point to another. The little dug-out canoes, each heaped high with produce or trade goods, were being paddled or poled lazily along the canals by both men and women. Mostly, however, the men sat in the stern, steering and smoking, while dreaming of a rich harvest of good trading business. The women were set to work on the paddling or poling.

Each tall sugar-palm had lashed to its stem a crude bamboo pole, with crossbars at intervals, to serve as a ladder when extracting the juice in due season.

Throughout this low-lying, swampy area there was a welcome profusion of bird life—snipe, duck, quail, teal, herons, wildfowl of great variety, and waders. Often I saw white-plumed padi-birds in the water-logged rice-fields, adding a splash of colour to the countryside. In Siam, being a Buddhist land, all life is held sacred: or supposed to be. They are not always too particular, however, in regard to the sanctity of human life; though they rarely kill wild birds or animals.

At Petchaburi there is a large town, set amid acres upon acres of rice-fields. Here I saw the first substantial *Wat* (temple). Upon the hill, some half an hour's walk to the west of the station, were several handsome examples of Siamese temple architecture. They looked interesting and worthy of closer inspection, but this was impossible. The Kao Luang (Royal Hill) overlooks the railway station. In actual fact, there are really twin hills: one crowned by a shrine, and the other by the royal palace. The main portion of the town is spread out on the flat ground at their base, the road from the railway station being earth-surfaced, lined by an avenue of shady trees, and brick-embanked against floods. On either side of this road is a huge expanse of rice-fields.

On the southern extremity of the twin hills are two *prachedi* shrines and one of the *phraprang* type ; while an observatory and the castle-like palace occupy the northern end. On the slopes of these hills are military barracks, stables, and the columned Royal Theatre. The *pratumang* (palace) was built in 1860 for King Mongkut (Rama IV), and remains exactly as it was at his death. It is said to be well stocked with rare art treasures—furniture and pictures of the English period, and many fine specimens of Copeland and Garrett porcelain. The site of this palace is a splendid one, but the building is not one of any real beauty.

In the neighbourhood of Petchaburi the whole population—men, women and children—were actively engaged in harvesting the season's rice crop. The yellow stacks of rice plumes, and the pink or slate-blue water-buffalo ploughing the harvested fields, added considerably to the picturesqueness of the scene. Every *klong* was crowded with canoes or sampans, each heavily laden with the freshly cut crop. Here, too, were innumerable villages and farm homesteads—little nests of houses shaded by clumps of fruit trees or feathery bamboos ; while on every hand the rice was being winnowed industriously, the ricks threshed, and the grain carefully stored away in the granaries. Occasionally a diminutive gendarme cantered along, mounted on an equally midget Siamese pony. Everywhere there was movement.

The Petchaburi district is engaged throughout the year exclusively with rice-growing. Although a six months' crop, yet it requires so much repairing of water-channels for irrigation purposes, so much ploughing by water-buffalo, and so much trampling into the liquid mud of the green manure provided by the lush vegetation springing up in the wet seasons, that there remains no time for leisure. Rice-growing is an all-time job. The result is that the Siamese peasant of the Petchaburi rice-plains is so fully engaged throughout the year in tending his fields, sowing the seed in the nurseries, planting out the young plumes, and with harvesting and marketing the crops, there is very little opportunity for the festivals and religious observances so common in all Buddhist lands.

During a more prolonged halt than usual at Rajburi, I was able to see a little of this large town and the ancient city wall surrounding it. Cattle seemed plentiful hereabouts, but were as dwarfish as their owners. In all the *klongs* were a profusion of gorgeous-hued lotus lilies ; but these could not compare with the grandeur of the carpet of blood-red lilies over which I once travelled when approaching the Inle Lake in the Southern Shan States of Upper Burma. The Rajburi lotus lilies were only a pale imitation of those in the canals giving access to the gorgeous expanse of the Inle Lake.

There was an impressive view of the largest *Wat* in the world

from the station at Nakom Patom. It rose abruptly out of the rice-fields, dominated the town and countryside, and was a magnificent structure. There are also large military barracks and a substantial jail in this garrison town. Siamese soldiers roamed about, dressed in neat khaki uniforms; but their stature was so slight that they looked more like Boy Scouts than adult soldiery.

Through a profusion of rice-fields, busy mills and smoking factories stacks, we sped onwards to Bangkok, having turned due east from Ban Pong—the station before Nakom Patom. Frangipani trees, often in avenues of gnarled trunks, gave forth their swooning, sickly scent from the white or cream-coloured blossoms. So strong was its perfume that it even invaded the compartments of the moving train.

Finally, we ran smoothly to a halt beside the platform of Bangkok Noi station, which is actually the terminus of the Southern Siamese Railways. I glanced at my wrist-watch, and noted that we were punctual to the second. Thus, after many years of patient hope, at last I stood in Bangkok.

The suburb of Dhonburi, in which is the Bangkok Noi Station, stands on the right bank of the river; while the capital city is on the left bank. Formerly, you had the choice of either taking a motor-launch down the river to your hotel, or else crossing by launch or sampan to the Tha Phra Chan landing-stage on the opposite bank and then driving to your destination. This is all changed now.

On January 1, 1927, King Prajadhipok opened the new railway bridge across the river, naming it the Menam Chao Phya, and thus linked the southern and northern railway systems in the central station of Hua Lampong. The latter is situated in the heart of the capital. In April of 1932, King Prajadhipok performed the opening ceremony of the new Menam River Bridge, which established vehicular and pedestrian communication between the two banks.

The Southern Railways and the hundred thousand souls in Dhonburi are no longer isolated and cut off from direct contact with the capital city. Until the completion of these two magnificent bridges, which are the centrepiece of a fine example of modern city planning, the population on the right bank has existed under conditions which were very much the same as 150 years previously.

That journey into Siam had been a delightful experience. It paved the way and prepared me for much which was to follow in the succeeding weeks. As an introduction to a country, the railway from Prai to Bangkok could not be bettered and must assuredly appeal even to the most bored of globe-trotters.

## CHAPTER XII

### AN ORIENTALIZED VENICE

THERE are three good hotels available in Bangkok—a former Royal palace (now a Siamese State Railways' hotel), the Oriental or the Hotel Royal—all of which are on the left bank of the Menam River. Acting on advice given me in Penang, I had already telegraphed for accommodation at the Oriental.

The hotel porter met me on arrival at Bangkok Noi station. He brought a message from the proprietress, suggesting that I might find it more pleasant to detrain here and travel down river to the hotel in a motor-launch. That was a most thoughtful act. The two Australian ladies had also booked at the same hotel, and joined me on the comfortable launch; but my R.A.F. friend had reserved accommodation at the Hotel Royal.

We were soon speeding down the Menam River—a muddy, swift-flowing waterway, which is the "Thames" of Siam. That river-journey revived old memories of many a launch trip on the Tigris through Baghdad during the Mesopotamian campaign; also gave me a splendid opportunity to see something of Bangkok's waterfront.

In about thirty minutes we came fussily to a halt at the private landing-stage of the Oriental Hotel. I was at the end of a comfortable and fascinating journey into Siam, the land of picturesque *Wats*. The hotel is within a stone's throw of the British Legation; and every business place of importance is close at hand, as well as the principal clubs. Electric light and fans, modern sanitation and comfortable rooms were not the least of the attractions of this hostelry. The cuisine was as good as that of the best hotels in the East or Far East; and I enjoyed a fillet of steak there, which was as tender and sweet as any served in the great capitals of Europe. I never regretted going there in preference to the magnificent but expensive ex-palace.

I had always heard, and was prepared to believe, that the city of Bangkok was full of interest. On the following morning, my R.A.F. friend joined me and we set forth early to get down to grips with the modern capital of Siam.

Bangkok is a comparatively young town, with a population of about a million. It dates back only a trifle of a century and a half,

though I found difficulty in realizing this. The city is ever expanding prodigiously and now covers a vast area of ground. As development is not hindered by any lack of space or encompassing hills, there is ample room for Bangkok to spread out over the flat alluvial plain until one of the largest and fairest cities in the Orient.

Yet it has not always been the capital of Siam. Bangkok was built shortly after the ancient capital at Ayudhya was destroyed about one hundred and seventy years ago by the victorious Burmese invaders of the territory. To the north—a short train journey on the Northern Siamese State Railways—still stand the crumbling ruins of that old "City of the Great Kings." From Ayudhya fled the last of the thirty-four kings who had proudly ruled there during the four centuries of Siam's early history.

King Sucharit sought safety in flight when the Burmese captured his capital in 1765. It is said that he escaped stealthily by night from his great palace in Ayudhya, unattended by any members of the Court, but died a violent death outside the city walls while the Burmese were busily engaged in pillaging his palace and capital. The palace buildings were razed to the ground; his Queen, young daughters and the many concubines were captured and sent as prisoners to Ava; while nothing much was left of the city's ancient glories.

That colossal disaster, however, proved beneficial to Siam in the long run, for the new capital at Bangkok is some hundred miles nearer the mouth of the Menam River and the Gulf of Siam. It is thus more accessible than was Ayudhya; and to-day fast and comfortable passenger-steamers provide a regular service to Bangkok from Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore and Batavia. Steamers of not more than 13 feet draught are now able to anchor in the river opposite the city or else come alongside the wharves on the banks. Within the last decade luxury-cruise liners have included Bangkok in their programme, and it is no longer off the beaten tracks for tourists. This is a great boon to both Siam and globe-trotters. Year by year, the fascination of Bangkok is becoming more widely appreciated, and the number of visitors grows steadily.

As a city, it offers some startling contrasts. The buildings range from handsome stone edifices to mere mat huts; but some of the public buildings are worthy of any great city in the world. Within the last twelve years an ordered plan has been evolved for development on modern lines. Slowly but surely, out of the existing chaos in some of the poorer districts, Bangkok is being made into one of the most beautiful and delightful cities "East of Suez."

The climate, though hot, is not uncomfortable or trying for Europeans. There is a definite cold season; and the rainfall averages about fifty inches a year. During the hot weather season, however, the temperature often reaches as high as 106 degrees;

but between October and February the maximum is about 92 degrees and the minimum approximately 54 degrees Fahrenheit. Fortunately, my visit took place in the month of January and I never found it unpleasantly hot. The city's water supply is excellent and can be trusted for drinking purposes, for it is filtered and piped from the source ; and electricity is available for all, the streets and houses everywhere being lit from the electric power station.

Within its limits there are splendid roads ; yet the original highways were not metalled roads, but a vast network of *klongs* (canals) which intersected the city in all directions. These, besides affording means of communication and transport facilities, also housed innumerable families. Houseboats and shops afloat are quite common in Bangkok. Not a canal or narrow stream is without its masses of anchored houseboats ; and the *klongs* also serve the purpose of a laundry, bathing-place or water-closet. These canals are the most outstanding characteristic of Bangkok.

This is equally true of all the low-lying delta in which the capital is situated and even in the districts of Siam much further afield. Agriculture plays such an important part in this country that road development is a sheer necessity ; yet nothing much has been done to supply this crying need in the rural areas.

The peoples in Asia are, to a very large extent, dependent upon the rice plains for their principal article of diet. In fact, rice is the "staff of life" to a very large percentage of the world's population. Siam, Burma, and French Indo-China are the three great rice exporting countries. Java, which also grows it extensively, cannot produce enough even to satisfy home consumption and has to import large quantities from its more fortunate neighbours.

The rice grown for export purposes in Siam is produced chiefly on the flooded plains on the Menam and Meh Klong Rivers, both of which debouch into the Gulf of Siam. Producers from both areas ship their rice-crops through the river-port of Bangkok, which is about twenty-five miles from the sea. All the rice grown in the fields, where no railways are available in the near vicinity, has to be brought to Bangkok by means of the *klongs*. The latter are the main highways of the little kingdom. In Bangkok and district—and more particularly at the estuary of the Menam River—there are seventy-five rice-mills engaged in converting the rough rice into the commercial product ; while there are seven hundred other mills in the Provinces.

There is a large river-population in Canton, partly because there is no more room available for houses ashore ; but this is not true of Siam, for the density of the population—there are roughly ten millions—does not approximate to that of China. The teeming boat-traffic seen on the *klongs* in an around Bangkok is pretty conclusive evidence that the Siamese inhabit the rivers and canals

from preference and not from economic pressure of space for housing purposes.

As there are no country roads in the outlying districts, the *klongs* supply this deficiency. The whole of the delta is criss-crossed with canals and water-courses, thus making an elaborate system of communication between towns and villages. Large cargo-barges, poled steadily along, ply up and down these quaint water-ways; while little row-boats or canoes dart in and out through the congested water-traffic. The scene on these *klongs* is always one of intense activity, and ever picturesque.

The rural villages, to a great extent, consist of a large floating population. Houses even are built on rafts or on top of scows, which are then anchored by means of stakes driven into the edge of the canal banks. These queer-looking houses line the *klongs* on both sides in long rows, with water-lanes between them, thus creating a striking effect.

The banks of the Menam and other rivers also are freely lined with these unique settlements afloat; and, when a launch or other powerfully-driven boat passes them, they bob up and down in a most disturbing fashion. I should imagine that this perpetual motion of the house-boat must be rather trying at times; but, no doubt, the residents grow accustomed to it and do not experience any sensation of seasickness. In any case, they appear to serve the needs of a water-loving people most admirably. Communication between the land and their water-homes, or with neighbours on the water-way, is by means of canoe or sampan. I have seen both men and women swimming across to another house-boat.

One of the most interesting features of this canal life is the marketing which takes place every morning. Fruit vendors, fishermen, merchants and general traders, or farmers with produce for sale, all gather at a fixed spot on some important waterway and carry on the functions of a market-place. The scene is always animated. There is ever a loud babble of voices as vendors and buyers haggle vehemently over prices. They sit in a boat which rocks in harmony with the excited movements of its occupants, while bargaining for things they wish to buy or sell. You have to be early afloat if you wish to watch the scenes, for the *klong*-markets generally come to an end about the time the average European thinks of getting out of bed. By eight o'clock in the morning, the market-place is practically deserted.

The first impression gained is that Bangkok is really an Oriental edition of Venice. A motor-launch trip along these waterways confirms this idea and is always an interesting experience. Yet to obtain the best results from such an excursion you must leave the Menam River and turn up the canals where the lives of the people are wholly undisturbed by trains, motor-cars and tramways. Here the





CANAL SCENE IN BANGKOK, WITH THE "GOLDEN MOUNT" IN THE BACKGROUND



1. GRAND PALACE OF KING OF SIAM, BANGKOK

2. THE WAR MINISTRY, BANGKOK

peasants will be seen living exactly as their ancestors did several centuries ago.

Their houses are of wood, and thatched with the leaves of the *nipah* palms. Those that are not actually afloat on the water are erected on stilts so that the flooring is a couple of yards above the ground. When the river rises in flood and covers most of the delta, the floor of the house is thus high enough above the flood waters to insure the family having a dry place in which to sleep at night-time.

A home afloat has many distinct advantages, especially if its owner is also a shopkeeper. When business is dull, he spies out a new site where he believes it possible to do brisker trade. If the money is available, he will hire a launch to tow his boat to the new location; but if cash is scarce, his friends and neighbours help him to pole the floating house to the selected new anchorage. He does not have to disturb a single thing in his home; there are no removal vans, bullock-carts, heavy lifting of furniture, packing or unpacking, and no breakages to fill his heart with sorrow. The minimum of trouble is involved in the move.

This is all delightfully simple. Such a mode of existence may cause the European townsman to smile; yet the canal-dweller of Siam is always a happy and contented individual. His simple needs are supplied in abundance. The rice grows luxuriantly; waterfowl, fish, fruit and vegetables are plentiful; and there is no need to experience hunger. So, why should he worry?

It seems a pity to disturb this rustic scene of peace and plenty, but the days of *klong* life must surely be numbered. Bangkok's canal system is being filled in inevitably; and the erstwhile water ways are being converted into modern streets and lanes. This is a wise move from a sanitary point of view, for the *klongs* only tend to provide breeding areas for the mosquitoes and thus make malarial fever a menace to the health of the population.

I noticed, in my wanderings about Bangkok, a marked tendency to provide the city with more and more broad, well-aligned roads; to fill in all mosquito-bearing areas; to destroy slums and erect modern hygienically designed houses in their stead; and generally to improve upon old-fashioned conditions. The completion of that stupendous task, however, will take some years; but when it is accomplished finally much of the present picturesque characteristics of Bangkok will have vanished. Still, even a Venice-like charm should not be allowed to obstruct hygienic revolution along sound lines.

That is a picture of the water-fronted and rural areas of Bangkok. In the centre of the city the canal life is a trifle different, but the water-traffic much the same; and all the *klongs* are packed with craft and house-boats.

I had heard much about the intriguing interest of the Sampeng

quarter of Bangkok, so took an early opportunity to see it for myself. Frankly, it left me cold. There was really nothing of any special interest, as far as I could judge, in the filthy, narrow lanes flanked by small curio and other shops. Underneath these lanes flowed the dirtiest, most odiferous *klong* in all Bangkok. This waterway must be a grave source of danger to the health of those who reside in its close proximity, and the thick clouds of flies and mosquitoes told their own tale. This *klong* was no more than an offensive, insanitary drain; the breeding place of mosquitoes; and the garbage dump for all and sundry.

In the shops of the Sampeng quarter I did not see one single thing to induce me to loosen my purse-strings. The famed Niello work was rarely encountered. I found great difficulty in persuading any shopkeepers to produce specimens for inspection; and still more difficulty in getting them to accept what I believed to be a fair price to offer. If I had been in less unpleasant surroundings, perhaps I might have bargained at leisure. Then the story might have ended otherwise.

The Siamese have their own arts and handicrafts, which are peculiar to themselves. The chief of these is the Niello ware, which fully deserves close attention from those interested in Eastern art. Their Niello ware stands in a class by itself on account of its vastly superior workmanship; and, with the exception perhaps of the products of medieval Italy, there is nothing to equal it in any other land. No matter how the Niello ware is used on articles in daily use in European communities—such as cigarette boxes, cases and trays—its specifically Siamese character remains intact. That is to say, always provided the craftsman confines himself to his native designs and rigorously excludes all Western influences. Niello ware is really a centuries-old art and now almost exclusively a Siamese process for the beautifying of various objects.

In order to make it, rather thick metal has to be employed, as good results are not obtainable from lighter material. So it is never fragile, as is so often the case with the arts and crafts of other Oriental countries. Niello ware lasts for a lifetime. It is strong enough to resist the wear and tear of constant daily use. In so far as durability and finish are concerned, the Siamese craftsman's work compares very favourably with the best products of European craft schools.

It is composed of silver, copper, tin and flux, being exceptionally difficult to manufacture. The silver must be quite pure. The material is beaten into shape by hammering, and then the craftsman carries out the design by cutting it out on the metal sheet. The whole is next powdered over with the prepared compound, and then submitted to fire until the silver is almost at melting heat. The rough outside scum is filed down and the piece of work scraped quite clean.

Next it is reshaped, for the great heat has distorted and twisted the material; and, finally, the whole is polished industriously.

Gilded Niello ware is also made in Siam. Two methods are employed. The first is by a process of hammering the gold into the silver; and the second by putting in gold and mercury together. In the latter process the mercury evaporates under heat, while the gold sticks to the silver by vacuum.

The origin of this Niello ware is little known; and, even in Siam, impossible to trace this art to its infancy. According to well-accepted Siamese authorities, Niello ware was first mentioned in the literature of that country towards the end of the seventeenth century, when the reigning King sent a few Niello ware articles as a present to the Pope in Rome. But it is thought that the art was first introduced from Persia early in the seventeenth century, for many Persians are known to have settled in Siam about that time.

Niello, however, is an Italian word; and this ware was certainly made in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is interesting to observe that there is very slight difference between the Italian Niello of this period and that of the Siamese of to-day. The chief points of beauty are the age of the design, the shape of the article, the freedom from bubbles on the inlay, the workmanship of the pattern, and the great smoothness of the whole surface.

The Sampeng quarter is at the bottom of Pah-U-Rat road, where the old city wall ends. To reach it, you cross the Taphan Han—a bridge which is an enclosed arcade of small shops, with the *klong* flowing beneath—and step forthwith out of Siam into China. This is the oldest Chinese district of the city. Having made his fortune, John Chinaman wisely lives in a more healthy section of Bangkok, while still maintaining his business in the Sampeng quarter.

Everywhere the *klong* is bridged by shops; but some of the lesser canals have been filled in and become lanes. The area swarms with children and beggars, flies and mosquitoes; one noise attempts to out-vie others; beastly smells to out-smell others equally nauseating; and beggars to out-whine their rivals' shrill supplication for alms.

And I had heard so much in praise of the Sampeng quarter!

Having failed in my efforts to purchase good specimens of Niello ware at a reasonable price, I haggled over a sepia-coated Siamese cat, which had a quaint and perky expression. The Chinaman who owned this creature would not deal, much to my regret. The genuine Siamese species is somewhat of a curiosity and difficult to obtain. There are many half-bred or imitation Siamese cats procurable, but the pure-bred animal is a rarity. Several times, once it was known I desired a Siamese cat, arrant frauds approached me with cats of dubious origin which carried a crumpled, crinkled or twisted tail. They swore these were genuine specimens of the breed of cat

peculiar to this fascinating country. Knowing better, I refused to be swindled.

The Menam River is always full of interest, and a launch trip, either up or down it, is fascinating. Only then can you fully realize how it holds the commercial life-blood of Siam. It is ever thronged with steamers and native craft of varying types; and the banks are no less instructive. The water is thickly covered with floating masses of a noxious weed—the blue water-hyacinth; while the tides and currents are stated to be tricky.

One night I hired a launch, and took my Royal Air Force companion and the two Australian ladies for a trip up the river. It was a nice moonlit night. I had arranged with the hotel to place on board the materials for supper, and the excursion proved delightful in every way. All thoroughly enjoyed it. We returned to the hotel's landing-stage about midnight. Packing up the remnants of an excellent supper, an unopened bottle of champagne came to light. I suggested it was a pity to return this to store: in which view all were agreed. Just as we were approaching the landing-stage, I was busily engaged in carefully drawing the cork, with my back to the river, and only about a yard from the three-inch high rail round the deck. As the cork came out with a comforting pop, the launch bumped rather heavily against the landing-stage. It caught me entirely off-guard.

Before I could save myself, overboard I went in my dress-clothes; while the foaming bottle was firmly clasped in one hand. With great presence of mind, I swiftly clutched with my free hand at the deck-rail, managed to seize it and clung on. My head and the bottle did not go under water. Laughing heartily at my mishap, the others relieved me of the precious bottle of champagne and helped me on board. Dripping with water, I started to fill the glasses with the wine. At the same instant the launch once more bumped heavily, caught me off-guard again, and dumped me bodily into the river. This time the bottle of champagne went to the bottom like a stone, and I was also completely immersed. Now I had to swim for it. The current was fearfully strong and rapid: treacherous eddies tugged me downwards. I should not care to swim for pleasure in that swiftly-flowing river. It was lucky that I am a good swimmer and fell in so close to the launch; otherwise, severely handicapped with my clothing, I should probably have been drowned. A friendly boat-hook, extended from the launch, aided me in scrambling back on the deck.

Fortunately, my unpremeditated midnight swim caused no harmful effects; but I hated to think of that expensive bottle of champagne giving the fish an unaccustomed "kick." A double-brandy neat, in the hotel, restored my ruffled spirits to normal calm.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IMPRESSIONS OF BANGKOK

**B**ANGKOK has an imposing appearance in certain sections, especially that area surrounding the Throne Hall. Parisian-like boulevards are features of the city—those passing the Ministry of War and approaching the Throne Hall are two instances of this.

Electric trams traverse the capital in almost every direction; motor-cars and motor-cycles, bullock-carts and pony-carriages, rickshas and even bicycles vie with each other for right of way in the main streets; and always the traffic on the *klongs* adds its peculiar charm. The rickshas are pulled by Chinese coolies, but in all other respects are different in type from those found on the streets in British Malaya. I do not think the Siamese type is so comfortable to ride in.

New Road, running north and south on the east bank of the Menam River, leads past most of the Foreign Legations and the chief business establishments. Here also are to be found most of the principal banks, shops and clubs. Altogether it is a very creditable thoroughfare, but inclined to be dusty and too narrow. The most striking feature is the handsome statue of Queen Victoria, which stands at the entrance gateway of the British Legation.

The traffic-control policemen are no whit less efficient than those in British Malaya. But, like all modern places, Bangkok has many grave traffic problems to be solved and overcome. Many of the streets are far too narrow to accommodate the increasing volume of motor traffic; and the practice of placing electric street-lamp standards and telegraph poles in the centre of the roadway only serves to accentuate the dangers. There are many of these obstructions at the junction of two roads, thus compelling motor-vehicles and other transport to make a wide detour round them. Accident follows accident, for the view of the road ahead is badly obstructed. The city has grown with such rapidity, and become so modernized, that its traffic problems have increased alarmingly. Of sights and places of interest there are a great many. The people intrigued me more, perhaps, than did the *Wats* (temples), Royal palaces, and such like buildings of note in Bangkok. Almost every race of the world is represented in the capital of Siam—Europeans of all nations, Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Laos, Malays, Cambodians,

Annamese, Javanese, Boyanese, the Karen from the Burma frontier, Persians, Eurasians and Indians. Most Eastern cities are distinctly cosmopolitan, but Bangkok more so than others.

The Japanese have a large community domiciled here, and are chiefly engaged in trades or professions. There is more than an average proportion of Japanese among the medical and dental professions ; and many more are either chemists or photographers. I could not avoid being impressed by the significance of their persistent presence all over Malaysia. They are to be found in almost every township—watchful, polite, and yet inscrutable.

It is interesting to note that the great majority of the professional photographers throughout Malaya, Siam and the neighbouring territories are Japanese ; and that, when the Singapore Naval Base was first mooted, many Japanese bought up land in the immediate neighbourhood of the proposed site. Perhaps I am unduly suspicious of such things ; yet do not think so. The strange coincidence of their invasion of these territories is worth noting.

The Japanese secret service is known to be about the most efficient and widespread in all the world. Everyone who has travelled much, especially those who have been ordinarily observant in the East and Far East, well-knows that the Japanese are ever athirst for information. Coming homewards on one of their ships, I was continually being cross-examined by some of the Japanese passengers in the hope of eliciting the type of information about our ports and naval stations which does not interest the ordinary traveller. They learned nothing from me. Penang, Colombo, Malta, Gibraltar, and Dover were all subjects of lively concern to them, it seemed. I fear they must have been disgusted at my apparent ignorance of those important points in the British Empire.

Cameras were much in use at all places where the ship called. This would not have borne any special significance but for the fact that buildings and harbour-works appeared to interest them photographically more than the local people and the general scenery. The ordinary passenger does not concern himself with taking photographs of docks, harbours and strong-points. This, coupled with their persistent questioning about such things, naturally aroused my suspicions as to their actions. It might be due to idle curiosity : then, on the other hand, it might not. Personally, I am inclined to believe that every Japanese traveller is a potential secret service agent ; or, at least, is collecting and forwarding information likely to be helpful to his own country.

Not only in Malaysia is every country honeycombed with Japanese, but China and the Philippines also. Nobody seems to care. They may come and go freely within the limits of passport regulations and immigration laws. We have yet to learn the final answer to the riddle of the deportation of two Japanese visitors to



Singapore recently, and the reason why a prominent Japanese resident on that island died so suddenly when being examined at the police-station. That is an incident of very recent happening ; and not an isolated instance. I have often wondered what would be brought to light if the premises of local Japanese photographers were raided suddenly in Singapore and elsewhere.

It is difficult to suggest how these activities reasonably could be curtailed. I do not pretend to be able to do so. Still, the ever courteous and silent Japanese agents work industriously to build up an Intelligence Service which should prove of inestimable value should the day unhappily arrive when East and West are in conflict. There are many who believe that this must come to pass. It is known that most of the Intelligence work in the Russian-Japanese war was carried out by Japanese jugglers, who performed for the amusement of the enemy's troops behind the lines. To-day there can be little for them to learn about Western nations' defensive points in the East and Far East.

I may be advancing a mare's nest ; yet do not think so. Singapore has recently found it necessary to introduce an Official Secrets Bill, giving wide powers to the Governor to deal with all cases of espionage.

Burma has rightly been called the " Land of the Yellow Robe." Siam, also, is a Buddhist country. The saffron-robed monks are plentifully in evidence throughout that land ; but are far more orderly, less offensively truculent, and keep more in the background than in Burma. After seeing both lands, I was greatly impressed by the fact that the Buddhist monks in Siam were less politically-minded and more genuinely religious than their brethren in Burma.

This fact, once it had been absorbed, set me furiously to think, Is our British tolerance for the religious beliefs of other races now subject to us, and our reverent treatment of the priests of the various religious denominations within our far-flung Empire, being overdone and misapplied by any chance ? A mixture of religion and politics is a decidedly unhealthy thing for any country, for they make poor bedfellows. This has been proved, time and time again, in India, Burma, Egypt and elsewhere. Yet Siam is a genuinely Buddhist country and is governed by Buddhists, but religion and politics are not permitted to clash.

Throughout the length and breadth of that kingdom no particle of nonsense is brooked from the monks, who are kept strictly to their own business and not allowed to mix in or dominate politics. Our own method of benign tolerance and patient acquiescence in all forms of stupid political agitation has done incalculable harm in India and in Burma since the Great War. Nothing, to any sane man's thinking, could be more disastrous than permitting political agitation to be carried on under the cloak of religious fervour.

This marked contrast between what pertains in our own several

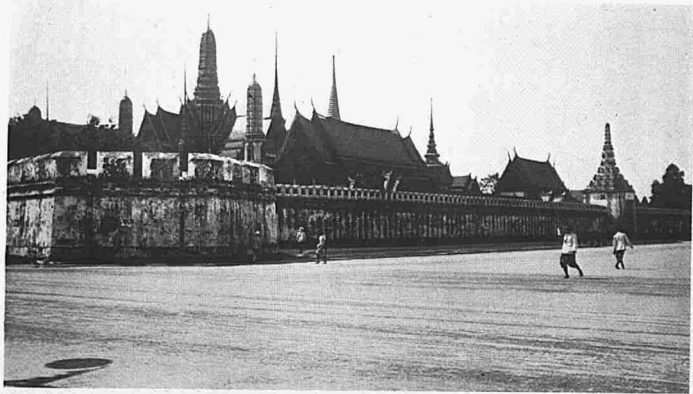
possessions, and what is found in Siam bears deep thinking and patient investigation. I cannot avoid the conclusion that Siam can teach us a great deal about the wisest manner in which to handle religious teachers who forget their cloth and the tenets of their faith in order fanatically to run *amók* in political strife. Those who should be the last to do so actually employ their influence to sow broadcast the seeds of revolution and bloodshed; instead of using it for peace and goodwill amongst mankind. Terrible harm can result from allowing religious tolerance to be carried to unwise lengths. History provides ample evidence.

Of late years—ever since, in fact, the seed of political extremism has been sown assiduously by Indian agitators from across the Bay of Bengal—Burma has closed all her Pagodas to non-Buddhists. New-fangled regulations have been introduced by monk-politicians, all aimed solely at bringing Europeans into contempt. Political agitation, not religious fervour, gave birth to these new regulations. No sensible European will walk bare-footed into an insanitary building, which now they must do if wishing to view the beautiful interior shrines. The Oriental has no ideas on keeping such sacred buildings clean, any more than he has about proper hygienic conditions in his own household. The consequence is that these Pagodas are mostly the habitation of filth and disease-bearing germs.

In Siam you may freely enter all their shrines and *Wats*. Both Burma and Siam are true Buddhist countries; and so it may well be asked why you should be compelled to enter a Pagoda bare-footed in Burma and not have to do so in a Siamese *Wat*? The answer can be found in this latter-day mixing of religion with political agitation. That mixture, as all should know, is highly dangerous and inflammable.

The Siamese legal courts occasionally give some strange decisions, and two curious instances were brought to my notice while I was in Bangkok. They are not without elements of humour.

In the first case, a Siamese policeman was charged with allowing a Chinese prisoner to escape in consideration of a bribe of ten ticals. The policeman pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Yet, because he had pleaded guilty, the Court reduced the sentence to two months; and furthermore directed that, should the escaped prisoner be recaptured before the expiration of this sentence, whatever period still remained unserved should be forthwith cancelled and the policeman instantly released. It struck me as a strange system of punishment, and the reasoning of the Court is none too clear. The fact that the accused man accepted a bribe for allowing the prisoner to escape, and pleaded guilty to doing so, seemed to be treated as of no account at all. Obviously the Court sentenced him for allowing the Chinaman to escape, not for bribery as well.



WAT PHRA KEO AND ANCIENT CITY WALL IN BANGKOK



1. SHRINE IN WAT POH, BANGKOK



2. INLAID DOOR OF SHRINE, WAT POH,  
BANGKOK

The second case was that of a Siamese who had been charged with committing a murder. He was found guilty at the trial, and sentenced to life imprisonment instead of getting a death sentence. In Siam all executions are carried out by beheading with a sword. So irksome did the murderer find this long term of imprisonment that he killed a fellow-convict. Once more he appeared before the judges on a capital charge. He cheerfully pleaded guilty, but explained that the second murder was committed so that he could be sentenced to death this time and freed from the hateful life imprisonment. Just chop off his head, he pleaded earnestly, and thus end his unbearable existence in the jail. He almost went on his hands and knees to the judges in pleading for the death sentence.

Evidently acting on the hypothesis that it is folly to give such a criminal what he wants, the Court again passed a sentence of life imprisonment. The murderer was furious and was loud in his expressions of rage.

I am unable to say if this ridiculous situation ended satisfactorily from the murderer's point of view; nor do I know if this man took the lives of any other fellow-convicts or warders so as to make certain of his own death. The sentence was rough on the murderer but rougher still on his fellow-prisoners, who might well be offered up as a stepping-stone to the executioner's sword. I would have liked to have heard the sequel to this amazing episode.

Siamese Budgets of late have found great difficulties in being balanced and, indeed, are apt to show an annual deficit. In this, Siam is not peculiar. From time to time, various means have been taken to raise money for public utility services; but not all have proved successful.

Ten years ago there was organized a National lottery for a million tickets, which was to be drawn for at the annual Winter Fair in Bangkok. There was no difficulty in selling the tickets and funds flowed in freely to the organizers. After the draw, strange rumours were afloat. It was freely stated that the public, who had subscribed so generously to the lottery, had been shamefully swindled. The winners' names, when published, were known to none; and it was further alleged that the prizes were paid out on tickets which had never been sold.

Hearing of these rumours and accusations, the late King Rama VI appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the charges made against the officials concerned with the organization of the National Lottery. The result was that forty-nine persons were found to be definitely involved in the alleged embezzlement and misappropriation of lottery funds. Among the accused in this scandalous business was a high officer of the King's own Court. The total sum involved in this instance, as well as in other smaller lotteries held, was stated to have been very considerable.

King Rama, immediately he had read the report of the Commission, took prompt action. The high officer of his Court was suspended from the Royal Household, deprived of all his Orders, forbidden the entry to the Court, and expelled from the exclusive body of Royal aides-de-camp. Later he was arrested and sent for trial. I did not hear what sentence was passed on this man, or on his companions in the swindle ; only that they were all proved guilty. The King, as a further mark of Royal disfavour, cancelled his gift of a house and grounds to this former trusted aide-de-camp.

While the accused were awaiting trial, the police advertised far and wide for the alleged winners of the three largest prizes to come forward and disclose their identity. None responded to this invitation.

A year later there was organized another large lottery—a two million tical affair—in connection with a National Exhibition in Bangkok. This was very poorly supported, which is not at all surprising. Even the Siamese believe in the old proverb : “ Once bitten, twice shy.”

None should go to Siam under the impression that the people of that country know and speak no other language than their own. There are a great many fine schools in Bangkok which offer a really first-class English education ; and every year sees more and more youngsters going to Great Britain or the Continental countries to complete their studies at the great Universities. Naturally, the knowledge of the English language is widely spread, and is found among all the better classes in the towns.

The late King Rama VI, the ex-King Prajadhibok, and their brothers were all educated at English Universities, Sandhurst or Woolwich ; and, no doubt, this fact set a very good example to their subjects in Siam. If the Siamese nation especially favour the institutions of learning in one particular country, it is those of Great Britain. This can probably be traced to the fact that their relations with the British Empire are older and more intimate than those with any other race. Furthermore, Siam has a British possession immediately on its western and also southern frontiers.

Led by their Kings, the educated classes of Siam have wisely committed themselves to the adoption of only such foreign methods which lend themselves best for amalgamation with those of Siam. The country is very far from adopting the institutions of any one nation, purely from sentimental reasons, to the exclusion of all others.

So, although the fashions have changed with the times, they are only doing so with caution and discrimination. The great lady in Siam, not so long ago, would appear at a Court function in the traditional attire of her high rank—short hair stiffened so as to stand on end, face powdered a dead white, eyebrows blackened

and enlarged, lips painted scarlet, a bodice of ancient design, and the *panung* so stiffened with wax that it flared out on all sides and made its wearer waddle rather than walk. Seen thus, the *panung* was not unlike the old-time crinoline. Nowadays, however, the latest fashions of Paris, with the exception of the skirts, are generally followed in Bangkok; though there is a marked inclination to wear European costumes exclusively and abandon the national dress entirely. For long the *panung* resisted the attack of the Western dress or skirt. How long it will continue to do so, even to a very moderate extent, no man would be so rash as to predict. Perhaps the Court beauties in Bangkok can supply the answer to that riddle.

Seeing that the late King Rama and the ex-King Prajadhibok wore European clothes and uniforms, it cannot be long before all the upper grades of society follow their example and entirely scrap the use of national costume. When that day comes—and it has practically dawned—Siam will have lost much of its charm for the traveller; and certainly have surrendered its striking individuality. Personally, while regretting that such a time must come inevitably, I can still find comfort in the knowledge that I saw the Siamese before their final surrender to Western conventions in dress and habits of life.

Ex-King Prajadhibok (the Prince of Sukhodaya), who succeeded his late brother, King Rama VI, on November 26, 1925, always showed marked taste for everything British. During his ten years' reign he fostered the growth of Western influence in Siam, always furthering any sound policy which would make his people and country more civilized and enlightened.

Now that he has abdicated, and an infant has succeeded him on the throne, it is improbable that Siam will revert to the days of pre-Western influence. The Siamese are far too deeply committed to the enlightened policies of the last three kings. They would frown upon any attempt at retrogression.

Both my R.A.F. officer friend and myself were anxious to learn all we could about the Siamese army, navy and air services, so set out together in quest of information. The Military Service Act of 1933 added Siam to the list of those nations which have conscription. Every able-bodied man is now liable to serve for two years with the colours, thereafter doing twenty-three years in the three reserve classes.

Shortly after leaving my hotel our interest was claimed by an imposing building, on the green lawns of which were displayed an amazing collection of ancient cannons of light and heavy calibre. The building was guarded by khaki-clad soldiers. We had never seen any artillery like this so, ignoring the strong military guard, we stepped forward boldly, climbed over some iron chains and began

to inspect the cannons at closer range. Out came our cameras to photograph this array of antiquated armament. We did not observe the approach of a natty little captain of the Siamese army, with sword drawn. Nearly all the required photographs had been taken when he thrust himself before us. He was wonderfully polite—almost apologetic—while warning us off the premises. As he was speaking, out of the tail of my eye I noticed an armed guard approaching us from the main building. I scented trouble.

"Europeans are not allowed here, gentlemen," the Siamese officer stated, smiling slightly. "This is the Ministry of War, and I must ask you not to take photographs."

He saluted smartly with his sword. We raised our sun-helmets and bowed with all the grace at our command. Both smiled disarmingly at the little Siamese soldier, and the R.A.F. man apologized handsomely for our trespass. The armed guard came to a halt, with fixed bayonets, behind their officer; and I wondered if we should be arrested as spies. The Siamese captain gave a curt order to the guard, who about-turned and retired to the Ministry of War. We sighed with relief and climbed back over the chains. The little captain saluted gravely with his sword, watched us off the forbidden area, and then withdrew. The international incident was closed.

Later on, I saw a number of photographs of this building and gun-park exposed for public sale in a Japanese photographer's window in Bangkok. I still fail to understand the prohibition against photographing either building or artillery of ancient vintage, for the negatives exposed were not confiscated. Perhaps we should have had a permit.

The Royal Siamese Navy is not a very ambitious arm of the fighting services, consisting only of small craft. They garrison the Paknam Forts at the mouth of the Menam River; and have an arsenal and docks in Bangkok. The fleet chiefly consists of gunboats, destroyers and torpedo-boats, scrapped by some European Power. I made enquiries as to whether this fleet ever went to sea. An old-timer in Bangkok told me an hilarious tale of the early pioneer days, when the navy was commanded by a Dane with the rank of Admiral-in-Chief. I repeat the story as told to me.

The Danish Admiral-in-Chief decided to take his fleet down the river to the Gulf of Siam for naval evolutions and gunnery practice. They duly arrived at the open sea without any untoward incident and proceeded well into the Gulf. So far so good. The Danish Admiral began to breathe more easily. What followed seems almost too humorous to be true, but was vouched for by my informant.

After various tactical manœuvres had been successfully carried out, the Admiral-in-Chief ordered his fleet to fire a salvo. His flagship duly loosed off a broadside, but the other vessels remained



mute. When the Dane had recovered from astonishment at this gross disobedience of his signals, he discovered that the entire crews of the other vessels in the fleet had dived overboard. The flagship's crew had done likewise. The roar of the broadside had badly shaken their nerves; and they thought the flagship had blown up, while their own craft might follow suit. Taking no risks, they dived into the sea to escape such an ill-fate. I am told that it took quite a lot of persuasion to entice the crews back on board. When all were rescued, the fleet put about and steamed slowly back to their anchorage in the Menam River off Bangkok.

This yarn greatly amused me, but I was inclined to regard it as fiction rather than fact. Then I saw Siam's fleet at anchor in the river. In view of the ancient character of the vessels and their armament, my sympathies were inclined to the tender susceptibilities of the Siamese admirals and lesser ratings who manned them. My doubts about the genuineness of this alleged incident quickly evaporated. The fact remains that, once the fleet was safely back in the river, the navy has been anchored there more or less permanently. To be the Admiral-in-Chief is to enjoy a shore-going job; but the sinecure is to-day the prerogative of a Siamese and not an imported foreigner.

When I saw the fleet in Bangkok it had more of a resemblance to a floating laundry, sadly lacking a new coat of paint, than a nation's navy. I circled round it in a motor-launch on various occasions, always finding the rails and rigging festooned with clothing hung out to dry; while the crews were in all stages of dress and undress. They lead the simple, peaceful life in the Siamese navy.

Seen ashore, however, the officers and men look smart and workmanlike. The city of Bangkok is about as plentifully sprinkled with them as with members of the land forces; and the streets, at all hours of the day, can be seen filled with high and low officers in natty white-drill uniforms and also the lower ratings.

The Royal yacht, the *Maha Chakkri*, is generally to be seen anchored off the Royal landing-stage on the left bank of the river. It is a most palatial vessel, with graceful lines, but seldom puts to sea.

The Army, however, is cast in a much sterner mould; also better trained and equipped than the navy. They are organized into divisions and corps. The Ministry of War holds large annual manoeuvres in the vicinity of Bangkok; and I was told that these are splendidly conducted. The British Malaya Command frequently sends a General Staff Officer to attend and observe these military manoeuvres.

There is an equivalent of the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, organized for the purpose of training cadets who will ultimately

become serving officers. The Honourable Corps of the Wild Tigers is a powerful body of the upper classes in Siam, who have a semi-military organization and approximate to our Reserve of Officers. This Corps was originated by the late King Rama VI in order, I understand, to surround himself with a strong force against any form of anti-monarchist movement. The spectre of a possible political revolt was even then on the horizon.

During our quest for information about the Fighting Forces of Siam, we came to an open piece of ground where an infantry battalion was drilling. We watched them, with deep interest, performing battalion and company drill. They put up a spirited performance, and every single phase of the training was excellently carried out. This was a surprise, after seeing the Navy; yet there was more to come. Later that day we halted to watch a regiment of cavalry consisting of two squadrons, at drill on the open space before the Ministry of War. They worked more like mounted infantry than cavalry, though armed with a sabre in addition to a rifle. The drill evolutions were admirably performed.

There is still another branch of the Fighting Services which commands more than casual attention—the Aviation Department. This owes much to the initial efforts of Prince Amoradat, Colonel on the General Staff, and his able assistant, Colonel Phra Chaloemkas, who directed the Aeronautical Service.

Siam was quick to recognize, and profit by, the value of aviation. Even before the Great War, King Rama VI had realized the immense utility of aircraft; and sent three Engineer Corps officers to France in 1911 to study the science of aeronautics. They returned to Bangkok in 1913, fully certified as air-pilots, and immediately took up their task as instructors in aviation. Schools for flying were established early in 1914. Simultaneously the Royal Flying Corps was inaugurated with a view to training pilots and organizing flying services in Siam. Aeroplanes were first used in the military manœuvres of 1913; and Siam supplied a Flying Corps contingent to the Allies in the Great War.

After the Armistice, owing to the almost universal progress attained in aviation, Siam recognized the necessity for a broader development of these services for both military and civil purposes. She converted her Royal Flying Corps into an Aviation Department of State. The aim of this Ministry was generally to direct all manner of aviation in the country, and to seek ways and means of using aircraft for the greater benefit of the nation. In October, 1920, Siam signed the convention concerning aerial navigation with the other Powers of the world, and thus definitely placed herself on the same plane as the more enlightened Western countries. This fact alone illustrated Siam's keen perception of the very powerful influences which aviation can wield in the up-building of any country.

By 1924 there were four aerodromes operating for international and national aerial navigation. These were situated at Song Khla, Ubon, Chiangmai and Donmaung—the latter being about thirteen miles north of Bangkok. There is a flying school at Donmaung ; and an anchorage for seaplanes at Samud Sakorn, about twelve miles from the capital and on the Gulf of Siam.

Each of these aerodromes provide Rest-houses, Customs' services and canteens for the welfare of aviators and passengers from foreign countries. There are also repairing shops, hangars, various elaborate signal systems to facilitate landing and taking off by aircraft—either by day or night ; and also efficient wireless and meteorological departments. Communication between these aerodromes and Bangkok is by railway. In addition, lesser aerodromes have been generously prepared in almost every district throughout the country, each being clearly marked by distinguishing letters which can be read easily from any machine in the air.

Siam lacks sufficient means of internal communications, but the introduction of aeroplanes went far towards solving many of these grave difficulties. The services undertaken by the Aviation Department include surveying from the air, carrying the mails, transporting goods and passengers, and bringing in sick people from outlying districts to town hospitals. Many a life has been saved through the use of air-ambulances.

If for nothing else, Siam is remarkable for being the first country in the Far East to be progressive in the matter of aviation. In this respect she was far ahead of her neighbours—Burma and British Malaya. Within a comparatively short time of the air being conquered definitely, Siam placed herself in the ranks of those Western nations which had become air-minded. She has never looked back. While the other countries in the East and Far East remained insensible to the benefits conferred by air services and the paramount importance of creating aerodromes, Siam kept herself abreast of the modern age.

To-day Siam has one of the most efficient Air Forces in the East or Far East, and quite adequate for all local requirements. Unquestionably this branch of her Fighting Services is superior to all others ; also a model for all her neighbours.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A MODEL ORIENTAL KINGDOM

**T**HROUGHOUT the centuries and until June 24, 1932, Siam has been an absolute monarchy. On that fateful day in the kingdom's history, a bloodless revolution changed the government of the country into a constitutional monarchy within twenty-four hours. Thus ended the last absolute monarchy in the world.

The story of the successive stages which brought about that change is not without interest.

In order to understand thoroughly the causes that have led up to the recent social and political upheavals in Siam, it is imperative to inquire into the nature of the monarchy and its relationship to the social life of the people. A brief outline of these will create a better conception of what has taken place in Siam within the past two years. The causes and effects are, perhaps, not generally understood in Europe.

From the time when the Siamese first threw off the Khmer yoke at Sukhothai in the thirteenth century, their government has always been an absolute monarchy. This has varied from a mild patriarchy to the extremes of cruel tyranny. During the first hundred years of their independence the Siamese enjoyed their new-found liberty under the mildest form of paternal rule. Their kings levied no taxes, allowed the meanest of their subjects the right of audience, and left to posterity undoubted evidence of the happiness of their subjects.

With the establishment of the capital further south at Sukhothai in 1350, the kingdom increased in size and consolidated its political position among the nations of south-eastern Asia. This was accompanied by an excessive centralization of the administration; also a false appearance of wealth was produced as a result of the concentration of expenditure on a luxurious Royal Court. In consequence, the country people were reduced to extreme poverty.

There was no strong Brahmanic caste in Siam to control the despotism of kings, as was the case in India; and the officials were merely menials intent on retaining their precarious positions and exacting what they could out of the people whenever an opportunity offered. When the capital was moved still further south to Ayudhya, the change in the relations between the monarch and his subjects

became even more marked. The reason was that the Siamese became more sophisticated as they penetrated further southwards and mixed with more advanced peoples.

Though the masses remained strongly attached to the simple tenets of Hinayana Buddhism, the kings sought to emulate the pomp and stately Court life of their former Khmer suzerains and also imbibed over-ripe Hindu ideas on the divinity of monarchs. They came to be regarded by the people as the reincarnation of Hindu deities. The elaborate ceremonials with which they surrounded themselves did much to impress the ignorant masses with the divinity of kingship.

Then the Burmese successfully invaded Siam in 1765, destroyed the capital at Ayudhya, captured the king's wives and family, and put him to flight. When King Sucharit met a violent death at the hands of the conquerors, and the humiliation of the Siamese people was complete, the old order was entirely reconstructed. A new capital was created further south on the Menam River, which is now the modern city of Bangkok.

A new dynasty was created when the Siamese general who led a successful military expedition into Cambodia was called to the throne, as Rama I., by the will of the people, chiefly as a reward for his military genius. This was the foundation of the present Chakri dynasty. The kingdom still remained an absolute monarchy, and it was seventy-five years before new ideas as to government and progress were introduced.

The credit for the initial steps taken to allow the filtration of Western ideas into Siam stands to the credit of King Monghut (Rama IV), the fourth ruler of the Chakri dynasty. He was a learned and enlightened monarch, broad-minded and sane of outlook. Rama IV is owed much by Siam for his far-sighted vision, for he created the foundations of a new and brighter era for his people. With his accession to the throne in 1851, things changed rapidly and for the better.

Among the things standing to the credit of King Rama IV, are a decree giving religious toleration to all faiths in his kingdom; the signing of treaty relations with the great European Powers; and the grant of liberal concessions to European traders, for he was quick to visualize the advantages which must accrue by permitting Westerners to exploit his country and open up trade. The new era of prosperity and progress initiated by this king has been developed loyally and without cessation by the monarchs who followed him to the throne.

His son, King Chulalongkorn, did most for Siam's advancement and development. He brought experts from almost every country in the West to organize and superintend the working of an entirely new system of administration. As the complement to this, he sent

hundreds of young Siamese to Europe to be educated and trained efficiently in the various professions. He sent his own sons and kinsmen to Great Britain, other Continental capitals and the United States of America for their education or to complete their experience in modern Western methods. This custom has been followed by all his successors.

Beginning with Chulalongkorn's reign, the Siamese Ministers of State and high officers have been sent to other countries in the West in order to study methods of administration and modern progress. Later they adopted such schemes for developing their own country which appealed to them as sound and feasible of application, with due regard to local needs and conditions.

Those envoys painstakingly investigated the administration of railways, land banks, and co-operative societies, as well as scientific agricultural production; studied the hospitals, universities, schools and industrial factories; explored river transportation and road-making, matters of sanitation, water and lighting; and also made a study of defence problems. Everything came under their closest scrutiny. They combed all modern methods thoroughly, and the results obtained from this careful panning of the public utility services of other lands in the West, or even nearer home, were used for the further advancement of Siam.

My visit to Siam afforded me ample and convincing testimony as to how well those State envoys had panned the brains and methods of other countries. Only in the matter of road communications is Siam still signally backward and non-progressive. Yet even these may come soon, for motor-cars are becoming increasingly popular among the well-to-do Siamese. They will rebel against being restricted in their use and soon demand means to drive them through the country regions.

King Chulalongkorn did not rest content with bringing foreign advisers to help in the work of reconstructing Siam, or with sending his sons and kinsmen to be educated in the Western countries; or even with despatching envoys to learn at first hand how railways and so forth were managed. He devoted himself energetically to the work of reorganizing his Government Departments and developing Bangkok after Western ideals. It was during his beneficial reign that Bangkok really became an important centre in the East or Far East.

Regular steamship services were organized to Singapore and the chief coastal towns. Railways were built to link up Bangkok with the principal centres in the north, south and east. The capital began to modify its wholly Oriental appearance and became a fair imitation of a European city. The *klongs* (canals) and narrow foot-paths, which had served all the traffic needs of earlier generations, were now regarded as inadequate. Some of the *klongs* were filled in as the

foundations for broad roads; other thoroughfares were made through the city; and then an electric tramway service was established.

To show his faith in these new ideals, King Chulalongkorn caused a Throne Hall to be erected in the heart of Bangkok, which is still the finest building East of Suez. This was built of stone and marble in the Italian Renaissance style of architecture. Being too heavy to find secure support on the deep alluvial soil of Bangkok, the engineers engaged upon its construction erected the foundations on floats composed of caissons of cement.

Not content with this, however, he had all his chief departments of State housed in buildings designed and erected by European architects. All are models of the Western style and make a very creditable show in Bangkok.

King Chulalongkorn was succeeded by his son, who had been educated in England and completed his studies at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. The new monarch assumed the title of King Rama VI and continued to extend the policy of his father. If anything, he was even more of a staunch advocate of the Westernization of Siam than his predecessors.

Of particular importance was the establishment of a city water supply and of a Public Health Department in Bangkok. To-day the capital of Siam is one of the few cities in the East where doctors will certify that it is absolutely safe to drink the water as drawn from the taps. This, with the educative work carried on by the Department of Health, has resulted in the almost complete disappearance of cholera and typhoid epidemics. Formerly these outbreaks came constantly on the heels of the dry season in each year. Now Bangkok is a clean and healthy city.

General education has also progressed steadily. More and more of the young Siamese are sent every year to Europe to undergo a thorough Western education and training. In England, alone, there are over two hundred Siamese students at the present time; and some remain in Europe or America for as long as fifteen years to complete their studies or qualify in their selected professions.

There are two universities in Bangkok, which are doing valuable work in the uplift of the people, though these new institutions are still somewhat deficient on the cultural side. There are also medical, legal, engineering and military colleges; and all the essential training schools are available for the Siamese in their own land. These are performing a really valuable work, while the initial deficiencies will be corrected in due course.

Elementary education has been made compulsory, while the cost of secondary education is so low as to bring it within the reach of all but the very poorest classes. Gradually all these means of education are being extended and brought within the grasp of all.

In the definitely rural areas, however, progress has not been so rapid or even so far-reaching in its results. It is in the towns and more thickly populated areas that the greatest advance has been made. Nothing else could be expected. The simple peasants and agricultural community—that is to say, the vast majority of the people—are still mostly uneducated; but means for the schooling of their children are gradually being introduced.

The results of this policy of giving thousands of Siamese an intensive Western education and training in the professions, coupled with the rapid improvement in internal education facilities, soon began to be felt and show themselves. The intelligentsia of Siam felt that the time was ripe for them to evolve their own political destiny. They quickly became confident of being able to direct the administrative and public services of their country without the assistance of highly-paid European experts. In the past, the latter occupied all the chief posts in the various departments of the Government.

Soon after the Armistice the process of the gradual substitution of these European officials and experts by Siamese was put into operation by King Rama VI; and during the last decade or more, this policy has been greatly accelerated. The reason for this is not hard to seek.

King Rama VI, and then his successor, were faced with an economic depression. The fall in the value of rice, which is the chief export of the country, together with the decline, both in value and quantity, of tin and teak, which are the next largest exports, indicated an urgent need for a reduction in expenditure by the State. The solution was fairly obvious. For long there had been a strong feeling that the work already being performed by Siamese civil servants, as well as by the high officers of the Fighting Services, was of such good quality as to make the efficient running of the country by the Siamese, unaided by foreigners, both a practical and economical possibility.

The experiment was more widely put into effect. Judging by the results achieved, the bold policy more than justified its application. The success of this innovation is a permanent tribute to the work of the Kings of the Chakri dynasty during the past half a century or more. They have persisted in the adoption of Western methods, yet were shrewdly unwilling to urge it along at such a pace as to strain their absolute power as head of the kingdom.

Although Siam remained an absolute monarchy as hitherto, yet it was conducted on lines of benevolent and paternal despotism from the date of the accession of King Chulalongkorn. How absolute this monarchy was can be judged from two instances which occurred in the last eighteen months of King Rama VI's reign. I was told about them by an Englishman, who had long





WAT CHANG FROM THE MENAM RIVER, BANGKOK



WAT CHANG, BANGKOK—SHOWING THE PHRAPRANG AND TWO  
PRACHEDI SPIRES

resided in Bangkok and was a leader of the British commercial community. Later, both stories were confirmed by others.

King Rama gave a State Ball at his palace in Bangkok, the invitation cards being timed for nine o'clock. The Siamese and foreign guests arrived and awaited the King's presence in the ball-room. His Majesty did not appear at the stated time, and rumours were current to the effect that he was entertaining a lady at one of his country palaces. Time went on, and still he did not arrive. Dancing could not start nor refreshments be served until the King was present to receive his guests. Finally, close on midnight, the Royal host condescended to put in an appearance. Meanwhile, for three hours, the large gathering of Europeans, Siamese and other nationalities had to pass the long period of waiting in conversation. No doubt, they found it dry work. I make no comment upon this discourteous action. In Siam, being an absolute monarch, the King could do no wrong.

The other instance quoted to me concerned a polo championship game between Siam and Penang, played in Bangkok. The visiting team came up by train with their ponies and followers, the expense not being inconsiderable. The match was due to begin at four o'clock. All Bangkok's society was present on the polo grounds to watch this important game. King Rama had signified his intention of being present, receiving the polo players and thereafter watching the game. The rival teams did not dare start playing until the King was present on the ground and received them formally. They waited until it was almost sunset, and then he drove up in his car. By the time play could be started, there remained only time for one chukker in feeble light; and, as a consequence, the match had to be played next day. A championship cup was at stake. The visiting team missed the International Express to Penang, as a result of the extra day's delay, and were forced to engage a special train for the return journey. The inconvenience—as most of the players were business men—and additional expense was certainly rough on the British team from Malaya. It was poor consolation that they took the cup back with them.

The King ruled with a nominated Legislative Council, set up by himself, and a Supreme Council of State. There was also a Cabinet, over which the King presided in the capacity of his own Prime Minister. These bodies were normally composed of Princes of the Royal family, both in and outside the line of succession to the throne; together with a few others specially nominated by the King as a signal mark of Royal favour. The King's wishes were law, however; so these three bodies were, more or less, mere figureheads.

After King Rama's death in November of 1925, the new King, Prajadhipok, found it more convenient in practice to cause the functions of the nominated Legislative Council to be taken over by the

Supreme Council of State and the Cabinet. They met weekly in the King's presence.

In carrying out their schemes for reform, improvements and modernization, the last four monarchs, while ready enough to employ European advisers, have kept the control of the government in their own hands. They staffed the Councils and various Departments very largely with their own near relatives, all of whom had the advantages of European education and experience. For many years this system worked admirably and conformed to Siam's increasing advancement on the lines of Western civilization.

Keen observers of the social and political progress of the Siamese during the past two decades, the more particularly in the last one, can scarcely have been surprised that the intelligentsia regarded this absolute monarchism with feelings of resentment. They had seen monarch after monarch deposed in Europe, to be succeeded by either a republican form of government or a dictatorship. These facts were not lost upon them. They had gained experience in responsibility and felt themselves fully qualified to have more than a passive voice in the destinies of their own country. The world was changing about them, and they had no wish to be left behind.

The writing was already upon the wall. The days of the last absolute monarchism in the world were numbered, for the educated classes of Siam were becoming more and more restless under the existing regime. They wanted to be enfranchised as a nation and have a say in the government of their country. Secretly was formed a new political party with this main object in view. The prime movers styled themselves the "People's Party," which was really a misnomer, for it actually represented the views and political aspirations solely of the intelligentsia of Siam. In other words, it was the voice of the small minority. Yet it was a beginning.

Plans were formed at secret meetings to force King Prajadhipok's hand into granting them a greater share in the government of their country. Rapidly they took definite shape and awaited only a favourable moment to be launched.

What these new political leaders overlooked, or perhaps preferred to ignore, was that their monarch was in full sympathy with their ideals. He had reigned for seven years, having succeeded his brother, Rama VI, on November 25, 1925. King Prajadhipok was no fool. For long he had recognized that the time was at hand when the growth of education and the constant introduction of Western ideas must inevitably lead to a desire for a more representative form of government. It might have been better if the leaders of the new People's Party had sought audience of him and frankly stated their case. This they did not do, but plotted secretly to attain their desired ends.

Beyond any question, King Prajadhipok would have given them

a patient and fully sympathetic hearing ; and might even then have bowed to the inevitable. It is known that, ever since he ascended the throne, he had in view the eventual introduction of a system of representative government ; but only when fully convinced that his subjects were ready to undertake such a responsibility. He knew that the great majority of his people were not yet sufficiently advanced to shoulder such a grave change in their political outlook.

The People's Party, directly their plans were ready and they were fully organized to act, took this decision out of the King's hands.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BIRTH OF A CONSTITUTION

IN order to understand the inner significance of the political changes Siam has undergone during the past three years, it is necessary to define exactly what is meant by the "People's Party." It must not be inferred that the term actually covers the field of political entity implied by the words. The designation selected by this first political party in Siam is definitely ambiguous. Its leaders were ambitious and, having the courage to give vocal expression to their aims, claimed to represent the masses of the country. Such is very far from being the case.

The People's Party came into being in the capital, and was chiefly confined to Bangkok and the larger towns in Siam. It was composed mostly of the salaried classes, more especially of the Civil and Fighting Services. The peasants and agricultural communities in the kingdom were not members, and it is doubtful if they entertained the slightest interest in the movement or had any genuine sympathy with the Party. The rural classes were concerned solely with their own affairs, and had no wish to upset existing conditions or participate in the government of the country. The People's Party represented, therefore, the voice of the small minority—the intelligentsia.

The two main causes leading to the party's formation can be summed up under two heads: firstly, the repercussions of the world-wide economic depression, which Siam hoped to escape but failed to do; and, secondly, the wide extension of European education and the influences of the almost complete Westernization of the kingdom. It was inevitable that these two factors should bring about an atmosphere of unrest and dissatisfaction among the official elements in Siam. But for the effects of the economic depression, it is extremely unlikely that there would have been any political upheaval for some years to come.

The Civil Servants and Officers of the Fighting Forces raised many protests against the increased taxation imposed in an effort to balance the Budget; more especially against the direct taxation, of which the Siamese hitherto had little or no experience. The imposition of a tax on salaries, pensions and commissions was regarded by these favoured classes as grossly unfair. It was deeply resented by all of them, particularly because the agriculturists, who formerly had borne the brunt of the burden of taxation, were

now being assisted by a substantial abatement in the tax levied on their rice-fields.

The People's Party was formed by these minority malcontents, chiefly to obtain redress of their alleged grievances. It appeared to be ignored that they were contributing little to the revenue of the country in comparison with the industrialists and agriculturalists. Their attitude to the economic depression, which was universal in the land, was an entirely selfish and unworthy one.

From real to imaginary grievances is but a short step. A demand for more say in the government of their country was added to their programme. What had started as a simple movement to redress the burden of unaccustomed taxation soon developed into a bold policy to secure constitutional government in substitution for the existing absolute monarchy. Their plans fully matured, the leaders of the new political movement awaited the opportunity to strike with a certainty of success.

King Prajadhipok and his Queen went to Hua Hin for a seaside holiday, and the Court took up residence at his palace there. With the monarch absent from the capital, the moment seemed opportune. The People's Party moved swiftly, secretly and with amazing success on June 24, 1932; and within twenty-four hours had brought off their *coup d'état*. The suddenness of this epoch-making event startled Siam, as much as it did the world. The centuries-old absolute monarchy became a constitutional one, without any vestige of force, strife or bloodshed. This achievement is entirely without parallel. Until their object was fully attained, a few of the Royal Princes were temporarily held as hostages in their palaces; and envoys of the People's Party sought audience with the King at Hua Hin and presented the new Constitution for his signature.

It is significant that King Prajadhipok signed the new Constitution, as presented by these envoys, after making only a few minor alterations. Possibly, the clauses coincided with the benefit it had been his intention to confer upon Siam as soon as he deemed the people were fitted for such innovations.

By this new Constitution the supreme power was vested in the people. For the time being, however, this was to be exercised by the King, a People's Senate, a committee of the People's Party and the Law Courts. King Prajadhipok remained as the reigning sovereign, while the existing Law of Succession was not changed.

It was stipulated, however, that any Act or Decree of the King must also be signed by a member of the committee of the People's Party. If he disapproved of any Act as passed by the Senate, the King could return it for further consideration; but if the Senate and the People's Party persisted with the measure, the Senate could promulgate the Act and make it the law of the land. The King's

power of veto was restricted, therefore, and he was forced to bow to the will of the new regime.

Under the terms of this Constitution, the Senate was at first to be composed of seventy members, consisting of military officers acting on behalf of the People's Party; but, within six months, half of the Senate was to be elected by the people of the country on the basis of one Senator for each Province. It was further laid down that representation in the Senate could later be altered in accordance with the total population. When the general standard of education throughout the land warranted the change, the whole of the Senate could be elected by the vote of the people. Women were given the franchise on an equal footing with the men.

King Prajadhipok accepted the position created by the People's Party without serious demur, and his minor alterations in the terms of the Constitution were accepted by the latter without opposition to his views. Never was a change of government in any country—so drastic and sudden, so far-reaching in its consequences, or so dramatically brought about—staged in such a spirit of harmony and friendliness. The King recognized the Party's right to set up a constitutional government, with himself at its head. Thus he identified himself with a movement which had always been close to his heart and aspirations, but for which he had awaited a favourable moment to put into effect.

At the time of this first bloodless revolution there were many who thought that the grant of such a Constitution, partly democratic in character, would prove premature in the stage of development then attained by the country. Their doubts seemed logical enough. Given unexpected power, the leaders of any revolutionary movement are apt to lose their heads and become greedy for more, and still more, say in the government.

The People's Party having obtained their primary objects, it was hoped by all who were deeply interested in the country that the Chakri dynasty would be upheld loyally. At least, it could be claimed honestly that the Chakri kings had ruled Siam both well and wisely, even putting the welfare of their subjects before their own personal ambitions.

The Siamese have always been a sane and mild-mannered people. In no instance than in this first *coup d'état* was this characteristic of the nation more apparent, for the accomplished fact was generally accepted with a calm dignity wholly admirable. It came as a great surprise to many European residents in the country that the methods employed to transform the political system from a paternal autocracy into a limited monarchy could have been carried through with so little disturbance in the capital or countryside. It must be remembered that this political *coup* was fostered and engineered by officers of the Fighting Forces. Judging by such events in European



countries, this entails civil war. That element was entirely lacking in Siam's peaceful revolution ; and this fact must stand to the credit of its organizers.

It was not without a sense of misgiving, however, that keen observers followed the subsequent course of events. The minority was in power on a self-assumed authority to represent the people. It remained to be seen how the peasant and agricultural classes would react to this new regime. Hitherto, with their deep-rooted respect for ancient traditions, they had been quite content to wait until such time as their rulers saw fit to accord them a measure of self-expression in government. Now that it was granted, many wondered if they would know how to use it or take full advantage of their changed status. They were the unknown quantity in this game of politics, and many wondered what would be their reaction to this startling alteration in the method of government. Traditions die hard. Probably enough, they will die harder in Siam than in most countries of the world.

The rural classes have often been criticized severely for not taking a more active part in the commercial and industrial development of their country ; and now are certain to be abused for not taking a more intelligent interest in politics. The plain truth of the matter is that they have always been content to leave commerce and industry to the more energetic Chinese or townsmen ; and will be likely to leave politics to the intelligentsia. They prefer the peace, plenty and simplicity of the rustic life to the noise and bustle of the towns. In their own particular environment there is harmony and a placid outlook on life. Politics have never held any interest for them. They have no wish to be dragged into a raging sea of bitterness and political strife.

Anyone who looks beneath the surface indications of the rural life along the *klongs* in Siam can surely understand and fully sympathize with the viewpoint of those jolly, courteous peasants and farmers. The Siamese country-dweller is no fool. All he wants is to live and let live, wherein he is wise.

That is one reason why the peasant and farming classes throughout Siam have had no hand in the work or aspirations of the People's Party. They were not even consulted. Before long they will be drawn into the political arena, egged on by the wild promises of visiting representatives of the People's Party. Once they have been launched on this rock-strewn sea, there is no saying where their journey will end. For how long will the lower orders submit to being ruled by the favoured classes of educated people and salaried officials ? That is a question which is exercising the minds of many thoughtful men.

Bangkok can no more be said to truly represent the view-point or legitimate aspirations of Siam as a whole than can London claim

to do so for either the United Kingdom or the British Empire. It is on account of this total divergence in mentality and interests that the new form of representative government may find its path deeply pitted with unbridgeable chasms and heavily strewn with boulders. In any case, and of necessity, it must be a long time before such a change in the form of government can claim to be appreciably representative of the nation.

There is still one other reason why this experiment may yet fail dismally and lead to disastrous results. The Oriental nations have vastly different conceptions of right and wrong. Bribery and extortion have never been rarities in Siam, any more than they are in other Eastern countries. Even under the autocratic rule of former kings, Siamese officials openly abused their positions to oppress and blackmail the people. Will this unamiable trait be restrained under a democratic government? It is so questionable, that one feels safe in answering in the decided negative; indeed, even to go further and insist that such instances will rapidly increase. How long will the mass of the people submit to this form of misgovernment? Sooner or later, it would be bound to bring about violent reaction and a possible overthrow of the existing regime.

Once Siam had settled down after the astonishing bloodless revolution of June 24, 1932, the prophets were busy predicting an early revulsion of feeling. They did not have to wait long to see their fears were not entirely groundless. Ten months passed: then came a second bloodless revolution. Again it was entirely successful. The Siamese Parliament was dissolved; and instead a State Council was set up to hold power until an election could take place. Already the leaders of the People's Party were in disagreement, while bitter jealousy prevailed against those whose power seemed greater than that of their comrades.

Things settled down once more and there was comparative quiet; but the elections were delayed and again a wave of unrest was noticeable. Men of wide knowledge of local conditions predicted more trouble ahead. They argued, not without cause, that such sudden and drastic changes in government must inevitably bring in their wake violent or peaceful repercussions. In any event, rivalry among the politicians for power would go far towards wrecking the reforms. They viewed these two upheavals with the gravest apprehension.

Again they were justified in their pessimistic outlook. In June of 1933 the delay in the General Election brought about a third and equally bloodless revolution, which was the work of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. He turned out the State Council, and announced that he would re-open Parliament. This minor revolution was ended by King Prajadhipok appointing the Commander-in-Chief as the head of the Government.

Siam was not out of the wood even yet. Four months later revolution again broke out in the country on a much more serious scale. This time it was engineered by a member of the Royal Family, Prince Bovaradej. He was supported by a large body of monarchists, who were thoroughly at loggerheads with the present unsatisfactory state of affairs created by the inexperienced People's Party. This revolution was the natural outcome of events during the previous sixteen months. It is doubtful if any serious-minded person expected the new regime to work smoothly for long or without a definite revolt against the high-handed actions of the swollen-headed People's Party.

Martial law was proclaimed throughout the land. The King and Queen were persuaded to seek temporary refuge from Hua Hin, where the Court was in residence at the time, and await the course of events at Singgora. Two Siamese naval vessels were sent to that port to protect them.

The existing Government energetically set about crushing this rebellion. Some severe fighting took place between the armed forces loyal to the Government and those of Prince Bovaradej. Two up-country battalions of the Army mutinied and joined the revolutionaries; Donmaung aerodrome was captured; and the rebels marched upon the capital. Some of the Royal Air Force went over to Prince Bovaradej, joining him with their aeroplanes; and, for a time, the Navy's loyalty to the Government hung in the balance. Two of the rebel aeroplanes were brought down by anti-aircraft gun-fire, and fell in Bangkok; while three other officers, who had been captured at the Donmaung aerodrome, escaped and rejoined the Government forces with valuable information as to the plans of the revolutionaries. The latter were specially promoted for this service.

Heavy fighting took place only thirteen miles outside the capital. For a time all communications were paralysed and a strict censorship was established. The Government announced their determination to restore order, and assured the various Legations in Bangkok that all foreigners were safe. Bangkok, however, remained comparatively quiet; though the Legations were guarded by strong detachments of Siamese troops and the city was patrolled by them. As a precautionary measure, the residents in the suburbs of the city were asked to evacuate their homes.

The strong action taken by the Government had the desired effect. The rebels began to desert Prince Bovaradej in great numbers, and he realized that his attempt to overthrow the constitutional government and restore the absolute monarchy had signally failed. He fled with some of his fellow-conspirators, seeking safety in a neutral country. A few days later the revolt collapsed. After the Government had triumphed, the King and his Court

returned to the capital. Once more the country settled down peacefully.

The era of quiet from political strife was not to endure for any length of time. Prince Bovaradej's revolt was crushed in October, 1933; and the People's Party, flushed with their victory, immediately began to strive for greater control of the Government. The King resisted these further encroachments upon his powers whenever he deemed the demands made were unreasonable, but gave in where the claims seemed to him as justified. It was soon evident to him that the position would shortly become untenable. In his heart of hearts, perhaps, he wished to surrender the exacting duties of kingship; but he remained on the spot from a sense of what was owing to his people. Curtailed greatly as were his powers now, he was yet the only buffer between his subjects and the rapacity of the People's Party. He was loath to take strong action to put a stop to this experiment in democratic government, for his sympathies were with the chief points of the constitutional monarchy. Yet it might easily have been done, and successfully.

Still further interference with his lawful prerogatives decided him that his wisest course, short of calling upon the loyalty of his subjects and armed forces, was to retire from the scene until saner counsels prevailed. He was prepared to go to considerable lengths in surrendering his age-old privileges in order to assure the well-being of his kingdom; but there were certain prerogatives which he would not waive. None can blame him for that attitude. He felt that he had gone far enough; even had a shrewd suspicion that he had given in to the demands much too generously.

He announced his intention of proceeding to Europe in order to consult specialists about his eyesight, for a slight operation on his eyes had been advised by the local doctors. A Regent was appointed to act in his absence from the country, and he left in the middle of 1934.

Whilst holiday-making at Knowle in Surrey during October of that year, the King threatened to abdicate unless his prerogative in regard to the final word on death sentences was left inviolate. The Royal prerogative of mercy he would not surrender as long as he was on the throne. This ultimatum was fully justified in the light of events; and he was fighting, to use his own words, for the "principles of democracy."

The measure curtailing his privileges over life and death in Siam was introduced into the Assembly by the Cabinet, but the majority of the elected members voted against it. The Bill was carried through mainly at the instance of those members nominated by the Prime Minister. King Prajadhipok considered it was the will of his people, as expressed through their elected representative, that this measure should not be passed into law. In his threat to

abdicate, he insisted that it would take effect unless the Government was prepared either to drop the measure, put it before a plebiscite of the people, or else make it the issue of a General Election.

A deadlock was reached. Neither the King nor the Government would give way. A deputation was sent to interview the former in England, and he merely reiterated his ultimatum. A period of discussion followed, but did nothing to relieve the tension. Finally, King Prajadhipok abdicated and decided to make his future home in England. He had been educated here, liked the country and the life, and was assured of a peaceful asylum. Like so many other ex-monarchs, a refuge in England was the one that appealed most of all. He has now bought Hangmoor, Virginia Water, which is a fine mansion standing in fifteen acres of land ; and this will be his future home. Henceforth, by his own wish, he will be known as Prajadhibok, Prince of Sukhodaya—the title he used before succeeding his late brother.

Meanwhile the Cabinet has selected Prince Ananda Mahidol, a nine-year old boy and member of the Royal Family, as the future King of Siam. He is undergoing his education in Switzerland in the care of his mother. By a recent decision of the Cabinet, for health and educational reasons, the boy-King will be permitted to reside in Europe for a further period of two years before returning to Siam to be crowned.

Following closely the course of events during the past three years in Siam, it may be wondered whether this boy-King will ever ascend his throne. It is not at all unlikely that the political leaders in that country will gradually abolish the monarchy altogether, following the example of so many Western nations, and create a republic.

If this should come to pass, it would not be surprising to find the people revolting against the imposition of the will of the minority. Siam is a long way yet from being out of the political maze. It behoves the present Government to move cautiously and not strain too far the traditional loyalty of the people to their kings. There is ever a danger of this being done.

The future of Siam, the former model Oriental kingdom, is now on the lap of Time. Those, who know and love that country, fervently hope that the clock will not be set back.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE "WATS" IN BANGKOK

**S**TRANGERS in Bangkok inevitably ask themselves: "Shall we *Wat* or not *Wat*?" Few can resist the entrancing occupation of *Wat*-ing.

Having seen and greatly admired the beautiful Taj Mahal at Agra and the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon, I was keen to compare my impressions of them both with the *Wats* (temples) of Siam. As Bangkok is blessed with many fine examples of these Buddhist shrines, I left them to the end of my visit and then devoted two days to the tour of these buildings. My time was not wasted. Burma has many beautiful pagodas, especially in Rangoon, Prome and Mandalay; but Bangkok can offer equally attractive specimens of Oriental architecture.

*Wat Poh*, just south of the Royal Palace, is the home of a gigantic reclining Buddha. The main building, which houses this colossus, is generally only open on feast days. I was fortunate in being granted a private view, chiefly through a judicious lubrication of the custodian's hand.

The figure is of incredible size, and rests on its left side on a raised stone platform. Buddha is depicted with a seraphic smile on his face. There was a time when this great recumbent figure was gilded profusely with gold-leaf; but now it is all peeling off in flakes, while the stonework has every appearance of being inflicted with leprosy or some other loathesome skin disease. I was told there was a project afoot to raise a sum of a hundred thousand ticals to pay for the regilding; but times are hard and the plan hangs fire. Certainly such attention would be timely!

All was quiet and peaceful within the shrine, and the air pleasantly cool after the hot sun without. On the walls were many painted frescoes, with wonderfully brilliant and yet harmonious colouring; but I found little else of any great interest. The statue, though of truly gigantic proportions, is yet not so huge as that of the reclining Buddha at Wingaba in Rangoon.

*Wat Poh* is of much the same age as the city of Bangkok. It is really a collection of buildings, the outer courtyard of which is hedged in by a high wall. The main entrance has a large wooden door, giving access to this outer courtyard, which is decorated in gold and black. It is guarded by two grotesque *Yaks* (giants of the Siamese mytho-

logy), whose fierce scrutiny meets the gaze of all who would enter the precincts of this *Wat*. Leaning on their stone staves, they glare at you with non-committal eyes. Their heads are adorned with large, beaver-shaped top-hats of stone. They convey an utterly weird appearance.

The actual temple covers a vast area of ground. Across the roadway, and opposite the main entrance, is the monastery of the Buddhist monks who serve this shrine. In the various courtyards are still more of these strange *Yaks*, guarding the gateways leading to some of the lesser shrines. They are far more terrifying in aspect than are the multitude of comic-looking stone figures adorning the little courtyards themselves.

The great oblong building at the northern end of this *Wat* has six roofs, the gable ends of which flame off into bright yellow-glass scales. The windows on the ground floor have heavily carved black-wood frames. The roofs are supported on rounded pillars, and the *prachedi's* spire tapers upwards from a ground base of steps. It is covered with small yellow-glass tiles, laced across with diagonal ribbon and flower motifs in divers colours, of which the most handsome undoubtedly is the green and dark blue effect.

At the time of my visit to this *Wat*, there were some military buglers squatting near a small, shady temple and earnestly practising calls. Their terrific discords did not inspire reverence and accorded unhappily with the otherwise restful peace of the shrine. It struck me as somewhat odd that they should have selected a temple for their bugle practice; but, strange as it may seem, I was assured this was an habitual custom. Certainly they had the field to themselves and could blow as many discords as inclined. They were not doing so badly in that direction!

Throughout this handsome *Wat* was the same marvellously effective background of colour and that gold figuring in lacquer on woodwork, which is so happily common in Siam. The colouring on some of the temple buildings and the spires of the *prachedi* simply beggars description. No cold words can faithfully depict their glories. They must actually be seen with one's own eyes in order that their exquisite beauty can properly be appreciated.

The scattered animal figures in the courtyards were all in a terribly dilapidated condition, often being minus either heads or limbs, or all of them. They fitted in unhappily with the glories of the larger temples and spires. I can compare them to nothing else than a congregation of crippled animals awaiting attention in a veterinary hospital. I doubt if one single figure was undamaged. They have all been presented by different individuals as an act of merit; but the merit was acquired solely through the act of presentation. None can be gained by anyone who repairs them and, therefore, they are allowed to fall into a state of decay. That is why you

gaze at a cripple's ward. Yet they are the sole note of discord—if we exclude the military buglers—in that serene atmosphere of architectural beauty.

On the right of the main temple is still another large shrine. A small fee is charged for viewing it. Therein sits Buddha's figure in the act of preaching to the smaller stone figures of his five disciples, who are seated at his feet and facing him. This effigy is believed to have been brought from Rongpibun in southern Siam.

Other shrines are also filled with figures of the Buddha; and long galleries are lined with them. Some are seated, others standing erect; and all were once covered with gold leaf, which is now mostly hanging in flakes. I was told that there are 397 figures of the Buddha in this *Wat*. A few gave evidence of some attempt to keep them in a state of repair, either by plastering or gilding; and they appear to have grown in size with each such mild attention. Some have acquired a "middle-aged spread"—definitely so. The bronze monsters, on the other hand, have no such ambition; and retain their original form and dimensions.

The Royal shrine of the Buddha in this *Wat* possesses a perfectly wonderful mother-o'-pearl inlaid door. The walls are beautifully frescoed in divers colours.

There is much to be seen and admired in *Wat Poh*, but I did not find it the most interesting in Bangkok. There are others which are as attractive, if not more so. That is, of course, purely a matter of personal opinion. I do not wish to appear dogmatic. Three, however, will always remain especially green in my recollections of Bangkok—*Wat Sutat*, situated close to the conspicuous red posts of the "Swing Festival"; *Wat Benchema* (sometimes called *Benchemababitra*); and *Wat Chang*, on the west bank of the Menam River.

The principal court of *Wat Sutat* is a square. Along its sides sit many a score of Buddhas looking out upon the paved courtyard, which is bordered with flowering shrubs. The central shrine is also square in shape, while at each corner is a bronze figure of a horse. *Sutat* is a particularly hushed and silent temple—the stillness and absence of all noise inspires reverence. This is emphasized occasionally by the raucous cawing of the crows—the same old crow of India and Burma, confound him!—as they hop in and out of the stone lanterns in the courtyard. Sometimes, too, is heard the blatant shriek of a motor-horn from the roadway without. Then the peaceful idyll is shattered. Everything was normally so hushed that I felt compelled to confine my speech to whispers.

The carved wooden doors of *Sutat* are extremely handsome; while the small granite figures grouped about the steps leading up to the main shrine are curious features of this *Wat*. Yet *Sutat* is not so imposing or artistic as *Wat Benchema*.





WAT CHANG AND SMALLER TEMPLES, BANGKOK



GUARDIAN YAKS AT WAT CHANG, BANGKOK

*Wat Chang*, with its gorgeous *phraprang*, I think is best viewed from the Menam River or the east bank. At sunset or sunrise, its lovely colouring and graceful outlines are quite incomparable. It stands opposite the Royal landing-stage; and should be approached by water during the early hours of the morning when the sun is still rising and is reflected back by the myriad colours of the temple. *Wat Chang* signifies "the clear, bright temple." It has been aptly named.

The great *phraprang* is by far the most elaborate, brightest in colouring and clearest in pattern of any of the *Wats* in and around Bangkok. It rises in three stages from the ground floor, each with a balustrade and a band of kneeling figures supporting the next stage's motif. Above the highest of them are still more bands of ornaments, all in diminishing size and ending in a three-headed elephant shrine on each of the four faces. Towering above this is the peak or steeple of the *phraprang*. At each corner of the main *phraprang* is another spire, only less high and elaborate, but with a horse shrine.

The whole is amazingly banded about and ornamented in china-ware of every possible hue. It scintillates and flings colours at you. Yet its mass effect, its detail effect, and its mass and detail combined, are due to nothing more than broken crockery set in cement! For this reason you should approach it none too closely or disillusionment must follow. Definitely, it is best viewed from the waters of the Menam River.

Nor should you pass ridicule upon the separate pieces of china-ware nor adversely comment upon the glaring cement gaps between the colours. To these defects—the necessary groundwork of this quaint and curious art—you must remain blind and realize that the appeal of this *phraprang* is intended for a distant view. Only from a distance can it go out true in colour and form to the genuinely appreciative eye. Seen from the Menam River on a clear, bright morning, it is just what its name implies—and a lovely building. Even at midday with the sun directly overhead and little or no colour thrown off the china-plate chips, its outline is still remarkably beautiful and impressive. But when the sun sets behind it and the shadows creep down the eastern flank, its lines stand out startlingly and provide a landmark in Bangkok.

The landing-stage of this *Wat* is guarded by two gigantic crocodiles in stonework. A green giant and his wife guard a shrine in the precincts of the temple. Inside one shrine is a Royal bedstead of solid teak, made in one piece and large beyond any teak tree than can now be found in the forests of northern Siam.

*Wat Benchema* glories in an old-gold roof, vermilion woodwork and marble-white walls. The gable of a building on the left of the main entrance is particularly splendid, both for actual design and

colour effects ; and green, gold magenta, and white are commingled upon it in perfect harmony. The outer walls enclose a number of buildings, the chief one being that directly opposite the beautiful entrance gateway. This is a particularly splendid shrine and kept immaculately clean. I might have been in any Christian church or cathedral in England ; and the two *prie dieu* before the Buddha's principal shrine—those for the Archbishop and Bishop—heightened this impression. The walls—all a mass of lovely coloured frescoes—were simply marvellous ; while the floor was of polished marble.

Through the precincts of this temple runs a *klong* between orderly cement-bound embankments, which are railed off with granite posts supporting iron chains to guard the water from misuse. In this little stream, the monks and youthful novices for the priesthood bathe and wash their scanty garments.

There are also other temples, handsome residences for the Archbishop and bishops, a monastery, and novitiate for aspirants to monkhood. Every single thing within the outer walls is well-cared for and beautifully clean, while the place smells sweet and fresh. There are none of the customary evil smells of Burmese pagodas to offend.

Behind the principal building is the temple of the late Queen-Mother of Siam, with a Buddha brooding high up on its perch above a rather ornate altar. The ceiling of this shrine is a curious octagon vault in gold and vermillion, which acts as a canopy above yet another figure of the Buddha placed in the centre of the main hall.

Scattered about the grounds are bronze bells in separate belfries, which are rung thrice daily. There are also some fine bronze panels on doorways at the side of the principal temple, while the marble-barred windows are of pink granite and delicately beautiful. On the lawns, under a large shady tree, is the massive stone head and neck of a Buddha, which has rather a supercilious expression on its face. The rest of this statue either was never completed or else got mislaid. It is nowhere to be found. Perhaps the sculptor died before his task was completed, and none knew what to do with the head and shoulders.

*Wat Benchema* is accounted the purest example of the modern form of Siamese architecture. Its modernity is emphasized in the arches above doors and windows, which are pointed but do not draw up to a point with the quick and thoughtless grace of the more ancient arch. Their shape is their own—more massive in line and squat in conception than may be seen elsewhere ; but they suit their building admirably, with its studied, deliberate and successful singularity among *Wats*. On a glittering sunny morning, or in the blaze of early sunset—at either of which times of the day its colours show up to best advantage—*Benchema* should always be viewed. Acting on sound local advice, I did so ; and thereafter gave grateful thanks.

I stated earlier that Bangkok is situated on a flat, alluvial plain and there are no hills to bar its rapid expansion. Perhaps this is not strictly accurate, for there is one hill of sorts ; yet this is no work of Nature but of home manufacture. It is known locally as "The Golden Mount."

Let none be induced, as I was, into rising before the dawn to climb up its brick stairway in order to view Bangkok at sunrise. Generally you will see nothing, for the sun rises through the mist off the plains and obscures the view. There is no gold about this man-made hillock, either. Any gold which once may have gilded the topmost spire of the temple on the summit has long since given way to the assaults of Time and the elements. However, it is worth a brief visit.

The hillock rises to a height of two hundred feet. On a clear day, from its summit may be seen all Bangkok spread out at your feet like an open map. It is a fair sight, worthy of the loss of breath and bath of perspiration which the upward climb entails. Below is plainly visible the glory of the city's *Wats*, the *prachedis* and *phrafrangs*, a silver glint of water from river and *klongs*, a sea of green foliage, and an exceedingly ugly vista of corrugated-iron roofs. At the base of "The Golden Mount" squeals a steam sawmill, whose smoke drifts blackly about the hill-side. Standing up clearly are the Throne Hall, the Amphorn Palace, the military barracks, the War School, *Wat Phra Keo's* golden *prachedi*, the three black roofs of the Chakri Palace, the tall red posts of the "Swing Festival," *Wat Poh*, and the *yot* of *Wat Chang* across the Menam River. *Wat Sutat* also comes into this big canvas ; while the many tall factory chimneys and rice-mills belch forth black trails of smoke into the blue sky.

Immediately below the shrine are a monastery and a cremation ground. Hideously high, and hopelessly conspicuous, are two cement water-tanks standing on straddling legs. The actual summit of "The Golden Mount" is crowned with a *prachedi*, hung with bronze bells which tinkle at times in the breeze or in response to the playful antics of the black crows. These latter discuss their private affairs with raucous voices, and seem to be genuinely heated in their arguments. What confirmed chatterboxes they are ! Under the *prachedi* is a clumsy, square building of brickwork, the entrance-gate to which is guarded by wooden bars. Through them you can dimly see a small Buddha, shining and smiling to himself in the centre of the interior gloom. Attached to this shrine is a *Wat* with a green and gold-bordered roof. The hill itself is crumbling to bits, but maintained in ruins by the roots of trees, shrubs and creepers. Its grottos, rocks and vaults have an air of extreme senility, which is not in the least warranted by their actual age. At most, they are only a century old.

The Royal Palace (*Dusit Maha Prasat*) is situated on the left bank

of the Menam River, facing *Wat Chang*. The main building, with three stages in European styles, is crowned by a Siamese roof. This sounds rather a curio in architectural design—and such it is; but the general effect is much better than would be supposed by the blending of these two styles. The roof has what all others in the Siamese style of architecture illustrate in their gables—a *garuda* (the mythical king of the birds) holding a snake in the claws of each foot. This is a design peculiar to Siam and met with nowhere else. China, perhaps, approximates more closely to Siamese architecture than any other nation.

The Dusit Maha Prasat comprises within its walls a number of buildings. In the courtyard is a mounting-block in white marble, a pavilion in gold and vermilion, and a ceremonial bathing-tank formerly used exclusively by the King. This latter has a cover of solid teak, and is quite generously proportioned. In the Amarinthra Hall is a boat-shaped throne, and the beamed ceiling is also in gold and vermilion—the Royal colours of Siam. The throne was of gold; and the nine-tiered umbrella above it is for the King, while the seven-tier umbrellas are for the Royal Princes. At this palace is to be seen an excellent example of Siamese roofs, eaves and gables. The tiling is really remarkable. Green tiles with broad yellow borders, yellow tiles with broad blue borders, ruddy tiles with green-grass borders, or just plain gilding with winking points of gold serve to make up that riot of colour, all of which is marvellously contrasted. Behind it all are two spires in sombre black and deep green.

In the Chapel Royal are frescoes, from the time of Rama I (of the present dynasty), set in arcades; and its *prachedi* is in gold mosaics. The main building is in the shape of a *yôt*, and encrusted with patterned mosaics. Tenderly beautiful are the porcelain panels on the walls of the ground-floor platform, which take the form of Chinese flowers and brilliant birds. The roof is hung with bells which ring in the breeze, not one of them having the same tone; yet there is not a jangled note amongst them. The mortuary chapels are miracles of colour, the rather uncommon powder-blue motif combining effectively with the Royal gold and vermilion. Here colour riots with colour: the more it riots, the more it harmonizes.

In the grounds of Dusit Maha Prasat are a mass of marvellously shaped Royal umbrella trees and also the temple of the famous Emerald Buddha, so named because it is of solid green jade. It is a small, curious and deeply venerated image, seated high up on a throne in a frescoed chapel with the inevitable gold and vermilion-coloured roof. China is supposed to have been the original owner of this image; and China and many other Eastern races have fought to secure or retain it. As the illumination of its high seat is dim, the Buddha looks very mysterious in such surroundings.

The elephant stables contained the white elephant whose posses-



THE BUDDHA'S HEAD IN THE GROUNDS OF WAT BENCHEMA, BANGKOK



1. THRONE HALL AND BOULEVARD RAJA DAMNOEN,  
BANGKOK

2. MAIN TEMPLE IN WAT BENCHEMA, BANGKOK

3 AND 4. SIAMESE DANCING BOYS AT BANGKOK



sion confers on the King of Siam the proud title of "Lord of the White Elephants." This pachyderm stands for the national symbol, the device of the national flag, the creature of Siamese legends, the emblem of an Order of Chivalry, and also the animal which is the outward sign of kingship. He is a tuskless male, estimated to be about forty years old—which is mere youth for an elephant—and the skin has not that bluish-slate tinge of others. He has whitish eyes, whitish fringes to his ears, whitish nails, and a white touch at the base of the trunk. He is white, yet not white. I would prefer to describe this elephant as possessing an undertone of white in his general colouring. I was told that he is always shackled and that his temper is royally irritable. Despite the homage paid to him, I could pity him for his enforced captivity.

The Throne Hall, at the end of the long, broad and beautiful boulevard of Raja Damnoen, is a magnificent building standing in flowering gardens and green lawns. Before the entrance-gates of wrought iron, in the centre of the boulevard, stands the equestrian statue of the late King Chulalongkorn. The throne stands in the centre of the main hall under a nine-tiered umbrella. In front of it is a device in mother-o'-pearl, displaying the ancient Sanskrit protective sign on the forehead of Buddha. In a picture and not as a statue, the Buddha is enthroned high up at the end of the hall and dominates the building. A permit is needed to see the interior of the Throne Hall, but worth the minor trouble entailed in asking for it.

Much as I wished to do so, I found it impossible to take a trip along the Northern or the Eastern Railway. The Northern is a broad-gauge track, with its terminus on the east bank. Northwards from Bangkok are Ayudhya, Lopburi, Suwankaloke, Sukothai, Chiangmai and the country of the Northern Siamese tribes. There is also Donmaung, Siam's largest aerodrome; and Ban Pa In, where the King has a summer palace. Yet I had to abandon all ideas of seeing these interesting places. Even Korat, the present terminal and frontier post on the Eastern Railway, which is enclosed in thirteenth-century brick walls, had to be left out of my itinerary. Time can be a cruelly hard taskmaster!

Before I left Bangkok, I sampled the Siamese theatre. I spent a whole evening there, even though it was hot, smelly and none too clean; while the fleas and mosquitoes must have been starving, if one can judge by their ravenous attack. Nevertheless, I enjoyed every moment—between the bites!

The actors were really first-class, and surprisingly so; the orchestra melodious, seeing that the chief instruments were drums and sweet-toned gongs; but the singing was too dreadful. The costumes and make-up of the players were better and more picturesque—at a distance—than anything I had yet seen in other Oriental lands,

saving only China. The legend of the play, though rendered in Siamese (which I did not understand), was easily followed. Most of the story was unfolded by action. Every single movement of the fingers, hands, feet, legs and body played an important part in getting this legendary play over the footlights. The actors, when not actually taking part in the drama, jumped down off the stage and joined their friends in the audience. The dancing was wonderfully fascinating and extremely graceful; but I was destined to see far better in the Dutch East Indies.

I had almost forgotten the comedian. He was a local Harry Tate—and would have made a stone image laugh heartily. He drew a great deal of mirth from me during the course of the evening, yet I could not understand a single word of his legitimate lines and racy gagging. If that is not good comedian stuff, then nothing else is.

Later I persuaded some of these youthful dancers to perform before my camera in the courtyard of a temple during the sunshine hours. They were all small boys, who even took the parts of girls. It was difficult to detect their real sex, thanks to their excellent make-up. The amazing way they could bend back their supple fingers was most entrancing to watch, and this movement conveys some of the story they are dancing.

There is really so very much of interest in Bangkok, and all so novel, that a couple of weeks is nothing like long enough. It was with genuine regret that I bade good-bye to the city and boarded the Siamese State Railways for Penang. This time I was headed for Sumatra.

I can confidently recommend a visit to Bangkok, and feel it is far too much overlooked by those who globe-trot in the Orient. It is so easily accessible; and one travels over such a comfortable railway, that lack of time should be the only excuse for giving it the cold shoulder.

The journey back to Penang was every bit as fascinating as that to Bangkok, and I saw by daylight such parts of the country which had been passed previously during the night. At the frontier post of Pedang Besar, I had to say good-bye to the Siamese State Railways and transfer to the Federated Malay States system. I was not travelling on this occasion by the "International Express." My luck was certainly out. I am not likely to forget that miserable experience from Pedang Besar to Penang. Of course the F.M.S. train did not connect with the Siamese one. We had to wait and lunch on the Siamese train, and were delayed two hours at the frontier; then, when the F.M.S. train did arrive, there were further delays. We started for Penang several hours late.

They do things better on the Siamese State Railways.

## PART III

### THE DUTCH EAST INDIES

#### CHAPTER XVII

##### ACROSS SUMATRA TO LAKE TOBA

UNTIL Sumatra had been traversed by motor-car from north east to south-west, I had not the slightest idea of the great size, infinite variety of resources and natural beauties of Holland's largest possession in the East Indies. Indeed, it is a truly remarkable island.

The Netherlands East Indies comprise a vast number of both large and small islands, as well as parts of other large islands such as Borneo and New Guinea. The whole may be divided conveniently into two sections—the outer and inner possessions. Java and its neighbour, Madoera, are the inner; Sumatra and the remainder form the outer possessions.

Sumatra is about the same size as Borneo, and roughly four times that of Java. It has an area of approximately 180,380 square miles (inclusive of its dependencies), which is about thirteen times larger than Holland. The population, on the other hand, is only some 5,500,000—an absurdly small one when compared with that of Java or with the enormous area of Sumatra itself. It could comfortably support 75,000,000 people.

It is this lack of sufficient population which has retarded Sumatra in the development of its natural resources; and only within the last decade or so has the island attracted the attention of agriculturists and mineralogists to any great extent. Java is a country of magnificent realization; Sumatra has a really great future ahead of it. A more complete knowledge of the island's untapped wealth, and its advantageous position in the East, has forced the Government of the Netherlands East Indies to develop Sumatra with greater enthusiasm.

In shape, Sumatra can best be compared with Madagascar. The extent and configuration of the two islands contribute to a real resemblance. Each is traversed by a backbone of mountain ranges running in parallel chains from one extremity to the other; there are about the same ocean depths off the coasts; and the relative

was modern in conception, the service and food first-rate, and modern sanitation a welcome feature.

Owing to the enforced change of steamers at Penang, I had arrived in Medan twenty-four hours behind my scheduled programme which rather curtailed my stay at various places of interest in the early stages of my trip across Sumatra. In consequence of this, I spent only a few hours in Medan : just long enough for an excellent luncheon and a short drive around the town.

I was greatly impressed by the unpretentious character of the Dutch Governor's residence, especially after viewing the handsome palace of the Sultan of Deli. This modesty in the abodes of the Governors and Residents throughout the Dutch East Indies is rather a striking feature. In comparison to those in Malaya it was especially noteworthy.

It was refreshing to find no evidence of hovels or crowded tenements in Medan. The Chinese seemed to have got a good grip on the place. The police, armed with revolvers and long swords, looked fierce bandits in their blue uniforms, top-boots and wide, brown straw-hats. Their traffic control was ably done, the men on point duty wearing long white sleeves so that their signals could easily be seen. The streets were filled with diminutive Sumatran ponies, which trotted along briskly and drew rubber-tyred and hooded *Sados* (like the old-fashioned governess carts) ; and these, besides a fair proportion of taxi-cabs, served the general public as a means of conveyance from point to point. I do not remember seeing any trams, though there were a number of Ford buses driven by Chinese or Malays.

Soon after lunch I drove away from Medan on the sixty-five miles journey to Brastagi. I planned to spend the night there. The huge areas devoted to tobacco, tea and oil-palm growing came as a revelation. Sumatran tobacco is not without fame on the world's markets, though chiefly used as wrappers for cigars. Feverish activity in development was the keynote in that vicinity, also on many other sections of the road between Medan and Padang. The Dutch and Malays vied with each other ; while Chinese also played a big hand in agricultural affairs. The native planters and agriculturists were one of the really big surprises in the course of that drive across Sumatra.

I know little enough about Para rubber, and can speak only as a casual observer ; but what I did see of the Malays' plantations was decidedly instructive. I noticed that the areas planted by them were mostly selected on rising ground, the trees extending in rather haphazard fashion from the roadway to the very summit of high hills. After seeing the estates in the Malay Peninsula, this struck me as peculiar ; but there is probably a logical and sound reason for choosing hill-sides.

However, the most permanent impression which I gained of these Malay rubber estates was not so much the peculiarity of the site chosen, but of the untidy and casual manner in which the trees were planted. Still more striking was the fact that, with very few exceptions, I did not see a native's estate weeded. Mostly these rubber plantations were hopelessly mixed up with forest trees, jungle-scrub and long grass. Even the immature trees had been tapped in many instances. Experts had assured me in British Malaya that this was a disastrous policy to adopt and promised badly for the future.

Particularly in the hills behind Sibolga was native-grown rubber very much in the picture. I passed through innumerable villages by the roadside where the presses were hard at work on the latex; and much crude rubber was hung out to dry. These sheets were different in shape and appearance from those seen on the Malay Peninsula, being full of holes and resembling long scarves of lace-work. Near Batang Taroe (between Sibolga and Kota Nopan), I noticed a number of well-kept estates. They compared favourably with many seen in British Malaya. Vast areas thereabouts seemed to be under rubber cultivation by the Dutch. The contrast between the Dutch and Malay methods of planting and production was very marked indeed.

The avidity with which the Malays in the Dutch East Indies took to rubber planting, encouraged by their Dutch rulers, was largely responsible for the slump in the industry and the bad times experienced in British rubber-growing countries. For a number of years the Dutch East Indies refused to co-operate with the British in schemes for restricting production and maintaining equitable prices for rubber. With restriction in force in British Malaya, Siam, Burma and Ceylon, and the price of rubber at lowest ebb, the Dutch have been compelled at last to abandon their selfish attitude and co-operate with their neighbours. Already this united front on restriction is bringing rubber slowly back to a stage of profitable production and, as time goes on, should go far towards regaining lost ground in the industry.

There are many other interesting things in Sumatra besides rubber; and my time spent on the island was full of surprises. In motoring across it, however, I was unable to secure a full appreciation of all that Sumatra is and can be made. My impressions were but fleeting ones, yet may not be altogether wide of the truth. At least, I can give but the high lights of the general picture formed in my mind. Even such a small cameo may supply many others with an incentive to go there and see it for themselves. I repeat emphatically that Sumatra is well worth a visit and tarrying there for a period.

The road from Medan to Brastagi, the small health-resort in the hills overlooking the beautiful Plateau of Karo, is filled with varied interests. Lovely scenery, a long succession of tobacco, oil-palm

and tea estates vie with each other for pride of place ; and always the road was reasonably good.

The curiously shaped tobacco drying-sheds were landmarks close to Medan ; and then gradually the nature of the crops changed. Oil-palms began to take the place of tobacco, and I realized that this industry had assumed considerable importance on the island during the short period of its existence. According to statistical information, the production of oil and kernels for export rose from 10,200 tons in 1926 to 70,000 tons in 1934. To increase production sevenfold in eight years is a sure indication of the prosperous outlook of this industry.

I saw hundreds of Malays along the road, and all looked cowed and even servile. This was very different to my experience in British Malaya. As we passed them, the Sumatran Malays all raised their hats, but hid their faces from view, as if they saluted only under dire compulsion and were ashamed of doing so.

All around Arnhemia were huge, prosperous tea estates, in which the women seemed to predominate as workers. Here we began to climb up into the mountains, through extremely lovely country and many splendid tea estates. There were many sharp bends, and always wonderful views of forests and fertile valleys on either side.

I had heard rumours in Medan of a slight landslide in these hills on the previous day, close to Brastagi. It was further declared that the road was blocked for traffic. Being of an adventurous turn of mind and determined to complete my journey across Sumatra, I took a long chance on getting through to Brastagi that night. When we reached the scene of the " slight " landslide, I found the roadway littered with great boulders, uprooted trees and huge mounds of rubble. A large gang of natives, under Dutch supervision, were clearing the road ; and it was only possible to creep through the obstructions at a crawling pace.

I had just got clear and halted to talk with a Dutch engineer, when there came a terrifying report from the hill-side above. We glanced up fearfully and, at that instant, the whole of the hill's face just ahead of the car seemed to come crashing down upon the roadway, its edge just missing the car. The noise of the immense mass of earth, huge boulders, giant rocks, and big trees cascading down the slopes was simply paralysing. It was impossible to go into reverse on account of obstructions in the rear ; and there was no hope of speeding ahead. With a deadly fear in my heart, I sat still in the car and hoped the avalanche would give us a complete miss. The Dutchman clung to the side of the car, face as ghastly white as my own, lips twitching as if praying hard. It is impossible to say how long the avalanche continued or the deafening noise drummed in our ears. By a miracle we were saved—it seemed only by inches.

Neither of us was capable of speech. I dare not look back at

Tambéh, lest he should see my own terror. Yet, after a single cry of fright when the landslide started, he had given no further indication of his reactions to this ghastly experience. I am prepared to wager that Tambéh was no less terrified than the Dutchman and myself.

Gradually the rush of earth, rocks and trees slowed down. I could now see and hear the great masses of debris pouring down the hill-side below the road into the valley. After the worst was over and the tumult somewhat subsided, a thick fog of choking dust blotted out the landscape, filling eyes, lungs and mouth. When this finally lifted, I gazed upon a quarter-mile wide path of utter desolation. It looked as if the entire hill-face had been torn ruthlessly down, and the track of the avalanche was strewn with wreckage from the forest. Huge trees and massive boulders littered the road ahead, as if carelessly thrown aside by a giant. Below the road, and right down through the forest into the valley, everything was wrecked—a cruel scene of devastation.

When I felt capable of movement and speech, I climbed out of the car and went forward with the Dutchman to examine the almost obliterated roadway. The edge of the avalanche was not less than ten yards from the bonnet of my car; but that ten yards had saved us from being overwhelmed, flung down in the flood of the landslide, and swept to death in the valley. I remember filling my pipe and sticking it between my teeth, chiefly to steady my jumping nerves. When I had gained complete control of myself—half an hour later—the pipe was still unlit and stem almost bitten clean through.

"Perhaps you can go on to-morrow," said the Dutchman dismally, his voice shaking. "Now it is impossible."

"Can't you get your men to clear a path for me? I'll pay for the labour."

"The Government pays," he assured me, trying hard to smile; but it was a wry, twisted attempt. "You had better return to Medan."

"The car's too big to turn round on this track," I insisted.

"Go into reverse."

"Not on your life!" I exclaimed vehemently. "Simply couldn't be done. It was difficult enough getting through the debris to this point."

"Then you'd better make up your mind to stay where you are until the road is cleared," he shrugged, and started to walk away.

I had nothing to eat or drink with me. Also I did not fancy facing up to another possible landslide. I wanted to go on to Brastagi and escape from this unpleasant bit of country. I used all my persuasive powers with this unsympathetic Dutch engineer and, finally, wrung from him a promise to turn all hands immediately to work at clearing a path ahead for me. I volunteered the services of Tambéh and myself, which were accepted. It took three hours to clear a sufficient space for the car to get through over many small obstructions and mounds of earth. The surface of the road was not

visible at all. It was a nightmare of a drive, but accomplished somehow. What an immense relief it was to be clear and on the distant edge of that avalanche's path !

Gratefully thanking the Dutch engineer and distributing cash among the Malay labourers, I wasted no time in getting out of this danger zone. That was about as bad an experience as I have ever had in my travels, and do not want any repetition.

The mountain road beyond the scene of that near-disaster offered many gorgeous glimpses of the plains below, but threatening rain-clouds now unkindly hid the blue waters of the Straits of Malacca. About fifty-eight miles from Medan, at an altitude of just over 4000 feet, there was one view never to be forgotten. Despite my fears of further landslides, I could not resist halting the car there for a brief time in order to drink in the beauties of that scene. I could see for many miles to the eastern coast, and the plantations on the plains stood out clearly. But with the memory of my recent experience fresh in my mind, I did not waste too much time on admiring scenic marvels. Soon I drove on again.

My acquaintance with Brastagi, unfortunately, was all too brief. It is situated at an altitude of about 5,000 feet above the sea level, the air chill and invigorating. Delayed on the road by that terrifying landslide, I did not reach the hotel until dinner time ; and it was impossible to stay longer than that night in this lovely health-resort.

The Grand Hotel could not be bettered, and the situation occupied simply ideal. The sulphur crater of Sibajak stands just behind it, forming an effective background ; and the wonderful views of the green lawns and of the Karo Plains in front of the hotel, as seen shortly after daybreak, were a sight for tired eyes. It really is an amazingly fine spot ; and I longed for the gift of an artist's brush to record those scenes in their natural colouring. Brastagi is normally only three hours' drive from the port of Belawan-Deli, so is rapidly growing in fame and popularity as a healthy hill-station

My best memory of Brastagi, however, was the sunrise. It was simply gorgeous. The sky was painted blood-red, flecked here and there with patches of tender blue, dove-grey, jade-green and salmon-pink. Almost as suddenly as its glories had come, they faded and melted into the gold of the new day. For a brief time, the sulphurous fumes arising from Sibajak's crater were momentarily red, giving a good imitation of a furnace-door just opened for refuelling. That sunrise was a thing of beauty to treasure long in the memory !

The journey across the Karo Plateau was through a rather dull, monotonous and little developed country. The road winds hither and thither, ever climbing upwards. There seemed to be very little water hereabouts, while the soil looked poor. In the vicinity of Kabandjahe, however, there were occasional patches of cultivated areas and a few scattered tea estates ; and this was true as far as Seriboedolak.



One of the tea estates was extensive and in fine state of production. In rarer patches there were either rubber, rice-fields or maize ; but principally you see little more than virgin forest and jungle grass.

Near Brastagi I had seen some of the curious Batak people of Sumatra ; also some of their peculiar houses. But on the Karo Plateau the types of natives suddenly changed. Those now seen beside the roadway reminded me of the interesting tribes in the Northern and Southern Shan States of Burma. Their costumes and features closely resembled those of the Shans.

Then we dipped downwards and eastwards, on an easy gradient, towards Pematang Siantar, the terminus of the railway from Medan. It is the centre of a great tea-growing industry and a prosperous looking township, endowed with an excellent hotel—the Siantar. The main street was not without interest ; but, apart from this, there was nothing really to see and admire. After lunch at the Siantar Hotel, I pushed on to Parapat on Lake Toba. Now I turned over the wheel to Tambéh, and sat beside him so as to miss nothing of interest. The day's journey was about one hundred and forty three miles, which we covered in just over five hours exclusive of stops on the road.

From Pematang Siantar *via* Panahatan to Parapat, the road leads at first through rubber estates and then gradually ascends the ridge of hills which surround Lake Toba. Up to this point the drive had been somewhat disappointing. My attention had been concentrated mostly upon the feat of engineering in constructing the road and upon the expertness of the driving of Tambéh. Many a time, as we raced round blind and sharp bends without sounding a warning note, we avoided collision with a Government motor-bus only by a few inches. My hair almost stood up on end under the sun-helmet and often I caught my breath sharply. On the one side was a rocky wall and the recklessly driven motor-bus ; on the other, just room for us to get by and a deep, boulder-strewn precipice to go down if our wheels slipped. However, I quickly came to repose the utmost confidence in Tambéh's ability to give me thrills while still evading disaster. On many occasions, it seemed to me almost a physical impossibility to escape a nasty accident or even death ; but Tambéh never lost his head, and always emerged safely from every difficulty.

At Panahatan, suddenly a vision of a limpid blue sheet of water, surrounded on all sides by massive green and brown hills, thrust itself before my eyes. This first glimpse of the lovely Lake Toba was wholly entrancing. The more I saw of it—at Parapat, Balige and elsewhere—the more did I grow to love its perfect beauty and deep tranquillity. The lake is hedged in on all sides by giant hills, while the waters are a serene, deep blue.

Lake Toba is the largest sheet of water in Sumatra and, in olden times, was regarded by the natives as sacred. Every stranger attempting to reach it, according to native superstition, inevitably

met his death. In 1835 three Frenchmen and two Americans tried to get there, but were murdered when almost within sight of their goal. Ida Pfeiffer, the well-known explorer, was also unable to reach its shores in her attempt during 1850. The first European to see Lake Toba was Van der Tuuk, the famous Dutch student of native languages. He reached the shores in 1863, but immediately was obliged to seek safety in flight owing to the hostile attitude of the Batak cannibal tribe. Native superstition now appears to be dead. It is well, for there are few more beautiful lakes in all the world.

The greatest length is about 56 miles, while it covers an area of roughly 23 square miles; and, in some places, there is a depth of fully 1,500 feet. Far to the south-west is the island of Samosir, divided from the mainland by a narrow channel; and there are other smaller islands scattered about its vast waters. When viewed from the surrounding hills, Lake Toba gives the impression of a huge crater half-filled with water. Most probably, it is of volcanic origin.

The road into Parapat—where the hotel is splendidly situated on a narrow peninsula standing high above the lake—is a marvellous work of engineering and a scenic masterpiece. It winds round the ridge of hills, passing over many fine bridges and through a short tunnel in one of the spurs. The Dutch engineers seem to delight in making sharp turns and leaving blind bends in their roads, and seldom allow sufficient room for two cars to pass. They also like to make all approaches to bridges at right angles, which adds to the dangers of driving. You have to keep a sharp eye ahead, and never relax your vigilance for an instant.

Parapat is only a small fishing village; but the hotel has a fine, sandy bathing-beach and other attractions to offer visitors. I found it a delightfully restful spot. The manager was courtesy itself and displayed a degree of honesty that staggered me. There was a slight error in my bill—against me, of course!—which I had overlooked. Before I left, he came to me full of apologies for the clerical error and insisted on refunding the overcharge. This was most unexpected, for strangers in most countries are considered fair game by all and sundry.

Just before sunset, on the day of my arrival there, a sudden breeze whipped the placid waters of Lake Toba into short, angry, spray-flecked waves. It reminded me of Lake Albert in Central Africa on which, in a sudden squall, I once made a perilous voyage in a decayed steam-launch.

Owing to the delayed arrival at Medan, I had been forced to fit four days' programme into two, with the result that this section of my journey across Sumatra had been completed at such speed that there was not much opportunity to see things of interest. In addition, I had started forth with high fever and a violent cold in the head, which rather gave me a jaundiced outlook. There were much brighter prospects ahead.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AMONG THE SAVAGE BATAKS

FROM Parapat to Balige—also on the shores of Lake Toba—is a journey of sixty-six miles, and we covered the distance at a good rate of speed. Shortly after leaving Parapat we passed the boundary stone of eastern and western Sumatra, thus marking the centre of the waist of the island. The whole of this section of my journey provided ample evidence of wonderful road-engineering, but the surface appeared to be neglected in some spots. This was much more marked in the eastern than the western portions of Sumatra.

We climbed upwards from Parapat over hilly grasslands, which closely resembled many parts of Natal, and more especially, the area around Pietermaritzburg. The countryside is sparsely populated and under-developed. The road was very winding, yet the gradients never seemed severe; and my Buick took all on top-gear.

Then we began to dip down towards Balige, and the face of the country changed for the better. There was a much denser population, and agricultural development more in evidence. Here were to be seen vast acres of terraced rice-fields—*sawahs*, as the Malays call them. I had never before seen rice grown in this manner, and found the system more than ordinarily interesting. In a hilly country, the only way to solve the problem of irrigation is by means of these terraces; and the plan seems to have solved all difficulties very effectually. They give an extraordinary appearance to the country, but are always picturesque. Miles upon miles of these curved terraces of flooded *sawahs* covered the slopes of the hills, right up to their summits; and the water trickled down from the topmost terrace to the lowest, thus irrigating them all in turn. The frequent rains supply the water, and no pumping is required.

Tambek was at the wheel, for I was keen to see all there was of interest; and motoring through Sumatra calls for strict attention to the business in hand. You allow your eyes to wander from the road ahead only at your peril. His driving had frequently called forth my admiration, and deservedly; but Tambek had an unfortunate penchant for giving way to nothing in the shape of domestic animals. Our bag, so far, had amounted to five mangy pariah-dogs, one piglet, a yellow cat, and a dozen or more fowls. Admonishing him served no purpose. He added considerably to this death-roll

before we reached the end of our journey. At least, it can be said that he gave them all a painless death and left none maimed or dying on the road. After each such casualty, I looked back to make sure. All had been killed instantly. His actions were not due to callous indifference to life; but these creatures strayed about the roadway near villages as if they owned it. No doubt, the slain beasts helped to swell the family larder.

Now we were on the fringe of the country of the savage Batak people, about whom I had heard something and was anxious to know more. Naked-breasted, ugly-featured, dirty-looking Batak women passed us continually on the road or were seen industriously at work in the *sawahs*. The men were almost as naked as the day they were born, and extremely ugly and repulsive looking scoundrels. These Bataks are a prolific and industrious race. Everyone appeared to be working; and almost every woman either carried a child or was followed by a group of varying ages—generally a step-ladder of a family. Even the small, naked toddlers were helping the workers in the rice *sawahs*, for the time was nearly ripe for the harvest.

I halted the car to study an interesting native bazaar, which was in full swing at Lagoeboti village. Here I first rubbed shoulders with these primitive savages and obtained a close view of them. None can be said to have been endowed by Nature with either facial or physical charms. All looked horribly dirty and verminous. They are an unprepossessing people, with no single characteristic to commend them. The market-place seemed to be devoted chiefly to the sale of foodstuffs, and I could discover nothing in the way of curios worth a moment's consideration. I did not waste many minutes there.

Just before reaching Balige, there was another perfectly glorious view over Lake Toba and some of its archipelago of small islands. The vast sheet of water was glassy-smooth and of the deepest blue. As we entered the town, Tambéh halted the car unexpectedly by the roadside and pointed to a small group of Batak men standing a few yards away. At first, I was at a loss to understand what was on his mind for there appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary. I was not long left in doubt.

Suddenly I heard the most piteous, agonized cries coming from the centre of the group. Undoubtedly, these were the terrified moans of a dog being tortured. There could be no room for mistake. Wrathfully, I started up in my seat and made ready to leap out of the car to the dog's rescue. A Dutchman, to whom I had given a lift into Balige, grabbed my arm and prevented me going. Hurriedly he explained, while a futile rage consumed me. It seems that the Bataks have a strong liking for dog-flesh, and it costs three times more in the market than the meat of any other animal. Their custom is slowly to torture the dog to death with knives, bleeding



1. BATAK HOUSE AT HOEDJA GINDJANG,  
NEAR BALIGE



2. BATAK HOUSE AT SOETI SOCHI, NEAR  
BALIGE



1. BATAKS IN THE MARKET-PLACE, NEAR BALIGE
2. DJANDJI MARIA KAMPONG OF BATAKS, BALIGE
3. BATAKS IN DJANDJI MARIA KAMPONG, BALIGE

it while still alive so as to secure white meat. And this was what was happening before my eyes !

I was powerless to intervene, for the custom is winked at by the Dutch Government. The memory of that dreadful sight cannot be forgotten ; and the recollection leaves a permanent evil taste in my mouth. It was such a cruel and utterly revolting practice. The whole scene was so absolutely repulsive that, even now, the mere thought of it is nauseating. I am glad that, at long last, the Dutch Government is making an earnest effort to stop this horrible custom, but it would appear to be a slow process. In the name of humanity, it should be suppressed at all costs.

I spent some time at Balige, studying the Bataks and their villages. The Hotel Toba was not a bad resting place, though not quite up to the standard of others in Sumatra. In order to get a real chance to study the Bataks, I sought the assistance of the Assistant Controleur of Balige ; and this Dutch official proved most helpful and courteous. Immediately I had made known my mission, both he and his pretty young wife offered to accompany me in the Buick to some of the chief villages of the Bataks. I owe them a deep debt of gratitude for most useful information and for their courtesy to a complete stranger. The Assistant Controleur's wife, as also himself, spoke perfect English. This rather astonished me until she smilingly told me that her education had been completed at Roedean School (Brighton), where she had been captain of the school cricket team. It is a small world, indeed !

The Bataks are agriculturalists, as well as breeders of cattle, pigs and water-buffalo. They are the Malays of the western area of Sumatra, and inhabit the Residency of Tapanoeli, in the south of Atjeh, a large portion of the eastern coast of the island, and parts of the neighbouring islands which are external to the Dutch East Indies proper. According to the differences in their dialects, the Bataks are divided into three principal groups : the Tobas of Sibolga, the Baros and Sorkam ; the Mandailings, on the west of Sumatra ; and the Dairis, of the north and north-west of Baros, and in the centre of Singkel. To these three main groups others are related : the Timor-Bataks, the Raja-Bataks, and the Pakpak-Bataks of Lake Toba ; and the Karo-Bataks and the Dusun-Bataks of the high plains and on the east coast of the island. I had just seen the Karo-Bataks around Brastagi ; but the people I was now visiting were the Pakpak-Bataks.

Any real knowledge of the Bataks dates only from the year 1867. Until about 1883 they enjoyed a terrible reputation for cannibalism, due no doubt to the reports brought back by the early Arab travellers in the interior of Sumatra. Out of about 500,000 Bataks, at least half are Mohammedans ; yet the propaganda of Islam followed rather than preceded Christianity. There are roughly 80,000

Christians, or rather alleged Christians ; and the remainder are just animistic pagans, whose beliefs are modified by somewhat vague memories of Hinduism. These latter are very susceptible to the influence of Christian missionaries, a fact which has greatly facilitated Holland in gaining domination over them. Throughout their land the multitude of quaint Christian churches of the German or Dutch missionaries is quite a feature. But the professed Christianity of these people is very far from being sincere. Saturated with superstitions, their religious beliefs are naturally warped.

The character of the present generation of Bataks is peaceable, and they are easy to deal with in ordinary circumstances. They conclude their rice harvesting, however, with collective banquets at which many a buffalo is slaughtered and eaten. Afterwards there is much quarrelling, and not a few broken heads. The Dutch Government prohibits feasts and dancing during the harvest season, as otherwise the crops would be neglected ; but permit any form of indulgence in joyous celebrations once the harvesting is completed.

Whatever religious label the Batak assumes, he is more a slave to superstition than an actual believer. For instance, the Islamism of the Bataks, wherever it is professed, is limited to the circumcision rite, which is also practised by the Karo-Bataks generally ; the veneration of the *Hadjis* and *Santris* ; the erection in every village of a very countrified mosque ; and abstention from pig-flesh and also strong drink. A dispensation, however, seems to be given on the occasion of a harvest festival, for Moslems among the Bataks can then hold their own against other religions in the matter of drunkenness. In all else, the *adat* (clan laws) of their particular village comes first.

The practice of filing the teeth would appear to be a general custom among the Bataks ; and marriage affects the patriarchal or matriarchal form according to the village concerned or the rank of the parties contracting it.

For those interested in strange peoples and their customs, the Bataks offer as fascinating a study as any race in southern Asia. They are still in a very raw and unenlightened stage of development, also but little removed from the wild, savage days of half a century ago. Then they went out to attack their neighbours with spears and knives, or ancient muskets obtained from the Arab traders, intent upon loot, murder and cannibalism ; and with as little concern as a butcher would kill a sheep for the market.

Their art and architecture, their weapons and worship, their fears and feasts, their music and medicine, their dancing and dentistry, and their marriage and burial rites still reek of a pagan age. Scores of these people can be seen at their weekly *pekan* (market), squatting on the ground, hacking at the carcasses of half a dozen oxen or water-buffalo of uncertain age ; or else cooking all



parts of the beast with sliced bananas in green bamboo-tubes leaning over blazing wood-fires ; or returning to their *kampongs* or clan-house with a bamboo-tube of raw blood to be made into a savoury sauce. You are then reminded that here is a race of people who have not yet reached the fringe of civilized life.

Their communal life is kept up in *kampongs* enclosed within wooden palisades or feathery bamboo clumps. Wherever you see one of these graceful oases in the midst of the rice-fields or alongside of the roadway, breaking up the scenery in rather an attractive manner, you may be certain that it holds a Batak village or household. Sometimes there are from six to sixty dwellings and granaries within such an enclosure ; at others, there will be only one or two dwellings with adjacent granaries.

All of the Batak houses are erected on massive stilts, with thick plank walls and high, steep roofs of palm-fibre thatching. No nails, glue or glass are used in their construction, but all are highly ornamented. A pair of horns or a carved wooden head and neck is invariably fastened to the dizzy heights of the gables of the front and rear of the roofs. The architectural style is most unique, and possesses a neat, rustic appearance which is distinctive.

The graceful shape of the roofs is genuinely original and attractive, but bears a close resemblance to those of the Bahnars in French Indo-China. The roof construction and the decorative wood-carvings are vastly interesting, so it is a thousand pities that Batak architecture is fast dying out. There is reason to fear it will soon become a lost art. I was told that a rich American tourist bought one of these houses complete, a few years ago, and paid five thousand dollars for it. She had it transhipped in sections to her home in America, and there re-erected on her estate by Batak workmen. For her sake, I hope she had it well fumigated and cleansed with disinfectants—for this would be a sheer necessity. The Bataks are a filthy and verminous race of people, whose ideas on sanitation are negligible.

In every village there is one huge communal house, where the Bataks receive friendly strangers and also keep their most valued possessions—which are mostly of a fetishistic nature. Rows of smaller huts serve as granaries ; and each is roofed in the same style of architecture as their larger brothers.

The Batak has no real door to his house, though there are unglazed window-frames. There is a wooden stairway leading up to the flooring under the raised platform on which the house is actually built, and through this hole in the floor underneath the house they enter their homes. Their villages are extremely insanitary and offensively odoriferous ; while the people themselves look disgustingly dirty and unkempt, all of a most primitive type of human being.

There are eight families and as many cooking-places in the one big room that forms the dwelling, but no chimneys and only open window-frames. The walls and rafters are thick with dripping creosote. Like the Dyaks of Borneo, they store large supplies of wood-fuel over the fire-places for years, as a symbol of their providence. The stacks of empty, giant bamboo-tubes, still seen among the rafters, were formerly the powder magazines for sparking their flint-lock muskets when engaged in their frequent inter-tribal warfare.

The burial customs of the Bataks are original, too. They do not place the bodies in the earth, but on a raised platform above the ground ; and over this is erected a quaintly-shaped tomb. The rich have handsome brick or stone mausoleums ; but the poor have to be content with somewhat drab affairs of mud and thatch. Some of these graves stand in the midst of the rice-fields, being often whitewashed. The design is always interesting, and not infrequently the summit of the tomb is decorated with a weird and hideously carved-stone figure.

One of the best types of Batak villages which came under my direct notice was the *kampung* of Djandji Maria, a few miles outside Balige and just off the road to Parapat. The people in this *kampung* were quite friendly, possibly owing to the presence of the Assistant Controleur of Balige. Their chief was particularly filthy and a fiercely hideous scoundrel ; but his unprepossessing appearance belied the good nature underlying it. I wanted to secure some photographs of types of the Bataks, but his people were shy and loath to face my camera. The chief obligingly came to my rescue and posed for his own portrait, then curtly ordered the people to do likewise. They obeyed him as if he had instilled great fear into them. Near this village was a very extensive Batak cemetery, but few good graves ; mostly they appeared to be those of extremely poor people.

The healthy but dirty children of this village were decked out with Spanish doubloons or else modern silver *ringgits* (dollars), yen and guilders. The women, in their sombre indigo *sarongs* and naked chests, wore massive ear-coils of silver, which were partly supported by the folds of the clumsy, pillow-like turbans on their heads. The latter were very similar to those worn by many of the Shan tribes in Upper Burma. I persuaded one old woman to lift out the wedge key and lay an ear-ornament on a Batak weighing machine. It tipped the scale at a trifle over two pounds. Each village has a massive tree-trunk set in the ground, with a lever attached, to draw out the silver for making these huge ear-ornaments.

Dentistry is a crude and painful business among the Bataks. The diabolical custom of cutting off the teeth of young boys and girls at the age of adolescence came under my notice at the village

of Porsea, which we visited after seeing Djandji Maria. The *pekan* (market) was coming to a close when we arrived, but still large crowds were present. All along the road we passed great numbers of men, women and children, either with or without heavy loads. Directly we arrived, I set out to explore the market-place in search of possible curios worth buying; but found nothing of any value. Then, suddenly, I came across a scene which is unlikely to be forgotten in a hurry.

Before my eyes was being perpetrated the unpardonable crime of mutilating a youngster's teeth. A barbarian mother had brought her youthful daughter to a brutal butcher for him to inflict this added mark of tribal "beauty." The poor little child was stretched out on the ground, with her head on a pillow of stone, and jaws wedged open with a largish block of wood. The outrageously dirty, partly naked Batak dentist opened an ancient biscuit tin and produced a motley collection of old files, rusty chisels, lead-loaded bone mallets, an ordinary but rusty steel spike, and hack-saws made by notching watch-springs. These were his instruments for the operation.

He began forthwith to chip off the living ivory from the child's eye-teeth in much the same manner as a mason would attack a block of stone. After cutting off these teeth, the watch-spring hack-saws were inserted in the gaping and bleeding mouth, and all the incisor teeth in the upper and lower jaws were sawn off as far down as the actual gums. The throbbing stumps were tortured into still further throes of agony by being rasped with an ordinary blacksmith's file. I would endure the most acute toothache for the rest of my life rather than place myself in the hands of a Batak dentist.

Remonstrances are utterly futile against this age-old barbarism, so I turned away with mingled feelings of horror, anger and nausea. I never remember seeing a more harrowing operation performed on humans or animals. Heaven forbid that such a ghastly custom should be permitted to continue unchecked!

The wicked cruelty thus perpetrated on quite young children calls for immediate suppression. I learned later from the Assistant Controleur that efforts have been made to persuade the Bataks to abandon this revolting practice, but so far have met with no marked success. He told me that one victim of this crude, barbaric dentistry had been unable to eat or drink for four days after the operation, and dared not even speak for fear of the agony entailed. While another woman victim had suffered continually from severe pains in her mouth for twenty years—ever since, in fact, the parents had caused this vicious mutilation to be performed upon her.

Apart from my deep disgust at their dog-torturing and tooth-mutilation proclivities, my most lasting memory of the Bataks is of the graceful architecture of their homes.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BALIGE TO FORT DE KOCK

I LEFT Balige at six o'clock in the morning, intent upon reaching the Rest-house at Kota Nopan that evening and then driving through to Fort de Kock next day. It was an ambitious programme, for the distance to Kota Nopan was 374 miles and the road mostly mountainous ; while no allowance had been made for bad weather or possible breakdowns. Foolishly, I started forth on the long run without a meal. It was my intention to breakfast at Sibolga and lunch at the Rest-house in Pedang Sidampoean.

Between Balige and Sibolga, a thriving little port on the west coast, is interesting and often really beautiful country. As we began to climb up into the hills above Balige, a police post halted us and examined the contents of the car. I thought they were Customs officers, but was wide of the mark. Tambéh asked them what was wrong and then translated their answer to me. They were merely making sure that we did not take any miserable dog-victims out of this area. The Batak savages are permitted to finish off the present supply of canines, but no dogs may be imported or exported in the Balige district. This regulation seems farcical. There are other quite simple means to evade them, and dogs need not be carried along the motor-road. Also dogs breed and have large families. The Bataks will see to it that the supply does not fail them.

The road is excellently constructed through very fine mountainous and well-wooded country. It is a really fine effort at engineering, for there are no less than fifteen hundred sharp bends in the one hundred and twenty-two miles journey to Sibolga. I kept tally, but may have omitted to count some of them. You need to be a good and careful driver, with nerves of steel, on this section of the motor-road through Sumatra ; while a small car is a decided advantage. The roads are narrow. There is a constant stream of Ford-buses, which are recklessly driven by Malays and give no warning of their approach. To make matters worse, they are filled over capacity and hung round with bulging crates of livestock, bicycles and packages. Often I escaped a crash only by a miracle, for my foot was on the accelerator to make the best time possible and averaged about fifty miles an hour ; sometimes, the speedometer registered sixty-five.

There were many magnificent views, especially so from the milestone marked 106. Here was a wonderful panorama over the

placid, blue waters of Lake Toba ; while vast acres of terraced rice-fields were in the foreground, dotted here and there with clumps of feathery bamboos surrounding Batak villages. Just before reaching Tarotoeng, we passed through a deep valley between high, rugged hills ; and here were innumerable sulphur springs oozing out of the volcanic soil. There was a strong smell of sulphur everywhere ; and streams, smoking with its fumes, crossed under the roadway by culverts or else ran beside it through the valley. At the large village of Tarotoeng, I surrendered the wheel to Tambeh. The Ford-buses were getting on my nerves, and now had complete confidence in my Malay chauffeur's ability to dodge accidents.

Immediately after leaving Tarotoeng, we began to climb again into mountainous country. It was a well-wooded area, too. Here the rubber plantations of the Malays were very much to the fore ; and heavy native carts, hooded with matting and drawn by a single water-buffalo, streamed past us continuously with loads of crude rubber sheets for the market. I noticed that all the buffalos had a pad or leather shoes on their hoofs, so as to protect them from the hard stone surface of the roadway.

At Bonon Dolok (altitude 1,300 feet) I halted the car to climb up a narrow path to the summit of a hill opposite the *pasanggrahan* (Rest-house), which latter is reserved exclusively for the military and civil services stationed in Sibolga. From the top of the hill there was a gorgeous view of the town and port ; also of the wide, beautiful sweep of the blue waters of Tapanoeli Bay. Far below the wooded heights on which I stood were the Indian Ocean and the white houses of the town, while the road could be seen winding and twisting through the forest-clad hills like a white serpent. It was a delightful panorama, and I was reluctant to leave this spot. Wild pine-apples were growing profusely on the hill, but the fruit was very bitter.

The road from Bonon Dolok into Sibolga was an amazing bit of engineering, as well as offering many splendid views. There were several fine waterfalls down the face of the cliffs. Near Sibolga's outskirts, the road engineers had tunnelled through two hills—one even beneath a large waterfall.

It was very hot in Sibolga, which is the headquarters of the Tapanoeli Residency and also a large military station. The port has not yet grown to any great size, but promises to become important and the centre of intense commercial activity just as soon as Sumatra's west coast is more developed. There was a small hotel here, which could have been made more habitable by the addition of *punkahs* or overhead electric fans. But such luxuries were not to be found, for the Dutch do not seem at all keen on these aids in reducing the temperature.

We reached Sibolga at eleven o'clock. I did not feel like breakfast,

and it was too early for lunch. I decided to push on as soon as Tambeh had overhauled the car and filled up the petrol tank. Meanwhile I wandered round the little township. There was really nothing worth seeing. The only point of interest was that the Dutch colonists ignored the tropical sun. The men all wore ordinary straw hats, the women scorned sun-helmets and sunshades, and the healthy children were bareheaded. No harm seems to result from this departure from the accepted rule of most Europeans resident in tropical countries. I understand that a case of sunstroke is indeed a rarity. The Dutch in their East Indies possessions are very conservative and cling tenaciously to their homeland customs in living. Not infrequently during my travels through their colonies, I met Dutchmen wearing bowler hats and European clothing—even at the hottest time of the day. I was told that they always do so on Sunday, whether going to church or not.

My journey from Balige to Sibolga—and, indeed, all the way from Belawan-Deli—had been blessed with fine weather, though near Brastagi rain-clouds had threatened a deluge but came to nothing. From Sibolga to Kota Nopan we ran through a merciless tropical downpour that did much to mar the beauty of the drive and damp my enthusiasm. It also wet me to the skin, utterly ruined a suit-case on the luggage-carrier and spoiled all its contents. To add to our great discomfort, we suffered no less than fifteen punctures and three burst tyres on this section of the journey. Road-repairs in such a deluge of rain were about the last straw. Just my luck, too, that these disasters should occur only on a beastly wet day! I had experienced no tyre or engine trouble so far, and it was unkind to inflict upon me so many punctures and burst tyres on that particular day. Mostly Tambeh and I carried out repairs from within the car, but the wheels had to be removed and replaced in the torrential rainstorms. Not even a stout waterproof was of avail against a soaking.

The first part of the road from Sibolga took us along a two-mile strip of the coast, plentifully sprinkled with fishing villages. Looking backwards, there was a fine vista over Tapanoei Bay and the Indian Ocean. Then we crossed a number of broad, swiftly-moving rivers, but the bridges spanning them were not of the best. Some badly needed repairs. Generally speaking, however, the road was reasonably good and we made a fair rate of speed. Then the rain started and halts became distressingly frequent to repair tyres.

At Batang Taro, the river scenery was exceptionally lovely, but the sheets of rain did much to ruin the outlook. Thereafter we began to climb up into the hills again, and rubber estates were the key-note of the districts through which we sped. There were plenty of native rubber-growers hereabouts, which fact is not surprising when it is remembered there are over sixty million acres in Sumatra under



1. BATAK FERRY ON LAKE TOBA, NEAR PORSEA  
 2. MARKET DAY IN FORT DE KOCK  
 3. A MENANGKABAU FAMILY, NEAR FORT DE KOCK—AT  
 LAWANG KAMPONG



FAMILY HOUSE OF MENANGKABAU AT LAWANG KAMPONG, NEAR  
FORT DE KOCK



rubber cultivation by Malays. There were also a great many large and well-kept European rubber estates in this region. The road had many sharp bends to negotiate, but here the menace of the wildly driven motor-bus was not so pronounced. The majority of the scenery was really beautiful, the road being flanked by wooded hills and sombre miles of rubber trees; and, though we seemed to be constantly winding through the same type of country, I never found it boring or monotonous. Rice-fields were seldom seen. The local natives appeared to be concentrating their labours and attention on rubber production.

We arrived at the *pasanggrahan* in Pedang Sidampoean about three o'clock in the afternoon; but made only a brief halt in this little township. My hunger had almost evaporated by this time, though I had eaten nothing since dinner on the previous night. I only had a bottle of beer in Sibolga. I made enquiries for food at the Rest-house, but could only be offered tinned sausages. It did not sound appetizing enough to waste time over such a scratch meal. I passed it up, and we went on to Kota Nopan.

The rain came down intermittently during the rest of the journey. There were Malay *kampongs* plentifully sprinkled all along this section of the road, also a great number of water-buffalo at work or grazing. I was much interested by the manner in which the Dutch identified these villages, for each had its name painted in white lettering on a black board. This was suspended on wire across the roadway, and was easily read by motorists. It is a cute idea, worthy of imitation. You only had to glance up at the board on entering a village, and knew instantly exactly where you had arrived. The natives in this district seemed very friendly and quite happy, especially the children; while the cowed appearance of the Malays near Medan had entirely disappeared.

At sunset we began to climb steadily upwards to the Kloof Pintu Angin; but it was too dark and rainy to see anything of this famous beauty spot. All the way up this tortuously winding road were innumerable caravans of bullock-carts, either on the move or out-spanned for the night at the roadside. As many of them had only just halted, and the bullocks or buffalo were straying all over the road, it made driving a car round those hairpin bends in the darkness a matter of incessant thrills. We had some narrow escapes from collisions, but Tambek managed to scrape through somehow without disaster. He was an expert at the wheel on such roads, and I gave him full marks for his performance.

I was extremely glad to reach the rather indifferent *pasanggrahan* in Kota Nopan at nine o'clock that night. There was only one other guest—a Dutchman. He had eaten the dinner which I had ordered by telegram from Sibolga, and the best the caretaker could offer was a tin of sausages, some sauerkraut, bread and cheese. I washed

it down with a bottle of beer. I was too tired to eat much, and went off to bed within half an hour of arrival.

We left Kota Nopan at six o'clock next morning, after *chota hazri*, and drove swiftly to Fort de Kock. The weather was still a trifle unkind. Later in the morning, however, it brightened considerably and the rain ceased.

There were some wonderful views *en route*, especially over the saddle of the Bolat Pass near Rau, also between Rau and Loboek Sikapang, and again at the point where the road crosses over the Allahan Pandjang River near Bondjol. It was a tortuous, mountainous road most of the way into Fort de Kock; and, once the rain had finished, proved a most enjoyable drive. We reached the *pasanggraham* at Loboek Sikapang shortly after eight o'clock. Once more the only food available was of the tinned variety washed down with German lager beer; but this was not unwelcome after the short rations of the previous day.

I was now on the fringe of the far-famed, much advertised Padang Highlands of Sumatra, and nearing the country of the peculiar Menangkabau people. Just before reaching Fort de Kock, we passed a small mosque standing beside a diminutive stream. The Dutchman at Kota Nopan had urged me to halt here and see the sacred fishes, for they were a sight which should not be missed on any account. He must have been pulling my leg! I did exactly as advised, but could see nothing to warrant a halt there. I did not see a single fish—sacred or otherwise. That on top of consuming my dinner, almost induced me to return to Kota Nopan to tell that Dutchman what I thought of him. As he was a brawny specimen of manhood, perhaps it is just as well that wisdom prevailed.

A little further down the road there was a splendid view of the active volcano of Mount Ophir. There is another hill with this name in Johore State, which can be seen from Malacca.

We reached Fort de Kock in nice time for lunch, having covered 134 miles, inclusive of stops, in about six hours. Considering the gradients and bad weather at the start, this was not bad time. I found there was a choice of two good hotels, so stayed at the first one encountered; and was made very comfortable indeed.

Nestling at the base of the active volcanoes of Merapi and Singgalang, this charming mountain resort (at an altitude of 3000 feet) is the capital of the Padang Highlands. Fort de Kock dates back just over a century; enjoys as temperate a climate as that of the south of France; and is widely acknowledged to be one of the most healthy spots in all the Dutch East Indies. Rapid falls and rises in temperature are practically unknown in the Padang Highlands, though it rains more there than in Java; but mostly the rain comes during the afternoons or nights. It is never unbearably hot. You can walk about the whole day without feeling unduly the effects

of the sun. As it is practically summer all the year round, there are no definite seasons in the Padang Highlands; but the best time is between the months of December and May.

Let Java boast of being one of the most wonderful lands in the tropics, yet not forget that the Padang Highlands at least equal—personally, I would say excel—many of her glories. They possess the wildest, grandest scenery in all Malaysia. Nowhere in Java can be encountered such perfect pictures of plains and mountains, such magnificent stretches of landscape, such brilliant sunshine, and such brightness of colouring in trees or bushes. Add to these an interesting native population, still unspoiled by streams of tourists, who adhere rigidly to centuries-old laws and customs.

I had heard a great deal about the famous *Ris-Taeffel* of the Dutch East Indies. It is the Dutch equivalent of the curry and rice in India and British Malay; but a far more elaborate dish. I much wanted to sample it.

On the morning after my arrival at Fort de Kock, I asked the hotel proprietor for *Ris-Taeffel* on the luncheon menu. My request was readily granted. It proved an amazing dish of fully twenty or more ingredients—chicken and several kinds of meat; many varieties of vegetables; fish and eggs; and a multitude of terribly hot spices and sauces. The groundwork of this mammoth course was boiled rice. Two plates could not hold everything which goes to the making of a *Ris-Taeffel*, so I was surrounded with lesser plates to contain the overflow. Later on they provided a useful receptacle for discarded bones.

My capacity was quickly exhausted, for this was not a man-size dish but an elephant's. Yet both Dutch men and women gorge themselves upon it, sending away empty plates. This is an astonishing feat. I became a casualty early in the attempt to conquer this colossal repast; but mine host and hostess vanquished the piles of food with apparent ease. *Ris-Taeffel* is more of a rite than a course in a meal—a wallowing in heaped-up masses of rice and other ingredients.

The serving of this dish is as much a business as the eating of it. The hotel at Fort de Kock, where first I was introduced to *Ris-Taeffel*, had not many native waiters on the establishment; but served me with fully thirty dishes, as far as I can remember. Yet this was really a minnow compared to the whale of a course later encountered in Weltevreden (Java).

Six Malay waiters advanced upon me in single file, bearing aloft a dish in each hand. I helped myself sparingly from each in turn, but they promptly retired to bring up reinforcements. It took some time to complete the service, and then I was left to face up to a giant's meal. It simply could not be done.

There were other dishes on the menu. I have seen the Dutch

round off this colossal course with a generous helping from one or more other courses. I would rather keep a Dutchman for a week than a fortnight; and how they could stay the course always defeated my understanding. It can only be supposed that their custom of taking a two-hours' siesta after tiffin saves them from chronic indigestion. *Ris-Taeffel* probably accounts for the Dutch in these colonies looking so huge in comparison to other European races. They need to be big men to master such a dish.

Many of the Dutch families in the East Indies make a daily habit of *Ris-Taeffel*, and eat nothing else during the day. I can fully understand why one such gorge should suffice. In the Dutch East Indies "slimming" cuts no ice, for all worship at the shrine of this original curry and rice meal.

Apart from the craters of Mounts Merapi and Singgalang, which I did not attempt to climb, the Kabaoewengat (Buffalo Hole) on the outskirts of Fort de Kock proved of interest. It is a deep and narrow gulley between precipitous walls of rock, the floor being all cut up into rice-fields. The yellow-grey rocks, sometimes covered with green vegetation, tower fully 200 to 300 feet above them; and a solitary wedge-shaped, rocky mound in the middle of the gulley lifts its mighty bulk abruptly out of the cultivated fields. In the background, the mighty mass of Mount Ophir frowns down upon the country side; while the summits of Mounts Merapi and Singgalang are wreathed in thick veils of white mist. It is all very imposing and beautiful.

There are many great attractions in the neighbourhood of Fort de Kock, but I shall remember it best for the unique Malay race—the Menangkabau—who dwell all round this town and on the Lowlands near the shores of the Indian Ocean.

## CHAPTER XX

### MATRIARCHY AMONG THE MENANGKABAU

**F**ORT DE KOCK has history and beauty to commend it, but the greatest claim to interest is the native population. The town stands in the heart of the ancestral home of the Menangkabau, one of the most curious and fascinating of the Malay races.

Naturally, I have both seen and heard of hen-pecked husbands—individual instances, of course; but the Menangkabau people are collectively hen-pecked. In this Malay tribe it is the woman who counts and not the man. There never was any occasion for a Suffragette Movement among these people. I am inclined to be glad at having escaped being born a Menangkabau, though the life they lead may offer pleasant compensations entirely outside my knowledge.

The very ancient institution of matriarchy remains to-day in its purest form among the Menangkabau Malays, who are a proud and contented race. They regard themselves as the true aborigines of Malays, the father—or should I say the mother?—of these people; but, most probably, are only a detached branch of those Malays who inhabit the coastal regions. Historians claim there exists strong evidence that the Menangkabau have been isolated for untold centuries in Sumatra, and there have developed in perfect independence. The kingdom of Menangkabau, if we accept the accuracy of native legends, arose upon the ruins of the great Hindu Empire of Adityavarman; and its name, "The Victory of the Buffalo," symbolizes the supremacy of the Malays of Sumatra over the Javanese. The Menangkabau are believed to have conquered Java at a very early date in history, but their dominion over that fruitful island was of short duration.

Early converted to the Islamic faith, while still preserving their tribal *adat* (clan laws) and matriarchal form of government, the Menangkabau consider themselves, rightly or wrongly, to be the purest Mohammedans in the whole of the Malay Archipelago. Whereas in almost all other parts of the world the matriarchal institution disappeared a thousand or more years ago, it is still preserved in an absolutely pure form in the Padang Highlands and Lowlands of Sumatra to the present day. It is true that this peculiar institution is still found in one State of the Madras Presidency in India, and also in the Rawang district of British Malaya;

but neither instance can be claimed as pure in character. It survives only in a much modified form.

Having seen something of the British branch in Rawang, I was eager to seek a closer acquaintance with the customs of the original tribe in Sumatra. Practically the whole of my time in Fort de Kock was devoted to making excursions to the surrounding *nagari* (villages) of these fine Malay people. With the kindly help of a Dutch government official, I was enabled to gain some insight into their daily lives and peculiar customs, their unique form of self-government and their laws of inheritance. It proved all very instructive and interesting.

Notwithstanding the many severe attacks the matriarchal system of the Menangkabau has undergone at the hands of the Padris, a religious sect which once waged war against the Dutch in Sumatra and for long were a thorn in their side, it has remained constantly true to type. The system has never wavered from the original form. The Menangkabau themselves speak of this unique institution in these words: "It never cracks like clay through the heat of the sun, and never rots away like wood through rain." The past centuries have proved this is no idle boast.

With the Menangkabau the right of relationship is exclusively maternal; and their peculiarly designed houses, as well as the divisions of the interiors, are closely identified with matriarchy.

I should imagine that the matriarchal institution neither provides a spur for the individual man to develop any initiative nor even encourages any spirit of real ambition. Yet it possesses many patent advantages, such as serving to keep together the family possessions and thus safeguarding tribal prosperity. Perhaps the greatest blessing of all is that it absolutely prevents prostitution, which is so rife among other Malay races. The moral standard among the Menangkabau may be either high or low—I am not in a position to state which prevails; but was assured by the Dutch official, a man of long experience among these people, that a prostitute cannot be found among them.

With people who adhere to the matriarchal system, blood relationship is considered to exist only through women who are mutually related or else among those who can claim direct descent from the same woman. A household—employing the word in its broadest sense—may consist of a number of such relationship. At the head of each is elected a *panghulu* (chief), who, at death, is succeeded by his younger brother. In the event of there being no surviving brothers, the mantle of chieftainship descends upon the son of the eldest sister. A gathering of several households makes a family; while the combination of a number of families forms a tribe or union, called a *suku*. As a general rule, the inter-marriage of those belonging to the same *suku* is strictly prohibited.

These families have no proper name; but every *panghulu* has an ancient hereditary title. It stays with the head of the family always, and is called the *galar*.

Children follow the maternal relation and, consequently, also her *suku*. The father of the children, however, remains altogether outside this connection; yet all children born of one mother are considered to be fully related as brothers and sisters, just as if they owned the same father. It does not matter if a woman, as a widow, remarries several times and bears other children. The relationship of stepfather, or of half-brother or half-sister, does not exist among the Menangkabau. The children born of all sisters are known as *kamanakans* and remain in her family, irrespective of the fact that the father may belong to another *suku*. The man's status simply does not count in the scheme of relationship, for the family tree is purely maternal and never paternal.

It is quite easy to understand why every woman of this race desires to bear female children rather than boys, for the former are a means of support to her and the family during the whole course of their lives. Generally speaking, they do not leave the house of their mother even when married, but remain as dutiful daughters. Curiously enough, the men do not seem to object and get on quite amicably with their mother-in-law and other female relations.

The male children over ten years of age do not spend their days or nights in the feminine circle, but congregate in large private places of worship, called the *Surau*, where they are taught to read and recite the Koran. In cases of sickness, however, both men and boys return to their mothers and sisters, and then are readily given shelter and refuge in the family house to which they belong. Whenever occasion demands, this maternal home provides a secure refuge from danger. In such cases, the tribal proverb says: "No matter how far the heron flies from home, he will always come back to his pools." A Menangkabau man invariably refers to his wife's house as "my house"; but the actual "family house" of the domestic circle is always spoken of as the "house of my sisters."

The possessions of a family, both movable and immovable, which are called the *harta pusako*, always remain the indivisible property of the whole family. The sale or mortgaging of plots of family ground is only permissible when all of those concerned give consent to such an action, or else in such circumstances as are definitely laid down by tribal laws. In regard to the latter, land can only be sold or mortgaged when a family does not possess the necessary funds for the elaborate celebration of a marriage, the expenses of a funeral, the repair of the family-house, or liquidation of any debts of honour contracted by the head of a family. This latter stipulation, however, is really no longer applicable, for gambling is a vice under the Islamic religious codes. These rules have been extended

in the Padang Lowlands to cover the losses incurred through shipwreck. If a Menangkabau fisherman's craft is lost at sea during a storm, the family lands may be sold or mortgaged to pay for a new boat so that his work can continue.

The eldest man of the senior female line, called the *mamak*, is the recognized trustee of all the wealth and property of the particular family. In the event of a transaction concerning the family possessions being contemplated, the *mamak* can only ratify such an arrangement after a general council of the entire family has fully discussed and unanimously approved of the proposed course of action. At this council all the men and women (who are of age) take part; as also men who have married into the family. The inclusion of the latter is merely intended to safeguard the interests of their wives and children. On other grounds, they possess no legal status at all.

There is a great deal to be said in favour of the matriarchal institution as practised by the Menangkabau, for it renders impossible the squandering of family wealth in riotous living or gross extravagance. All property acquired by any member of a family becomes the *harto pusako* (communal property) of the family at his or her death. The tribal law does not admit of any hereditary rights between two individuals, for the *harto pusako*, as well as the lands, are reckoned to be part and parcel of the hereditary title of the *panghulu*. Land always comes back into the possession of the family, or the *nagari* (village), to which it rightfully belongs. It is quite unalienable. The tribal saying in regard to this law is: "The buffalo may rise, but the pool (ground) remains." One good effect of the matriarchal system of the Menangkabau is the complete absence of any gambling propensities, extravagance in living, and other vices. The wealth of the family constantly grows, but seldom ebbs.

In regard to their matrimonial affairs, a betrothal is considered binding upon both contracting parties by the simple act of exchanging pledges; and the actual marriage ceremony is conducted according to the rites of Islam. It is performed by a *wali* (a priest), who himself, curiously enough, adheres to the patriarchal institution. It is interesting to note, however, that the conjugal rights of the marriage over which the *wali* presides always remain matriarchal.

The bridegroom moves into the bride's house, but is never treated or considered as one of her actual family. The woman wears the trousers; the man the apron. It is the women who seem to do most of the work, and provide the directing brains of any household; while the man spends his days in sleeping, dreaming or gossiping. Perhaps that is why matriarchy flourishes so strongly among the Menangkabau. The mere male is content to let well alone!

The architecture of the Menangkabau, while not unlike that of the Bataks in some respects, is much finer in design and workmanship. It differs slightly also from that of the matriarchal offshoot in the



Rawang district of British Malaya, where their houses are not so graceful, picturesque or distinctive.

The outer walls of the Menangkabau houses are decorated with beautifully finished wood-carving and painted in mosaic patterns of white, red and blue—sometimes with even a splash of yellow. It conveys an impression of being inlaid, but such is not the case. The main door is approached by a stone stairway, painted yellow or whitewashed according to individual taste. These steps lead up to a small veranda or covered porch, beyond which is the main communal hall.

The roofs are thatched with *idjuk*, a product of the *aren* palm-tree, while the main ridge sags deeply in the centre and rises at each gable in a high sweep to a fine point. These sharply horned rooftops are their most lovely characteristic, the general effect being highly artistic.

You can always estimate how many daughters of a house have been married by counting the number of extra wings built on to the main house, and by the consequent additional sweeping horns which crown the roof. Sometimes you will see as many as two wings added to each end of a house; at others, there will be two at one end and only one at the other; while a few have only one extra wing. The latter is a rarity. I only saw a single instance of this when travelling about their villages. Four wings seemed to be the most common. I do not recollect seeing a greater number than that on any Menangkabau house.

The interiors are divided off into sections, while the main house provides the communal hall in general use. There are no actual partitions between the main hall and the wings, or between wing and wing. Nor did I see any section curtained off from another.

In one house at the village of Lawang, over which I was shown, there was a platform or dais at one end of the central hall and raised about a foot higher than the floor. On this was placed a wide divan, over which had been draped gaily coloured *Batik*-work cloths. There were no curtains around it, though I was informed this served as the bridal chamber for the family. There were no other beds visible. The members of the family sleep on grass-mats spread upon the floors in the various wings. In the centre of the main hall was a plain table, some rough chairs and small stools; but there was no other furniture, except a few cooking utensils near the family fireside.

The entire family dwelt in this communal house; as also the aged *panghulu*, a most courtly old Malay gentleman. I saw no other men or even youths about the premises, only a small lad of about three years of age. There were quite a number of children of varying ages, but all were girls.

The *panghulu* soon made friends with me. I judged him to be a man of over eighty, and learned that he had spent thirty years in

the service of the Dutch Government. He was now enjoying a well-earned pension. I found him a charming old man and the very soul of courtesy, but obviously under the thumb of his eldest daughter. Much to my secret amusement, he continually referred to her in a most deferential manner; and it was easy to see who was the real "boss" in that establishment. In fact, this intelligent, pleasant-faced and rather severe-mannered Malay woman monopolized most of the conversation.

The other women present were either middle-aged or fairly young. The head woman, I should think, was fifty or more; but the others varied between sixteen and forty. The majority appeared to be married, and the mothers of the many children in the house. Some were quite good looking, others could only be described as comely; and all had charming manners. They also treated the head woman with studied deference. The children were models of good behaviour during my brief visit, being seen but not heard.

I offered the old *panghulu* a cigarette from my well-filled case, but he passed the case at once to the head woman. He did not attempt to remove a cigarette. She took out two, and handed one of them to the chief. Then she passed round the case to the other women, each of whom took a cigarette until the supply gave out. As each got one, the head woman held out her hand for it and they surrendered their spoil without a word of protest. Soon she had possession of every one except that allowed to the *panghulu*, and quietly secreted them in a box. Her discipline over the household was undeniable.

Next the *panghulu* produced some native-made cigars and offered me one. I accepted the gift, but dared not smoke it. Afterwards, Tambéh seemed to enjoy it greatly; but the cigar smelled rank and vile in my nostrils.

Outside the main family-house were grouped a series of rice granaries, each being carved and painted with the same deft skill to be noted in the artistic dwelling houses. Herein were stored their grain supplies, chiefly rice for flour making. The style of the roof was an exact copy of the houses, but a miniature edition. They were delightfully picturesque, and looked like Menangkabau dolls'-houses.

The Menangkabau villages are generally hidden among a clump of trees or slender palms. Each family-house has its own particular area. The number of houses in a village varies; but, generally, there seemed to be a group of six to a dozen, with an open space separating each group. In a larger space between the various villages was an open shed, with the typical horn-shaped roof. In this was suspended a large drum, hollowed out of a whole tree trunk. This served as the village bell, being beaten vigorously to summon together the people when urgently required—such as a fire or other alarm. Its deep, reverberating notes could be heard from a considerable distance.



1. RICE GRANARIES OF MENANGKABAU AT PADONG PANDJONG,  
NEAR FORT DE KOCK

2. BATAK GRAVE NEAR BALIGE

3. RICE-SAWAHS (TERRACES) NEAR BALIGE



1. CANAL SCENE IN OLD BATAVIA
2. THE FISH MARKET, OLD BATAVIA
3. THE *DHOBI-GHAT* IN THE CANAL, BATAVIA

I found the Menangkabau always content and cheerful, and should imagine they live an ideal existence of happiness. Certainly they have proved through many successive centuries that the matriarchal system of government works admirably; and display no inclination to exchange it for that of the more usual patriarchal form.

Reluctantly I said good-bye to those happy, prosperous and charming Malay people. I had delayed in Fort de Kock longer than intended, and was compelled to hurry over the last portion of my journey to Emmahaven.

I rose at four o'clock on a Sunday morning to motor to Padang and Emmahaven, there to embark for Java. The distance is 70 miles, at first down a steep gradient and latterly on the plains. We covered it in just over two hours. The road was the most wonderful I had yet seen in Sumatra. Especially was this the case at Padang Pandjang and Anei Kloof, which latter spot is quite the most beautiful part on the entire journey through the island.

We rose gradually on a splendid road into the hills above Fort de Kock, following the railway to Padang most of the way. There was a fleeting glimpse of the lovely lake of Singkarak, but no time to pay it a visit. Mount Merapi showed up clearly at times, but at others was mist-wreathed; while the crater of Singgalang was enveloped in such thick clouds that the summit was invisible.

Soon I was driving down hill towards Padang Pandjang, which is a small garrison-town in lovely surroundings. The road from this town on to the plains was a remarkable feat of engineering, many long steel bridges straddling raging torrents deep below the roadway. The views were indescribably lovely and full of wild grandeur. On both sides of the road rise up steep, green-clad hills, crowned with immense giants of trees; and it is through these gorges that the Anei Kloof winds. The whole drive through this part of the country is one continuous feast of splendid impressions, and always astonishingly beautiful. Then we dipped downwards to Kajoetanem, a former health-resort for the troops at Padang but now reduced to insignificance. Here is the starting point of the rack-rail on the railway, where the engine is shunted to the rear of the train in order to conquer the steep ascent to the Padangloear, close to Fort de Kock.

Shortly afterwards we were clear of the giant hills and racing across the flat plains around Padang—an area which is densely grown with coco-nut trees and thickly covered with rice-fields. Despite the risk of missing my steamer to Java, I felt compelled to halt awhile at Loeboek Aloeng to watch the entertaining spectacle of Malays using trained monkeys to climb the palms and throw down the coco-nuts. All along the road hereabouts I saw natives leading these clever monkeys by strings fastened to a belt round the animal's waist.

The owner stood beneath the selected tree, holding on to the end of the long cord ; and then waited patiently for the monkey to start his appointed task. Both are the essence of sloth, and haste is of no material object. Finally, the monkey swarms up the tree, and the nuts eventually are thrown down ; but the best part of a morning may be consumed while one monkey supplies six coco-nuts. The Malay guides his monkey-assistant to the ripe nuts by signals on the cord, but often it takes a long time for the order to be obeyed. Not infrequently, the monkey has other fish to fry ; and indulges in a strenuous flea hunt instead of casting down the desired nut. *Tid'apa* (never mind), the nut arrives on the ground in course of time. In all my travels about the world, I have never seen an instance of monkeys being employed in this manner—except only in the Padang Lowlands.

The town of Padang is picturesque, and only fifteen minutes' drive from the harbour at Emmahaven. It struck me as painfully tidy and immaculately clean. The town presents an altogether different aspect to others in Sumatra, for most of the houses are built on stilts, have thatched roofs and possess large gardens with beautiful varieties of flowers. It had the appearance of a rustic, seductively charming village, spread over a large area. Compared with other costal towns in the Dutch East Indies, Padang can be said to have a fairly reasonable climate though sitting astride the Equator.

Padang dates back to 1606, and takes pride in its history. Fifty-eight years after birth, it was made the capital of Sumatra's west coastal regions ; and a fortress was constructed on the banks of the Padang River in 1667, but was demolished by the British in 1793. Two years later, however, Padang and the entire west coastal area was taken possession of by the British in the name of William, Prince of Orange. It remained under their control until the middle of 1819, when the Dutch once more hoisted their flag here. Sir Stamford Raffles, when Lieutenant-Governor at Benkoelen, founded a British settlement at Sinawang, on the shores of Lake Singkarak, as the result of a visit he paid to Padang.

Emmahaven, Padang's port, is a magnificent harbour which does the Dutch much credit. It is still expanding rapidly, chiefly owing to the ever-increasing output of the Oembilin coal-mines on the western shores of Lake Singkarak. Sheltered by the high mountains over which I had just motored, the harbour is situated in Koninginne Bay whose tranquil loveliness would be difficult to excel. Ships bound for Padang formerly anchored out in this bay ; but the present harbour was started in 1887 to cope with the expanding trade and the export of coal, and took five years to complete.

I found my steamer, the *Baud* (2,400 tons) of the K.P.M. Line, just about to cast-off, and was within an ace of missing my chance of getting to Java. As it was, I had only just driven the car up the

gangway on to the deck and stopped the engine, when the *Baud* cast off from the wharves.

It was a small but comfortable ship, and the Dutch passengers refreshingly amicable. They all spoke English surprisingly well. I asked one of them how he had acquired such proficiency in my mother-tongue, and was told "by constantly reading English books." I found he could speak German, French and Malay just as fluently as Dutch or English. This mastery of languages was a never-failing source of wonder to me in the Dutch East Indies; and every Dutchman whom I encountered seemed to know several European languages in addition to Malay.

The *Baud* crept out of the harbour into the bay. The giant hills in the background showed vivid green and mist-wreathed, while the blue sea was like a sheet of glass. Soon we were threading our way through a multitude of small, evergreen islands, each crowned with its coco-nut palm trees. We steamed through this archipelago of lovely "summer islands of Eden" down the west coast of Sumatra to our first port of call, Benkoelen. At sunset, the golden disc of the sun dipped down to the edge of the still, limitless, blue waters of the Indian Ocean and made them appear blood-red.

We came to an anchor in the roadstead off Benkoelen at nine o'clock next morning, and remained there, some distance from the shore, for nine hours while busily loading and off-loading cargo into huge barges. From the roadstead, Benkoelen looks small and insignificant; but the place is crammed full of history. Viewed from the ship, there was a fringe of coco-nut palms behind a white sandy beach; while the background was filled in by high hills, mostly wreathed in snow-white clouds. The swell of the ocean broke in foam-flecked waves on the foreshore with a rhythmic boom.

Despite the tropical heat, I was enticed ashore by a Dutch fellow-passenger. I am glad, for there were many historical monuments to tell the story of the occupation of this place by Sir Stamford Raffles. The town nestles at the base of a hill—the old fort constructed by Raffles standing near the shore end; and, next to it, is the home of the Dutch Resident of Benkoelen. In the cemetery are many tombstones of the British soldiers who died here.

I found my chief interest, however, centred upon the ancient Fort Marlborough, built by the British between 1714 and 1820 yet still in a remarkably good state of preservation. One memorial tablet on the walls was elaborate in design, bearing the inscription: "Richard Watts, Esqre., sometime of Council for the Rt. Honble. ComY's affairs in Fort St. George, and in the year 1699 came over Deputy Governor of this place; and in about three years after made, by Commission from the Company, the First President of this Coast. In which Station he departed this life, December 17, 1705, and in the 44th year of his Age."

Benkoelen was the last spot on Sumatra's soil on which I set foot. Seated in the old Fort Marlborough, I could not avoid a feeling of regret that Britain had surrendered her outposts on this rich island to the Dutch. One cannot burke facts and history. The restoration of the captured Dutch colonies of Java and Malacca was no more than elementary justice. With Sumatra, the case was somewhat different. With the founding of Singapore, the newly restored Dutch colony at Malacca became hemmed in between Penang and Singapore—both British posts—and also isolated from all the main centres of the Dutch East Indies. Obviously some form of equitable readjustment was essential; and, in 1824, an exchange of territory was ratified by the Treaty of London. From that date, the British Settlements in Sumatra ceased to exist and the whole of the island became Dutch territory.

So at Benkoelen, a little over a century after British evacuation, I bade good-bye to Sumatra. I had been most favourably impressed by its manifold wonders. Holland, if not already aware of it, will discover that the island is her richest possession in those parts. Sumatra has already found its feet. If Holland governs it wisely and is prepared to spend money freely on works which will be enormously productive, the coming years will show amazing strides forward. The world-wide economic depression, however, has put a temporary brake on progress in the Dutch East Indies.

The sea remained wonderfully calm all the way to Batavia in Java. On the evening we left Benkoelen, there was a glorious sunset of ever-changing colour effects. First the sea was painted blood-red, then assumed the appearance of liquid gold against which an island light-house was darkly silhouetted. Benkoelen itself was all rose-tinted.

When the dawn appeared next day, we were hugging the surf-girt, mountainous shores of Sumatra and steering a course close to land. We passed Blimbing Point shortly after tea, and soon were in the narrow Straits of Soenda. Our course was set between the twin islands of Seboekoe and Sebesi, the channel being at most a mile wide. Gradually we entered the narrow part of the Soenda Straits, between Sumatra and Java Islands; and the many light-houses on shore began to wink and blink at us from port or starboard beam. St. Nicholas Point's light-house bade us a flashy welcome to Java, and we turned the corner and crept across the mouth of Bantam Bay. Over a century ago, the British strongly held Bantam and consequently a grip upon Java.

Hugging the shores of Java through the night hours, we threaded our way through a multitude of small islands; and, an hour after midnight, let go the anchor in the roadstead off the entrance to Tandjong Priok harbour.

Shortly after breakfast, another of my dreams would come true. I should stand, at long last, upon the soil of Java.



## CHAPTER XXI

### JAVA—THE MECCA OF TOURISTS

FOR so many years emphatic eulogies of Java's marvels had been drummed into my ears that it is not surprising I was eager to visit the island. After seeing it, I find myself more than a little disillusioned. Its troubadours, perhaps, had overdone their task and led me to expect too much ; but the fact remains that Java did not measure up to my preconceived ideas of its glories. My disappointment hurt, for a long-treasured dream is never shattered without pain.

This statement will probably surprise many, even if not arousing their indignation. There is a great army of people who ardently worship at the shrine of Java ; but others have told me that they reacted to the island in the same manner as myself. To be perfectly frank, I liked Java the least of all the places visited on this journey of nearly six months through Malaysia. Lest misunderstood, I will admit there was much of beauty, interest, and enjoyment within its hospitable shores ; but also many keen disappointments.

The Dutch, and the host of lovers of Java, take pride in describing the island as " a peerless gem." I consider it an exaggerated phrase. It is possible, without straining the truth, to mention many countries which compare more than favourably with Java ; still others which may justly claim to excel in many respects. Those who have never seen any other Eastern country may well rashly think Java is without a peer ; but none who has seen Kashmir, Burma, Ceylon, India, Cochin China, Sumatra, Cambodia or British Malaya will feel disposed to give pride of place to the Island of Java.

In my humble opinion, Java has been over-advertised in comparison to actual values, while too much has been made of things which are below par in beauty or interest. This is a mistake, for those deceived look askance at realities. Truth in advertising should apply as much to a country as to commerce or industry. The publicity officials of Java have been zealous, and certainly brought the island much into the limelight ; but their work would have been more effective if less extravagant in phrasing.

Much store has been set upon the glories of the Boroboedoe, Prambanan and other Hindu relics. Java may keep them and grow mawkishly sentimental over these ancient, crumbled piles of stone ; but give me the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon, the Taj Mahal

in Agra, or *Wat Benchema* in Bangkok. There is really no fair basis on which to make comparisons. The shrines of Burma, India and Siam are living forces; those of Java are battered remains of a religion that has long since ceased to function in the island. There can be no just comparison between the living and the dead.

Java has become the Mecca of most globe-trotters in the Orient: partly because it has been so widely advertised, and partly because of its convenient geographical situation. The island is roughly forty hours' steaming from Singapore, and is also well served from Australia. Both are most advantageous circumstances. British Malaya, Siam, Burma or Sumatra can be reached with almost equal ease; but are so poorly advertised that tourists hear little of their manifold charms. Yet they are no less wonderful than those of Java. It is a matter for regret that these countries do not engage in an extensive publicity campaign like Java. This would be money well expended, and undoubtedly bring handsome returns on the investment.

Of all the Dutch East Indies, Java is the most favoured by tourists and more carefully nursed by the mother-country; and is the richest, most densely populated, best developed and most widely known of all. In one particular, I must admit that the Island excels its neighbours in the East—and that is in the matter of hotels. They supply first-class food and accommodation, but know how to charge visitors.

In regard to climate, though a tropical island, Java is singularly blessed. Even in the coastal regions, the mean temperature is never unduly high; and in the hills can be compared to a moderate summer in the south of Europe. In some of the highest hill-stations it is even cooler. Unbearable tropical heat is never experienced, while there are no extreme changes in temperature. The rainfall is governed by the monsoon seasons, and particularly heavy during the west monsoon period—December to February.

I have stated that Sumatra is hopelessly deficient in population; but the reverse is the case in the neighbouring island. With an area of 50,800 square miles, Java has a population of over thirty-five millions, which gives an average of about seven hundred inhabitants to the square mile. This may sound like overcrowding, but is not the impression you gather while travelling 688 miles down its length, from east to west. When you pause to consider the productiveness of the island and its many established industries, such a huge population is easily absorbed and none too great in reality.

Two things made a very great impression upon my mind—the magnificent harbours at Tandjong Priok (the port of Batavia) and Tandjong Perak (the port of Soerabaya). The engineers who planned and built them had master-minds. Java may consider herself fortunate in possessing two such well-adapted and well-equipped

harbours at her western and eastern extremities. Of the pair, that at Soerabaya is undoubtedly the better. The small port at Semerang, on the northern coast, is little more than a roadstead ; and steamers anchor a long distance from the shore.

The *Baud* berthed alongside the wharves in Tandjong Priok at breakfast time, and shortly afterwards I was ashore. This harbour was opened in 1886, after nine years devoted to its construction, and has three inner basins of considerable size. It is six miles from Batavia and the suburb of Weltevreden. There is a railway terminus opposite to the entrance of the first inner basin of the harbour, and a half-hourly service of trains to the city—the journey occupying twenty minutes.

The Customs and Immigration restrictions at Tandjong Priok might have proved irksome ; but a kindly Dutchman on board the *Baud* came to my aid and got me through the red-tape without any complications. I do not know what fairy-tale he told about me or the object of my journey, but no deposit was demanded and my possessions were passed free of duty. The fact that I was merely passing through Java possibly helped.

I drove off from the docks in high spirits. The road into Weltevreden was excellent, running between the railway and a canal. It was a pretty drive, bordered by graceful palms and other lovely trees. I had been warned by my Dutch friend on the *Baud* to keep a watchful eye for the monkeys along this roadway. He seemed to attach great importance to this feature of the drive. Monkeys may have been there in hundreds or even thousands, but I certainly saw nothing of them. Possibly my luck was out ; yet it was equally so on my next trip along this road. Another leg-pull, I suppose !

Batavia and Weltevreden are distinctly interesting. It is difficult to know, however, where one begins and the other ends ; both merge into each other with no visible boundary marks. The Dutch colonists have reproduced here their homeland atmosphere most effectively. Canals play an important rule, even as in Holland, and serve a multitude of authorized and unauthorized purposes—*dhobi-ghats* (laundries), bathing-places, latrines and a means of internal communication. They traverse Tandjong Priok, Batavia and Weltevreden in many directions ; and at all hours of the day you see them being used for lawful and unlawful purposes. Nobody seems to object to the latter, for custom has made this an accepted institution. It is no uncommon sight for women to be washing their clothes in the muddy waters or else bathing, while within stone's throw a man is attending to the functions of nature. Neither sex appears to consider this immodest or exceptional.

On one occasion I stood to watch the women bathing and washing their clothes. They were attractive damsels, well-developed physically and light brown of skin, while many were even pretty. Judging

by the noisy chattering, gossip and scandal are not unknown factors in the lives of Javanese belles. When in the water they did not discard their *sarongs*, but kept their bodies robed. Obviously, personal cleanliness is a characteristic of the Javanese: every day would seem to be a bathing or laundry day. These people make a picturesque scene on the canals, and a sculptor would find many perfect models for his art among the Javanese women.

Canal life has not developed in Batavia to quite the same extent as in Siam and parts of China. The people are not habitual water-dwellers. Small *prahus* are continually being rowed up or down these narrow waterways from the fishing harbour in the old city; barges are seen either anchored or else being poled along by strenuous effort; and there are innumerable bamboo-rafts, which serve the Javanese, male or female, for a multitude of wholly unexpected purposes. In the Chinese quarters of the town, these waterways were particularly picturesque and suggested a Chinese edition of Venice. Always they were a source of interest and amusement to me.

The Hotel des Indes in Weltevreden, where I stayed, is justly famous throughout the East. It covers a large area of ground—16 acres, to be exact—enclosed within many magnificent trees. Two handsome specimens, gigantic in girth and height, of the Waringin tree stand in the compound near the entrance-gates. The Waringin (banyan tree) is regarded as sacred by the Javanese, and plentifully sprinkled throughout Java and Bali islands.

Batavia and Weltevreden have good roads and many handsome buildings, especially so in the business section. In the strictly residential section there are a profusion of picturesque Dutch-looking bungalows, each surrounded by orderly gardens with green lawns and bright flower-beds. The suburb of Weltevreden is always a riot of gay colours.

The old town of Batavia was built near the seashore in 1619, and stands on swampy ground, which makes the place rather unhealthy. It is now exclusively the domain of offices, banks, warehouses and mercantile establishments; and there also may be found the genuine Javanese and Chinese town. Originally erected in the strictly Dutch style of architecture, it is intersected by canals and very narrow streets. Most of its ancient buildings, however, have now been replaced by modern structures; but the old Town Hall (built in 1710), the Portuguese Church (1693), and a few other antique edifices still display the styles of architecture then in vogue. Although now chiefly modernized, Batavia is yet quaint and charming.

In Kasteel Plein, a splendid open square, there is the Penang Gate—a rather imposing piece of architecture dating back to the year 1671. This once formed part of the walls of the old city, but these disappeared long ago and only the Penang Gate remains.



STREET SCENES, WELTEVREDEN

1. PRIMITIVE STREET-WATERING
2. JAVANESE PEDLAR WITH BAMBOO BOTTLES OF PALM-WINE
3. CHINESE FUNERAL PROCESSION, BATAVIA
4. JAVANESE DOS-A-DOS, BATAVIA



1. THE SACRED CANNON, BATAVIA
2. JAVANESE WOMEN AT *BATIK* WORK ON *SARONGS*
3. SUNSET IN CENTRAL JAVA

The Dutch maintain this relic in a splendid state of repair. It gives the impression of being quite modern.

Passing through this archway, you see on the left of the road one of the most interesting relics in Batavia. Half-buried in the ground, within an enclosure screened with mats, is an old cannon. This is no ordinary piece of artillery. There is only one other like it in the world—at Bantam, the old British stronghold in Bantam Bay.

The Javanese call this cannon the *Si-Jagur* or *Mariam Besar*, which gives it a certain degree of distinction. How many cannons are ever given the honour of a name? This one bears no date, and its past history is shrouded in mystery. The butt end is fashioned like a closed fist and bears on it an inscription in Latin: "*Ex me ipsa renata sum* (Out of myself, I was born)." This suggests, of course, that it was recast from some other ancient cannon, which is the only vague hint of history. For the rest you must look to native traditions.

According to the Javanese, this cannon has the unusual faculty of making fertile those who are barren. The local inhabitants set great store by it for this reason, and pay the cannon immense homage. The women come there to sit astride the gun, while offering up prayers for the favours it is supposed to bestow. I did not see any performing this rite, but the old cannon was half-covered with paper flowers and umbrellas—all much the worse for the elements—and ringed around with burning incense. I suppose the women make their pilgrimage during the hours of darkness, for unquestionably they do perform this curious rite. The surface of the ancient cannon is highly polished. It is a quaint conceit! There is another interesting native superstition in regard to this antique piece of ordnance. The Javanese believe *Si-Jagur* or *Mariam Besar*—whichever name is preferred—is the mate of the other at Bantam; and that, when the two cannons are reunited, the rule of the Dutch will come to an end.

A little further away, and only a few yards up Jacatra Road, is a section of an old wall. This is surmounted by a whitewashed human skull, transfixed by a spear-point, while a tablet below bears an explanation of this peculiar mural decoration. The wording is in both Dutch and Javanese. The inscription records that, in detested memory of the traitor Peter Erberfeld, building or planting in this place is strictly forbidden now and for all time to come. Peter Erberfeld was an influential half-caste, who conspired against the Dutch Government in 1722, with the intention of massacring all the Europeans in Batavia. Through the jealousy of a Javanese girl, the plot was betrayed to the Dutch. Erberfeld and all his associates were arrested, tried summarily, and swiftly beheaded on this site.

I soon discovered that the Chinese in Batavia control much of the best trade and most of the wealth. They are to be found all over Java, and always seem to be prosperous. In Sumatra, except in Medan, they have not yet acquired a stranglehold on commerce; but, in Java, they are the uncrowned kings of business. The invasion of British Malaya, Siam, Burma and the Dutch East Indies is not without significance. The Japanese, too, are there, but not so numerically strong; and really cut no great figure in commerce or politics. They are quite content, apparently, to keep out of the limelight, while pursuing their own designs and avocations without attracting unwelcome attention to themselves.

Weltevreden may rightly be styled a "garden city," for it has broad streets, large open spaces, an abundance of shady trees and some splendid parks. The principal thoroughfares are those of Rijswijk and Noorwijk, which are on either bank of the canal opposite the Hotel des Indes. They would be a credit to any modern city. On the north side of the Konings Plein, a large open square, is the palace of Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. He only resides here when not at his country palace in Boeitenzorg, which is the most permanent home at his disposal.

The itinerant palm-wine sellers, with their long bamboo-pole bottles slung over their shoulders; the street water sprinklers with kerosene-tin watering-cans; and the various types of conveyances in the streets provide a never-failing source of interest. In Java, there are two forms of *garhis* in use—the two wheeled *Dos a Dos* (shortened locally to *Sado*), pulled by one diminutive pony, in which the passenger sits with back to the driver; and the *Ebro*, which is a hooded, four-wheeled carriage, resembling a small landau, drawn by a pair of small ponies. The fares vary according to the number of ponies drawing the vehicle.

At the Hotel des Indes I was strongly recommended to drive out and see Boeitenzorg. Being new to the ways of Java's troubadours, I accepted this advice and started forth after breakfast in bright sunshine. Before being long on the road, it began to rain heavily and continued doing so, with only brief intervals of sunshine, for the rest of that day. This may partially account for my dislike for Boeitenzorg. It is thirty-six miles from Batavia, and the road is not at all interesting. The main portion led through extensive areas of rice fields.

Boeitenzorg was founded in 1745 by Governor-General van Imhoff, and has remained the official residence ever since. The word means "without care"; and the *tid'apa* (never mind) spirit certainly seems to have soaked in well here except in so far as the Botanical Gardens are concerned. The altitude of the place is only 800 feet, but the climate is supposed to be healthy and temperate. The local guide book informed me laconically that "its rainfall is abundant."



That seemed true enough, for there was a deluge all that day. What I did quarrel with was the declaration that "the hotels are good and invite a longer stay." After having lunch at the best one in the place, I was glad to return to the Hotel des Indes.

The Botanical Gardens are justly famed all over the world; and owe their inception to Reinwardt, over a century ago. You enter them through a long, green, sun-flecked tunnel (when not raining), formed by the tall, straight trunks of giant *Kanari* trees, whose tops meet in an arch fully a hundred feet above the roadway. The gardens occupy an area of about 145 acres, excluding a more recent addition of 60 acres of reclaimed land. The greater part is planted with arborescent growths, which play a prominent part in the tropical flora seen.

This avenue leads to a small lake, which mirrors the façade of the magnificent palace of the Governor-General. In the lake are a profusion of the gigantic *Victoria Regia* and other species of lotus lilies. The leaves of the former are like a huge pancake with upturned edge. A little to the left is a path leading to a small cemetery, where are the graves of Governor-General de Eerens and many other prominent people in Java's history. On the right, just after entering the Gardens, are some ancient relics of the Hindu period; and still a little further onwards is the small tomb erected to the memory of the wife of Sir Stamford Raffles, who ruled for a short period over Java's destinies. You cannot escape the hallmarks of Raffles throughout Malaysia, any more than you can escape from the inevitable Para rubber trees.

These Botanical Gardens are the only thing of real beauty and interest in Boeitzorg; while the local residents are not unmindful of the fact and never allow you to overlook their existence. They were so insistent that I was almost tempted, out of sheer Irish cussedness, to refuse to set foot within them. I am glad now that more amiable counsels prevailed. There are many wonderful flowers, plants and green lawns, and the place is more like Kew Gardens than any other seen elsewhere in my travels abroad. Orchids from all over the Dutch East Indies thrive here; and climbing aroids, rhododendron, ferns, nymphae, water-lilies, an infinite variety of palms, shrubs and creepers, and even euphorbia vie with each other for pride of place.

In the extensive and well-laid out park, the deer are marvellously tame. I almost imagined myself in Richmond Park. Small lakes here and there, cute little bridges, green vistas of lawns, imposing avenues of giant trees, and bamboos of all varieties—from the midget Japanese to the large *petong*—all added their quota to that generous landscape of Nature.

I forgave the unkindly rain because it had held off while inspecting these lovely gardens. When I started to drive back to Batavia, it

came down again in torrents and soaked me to the skin for the second time that day.

While at the Hotel des Indes I made several other bold attempts to stay the course with *Ris-Taëffel*, which may be regarded as the national dish of the Dutch East Indies. On every occasion, I retired in defeat. The Hotel des Indes is famous for its recipe. There the dish is served by twenty-four Javanese waiters, all marching in single file and each bearing two dishes. The line of them extends like a giant caterpillar from the kitchen to the table, then returns by a different route to the kitchen while serving other lunchers *en route*. I took the time, as a matter of interest, on one occasion. It registered exactly fifteen minutes for the procession of dish-bearers to pass a given point in the dining-room. In a really good *Ris-Taëffel* there is an average of fifty-seven different ingredients.

With a little pecuniary persuasion I enticed the *chef* of the hotel to give me his recipe for *Ris-Taëffel*. I pass it on gladly.

#### *Hotel des Indes recipe for Ris-Taëffel.*

To a large heap of boiled rice add the following ingredients, according to taste (and capacity !):

#### MEAT AND FISH:

- Spiced beef and devilled soup meat, both fried with coco-nut shreds.
- Baked minced pork.
- Fried fish, soured fish, baked fish, fried whitebait, and fried oysters.

#### SPICES:

- Red fish.
- Devilled shrimps and chutney.
- Devilled pistachio nuts.
- Devilled onions, sliced with pimentos.
- Devilled chicken giblets.
- Devilled banana tuft.
- Pickled cucumbers.
- Plain sliced cucumber to cool the palate after the hot ingredients (very necessary this, too !).

#### FOWL, FRUIT, ETC.:

- Plain roast chicken.
- Steamed chicken with chillies.
- Monkey-nuts fried in paste.
- Flour chips with fish lime (called *grapak* and *kripak*).
- Fried brinjals, without the seeds.
- Fried bananas.

JUICES, YELLOW :

One of curry powder, with chicken giblets and bouillon.

JUICES, BROWN :

One of celery, haricot beans, leeks and young cabbage.

SAUCES AND CONDIMENTS :

Chutney, Worcester Sauce, Tomato Ketchup, salt, pepper, and any other varieties of sauces fancied by individuals.

At least, *Ris-Taëffél* possesses the qualities of plenty and variety. There is nothing niggardly about it. The recipe quoted above is a fair sample, but some hotels add more ingredients.

To watch the Dutch bury their faces in the accumulated mass of food set before them, stuff their mouths full, emerge to masticate with gusto, take a deep breath, and then plunge once more into the trough, is one of the features of *Ris-Taëffél*. The sight not only amazes, but also creates a sensation of nausea to the unaccustomed watcher. It always stifled any appetite I enjoyed when taking my seat at the table. The astounding spectacle of a number of Dutch men steadily reducing that gigantic pile of food drew my eyes like a magnet.

Of course you do not have to accept every dish offered, and can take or reject according to personal fancy. My attacks on *Ris-Taëffél* were kept within the limits of my known capacity.

However, this is quite the best curry and rice I have ever tasted ; and none should miss an opportunity to sample it, if ever in the Dutch East Indies.

## CHAPTER XXII

### IN THE HEART OF JAVA

I LEFT Batavia by car for Bandoeng in the Preanger Residency. The road was good—but not equal to those universally found in British Malaya—and passed through interesting and, at times, beautiful country. Soon after leaving the Hotel des Indes we ran through a small suburb, called Meester Cornerlis, with fine avenues of trees bordering the roadway. Thereafter, for many miles, we traversed a flat country. After Poerwakarta, and when nearing Bandoeng, we began to climb rapidly into the Preanger Highlands.

In the early stages of this journey I secured my first understanding of Java's amazing productiveness; also of the industry of its inhabitants. Everything seems to grow and flourish in Java, while almost every yard of land is forced to contribute something of value. There is a curious mixture of crops. Rubber, rice, tea, coffee, coco-nuts, citronella grass, pepper, nutmeg, many different kinds of spices, vegetable oils, chinchona, Peruvian bark, teak, bamboo, ebony and so forth come in bewildering succession.

We travelled chiefly through avenues of shady tamarind trees; and the villages all looked clean and well built. The men and women were a good type of Javanese, their faces mostly handsome and bodies well-developed physically. Some of the women were clothed only from the waist down, and it was heartening to think the human form could display such graceful lines. The enormous number of children seen everywhere promise no lack of population for making Java produce every ounce from that fertile soil. The houses in the *kampongs* seemed not unlike those in the villages near Kandy in Ceylon, and rather superior to the average Malay house in British Malaya. The greenness of everything was refreshing, thanks to the frequent rains; while the air was cool and fragrant smelling.

Poerwakarta is a small township, but picturesquely situated. There was a native market in progress, so I halted the car to study the types; for the people interested me far more than the produce or goods displayed for sale.

The average Javanese is better clothed than the native of British India, and more stylishly than many in British Malaya, Siam or Sumatra. Although the general character of the local native

costume is preserved, yet there is a marked tendency to adopt convenient items of European dress. The effect is often incongruous. Distinctiveness, however, is conceded to be the right of certain ranks among the Javanese. Only members of a ruling family, for instance, may wear the royal patterns and colours.

The *sarong*, the basic article of Javanese or Malay dress, is made of cotton material and, like the kilt of the Scots, has its clan or area pattern. Men of the lower classes wear short, coarse linen drawers under an abbreviated *sarong*, with a belt round the waist. The Western jacket is favoured by the servants of Europeans and by the clerical staff of offices. The head is covered by a *Batik* handkerchief, worn in the manner of a small turban; and, even if a Javanese does sport European head-gear, he yet always wears his *Batik* turban underneath it. The women wear a *sarong*, too; but this is tucked round their loins. In addition, they have a waistband, a light corsage cloth, a loose jacket of white linen, or else nothing at all above the waist. However, it is somewhat rare in the rural districts to see them wearing anything to cover their chests.

Shortly after leaving Poerwakarta, we suffered our first casualty on the road in Java—a burst tyre. I had started my journey with four brand new tyres on the wheels, and one now burst in the first seventy-two miles covered. I do not blame the tyres, but the roads.

From this point into Bandoeng we travelled through a most beautiful section of country, the road often running across or beside deep ravines, all of which were filled with wonderful vegetation. Through them coursed raging streams. The combination of woodland, river, ravines and terraced rice-fields was indeed a happy one. Ever turning and twisting through the mountains, we could often see the railway high above us or else deep down below the roadway. At one point, within a space of a mile or less, I counted five immense railway viaducts. The latter stages of that drive to Bandoeng were mostly very beautiful and picturesque, and I began to think that the prophets of Java had not lied.

Bandoeng was a creditable town, with one of the best hotels met up to this point. When I saw the full length English bath—hot and cold water laid on—adjoining my suite of rooms, I almost shouted with joy and immediately made full use of this welcome find. For fully half an hour I wallowed in a luxurious bath. The memory of it remained with me for many a long day to come, and I was greatly tempted to prolong my stay here so as not to be parted from that bath. After the infliction of the customary dipper baths along the road, this was indeed an experience to be recorded in red lettering in my diary.

The town enjoys such a delightful climate that it should grow steadily in popularity. Bandoeng is the quickly expanding capital of the Preanger Regencies, standing at an altitude of 2300 feet;

still young in years, but smacks loudly of prosperity. The public, railway, commercial and educational buildings would be a credit to any town four times the size. The native population is interesting. I saw in the streets some of the prettiest Javanese girls in the whole island, who were adepts in the art of coquettish dressing and not averse to a mild flirtation. I received from many of them what seemed uncommonly like a "glad eye," but contented myself with taking their photographs. Tambek was not so backward. Early in the afternoon I encountered him with two extraordinarily pretty Javanese girls, and all three seemed to be on very good terms. His late arrival next morning for the start, I suspected was caused by those two sirens. It was none of my business, so asked no questions.

The quarter of the town devoted to the villas of the European and rich Chinese residents is only about twenty years old; and the Municipal Council is of even more recent date. The town is really more of a thriving, prosperous business community than a hill-resort, although as the latter not without fame in Java. Bandoeng seems much more alive and modern than Batavia or Weltevreden; and, if given a choice, I would rather live in Bandoeng than at the latter places.

The ancient township was founded in 1641 by Sultan Agung of Cheribon; and was a comparatively small place until the end of the last century. During the last three decades it has grown enormously and become quite an important centre of trade, now ranking the fifth town in size in Java. In the neighbourhood are some of the best tea estates on the island, especially that at Malabar.

I arrived in Bandoeng at the beginning of the Chinese New Year festivities; and a procession, or processions, perambulated through the main streets most of the afternoon and far into the night, to the noisy accompaniment of exploding bombs and fireworks. The Chinese never take their pleasures sadly; and fireworks would appear to be their main method of expressing joy or sorrow. They are the chief features of all festivals, even of funerals. The streets were lined with dense crowds of interested Javanese and Chinese, many of the former sporting multi-coloured, broad-striped trousers, for all the world like a suit of distinctly "loud" pyjamas. Yet the Javanese spectators did not seem to be enjoying themselves as much as the Chinese revellers.

Picture to yourself an old-fashioned Guy Fawkes night, and you can properly visualize that procession. As they passed, the roads were smoke-screened by the acrid fumes from the fireworks and the ground littered with smouldering debris. The Chinese have a very firm grip on Bandoeng and its thriving commerce, so none is bold enough to check their extravagant exuberance of spirits on such festival occasions.

I imagine the street-cleaners expressed their disgust in forceful

language next morning, when confronted with the unenviable task of cleaning up the mess scattered about the roads. They had already started to work when I drove off from Bandoeng after an early breakfast.

Between Bandoeng and Garoet, you dive still further into the real heart of Java. The native life becomes more interesting and picturesque. Every wayside group is dressed in gay *sarongs* and other brilliant-hued garments. The little children, who ride astride their mother's hip or else cling confidently to the folds of her *slendang*, seem to be cast in a finer mould. Their light copper-hued skin and the deep, dark brown eyes point to a different race to those encountered in the coastal regions. Yet they are all genuine Javanese.

The clumsy, patient water-buffalo is seen on all sides, either ploughing the fields laboriously, wallowing contentedly in liquid mud or pools, or else browsing off the stubble in the recently harvested rice-fields. Sometimes you observe a little nude, brown urchin sitting astride a buffalo's back, going to or from work. The lad's finely polished skin glows in the sunshine and gives him the appearance of a bronze statue.

Rice cultivation hereabouts was the dominant feature, but there were many other crops as well in evidence. Java has been called the "granary of the world"; yet, if my information is correct, the Javanese grow rice only for their own consumption, export none at all, and have to import large quantities from Burma, Siam and Indo-China to augment their own crops. Rice is their staple diet, and yet they do not grow enough for their own needs—and with fertile soil available for production. How very like an improvident native of Asia!

Through masses of feathery-topped bamboos, dwarfing all other growths, past hills and along valleys all dressed in vivid green, we rose ever upwards above the Bandoeng Plain. At times, the gradients were somewhat severe, for we were now climbing through the environs of Gunong Goentoer to the pass in the mountains near Nagrek. The summits of the Kaleidong and Harimoen mounts looked like baby cones in comparison with the adjacent larger mountains; nevertheless, they are a thousand feet high.

Sometimes we were engulfed in sombre cuttings in the solid mass of rocks; at others, crossing awesome gullies by slender bridges, while a raging torrent foamed deep below the bridge. Then, quite suddenly, we were looking down into the Plain of Leles, one of the fairest landscapes yet seen on this journey. Even the leaden clouds, which foretold imminent rain, could not dim the loveliness of that perfect view.

The finely wrought surface of the plain, a network of green dykes or terraces of flooded rice-fields, gleamed and glistened in the rays of the sun. It was one exquisite symphony in colour—

a mosaic of green, gold and silver. The lighter green of the rice seed-beds, the intensely vivid green of the young rice shoots just transplanted, the darker green of the more advanced crops, and the rich gold tone of the old stubble were relieved by the clumps of trees and palms. These latter were scattered here and there like small islands, with a most admirable effect in landscape arrangement; and each one of these clumps indicated the presence of toy villages in their midst.

Then my car raced down to the level of the plain, described a curve round the base of Kaleidong—an altar of agriculture—with Harimoen away on our left, and then approached the village of Leles. A short distance from its outskirts, a narrow track turned off abruptly to the left. I had been urged repeatedly to see the Lakes of Leles and Bagendit, as well as the Hot Sulphur Springs at Tjipanas, when on my way to Garoet. So I followed this lane, and shortly stood on the top of the rise overlooking the Lake of Leles (native name, Tjangkoewang). Those who told me to visit those three places were either real humorists or else laboured under a perverted sense of what is beautiful.

The Lake of Leles is nothing more than a weedy, dirty duck-pond. On the hillock above is a small summer-house, wherein the tourist is invited to sit while striving to picture a fairyland! Whoever can achieve this is gifted with powers of imagination which could be applied more profitably elsewhere. Immediately I halted my car, it was surrounded by a horde of small children who begged insistently for *largesse*. Strangely enough, this was the only spot where I was importuned in this manner. To crown the insult of having brought me to this pitiful "sight for tourists," a small youth produced a book of printed tickets, tore one out carefully, handed it to me with a cheerful grin, and demanded the payment of a shilling for the privilege of looking at one of Java's famous "beauty spots"!

I do not know who gets the income from this leg-pulling stunt, or even if a genuine tax. Of course, I had to pay and look pleasant; but my comments in good plain English would not bear printing. The official guide-book remarks: "the view over the lake . . . is a most beautiful one. It is possible to descend to the shore of the lake." Possible or not, I did not do so. Five minutes after my arrival, I was back in the car and on my way to Lake Bagendit: there again to be stung, but not quite so badly.

About an hour later, we came to some native houses, flanking each side of the roadway. I think there were at most eight little huts. This was the village of Bagendit. My heart sank within me. Was this just a foretaste of what the famed lake would prove to be? I asked myself. A few minutes later I halted the car—to stare at a large sheet of open water—much larger than Leles. So that was the Lake of Bagendit! It had rather dubious charms, a background of





JAVANESE DANCING TROUPE AT DJOKJAKARTA

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. THE <i>GAMELAN</i> (ORCHESTRA) | 2. TROUPE OF PLAYERS AND DANCERS    |
| 3. TWO CHIEF ACTORS OF THE TROUPE | 4. TWO LEADING LADIES OF THE TROUPE |



THE COMEDIAN IN THE HINDU LEGENDARY PLAY,  
DJOKJAKARTA

rugged brown hills and a small island in its centre. On the still waters a fleet of canoes was busily trawling nets back and forth for fish. There was absolutely nothing else to be seen. "Stung again!" I whispered to myself.

Three minutes later I prepared to drive on to the Hot Sulphur Springs at Tjipanas. They might prove more worthy, and could not be less so; while the law of averages might apply conceivably, for Bagendit was a brighter prospect than Leles. I was just starting on my way when my ears were assailed by a most tuneful melody. I looked behind, and saw a dozen small boys and girls advancing up the road towards us. The boys were responsible for the charming music, while the girls all carried small bouquets of flowers.

"A Javanese feast, wedding or funeral?" I asked Tambéh, with a note of resignation in my voice. He only shook his head, and advised me to wait and see. I did so.

The small orchestra came to a halt beside the car, and the tiny maidens smilingly held out their flowers for me to buy. What did I want with their flowers? I handed out small coins, bade them keep their flowers and sell them to the next motorist who passed that way. Thereafter the maidens lost interest in me, and departed homewards. Little devils, I firmly believe the trick was tried on every tourist beguiled to view the Bagendit lake! I found comfort in the thought that there must be others as foolish as myself.

The native boy orchestra was quite another kettle of fish. They were really interesting. These lads were producing the most charming and tuneful melodies from the *angklong*, a musical instrument made of tubes of bamboo. These are shaken with the hand, one being grasped in each fist and worked simultaneously. According to the size and length of the tubes, the sounds vary. The whole effect was astonishingly harmonious, and the lads appeared to possess quite an extensive repertoire. The Sulphur Springs faded out of the picture, and I settled down to enjoy the fascinating tunes played by these amazingly expert little urchins.

With Tambéh to interpret, I expressed a wish to try my hand at playing the *angklong*. One of the boys readily surrendered his instruments, and they all gathered round to watch the result with an absorbed interest. Soon they began to smile and then burst into hilarious laughter. The results obtained were nothing to write home about, for I had not the talent of those little brown boys. We had great fun over it, though. After many vain efforts to succeed in extracting anything resembling musical expression from the *angklong*, I gave it up. Afterwards I regretted not buying them for further practice or as curios. We had made good friends over the concert; and, finally, parted with mutual regret, faces wreathed in smiles, and my pockets the lighter for transferring sundry silver

coins to their little brown hands. I shall remember the Bagendit lake for that *angklong* concert, not for the alleged beauties of the scenery.

After leaving Bagendit, the road winds through low-lying rice plains to Trogong, where the main road from Bandoeng to Garoet is rejoined in the village *aloon-aloon* (square). Here we turned sharp to the right beside the *Wedana's* (chief's) house and soon were passing some picturesque ponds bordered by palm trees. The ponds are used for rearing carp and gold-fish. Presently we came to a halt before the Rest-house at Tjipanas.

Again I was bitterly disappointed. The Hot Sulphur Springs at Tjipanas were the cream of the jokes perpetrated upon me that day. The springs are supposed to possess curative powers, for the water contains sulphur and other substances said to be a remedy for all rheumatic complaints. The Javanese custodian did his utmost to try to persuade me to take a bath or drink the evil-smelling waters. I firmly refused both experiments. I had a bottle of excellent German beer in the car, and horrified him by drinking that instead. Yet he was not to be outdone, for the man insisted on my paying corkage under the rules of the *pasanggrahan*. It was true that the rules allowed for corkage charges, but I drank my beer in the car, and the bottle had a patent stopper instead of a cork. Corkage, indeed!

They work very hard in Java to puff up anything that could possibly, legitimately or otherwise, be squeezed into the category of "sight-seeing for tourists." Later that day, while at the Ngampalang hotel in Garoet, I overheard an Englishman from India saying some very harsh things about those three places—Leles, Bagendit and Tjipanas. I heartily endorsed his strictures on them, and joined with all my soul in condemning those who had so successfully wasted my petrol and several valuable hours on the road. All three spots were an insult to the intelligence of any tourist, no matter how placid of disposition and how eager to swallow all put before him or her.

Garoet is chiefly famous for its near-by active craters. Everyone strove hard to persuade me to rise at three o'clock in the morning and set off for Tjiparai, there transfer to a pony or sedan-chair, and climb to the summit of the crater of Kawah Kamodjan. I was not having any! Garoet is at an altitude of 2300 feet, and the mornings and nights are devilish chilly. Why should I get out of my warm bed at such an ungodly hour to climb up the crater of a volcano? I could not see any attraction in the expedition, though there were some charming American ladies going with the party. I much preferred to remain tucked up in my warm bed when it was icy cold outside. So I gave the crater the go-by, and slept peacefully until breakfast. When I saw the shivering members of the party

return for a late meal, the laugh seemed to be on them. None seemed really to have enjoyed the outing.

Craters are craters all the world over; and if you have made close acquaintance with one, you have no need to meet any more except at a distance. I had been up Vesuvius; so to blazes with this lesser brother! The official guide-book—a never-ending source of amusement to me, by the way—says: "If you are fond of volcanoes, then go to Garoet." I went to Garoet as bidden, but not to shake hands with craters or volcanoes. I had much better fish to fry. Java sets immense store by her possession of many active and dormant volcanoes, and is for ever dinning this fact into your ears. Let them remain there. I don't want them, and only a madman would. Personally, I should think they must be abominably unpleasant neighbours, but every individual to his own taste. Despite frequent assaults upon my resolution, I remained adamant on this one point throughout my progress in Java. I would have absolutely nothing to do with volcanoes of any sort—active or dormant.

The Ngamplang hotel in Garoet is ideally situated. The climate is invigorating, and here can be found a splendidly comfortable health-resort in the hills. The views from the flowered terrace of the hotel are magnificent; for, on a clear day, you can look out over the Plain of Garoet, with its silvery oases of lakes. The mountains in the background are robed in blue, printing their bold outlines in a wonderfully serene sky. Sometimes, when the landscape is cloudless, they gather a mantle of white vapours about their summits, which glows in the sunlight and resembles a crown of glory. To my way of thinking, the craters around Garoet are much better viewed from the terrace of the hotel than at more intimate range. It is certainly far less labour, and must be equally effective. The moon over the craters and hills at four o'clock in the morning—they got me out of bed at that unearthly hour when departing on my way—created a simply gorgeous effect; but this was small consolation for being routed out of a warm bed when still night.

The town of Garoet was really much more interesting than any prospect of peering through sulphur fumes into the belly of an active crater. It is situated in a dell on the plains, surrounded by five volcanoes—you simply cannot escape them here. They rise up like the petals of an enormous flower, with the town as the heart. Hills form a complete circle round the little township, which is so completely smothered in vegetation that often you cannot see more than one house at a time.

It was here that I became acquainted with the Dutch Government in its official capacity as universal pawnbroker. The Chinese formerly held the monopoly, but this proved such a profitable business that the Government—ever eager and greedy for new sources

of revenue—stepped in and took over themselves. I was told that they made a handsome annual income out of their venture. To-day, in Java, the Government is the counterpart of Attenborough and lesser fry in London.

I found many most attractive curios for sale in the Government pawnshop at Garoet. Most of the articles were jewellery; but there was also a sprinkling of cooking and eating utensils, *sarongs*, copper-work, silver and gold, and brass-work. *Kris* (the Malay daggers) of varying shapes and designs were common enough articles pledged.

The unredeemed articles are first put up to public auction. If the reserve is not reached, they are then offered for sale to anyone prepared to pay the price marked on them. The price demanded is fixed by the Government and is nearly always below the actual market value of the article. No kind of bargaining is countenanced, and over-charging is unknown. At this particular pawnshop I bought a very beautiful specimen of an enamelled *sarong* belt-buckle, which has been admired immensely by all who have seen it. The price was seven shillings. It was really absolutely given away, for the workmanship was perfect and the belt-buckle practically new.

I wanted to try the State Railways in Java, so sent on Tambéh with the car to await me in Djokjakarta. Until just over ten years ago, trains did not travel by night in Java; and all the long distance expresses seem to leave at a terribly early hour.

On the day of departure I was awakened at three o'clock by a slight earthquake shock, turned over and went off to sleep again. At four o'clock I was called by a Javanese hotel "boy," and got up most unwillingly. I was absorbed in a delighted study of the moonlight effects on the volcanoes half an hour later, when the same Javanese servant announced that my breakfast was ready. I declined it—with thanks. Fifteen minutes later the solicitous Dutch manager of the hotel added his entreaties to those of the table-boy; but I remained adamant. Breakfast at such an hour was an impossibility!

As I was entering the taxi-cab for the railway station, the manager appeared, bowed and pressed a package of sandwiches into my hands. I had not the heart to refuse them. Later, I was deeply grateful to him for his thoughtful action; for the sandwiches proved very acceptable at Tjibatoe Junction, where I had to wait for the express to Djokjakarta. A meal at seven o'clock—yes; but at five o'clock, definitely not!

At Tjibatoe Junction I gained my first experience of express trains in the Dutch East Indies. While in Sumatra there had been no occasion to travel other than by motor-car, but I was keen to see how the Dutch handled their State Railways and how they compared with those in the Federated Malay States or Siam. In

Java the express to Djokjakata was unpleasantly hot and none too clean ; but the train staff and service in the restaurant-car gave no cause for complaint, and the seating accommodation in the coaches was comfortable. Yet I am not prepared to admit that this train was as good as that of the Siamese State Railways, though comparing quite favourably with those in British Malaya.

After leaving Tjibatoe Junction, the railway track follows the Garoet Plain for a time and then proceeds up a narrow valley between Gunong Sedakeling and Gunong Tjakraboena. *Gunong* in Malay signifies a mountain. Then the line begins to ascend the pass between these two hills, with splendid scenery on either hand. From Tasikmalaja to Bandjar the country was mostly filled with rubber estates, for this area is a great rubber centre in Java. There were also a good sprinkling of rice-fields, coco-nut estates and some sugar plantations. The whole of this district appeared to be under intensive cultivation and looked very prosperous.

From Bandjar to Maos it was a very swampy, flat and uninteresting country ; which did not improve much in general appearance until nearing Djokjakata. Mostly this region is devoted to sugar-cane cultivation ; and, on both sides of the railway track, huge areas of this uninteresting cane-growth stretched endlessly back from the railroad. Here, in and around Djokjakarta, is the heart of the sugar-growing industry ; and the land is densely covered either with plantations or factory buildings. Sugar is the pulse of Java's prosperity in much the same way as Para rubber and tin are those of the Malay Peninsula. This industry in Java ranks first among the big agricultural products under European management, with rubber occupying only a secondary place.

Djokjakarta—generally called Djokja, for brevity—is the sixth largest town in Java, and also by far the most interesting of those I visited. Soerakarta, or Solo as it is more commonly called, has many similar characteristics and is a near neighbour ; but of this town, more anon. In both, the native customs are better preserved than anywhere else. Here is the real heart of Java.

The Grand Hotel, where I stayed, was well up to the usual high standard of those throughout the island. Here again I had the amazing experience of the management refunding an overpayment on my bill, quite without any request from me. I stress this because I so often heard grumbling about tourists being grossly overcharged at these hotels ; yet only had cause for personal complaint at Soerabaya.

Djokja is the capital of the Djokjakarta Residency and its most central point. Being only twenty miles from the shores of the ocean, the sea breezes materially help to cool the temperature. The railway station would not disgrace Manchester, Birmingham or Liverpool. The streets are broad and shaded by giant trees on either

side ; and crammed full of interest for those who delight in studying different races of people. Djokja is a good-sized town, looks commercially prosperous, and the shops are as good as any in the East. Again the Chinese seem to have a good slice of all that is worth having here. John Chinaman's fingers are in every good pie.

The Regent of Djokjakarta is commonly called the Sultan ; but the ruler of Solo is generally termed the Susuhunan, rather than the Sultan. Although both still retain their titles and, as in olden times of regal grandeur, have a large Court, yet their rule is purely nominal to-day. The Dutch Resident is the real ruler of both kingdoms.

The Sultan of Djokjakarata, however, keeps up quite an imposing regal state, also supports a vast army of retainers and nondescript hangers-on. The Court officials are a fine-looking set of men, and generally handsomely dressed. They are often to be seen swaggering about the palace area or in the streets of the town, wearing a quaintly carved *kris* stuck obliquely through the back of their belts or in the gaily coloured sashes. Their heads are adorned with a peculiarly shaped hat, which is not unlike that worn by the Parsi men. When proceeding on official business, they are followed by a small body of youthful retainers, the numbers of this bodyguard depending upon the official's actual status at the Court ; and over their head is held up the emblem umbrella of their rank. The other retainers carry their betel-nut boxes, swords of state, and the other paraphernalia of their office. They look a proud and aristocratic race of men.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### DJOKJA AND SOLO

**D**JOKJA, built on the ruins of an ancient city, was formerly the capital of a turbulent independent State which, during the past century, gave the Dutch a considerable amount of trouble. That is of the past. The State is now orderly and quite contented under the Dutch dominion.

The *Kraton* (palace) of the Sultan extends over an area of a square mile or more in the heart of the town, being enclosed within a wall. The entrance gates face a large *aloon-aloon* (square), where Waringin trees have been clipped and shaped to resemble colossal State Umbrellas. Great green *pajong* trees have been planted in the outer courtyard as a badge of Royal status. The interior of the Palace proper can only be visited on a Friday, and then only with the special permit of the Dutch Resident of Djokjakarta.

Within this square mile of Palace grounds dwell the huge army of blue-clad Javanese Court retainers and hangers-on, most of whom eke out a precarious livelihood within hovel-like huts and shops. I drove round this enclosure in a pair-horse, slow-gaited *andong*, a four-wheeled carriage with a rickety hood. The scraggy, aged ponies looked as if a long rest and plenty of good food would not come amiss; but their leisurely ambling gave me plenty of opportunity to see everything, which the use of my car would not. You enter this area through the *aloon-aloon*. There are a number of giant Waringin trees in the centre of this large open space; while on the right is an open shed in which an elephant is stabled, being chained by the legs to iron stanchions. The beast was presented to the Sultan by the late King Rama VI of Siam; but the Javanese, to whom the elephant is unknown, were afraid to utilize its services and so condemned it to life-long imprisonment in this shed. It is regarded as a curiosity by the Javanese; regularly fed and watered by attendants; but never unchained or given any form of exercise. My heart was filled with pity for that poor elephant prisoner.

There are several rather decrepit arched gateways through the surrounding walls of the Palace area, one being set at each point of the compass. The people were the only real thing of interest. I had almost forgotten the Sultan's State Coach, which I saw being driven along one of the narrow streets to his palace. It reminded me of the one used on state occasions by the Lord Mayor of London;

and even the coachman and footmen were dressed in rather similar style.

The near-by *Taman Sari* (Water Palace), like so many of Java's much lauded "sights," was a very much overrated affair. I found it an extremely dull place—a mere mass of crumbling ruins. The bathing-pool of the Sultan and his large harem was nothing more than a slimy, green pond that probably delighted the hearts of ducks but not those of the slim, bronze beauties of the Sultan's *ménage*. I sat on a crumbling block of stone awhile and gazed thoughtfully at that evil-smelling pool, while striving to conjure up a mental picture of the olden days. Time was, perhaps, when the many wives and concubines of the Sultan came here to bathe, while their lord and master admired their shapely forms and was amused by their playful antics. But it seemed all very unreal to me. How could one possibly associate such beauties with that filthy pond in a crumbling ruin? I shook the age-old dust of *Taman Sari* from my feet, and sought pastures new which might afford greater interest.

Djokja is the home of the famous *Batik* and brass industry of Java. I visited the little factory where the "father" of these two industries, helped by his sons and two women, still carried on the work. He has fallen upon evil days and is now almost a pauper; his beautiful art has been copied broadcast; and his monopoly is at an end. Yet he strives hard—infirm and almost blind—against crushing adversity. He was a dear old man, courteous and obliging. Sympathy with his undeserved misfortunes in old age caused me to loosen my purse-strings more than intended. His gratitude at my rather large purchases of his handicraft was pitiful.

For some time I watched the women doing the famous *Batik* work, and the old man's sons fashioning the quaint silver, gold and brass work. It was all most fascinating.

The process of *Batik*, which simply means "spotting," dyeing was originated in the East many centuries ago; and for a time was all the craze in Europe. It proved only a passing fancy, however, and now is seldom done outside the Malay countries. All that is required is some linen, wax, a brush, and a tool for outlining the design; and, of course, various dyes. The Javanese and Balinese use a special type of tool for marking out the designs. The wax is melted and then spread evenly over the surface with a brush. The design is then outlined on the wax with the sharp-pointed instrument; and the whole piece of cloth immersed in the bath of the required colour of dye. Later, the dyed portion is covered with wax and another section of the design uncovered with the instrument. Once again the cloth is immersed in a bath of another colour of dye; and the process is continued until the *Batik* work is completed. Indigo, white and blue are the most favoured colours among

the Javanese ; but brown, of a light or dark tint, is also common. I have seen black and red used, too ; but this is much more rare than the other colourings in *Batik* work. Sometimes the wax is spread on the designs—the smaller sections and most delicate work—with a curiously shaped instrument, which has a curved point. The liquid wax is run on to the cloth through a hollow tube into the point, much like the ink flow from a fountain pen.

There are many craftsmen in the Dutch East Indies who delight in works of art and love making beautiful things. Java has earned great fame for its *Batik* and other works of art. I watched the two women for the best part of an afternoon while working on their *Batik* craft. Both worked with amazing quickness and certainty ; and the results, to my uncritical eye, seemed quite faultless. Only women do the actual *Batik* work in Java and Bali ; and thousands of them are constantly employed in manufacturing *sarongs* for personal wear or for sale. The main difficulty in the process lies in the drawing of the actual design by artists. They have inherited these from their ancestors, and conservatively adhere to the old standard patterns. They display no originality of outline.

The cloth, on which the pattern is designed, is mostly imported from Japan or Europe ; but the women also weave some of it for themselves. The spinning-wheels and hand-loom are still popular, and their weaving apparatus is of the most primitive type imaginable. I was told that it often takes a woman over a month to manufacture one *sarong* of *Batik* design. Slowly but surely, imported modern machinery will kill the art of the hand-made *Batik* work. This will be a matter for regret.

My best remembrance of Djokja is that of a visit to a Javanese theatre and the performance of the famous *Wayang Wong* of Java. The theatre was a mat-shed, with a real stage at the far end raised on bamboo poles ; but the props and scenery were utterly bizarre. First a few women, dressed in brilliant cloths and wearing tight-fitting bodices—some old and plain, others young and passably fair—walked gracefully in single file round the stage. They each sang a solo in rotation ; then all joined in a chorus. It seemed to take a long time to get the choral overture finished, and their voices sounded for all the world like an extremely sad tom-cat wailing out his heart to the moon.

Their costumes were gorgeous, and far better than their vocal efforts. The movements of the performers were astonishingly graceful, as also the postures made to emphasize the words of their songs. Not understanding a word of Javanese, I contented myself with admiring their grace of movement and the delicious manner in which they waved their long, filmy scarves and beautifully coloured trains to the dresses. Their hand and finger manipulation was exceptionally good. Every single movement of hand, fingers,

eyes or other parts of their slim bodies told some part of the story of the drama; but their type of deaf and dumb language was as unintelligible to me as the words of their songs or their speaking parts.

Then masked and fearsome creatures advanced slowly across the stage, and began to dance. Finally, they recited long-winded orations. The dance movements inclined to be monotonous; but the actions of the hands and fingers were astoundingly effective. At first, not a single word was uttered, and their movements alone unfolded the action of the play; and then, suddenly and unexpectedly, one of them began to declaim in an alternately deep and high-pitched voice. Others took up the story in their turn, and now everyone became increasingly more animated. All of the actors threw themselves into their parts with a dignified enthusiasm. There was a complete absence of vulgarity or suggestiveness.

The comic element was not overlooked. The clown must have been a witty fellow, for both his comments and movements brought forth frequent bursts of hilarious laughter from the entranced Javanese and Chinese audience. I longed to be able to understand what he said, and felt sure it must have been rather naughty; but he might just as well have talked to a brick wall as to me, for his gagging was completely lost. That was a pity, for the clown was easily the star performer of the troupe.

The captivating rhythm of the tuneless yet curious music of the *gamelan* (percussion instruments forming an orchestra), placed on the left of the stage but among the audience, was closely followed by all the dancers; and their time was perfection. The orchestra was composed of men, women and youths. Most of them either smoked cigarettes or cigars, or else chewed betel-nut like a ruminating cow; and nearly all expectorated at intervals with a precision worthy of a Kansas farmer in the Middle West of America.

The flexibility of the dancers' bodies was a great feature of the performance, and must have necessitated strenuous effort and physical fitness.

The play of the evening, I learned from a Chinamen seated beside me, was derived from the ancient legends of the Mahabharata. The performance started about eight o'clock, and was still dragging on relentlessly into the early hours of the morning when I quit and returned to my hotel. I was the first of the audience to leave the theatre, too!

On the following night, another theatrical troupe performed at the hotel for my special edification. I paid the fees. This time it was a *Wayang Orang* show and differed slightly from the *Wayang Wong* of the previous night. This type of play forms the natural sequel to the original Javanese *Wayang Kulit*, in which leather puppets personate the gods and heroes of Javanese mythology and



A SCENE IN A JAVANESE DRAMA AT DJOKJAKARTA



1. THE CROWNING STUPA OF BOROBOEDOER
2. BUDDHA "WITH THE LID OFF"
3. THE BOROBOEDOER FROM THE HOTEL

are passed before a screen on which their shadows are reflected by means of lamplight.

In the *Wayang Orang*, which is of a much younger date than the real puppet shadow-play, human actors perform. It may be right-fully considered as an adaption to European standards of the stage, though the subjects dealt with by the plays are usually derived from either the Ramayana or the Mahabharata legends of Hindu mythology. Those two stories are the greatest of Hindu epics. The character of these performances—owing to the splendid Eastern costumes worn by the players, their peculiar dances, and the plays themselves—has remained exotic and reflects all the grace and rhythmic beauty of the ancient art of Greece. There are symbolism, religion, and the living idea in those dramas of Hindu origin.

The clown in this trouble was a real Javanese George Robey. Even though I could not understand his lines or quips, at least I could not resist hearty laughter at his facial expressions and bodily actions. He was indeed a droll fellow! I rather gathered that some of his gagging sailed close to the wind, and possibly was not always in the best taste; but the Oriental ideas on what is appropriate differ from the West.

The other players, both men and woman, were a perfect delight to watch. A dagger dance was a gem of graceful movements and beautiful expression. The effective waving of the long, filmy scarves and their hand movement was artistic to the Nth degree. The *gamelan* once more provided a most melodious accompaniment to this charming performance.

The Sultan of Djokjakarta maintains a private troupe of actors, and stages his own plays in the Palace. The performers are all of the royal blood. In view of the many wives and concubines maintained by these Oriental potentates, it is not difficult to fill the ranks of the players with their offspring. Their performances are far superior to those given by the ordinary strolling actors. The royal orchestra, too, is a much larger and finer one. All wear a special uniform in the royal blue; while their instruments are more varied than in the common *gamelan*. Anyone may hire the strolling troupes of players for a modest fee; but the royal players never appear outside the Palace, and Europeans only see their work on very special occasions.

I was so entranced with the performance of the troupe at the hotel, that I re-engaged them to repeat it next morning so that photographs of them in action could be recorded. A bargain was struck for the modest fee of thirty shillings; and both players and *gamelan* did my bidding for two hours, without any hint of protest.

Although these Javanese plays are wonderfully interesting to

watch and study, yet I consider them nothing like such good entertainment value as those of Siam and Cambodia. They are, it is true, superior to the *pwees* of Burma and the *nautch*-girl dances of India; yet do not compare too favourably with the *wayangs* in British Malaya. After all, it is a matter of personal preference.

Perhaps, I might have enjoyed them even more if able to understand the words in Javanese. The gestures were effective, but did not convey to me what they did to the native members of the large audience. Therein I was a big loser.

On another day I made a hurried trip to Soerakarta (or Solo, as it is more usually called), travelling there and back in the car comfortably during the daylight hours. Here the princes and people still adhere to the old customs. In Solo, as in Djokja, one sees the real soul of the island—the Java of the Javanese—unspoiled by European influences and true to ancient type.

The ruler of this State, the Susuhunan, is still acknowledged by the Javanese as their paramount king; but his power is fast fading away. His *Kraton* (palace) stands in a large area of enclosed ground, surrounded by high walls. Like at Djokjakarta, it is really a collection of dwellings for the hordes of Court officials, retainers and relatives (near or distant) of the Susuhunan. I had no opportunity to see the interior of the *Kraton* itself or within the enclosure; but was informed this was larger and more interesting than that at Djokjakarta. It is open to inspection by the public, on official permit, only on Wednesdays. Not knowing this rule, I had gone to Solo a day before my time.

The town of Solo has broad streets, bordered by magnificent shady trees. In some of the roads there are deep ditches on either side, crossed by little bridges which give access to the dwellings. This gives the town a certain quaintness and individual character of its own. I saw nothing like this elsewhere in the Dutch East Indies.

The street scenes in Solo were particularly fascinating. Sometimes you encounter a company of strolling players, with their hideous masks, performing in the roadway; hawkers are selling their wares everywhere; comely women, accompanied by pleasant mannered children thread their way through the crowds, their heads supporting heavy loads; and members of the Court are freely sprinkled about. The latter all wear stiff sugar-loaf hats, a *kris* stuck in the back of the belt, and are followed by a small retinue of umbrella-bearers and servants.

Such sights are common enough in Solo.

On my return to Djokjakarta in the evening, I found the hotel invaded by a swarm of American tourists off a round-the-world cruise. There were over a couple of hundred who had arrived by train to "do the sights" of Djokja and its environments between



lunch and dinner! Fortunately they were going on by train after dinner. I suppose they enjoy this sort of thing, or else would not do it. Yet Heaven preserve me from such a frantic rush in sight-seeing. One thing is positive—they must get frightfully tired and see mighty little that can register a true impression.

I sighed with relief when they left in a fleet of taxis for the station, and quiet descended once more on the hotel. Whenever I have encountered these American world-tourists being flicked round the show-places of the earth, I have always been glad to think I am a calm, deliberate, phlegmatic Britisher who will not be rushed about by any Tourist Agency under the sun.

That is why I like to travel by myself and make my own plans. It is so much more restful and you get far better value for your money. Moreover, you see just what is desired and do not dance at other people's bidding.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ANCIENT AND MODERN JAVA

THE glories of the Boroboedoe and the other ancient Hindu relics in the vicinity of Djokjakarta had been forced down my throat so persistently, I had not the heart to refuse the hotel manager's urgent pleading to visit them. I left them, however, to the last day of my visit. The suspicion was strong within me that disappointment might be my lot and, anyway, I would find more enjoyment in studying the people in this quaint Javanese town. I was correct.

I set off by car for the Boroboedoe early after breakfast, intending to lunch at the hotel there, and then tour Prambanan and the adjacent ruins after tiffin. The drive was interesting; more so than the temples themselves, to my way of thinking. Mostly we journeyed through vast areas of sugar-cane, palms, rice-fields, tobacco and general agricultural lands. The road throughout was well-shaded by fine trees and had an excellent surface—better than many of the others in Java.

The crowds of natives along this roadway were a never-failing source of interest, for they were so different to those encountered elsewhere in Malaysia. The villages were very rustic in appearance; and, at frequent intervals, stood clusters of whitewashed factory buildings in the sugar industry.

I was greatly impressed by the numbers of Chinese, most of them carrying heavy loads. They were also much to the fore in all the villages and even working industriously in the fields. On one hill-side was a large Chinese cemetery, with the curiously shaped tombs cut out of the slope of the hill and surrounded by groves of trees or rice-fields. The pattern of the Chinese grave never seems to change. There is a definite reason for this peculiar design, which an English-speaking Chinaman explained to me. The tombstone is shaped to represent the womb of a woman, symbolizing that the dead have returned whence they came. It is a quaint idea, but the Chinese are always original in both customs and thoughts.

Judging by what was seen along this thirty-mile road, the Javanese are a prolific race. Almost every woman encountered was either nursing or carrying an infant; while many had older children clinging to their *sarongs*. There is no need, seemingly, to worry about a falling off in the population of Java.

At Moentilan village there was a large market in progress. I noticed that most of the people were wearing the dark blue clothing, which is a sure indication that they have some remote connection with the Sultan's household. The relations of every concubine in the Palace consider themselves also distant members of the royal family, thus an estimate of the membership of the royal family would not stop at a paltry thousand. Even King Solomon might have been jealous of the Sultan of Djokjakarta. Nearly three people out of every four met in and around Djokjakarta wear the royal blue; and the population of the enclosed space around the actual *Kraton* is a hundred per cent related to the reigning house.

Just outside of Moentilan I saw a string of quaintly hooded bullock-carts, the matting sides of the hood being picked out in a check pattern of red, blue, green and purple colours. Behind them trailed a long procession of diminutive ponies, each carrying a very heavy load on its back. The musical bells round their necks supplied a charming melody as they walked sedately beside the motor-road. Immediately in their wake rode a Javanese farmer on a small white pony, his head covered by a broad-rimmed, conical-shaped straw hat; and, the day being sunny, he rode with an open sunshade above his person. The general effect was very comical.

The road forked just beyond Moentilan; and I took the left-hand one leading directly to the temples of Tjandi Pawon and Mendoet. These much smaller ruins pale beside the massiveness of the Borobodoer, and certainly are not worth more than passing notice.

The temple at Mendoet is pyramidal in form and about sixty feet in height, while the exterior walls are elaborately sculptured. There is one interior chamber, containing three statues of more than life-size. The largest and central one is that of the Buddha; and the others are supposed to represent two of his disciples. Buddha's figure is by far the most impressive, as it should be; also a particularly fine piece of sculpture. This temple is believed to have been built at a later period than Borobodoer. It was discovered in 1835 and partially restored in 1897. The latter work has been well carried out.

The temple of Pawon is smaller and a great deal more insignificant. It offers no particular interest except for some well-preserved bas-reliefs on the exterior walls.

Borobodoer is certainly situated in wonderfully beautiful surroundings. You approach it by a splendid, tree-shaded road, with Mounts Merapi and Merbaboe forming an effective background and overshadowing the massive bulk of the ruins. At the time of my visit, these volcanic mountains were nearly always hidden from view by misty clouds; but, at rare moments, their summits showed up clearly. The ruins stand in the midst of a plain of slender coconut palms and green acres of rice-fields, facing these two mountains;

and behind the giant piles of grey stonework is a distant background of green and blue hills.

For many years I had wanted to view the Boroboedoe; but since coming to Java had begun to suspect that it might prove another of those alleged "sights" to lure misguided tourists to acute disappointment. My doubts were not unfounded. I *was* disappointed, viewing the historic relics dispassionately. The official guide-book states that "of all the Buddhistic remains found in Java, this is the best known and most beautiful one." I will not deny that first claim; but the latter does not say much for the other ruined temples in the island. Every man to his own taste, of course; but only the remarkably well-preserved and splendidly executed bas-reliefs around the various terraces caused me any real thrills.

The temple itself is a gigantic stupa, built round a hill which forms the core of the stupa. It is enclosed by a series of four polygonal galleries, each with a balustrade; and on top of these rise three circular terraces, each adorned with lattice-work dagobs containing a figure of a seated Buddha. At regular intervals niches have been cut in the gallery walls; and each one contained, or once did, a Buddha figure. On the uppermost terrace of all is a damaged, bell-shaped stupa, crowning the whole massive pile of grey stone.

From the first gallery upwards, the sustaining walls and balustrades are covered with miles of bas-reliefs, illustrative of the various episodes in the life of the Buddha. Hundreds of gargoyles make hideous faces at you from the angles; and still more hundreds of delicate decorations in stone—flowers, birds, and animals chiefly—break the monotony of the gutters and run along the cornices. In the crowning stupa once stood an unfinished Buddha. It has now been removed and may be found under a shady tree near the small hotel. On some of the many terraces, the lid has been lifted off a few of the dagobs, to disclose the squatting figure of the Buddha. An American, who joined me on my tour of inspection, gazed at these latter reflectively and then remarked: "Buddha with the lid off!" In the middle of each of the four sides of the building there are flights of arched stairways leading upwards; and on either side of them sit lions at the point where the steps cross the galleries.

Built most probably during the eighth or ninth century, under the inspiration of Hindu architects, this temple most likely is erected over a part of the body or ashes of the Lord Buddha. The material used in its construction is all volcanic stone, and the greyish tint tends to enhance the sombre, imposing effect of the enormous ruin. It is the size alone that leaves any really permanent impression on the mind, though you cannot forget also that this is a monument of the former Buddhistic influence over Java. I can remember it best



LIFE OF BUDDHA IN BAS-RELIEFS ON TERRACES OF THE  
TEMPLE OF BOROBOEDOER, DJOKJAKARTA



1. SOUTH GATEWAY OF THE BOROBOEDOER
2. A LEOGRYPH AT BOROBOEDOER
3. JAVANESE FARMER RIDING HOME
4. DURGA'S STATUE IN PRAMBANAN TEMPLE

by its truly colossal proportions, for its base is 531 feet in length. I know this is so, because I paced it carefully. It is said that the carvings, if placed in line and touching each other, would measure something like two miles in length. I am prepared to accept that.

In the eleven centuries or more since this immense temple was built, many things have contributed to assist in its general decay—earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tropical rains and suns, and man's pilfering hands. Nothing is modern about it, except only the small Dutch hotel that squats at its feet under the shade of giant trees and looks like a flea beside an elephant. I enjoyed an excellent lunch there before driving away from the Boroboedoor.

Less than twelve miles to the east of Djokjakarta, on the borders of the Regencies of Djokjakarta and Soerakarta, there was once a settlement of Hindu priests who built an extensive temple-city. The numerous remains of it lie scattered about the plains of Prambanan and Sorogedog. They are now nothing more than widely scattered, crumbled ruins—sometimes even meriting the description of stone rubbish heaps. These ancient temples were erected, it is believed, between the ninth and tenth centuries, when old Mataram, the mighty Hindu kingdom, flourished in mid-Java. Most probably, the building operations were suspended in the first half of the tenth century, for many of the monuments were obviously never completed. However, these battered remnants still convey an idea of the former magnificent proportions of the temple-city and its grandeur. The area covered by the ruins and existing buildings is approximately four miles wide by six miles in length.

Constant earthquakes have caused the temples to tumble down. No cement or mortar was used by the builders, the heavy blocks of stone being piled one upon the top of the other; while projections on the stones, fitting into grooves or cavities in neighbouring ones, had to serve the purpose of binding the mass together. In this method of construction, there is nothing really strange. Similar instances can be found at the Elliptical Temple and Acropolis in Zimbabwe, Southern Rhodesia, as well as at Carthage and elsewhere.

Naturally enough, the stones were easily displaced by the shock of an earthquake, for the temples were nothing more than a gigantic pile of unbound slabs of stone. Tropical vegetation, which battened upon the forsaken sanctuaries, completed the task of earthquakes and dislodged the stone slabs still more. The big earthquake in 1867 destroyed much of what then still remained; and the human ghouls completed the task of absolute destruction.

Here came all and sundry, either as archæological collectors or house-builders. The stones were collected and broken up, just as if the temple-city area was a quarry. Whole villages around Prambanan to-day may be seen ringed about with blocks of stone stolen from these ancient ruins. The Dutch Government, it is said, has

not itself been guiltless in using these easily gained stones for State works.

Such temples as do remain partially in evidence have been despoiled almost completely of their statues, which have been pilfered and dragged away to decorate private houses or gardens in the neighbourhood. The civilization of Java in modern times has been fatal to the life of these valuable relics of former ages.

It is not remarkable, therefore, that if Boroboedoer did not effectually capture my imagination, neither did the ruins at Prambanan, Tjandi Kalasan and Tjandi Sari. The word "Tjandi" means a temple. All three of these ancient relics were in a most deplorable state of disrepair—a mere shambles and rubble of stone slabs; but those at Prambanan are slowly being restored, as best possible, by the Archæological Department of the Dutch Government. Yet this intervention has come too late to prove really effective. The damage was already done beyond human repair.

Tjandi Kalasan (or Kali Bening), a small ruin on the right of the road from Djokja to Prambanan, is built in the form of a Greek cross with projecting angles. It contains a large central chamber and four smaller rooms, of which the eastern one is joined to the main temple-chamber. No statues remain in any of these rooms, for all have long ago been looted. The temple stands upon a sub-base, of which little can now be seen; and this supports the temple proper after the fashion of a terrace. On the south façade, the ornamentations still survive. There is also a richly decorated entrance, on both sides of which are two small niches wherein a figure of the Buddha is chiselled in relief. The cube of the temple has a richly ornamented frieze. Some of the ancient decorations are scattered about the meadow which encloses this ruin, serving as pitiable reminders of Time's decay and man's thoughtless vandalism.

Tjandi Sari, situated a short distance from Kalasan, but on the opposite side of the road, is actually not a temple at all. It is believed to have been employed as a dwelling-place. The building is two-storied and formerly had six chambers—three in the lower and three in the upper space; but the floor of the upper rooms has disappeared. The three lower chambers all disclose traces—on the back wall—of former altars; there are also niches which probably served to hold oil-lamps. This is one of the best preserved ruins hereabouts. In early times, it was richly ornamented on the exterior, and carved figures in relief can still be seen.

Prambanan is much more impressive than those other two temples, though still in a state of partial restoration. It enjoys a picturesque native legend, which adds something to the interest of this ruin. The Javanese believe that a Princess once set a youth, who aspired to her hand in marriage, what she considered an impossible task. He had to erect a temple with a thousand statues in one night.



Quite undismayed, the stout-hearted lover set to work and, with the aid of powerful gnomes who were his friends, accomplished the task with the exception of a single statue. The maiden, seeing that her hand was all but won, contrived by trickery to frustrate the last statue's completion before daylight. The lover was so angered at having thus been robbed of his heart's desire by only one statue out of a thousand that he pronounced a curse upon her.

Immediately the Princess was changed into a stone statue and thus completed the required thousand. She is claimed to still sit enthroned in the greatest of the six temples at Prambanan—that dedicated to Siva. Actually, this is a statue of the goddess Durga ; but the Javanese persist in calling it the petrified Princess. To the present day people come to smear the statue with ointment and offer flowers, while crediting it with the possession of many various magical powers. Numerous are the pilgrimages made to it by young Javanese girls in quest of an amiable and rich husband, or by married women who come to implore the blessing of a child.

Unlike the remaining ruined temples on the Prambanan Plain, which are all Buddhist, that of Prambanan is dedicated to the worship of Siva. Upon a huge field, encompassed by a square enclosing wall, rise six large and two small temples. There are really two rows of three temples in each, the most westerly being the largest. The lane thus left between the two rows is closed off at each end by a smaller temple, situated just to the east of the north and south entrances. The midmost temple of all, in the western row, is dedicated to Siva and serves as the main one ; the northern one in the same row is dedicated to Vishnu ; and the southern to Brahma. In the middle temple of the eastern row is a gigantic statue of Nandi, the bull used by Siva as his mount. It stands between smaller statues of Surya the sun-god and of Chandra the moon-god. In the Siva temple, the lowest sub-base is richly ornamented with lions set in niches and much handsome bas-relief work. Here also is a small statue of Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Siva, and that of Durga, the virgin goddess with eight arms who was Siva's consort. This latter statue is the one that the Javanese believe to be the petrified Princess.

To the keen archæologist all the ruins about Djokjakarta offer a fruitful field for research ; but I make no claim to being even a colourable imitation of one. Perhaps, that is why these crumbling temples failed so signally to appeal to me. As it happened, I returned to the hotel, after my temple-seeing tour, a saddened and weary man. Sad, because of the vandalism of which I had seen much evidence ; weary because I had walked for so many hours in the hot sun to see so little. The American, whom I met at Boroboedoer, was equally depressed.

There can be no real comparison between Boroboedoer or its

neighbouring ruins and the many others I have seen in other parts of the world. I felt like the American who, after seeing Niagara Falls and then visiting the Victoria Falls in Rhodesia, cabled to the Mayor of his home town: "Have seen Victoria Falls. Sell Niagara."

Owing to rainstorms, I sent Tambeh off with the car by road to Soerabaya, there to meet me at the Oranje Hotel, while I made up my mind to travel by the railway. I started by express train immediately after lunch next day, saying good-bye to the ancient and prepared to see more of modern Java.

It was a hot and dusty journey by rail to Soerabaya, through flat and monotonous country—chiefly planted with rice, sugar-cane and other lowland crops; but near Sragen and Madioen were some fine teak forests to lift the depression off that outlook. On the right, beyond these trees, showed up a mountainous country. Kertosono and Djombang were fairly large towns and crammed full of sugar factories; and from this point into Soerabaya, it was mostly sugar plantations and factories. This is ideal land for its growth; and the port at Tandjong Perak has grown rich on this great Javan industry. Modjokerto, a small town beyond Djombang, is the site of the once mighty Empire of Menjapahit; and the whole region hereabouts is classic ground.

We arrived at Goebeng station in Soerabaya a trifle behind our schedule, yet in time for dinner.

Soerabaya, at the eastern end of Java, is the largest town commercially in the entire Dutch East Indies; and situated at the mouth of the Kali Mas, an affluent of the Brantas River. Separated from Java by a narrow Strait is the Island of Madoera, which forms a natural breakwater for the roadstead.

As a town it possesses considerable distinction and is modern in character; and though rather a hot climate, yet is not too unpleasant. It even possesses a colourable imitation of the gay Night Clubs of London—the *Cercle Artistique*. Here the local European lads and lassies spend their nights in dancing, often till the first blush of dawn bids them chase themselves homewards to prepare for the next day's office routine.

Soerabaya is very prosperous, despite a recent slump in the world's markets; and its buildings, both public and commercial, are solidly presentable; while the residential quarter is as splendid as can be found anywhere in the East. During the past two decades the town's growth has been almost phenomenal. It has been constantly adding new suburbs, until the area of the town is a huge one. Soerabaya is infinitely preferable to Batavia, though a much hotter place; and, undoubtedly, the most Europeanized town in all the Dutch East Indies, with Medan in Sumatra and Weltevreden coming next in order.

The point of vantage for the observer who would study the activities of this busiest of Javan cities is the Red Bridge, which seems to provide the focus for all things. Here is the pulsing heart of Soerabaya's business life ; and the local residents will tell you that the vehicular traffic over this bridge every day equals that over London Bridge. I cannot agree with this estimate. Numerically it is certainly not so great, but in variety distinctly superior.

Modern high-powered cars rub shoulders with motor-cycles and Ford lorries ; queerly balanced and hooded bullock-carts fall into the queue behind large motor-lorries, each bearing their load of produce or stacked to capacity with commercial goods ; little sports-cars perkily nose out of line the *Dos a Dos*, whose prancing pony is all dressed up and nowhere to go ; and rickshas crowd pedestrians against the sides of the bridge. Almost every race under the sun is to be seen on that busy span over the river—Dutchman, Englishman, American, Levantine, Eurasian, German, Italian, Frenchman, Arab, Japanese, Chinese, Malay, Javanese, Madurese coolie, Indian, Australian, Siamese, Cambodian, and tourists of many other nations from ships in port.

The Red Bridge, they will tell you, is absolutely vital to the existence of Soerabaya. I believe that, without any hesitation. The city's name marks the living connection. *Soera* means a shark and *baya* a crocodile, and it is claimed both fought for supremacy in this river until the waters ran red with blood. The tale survives in its name and the bridge ; also in the tail of the crocodile which appears in the Coat of Arms of the city.

There is another kind of battle waged here now—that for supremacy in commerce. Within a radius of a hundred yards of the bridge there are a dozen different banks—European, Chinese or Japanese ; two score or more of large import or export houses ; as many firms of lawyers or brokers ; and a cluster of Chinese shops and merchants, cheek by jowl with Indians engaged in the same line of business. The battle for big business and wealth is waged unendingly ; and has proved mighty good for the "city of the shark and crocodile" and its advancement to prosperity.

Tandjong Perak, the port of Soerabaya, has grown in leaps and bounds, in like manner to the city it serves. In successive stages it has advanced from a bay with gleaming white sands and decorative palms into a modern port which is fully equipped to deal with any of the world's largest shipping. The port is eloquent of efficiency. It is for ever doubling and redoubling the tonnage dealt with ; and will probably continue doing this for some years to come. When I was in Soerabaya there were plainly signs of the return of the tide of prosperity, temporarily checked by the world-wide economic depression. The port of Tandjong Perak is keeping keyed-up to meet this change for the better. Sugar, rubber, copra, tobacco and

quinine are flowing steadily through the port for export to other lands. As conditions on the world's markets improve, the flow will steadily increase to meet demands for the products of the rich hinterland of Java.

There are many beautiful parks, boulevards, suburbs and clubs in Soerabaya ; and one can enjoy there everything which modern progress has supplied to the world of to-day. Antique and modern stand side by side. The ancient fortress of Prins Hendrik and the station of the Madoera steam-tram stand beside each other ; *kampung* Arab and Chinatown rub shoulders ; business and residential quarters are all jumbled together in a heterogeneous labyrinth of alleys and narrow streets ; military barracks huddle up to shops and office buildings ; an arsenal and several cinemas are within a stone's throw ; and native markets and the Courts of Justice are close neighbours. Over all there is an air of Holland, principally noticed in the suburbs and the city's downtown restaurants. At the latter you sit at noontime on the pavement under an awning, and can be served with refreshments in the Parisian style, while making "catty" remarks about the stream of passers-by. It is a very pleasant life in Soerabaya.

My programme called for a visit to Pasoeroean and Tosari. The latter place claims renown not so much as a healthy hill-resort, but for the possession, in the near vicinity, of the Bromo volcano and the Sand-Sea. I inquired doubtfully at the hotel office in regard to these two "sights." Obliginglly the manager mapped out the itinerary, and begged me on no account to fail in going. I promised nothing, but retired to study the written directions.

The excursion entailed leaving Soerabaya at six o'clock in the morning by train for Pasoeroean ; and leaving there by motor-car for Tosari at 7.50 on the following morning. On the whole, that sounded reasonable enough ; but I felt convinced there was a catch in it somewhere. I studied the itinerary afresh, and quickly found the snag. It was expected of me that I should start from Tosari at 4 "ack emma," in order to proceed to the Bromo crater and the Sand-Sea. "Not on my life !" I breathed stormily. No volcanoes or sand-seas could tempt me out of bed at three o'clock in the morning at an altitude of 6000 feet above the sea ; not even the promise of either a pony to ride or of being carried to the crater summit in a sedan-chair like a Chinese mandarin.

I turned down the excursion and stood pat on that resolve, though the hotel manager's feelings were plainly hurt. The guide-book assured me that there was nothing of interest to be seen in Soerabaya ; but I beg to differ with the authors of it. I found simply heaps of things to interest and amuse me. Far more than I should have found at four or five o'clock in the morning, when bitterly cold and standing on top of a silly mountain with only the prospect of staring

at a sulphurous crater set in the middle of a sea of sand. So I remained in Soerabaya, and did not regret my decision.

I had been disillusioned somewhat in Java, but hoped the same would not happen in Bali. I heard the praises of this little island sung loudly in Soerabaya, so had booked a passage there from Tandjong Perak, taking Tambéh and the car with me. The troubadours of Java had stepped too hard on the loud-pedal, and overdone their publicity work. Those who like Java may keep it. Personally, I would far rather live in British Malaya or even Sumatra.

My steamer for Bali was due to sail in the afternoon, soon after lunch. Tambéh was outside the hotel with the car loaded, ready for me to start down to the docks, when I saw an American tourist—a member of a large party who had invaded the town that day—in furious argument with my driver. I walked over to them to ask what was wrong. It seemed that the American wanted a taxi to take him back to his ship and had selected my Buick car, much to Tambéh's indignation. I explained that it was a private car—mine in fact; and offered to get him a taxi from the rank. As he climbed into this, he pressed some paper into my astonished hand. Before I could do or say anything, he had driven away.

I glanced at the paper and found it was a ten guilder note. My first tip! I suppose he mistook me—why I know not—for the hotel's commissionaire, though I was dressed exactly like himself, in a silk suit and white sun-helmet.

Grasping the tip firmly, my face wreathed in smiles, I went back into the hotel to celebrate and drink the very good health of the donor. I must say it was a very novel experience; yet the nicest and most comforting in Java.

On the way to the docks I received another surprise. I passed a car full of Australian passengers off a boat, whose machine had broken down; so stopped and offered them a lift, which they gladly accepted. There was a rare job to fit them all in, so one of the ladies insisted on sitting on my lap beside Tambéh. Frankly, I did not recognize her; but it seemed she knew me. The lady explained that she was one of four Australian nurses on the *Caronia* in 1917, when I was officer commanding the troops on board, between Durban and Bombay. We went back to the hotel to spend the last of the American's tip.

Indeed, it is a small world!

## CHAPTER XXV

### BALI—THE "GARDEN OF EDEN"

**B**ALI, the fascinating little island east of Java and the first of the archipelago of the Smaller Soenda Islands, possesses many unique qualities to commend it to attention. Those who would see a Malay people as yet unspoiled by too close a contact with European civilization will find all and more than they want in Bali.

The Balinese have customs and characteristics nowhere else encountered in the Malay Archipelago ; and their native culture has remained constant through many centuries until the present time. Apart from the fact that they, alone of all the Malay races, remain staunch adherents to the Hindu religion, their island home is remarkable for the exquisite scenery, its distinctive architecture, and religious festivals with unusual features ; while the beauty and superb physique of the island people is most impressive.

It is surprising how this gem of the Dutch East Indies remained so long comparatively unknown to travellers through the East. It is so easily accessible, for you can travel there in eighteen hours or less by a comfortable steamer from Soerabaya. Yet only within quite recent years Bali has achieved wide fame and attracted tourists on world-cruises. A decade ago even in Singapore, less than five days' steam away, few people knew anything about the many charms of this island.

Although within the past few years Bali has been growing rapidly in popularity, yet to-day the island and its inhabitants can still be seen at their best. In a few more years much of their native picturesqueness will have been submerged under a wave of modernism. I am glad to have seen the island and the Balinese before such a catastrophe occurs. When I set out from Soerabaya for Bali it was my intention to spend only a few days there, but found so much to fascinate and interest me that I remained on the island for some weeks. There I lived in a modern "Garden of Eden," and saw things which the average tourist never even knows exist. Those who now flock to the island under the auspices of travel agencies or world-cruises are given neither the time nor opportunity to gain more than a superficial knowledge of the island, its customs and delightful inhabitants. Bali fully deserves a longer period of attention.

The island is only a small one, separated from Java by the Straits

of Bali. Like Java, it is essentially volcanic in character; and on the surface of a little over 2000 square miles there are a number of craters, mostly dormant or extinct. The outstanding exception is Gunung Batoer, which still remains unpleasantly active.

The western section of Bali is chiefly a mountainous region and practically uninhabited. The population of the little island is centred mainly in the south and south-eastern areas, though the northern coastal regions contain quite a number of people.

In the dim past, influential Malay Princes ruled over the southern areas—Kloengkoeng, Karangasem, Badoeng, Bangli, Tabanan and Gianjar. They were inter-married with the Balinese, and had become essentially more Balinese than Malay. These Princes no longer survive as an active force in rulership. The sole remaining descendant of these former Rajas is the Prince of Karangasem, who is the Regent of Bali under the Dutch Government. His power is purely nominal and may be regarded as negligible, much in the same way as that of the Sultan of Djokjakarta or Solo in Java. All the other Principalities have vanished. The days of Brahman tyranny and arrogance are ended for all time, which is just as well for the Balinese.

The Dutch first came into contact with Bali in 1597, about the same time as with its neighbouring island of Lombok, when the famous brothers Houtman were forced to land there but remained only a short time on the island. Years later an alliance was entered into between the ruling Princes of Bali and the Dutch in Java. This alliance was broken in consequence of the repeated acts of disloyalty on the part of the former, which necessitated frequent punitive expeditions from Java between 1814 and 1908. The extremely aggressive acts of the Balinese caused the Dutch considerable trouble during that period of the island's history. The most famous of these minor wars, perhaps, was that of 1849 in which General Michiels, the Dutch commander of the expeditionary force, was killed in action against the followers of the Raja of Kloengkoeng outside that town.

In 1906 and 1908, further military expeditions finally broke the power of the Balinese Princes. Prior to this, however, the Dutch exercised only a moral and little more than a nominal influence in Bali. As a matter of fact they were only firmly established in the districts of Djembrana, in the south-west and on the Straits of Bali, and at Boeleleng on the north of the island.

The punitive expedition of 1906 ended only when the Raja of Badoeng was surrounded with his Court and followers, and called upon to surrender. He refused to do so and was threatened with the severest penalties. Thereupon he finished his career in a magnificent *pupulan*. At the head of the entire Court, the Raja advanced boldly towards the Dutch troops investing his stronghold, their intention being not of giving battle but of dying honourably in a hopeless

cause. *Puputan* means devoting oneself to death rather than live after being dishonoured. One can picture this gallant sortie *en masse* of the Balinese Raja and his Court, all walking forward slowly and calmly, dressed in their gayest raiment, unarmed and with grim faces, to meet certain death at the rifles of the Dutch soldiers. They knew themselves hopelessly defeated; and resolutely refused to pause in that silent, dignified march to death. All efforts having failed to persuade them to surrender, the Dutch commander reluctantly issued the order to shoot. They died to a man, facing the foe and offering no resistance. Their end was gallant, and nobly done: a futile sacrifice of life perhaps, but an heroic gesture that belongs to the ages.

Two years later the Raja of Tabanan committed suicide rather than submit to being shorn of his princely powers; and the Dewa Agoeng of Kloengkoeng repeated the *puputan* act of the Raja of Badoeng. The spirit underlying this spectacular mass-suicide of nobles rather than submit to dishonour and accept life-long banishment from their kingdom gives the key to the true character of the Balinese people. They retain their former proud spirit under Dutch rule, but wisely have laid aside their warlike weapons to develop the rich agricultural lands of their glorious little island.

Though Bali was known to the Dutch for over four centuries, it remained little appreciated. Java has always been their chief concern. Now that a strong effort has been made to develop the island extensively and attract tourists, Java will have to look to its laurels. In my opinion there can be no question as to which of the two islands is the more artistic and attractive. Bali has quickly risen in popularity to Java's detriment within the past decade, and will continue doing so. The honour of being the first to really discover Bali's manifold charms and reveal them to the world rightfully belongs to artists. This is only fitting, for the island can furnish unusual styles of architecture, scenic grandeur, handsome types of people, and old-world customs worthy of any painter's brush.

I was first attracted to Bali by seeing a small illustrated booklet in Singapore—"Come to Bali." I live to bless the fortunate chance which placed this all-too-modest brochure in my hands. There could be no resisting the appeal it made. Bali was described therein as the "gem of the Dutch East Indies" and "the land for dreams and romance." Both are honest claims. The author of this particular brochure had not overdone his task, as in the case of Java, for the island proved all and more than stated.

The frontispiece depicted a Balinese girl posing within a most artistic temple. So great was her charm and beauty, so perfect her natural grace and so intriguing her *tout ensemble*, that I made up my mind, then and there, to include Bali in my travels. This necessitated the sacrifice of a hurried visit to Bandjermasin in Dutch





1. TYPES OF BALINESE GIRLS NEAR GIANJAR



2. MERU TEMPLE WITH ELEVEN TIERS OF  
THATCHED ROOFS



TYPES OF BALINESE WOMEN

Borneo ; but the reward cannot be measured in mere words. Suffice it is to say, I entertain no particle of regret for having been lured there by this picture of a lovely Balinese belle. Once in the island, I became so enraptured that the visit to the rest of the Smaller Soenda Islands faded out of my programme.

I stand confessed. The real bait to Bali was the damsel seen posed in a Hindu temple ; and I owe to her picture a delightful memory which the passage of the years cannot dim. I searched the island for her without avail in order to take some photographic studies of this beauty. It was not until the last few hours spent in Bali that I found her. Quite by chance I recognized her in the marketplace of Singaradja, divested of all her finery and selling piles of firewood to housewives. I had believed her to be no less than a Balinese princess ; and here she was following an unpretentious source of livelihood. The picture seen of her had not unduly flattered the maiden—if anything, not done her real justice. I got my photographs, though nearly missing my steamer.

Bali was certainly the plum of my pilgrimage through Malaysia, and reserved for the last. This was indeed a happy arrangement, for the sweets should always follow the meat. If I had seen Bali first, the other places visited would have seemed drab and uninteresting ; so I am glad that Bali was the entrancing climax to six months' travel through Malaysia.

Having loaded my car on the K.P.M. steamer *Van Heemskerk* (3000 tons register), I embarked with the faithful Tambeh and eagerly awaited the start for Bali. Soon after I was aboard, the mail-boat drew out from the magnificent wharves of Tandjong Perak and dropped anchor in the roadstead. We remained there until nine o'clock that night, being held up by a delay in the arrival of the mails for the Smaller Soenda Islands. This gave me a splendid opportunity to study the fine qualities of Soerabaya's harbour. The roadstead lies between the islands of Java and Madoera, is land-locked and affords a safe anchorage for a multitude of vessels. It has great beauty, too.

Shortly after dinner we headed down the Straits of Madoera for Bali. There is a bi-weekly service to the island, with occasional intermediate vessels, so that Bali is within reach of all who care to see its charms. I was told that we should reach Boeileleng on the following afternoon, the delay at Soerabaya having upset our schedule. Ordinarily, we should have arrived there not later than noon. This caused a rapid rearrangement of my programme, which later occasioned much thankfulness.

I went to Bali ; saw it ; and was enraptured. In all my travels about the face of the globe, I have never visited a more picturesque or delightful place. Bali is the superlative *it*. If you are the least bit sceptical of my enthusiastic eulogy, then I bid you go and see

the island for yourself. If then you doubt the complete justification and absolute truth of all things written hereafter about the little island, I am prepared to eat my hat—or, at least, try to do so. I feel confident, however, none would feel disposed to inflict this herculean and unsavoury task upon me. Bali would enslave all just as completely as it did me.

My overture is ended. I will now draw back the veil from Bali and strive to picture it in words: just as my eyes saw it, the people, customs and buildings. Yet mere words must fail to do adequate justice to that island.

I have called Bali the "Garden of Eden." At Qurnah I saw what is commonly accepted as the actual Biblical site—a forlorn, barren spot in the Iraqi desert, situated at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Although that desolate spot may be Biblically, historically and geographically the original site of ancient traditions, yet the island of Bali more nearly approximated to my own notion of what such a paradise should resemble. Bali is a modern, yet still primitive, "Garden of Eden" for Adam and Eve. You will not find there the "Tree of Knowledge" in the Biblical sense, but an ever-flowing fountain of romance and artistic charm.

The coast of the island is deeply scored with bays and small inlets which, for the most part, are unsafe for shipping to use. Owing to the presence of innumerable reefs and hidden shoals, only three harbours are available—the Boeleleng Roads on the northern coast at the edge of the Soenda Sea; Temoeke, the port of Karangasem and Kloengkoeng, in the south-east and in the Straits of Lombok; and Benoea, the port for Den Pasar, on the Straits of Badoeng in the south of the island. The port of Temoeke is often called Laboean Amoek or else Padang-baii.

Even the approach to Boeleleng holds promise of things very much worth seeing. As we steamed down the Soenda Sea along the northern coast of the island, the mountainous interior was shrouded in black, lowering storm-clouds; and, when the sun was not shining at fitful intervals, everything was wrapped in a grey mantle of mystery. It was the rainy season of the monsoon, and the customary afternoon downpour was gathering to flood the fertile lands of the island. The mountains were blue, brown or purple in colouring, many rising in sharp peaks above the ranges; while, overhead, banks of grey, black or white clouds drifted shorewards to envelop temporarily the rugged heights of the hills. I stood entranced upon the deck, watching them float past tranquilly, sometimes rose-tinted, at others grey and forbidding. It was all very beautiful.

Two fleecy clouds lay dreaming on the sky,  
While far-spun meshes in the radiant sun  
Drenched them in glory as they floated by,  
Their outlines soft commingled into one.

They glided, twined in harmony serene—

A wind stole grimly forth, from whence who knows ;

Bleakly his breath blew, sharp and chill and keen,

Rifted and turned to grey their glowing rose.

The foreshore stood out in bold relief and vivid green colouring under the spell of the occasional bursts of golden sunshine. The scattered white houses on the beach added much to the picturesqueness of the scene as we steamed into the Boeleng Roads. A handsome, white-painted bridge was prominent in the foreground ; and huge, foam-crested breakers boomed with ceaseless rhythm as they crashed stormily upon the white sands.

To the right of the little township, as viewed from the roadstead, was a Hindu temple—an oasis among the mosques of Islam. There is nothing really distinctive about this *Pura* (temple) except its three *Meru* (shrines) for the most sacred of the Hindu gods. A *Meru* has three, five, seven, nine or eleven tiered roofs, just according to the relative sacred character of the shrine. The two tallest towered into the sky and added a picturesque note to the main *Pura*. These *Merus* generally have a foundation of stone or brick, decorated handsomely with sculpture work, and with a flight of steps leading up to the actual shrine. The upper part is either of wood or brickwork, in which are housed the stone figures of the Hindu deities ; and above this rises the uneven numbered tiers of roofs. Each tier is made of *idjuk* (dried *aren* palm fibre), resting on a square wooden frame, growing smaller in size as they ascend to the summit. They have rather the appearance of roofs on some Chinese Joss-houses. Almost every Balinese *Pura* has one or more of these quaint *Meru* shrines, and I was to become familiar with them in my excursions about the island. The main temple, unlike those seen elsewhere, was whitewashed.

Beyond this temple, still more to the right and following the curve of the bay, were vast acres of dark green trees and rice-fields of a lighter shade of green ; and to the left, again more trees formed an effective background to the small township.

We had dropped anchor in the roadstead at three o'clock in the afternoon, and rain was already falling. Yet I felt in my bones that neither had the brochure on Bali misled me nor had I come upon a wild goose chase. This thought was exceedingly comforting after some of my experiences in Java.

Before the Dutch medical officer of the port had granted us pratique, what was a light rain became a tropical deluge. It certainly knows how to rain in Bali during the Monsoon seasons ! I had not selected the best time of the year for my visit, which is between April and September. *Tid'apa !* I was there—and nothing else really mattered. The rain was a severe handicap on the first day of my visit, also on my last ; but the rest of that delightful

time on the island proved adequate compensation for such misfortunes.

Boeileleng is a diminutive port. It almost savours of flattery to label the spot thus. In actual fact, the only claim to fame is in being the sole landing-place on the northern coast. Singaradja, the capital of the island, is two miles distant ; but it is not easy to find the boundary between the two places, for one really merges into the other.

After landing, I drove through the rain to the capital to call upon the Dutch Resident, who rules over the destinies of both Bali and Lombok Islands—the latter of equal size and immediately to the eastwards. I wanted permits to use the Government *pasanggrahans* on the island ; and these were readily granted. Singaradja has beautiful surroundings ; and is a handsome town, chiefly noted for an interesting *Pura*, also for the manufacture of lovely *kains* (Balinese silks and cloths).

From Singaradja to Den Pasar is eighty-six miles. We had arrived so much behind time, and the rain was so heavy, that the Dutch Resident suggested it would be unwise to drive straight through to Den Pasar that night. As an alternative, he proposed that I should sleep at the *pasanggrahan* in Mandoek, and next day visit the adjacent lakes of Boejan, Tamblingan and Bratan. I accepted his plan with a grateful heart, in view of the weather and not knowing the road.

With the rain coming down in sheets, we retraced our way to Boeileleng and then followed an admirable road along the northern coast westwards. The tropical deluge marred my outlook in the early stages of that drive. It is quite impossible to admire lovely scenery through the rain-screens of a motor-car. Such as I did see through these protective measures and the sheets of rain served only to fan the flame of my acute resentment at the unkindness of the elements. It was an inauspicious start and sufficient to ruffle the temper of a saint.

We hugged the northern coast-line as far as Pengastoelan, where we swung sharply south to south-east as far as Majong. At the latter village we took a road to the left for Mandoek. For short periods during that drive the rainstorm abated and the sun came out, so that I was able to obtain a delightful bird's-eye view of acres of flooded rice-fields. The tender green of the young shoots showed up pleasantly against the darker hues of the large trees and hedges bordering them. In the distance the hills swelled upwards to the towering mass of Gunong Batoekaoe (the Peak of Tabanan), which has an altitude of 7800 feet. It is not, however, the highest mountain.

Rice-fields and coco-nut palms were the dominating features of the crops at first seen along the road ; and in each and every rice-

field stood a small image-house in which incense was burning, as the Balinese say, "to keep away the evil spirits from the growing crops." Rice-sawahs covered many miles of the countryside through which I passed, and stretched back in terraces from the roadway up the hill-sides as far as the eye could see. The road, though narrow, was smooth and shaded by beautiful avenues of trees. To the extreme right, as far as Pengastoean, could be seen the gently swelling bosom of the emerald-green Soenda Sea.

Beyond Pengastoean, however, the whole character of the country changed considerably—and for the better; while the types of people and buildings were a never-ending source of delight. All of the villages through which we sped had their name-boards stretched overhead across the roadway, but most of these names were jaw-crackers to pronounce. Boeboenan was a short distance from Pengastoean; and at Majong (not the place where the fascinating Chinese game originated) we turned off the main road and began to climb the hills to the *pasanggrahan* at Mandoek. I arrived in time for a bath before dinner.

I rose with the lark and found myself greeted with a perfect day. Hiring two diminutive Balinese ponies, I took Tambèh along with me to serve as interpreter. We set out along a bridle-path immediately after breakfast, and spent the entire day until sundown in exploring the countryside. Tambèh soon dispensed with his mount. I think he found himself more at home on his feet, at the wheel of a car or on the bridge of a mail-boat. He dragged the reluctant little beast behind him for the rest of the day, much to my amusement.

Mandoek commands a glorious view over the Soenda Sea, the Straits of Bali, and the surrounding mountainous area. The air was keen and invigorating, for the altitude is roughly 2400 feet; and a salt-laden breeze blew across the mountains from the ocean. Lakes Tamblingan, Boejan and Bratan would have made Leles and Bagendit in Java blush for shame. Bratan is by far the largest of the trio and is overshadowed by Gunong Bratan (6600 feet). All these sheets of water, I should imagine, are of volcanic origin. There was a small *Pura* on the south side of Boejan, and another on the north-west shore of Bratan; but neither was as interesting as those seen later.

From the highest point were grand views of the various mountain ranges and their summits. To the westwards were successively Moengsoe, Grogak, Mesehe, Merboek, Malaja, Klatakan and Prapatagoeng—of which Merboek is the highest and has an altitude of 4400 feet; to the north, Tjatoer and the Peak of Boeileleng (the latter 4000 feet); to the west, Batoer (5560 feet), Abang (7000 feet), and Agoeng or the Peak of Bali (10,300 feet); and southwards Gunong Batoekaoe showing up clearly to the west of the main road,

with a vista of the fertile plains around Den Pasar and the blue waters of the Indian Ocean just beyond.

The views hereabouts were inspiring. As the *pasanggrahan* was exceedingly comfortable, I was strongly tempted to spend several days at Mandoek, yet was anxious to reach Den Pasar as soon as possible. I had been assured that the cream of the island was to be found in that neighbourhood. Yet there was no cause for complaint in regard to this first nibble at the feast which Bali was prepared to offer me. Even the weather had now relented and the sun was shining brightly.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### SOUTHWARDS TO DEN PASAR

SOMEWHAT regretfully, I left Mandoek next morning after an early breakfast. We retraced our way to Majong, swung to the south on the road to Den Pasar, and soon crossed the fine bridge over the Panas River.

There were many quaint villages, placed at frequent intervals all the way there. One or two caught my fancy for their odd names, and many were words of twelve or more letters. Until I checked up on the map, I persisted in calling Blimbing "Blimey," Antasari became "Anastashia" and Pendjalin was lightly called "Penguin." Tambéh irritably corrected me. Misnaming Balinese villages, however, is a harmless enough amusement.

These villages—none of any great size—were superior to all those seen in my travels through Malaysia so far; and more interesting in the originality of architecture, with the exception of those of the Bataks and Menangkabau in Sumatra. The houses stood back from the roadway in spacious compounds. All the latter were walled, with the summits invariably thatched with grass or rice-stubble. The compounds contained a great number of family image-houses for the most favoured Hindu gods and idols—all hideously visaged and of a terrifying aspect; and in each wall was a doorway with a wooden gate. Privacy appears to be treasured in Bali, and the Balinese appreciate the meaning of the expression "an Englishman's home is his castle."

Every village had its own temple, wonderfully handsome in design; but each and every one seemed erected to a sealed pattern. In point of fact, these temples look far more lovely in paintings or photographs than when seen with the naked eye. The material employed in their construction is a particularly soft type of sandstone, which wears and decays rapidly; and, although the Balinese are active in repairing such ravages, Time and the tropical elements move too fast for their efforts to catch up with the havoc wrought. The beauty of the Balinese architecture had been lauded in the brochure, "Come to Bali," yet I was a trifle disappointed in them. The sense of sameness became wearisome, and their fading beauty marred the picture sadly. There are outstanding exceptions, it is only fair to admit. Yet that minor sense of disappointment was the only one experienced throughout my stay on the island. It seems a

trifle ungracious even to mention it. I wish to avoid doing for Java, however, what the publicity writers have done for Java. The latter has been served ill by unwarranted eulogies.

Balinese architecture is not imposing in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word, though some of my photographs of the many temples appear to give this statement the lie. I was told in Soerabaya, and again in Singaradja, that the *Puras* were the main features on the island; but must confess other things proved of even greater interest. After the temples in China, Cambodia, Burma, India and Siam, those of Bali may be written down as mediocre without straining the truth. It is unfair, perhaps, to make any such comparisons. Most of the Balinese *Puras* are built of red brick or grey stone, but decay had overtaken them so fast that nearly all conveyed an impression of being mouldy and crumbling into ruins. Not even the insertion of beautifully coloured Chinese porcelain plates in their walls could off-set that appearance of decay. Only their great beauty of line held the attention and aroused a sense of keen admiration for the hand of the artist who had designed them.

A number of Dutchmen had assured me that the Balinese were an extremely dirty race by natural instinct, and all their houses and villages most insanitary. I observed no patent evidence of these charges being warranted in the course of my sojourn on the island. Yet the Dutch ought to know, seeing they live among these people. For myself, I was constantly seeing them at a pool or river washing themselves and their clothes.

Every village is infested with a plague of exceptionally detestable dogs, all very mangy and half-starved. The Balinese would not kill or hurt one of these pariah-dogs for untold gold, as they are firmly believed to harbour the spirits of the dead. There are also vast numbers of peculiar-looking pigs. Dogs and pigs were more in evidence than young children; yet they were not the only domesticated animals.

Fine cattle—and, of course, water-buffalo, both pink and slate-coloured—were plentiful throughout the island. Cattle and pigs are Bali's principal export trade. That is why the steamers from this island to Soerabaya are commonly called the "Pig Express." The cattle are splendidly nourished, seemed heavy on hoof for their size, and bore a striking resemblance to the famous breeds of the Channel Islands—yet larger of bone. Their hides are a rich yellow-brown or else a light fawn colour, with white rumps; while the heads seemed amazingly small for their bulk. Several times I saw cows which reminded me vividly of the ungainly Kongoni (hartebeest) on the Athi Plains of Kenya Colony.

The scenery on the road to Den Pasar was always beautiful—a succession of mountainous country, forests, palms, rice-sawahs in vast sheets of terraces, and raging torrents through gorges. Each



1. BALINESE WOMEN VENDORS OF *KAIN* (CLOTH)  
2. BALINESE WOMEN POUNDING RICE FOR GRAIN



1. BALINESE FAMILY WITH PIG
2. BALINESE "NATIONAL INDOOR SPORT"
3. WEAVING KAIN (CLOTH) WITH HAND-LOOM

type of country fought for supremacy in this gigantic bouquet of Nature's handiwork. As is only fitting, in such gorgeous natural surroundings are to be found perfect specimens of humanity.

Both the men and women wear nothing above the waist, except on ceremonial or religious occasions in the *Puras*. Sometimes you see both sexes wearing a *Batik* handkerchief wound into a saucy turban. Seeing how perfect are their forms, it would be a shame if they were loath to display them for the admiration of the less favoured. The figures and carriage of the women, improved by the habit of carrying heavy loads on their heads, are as nearly perfect as any sculptor could wish to find.

The Balinese are a happy race and always courteous; but there is nothing cringing about their demeanour. On the contrary, they carry themselves proudly and with a grave dignity of poise. The old-time period of Brahman oppression and arrogance has happily ended, never again to be revived. With the passing of the *Rajas* has also faded away the ancient custom of the peasantry alighting from their horses or carts to prostrate themselves by the roadside as their rulers or the members of high Brahman caste approached.

Many of the old barbarous customs imposed by Brahman tyranny have been wiped out, so that the island is now a much happier land for the Balinese. The custom, for instance, of life punishment for all women who degraded themselves by marrying into a lower caste has ceased to be practised, though banishment for this offence is still said to exist. As in India, the custom of *suttee*—that Hindu practice which forces a widow to be burned alive on the funeral pyre of her lord and master—has also become a thing of the past. If for nothing else, the Dutch rule in Bali is entitled to full credit for stamping out this inhuman and terrible custom.

Despite these former rites and a proud bellicose temper, the Balinese have always been tolerant of other customs and religions. Externally, they show their Hinduism by abundant prayers, feasts of purification, offerings to the deities in the *Puras* and other shrines of offering, also in the cremation of their dead. Like other Hindu races they do not eat beef. They consider their cattle sacred except for sale as slaughter beasts to other races. The only meat they will touch is that of the pig, feathered creatures and water-buffalo. They reverence all the products of the cow, even their dung.

It is the women of Bali who make the most lasting impression on the stranger—on the male probably more than on the female; but I suspect both sexes genuinely admire their perfection of form. No more beautiful bodies, I make bold to declare, can be found in any other part of the world—collectively rather than individually. Even many of the aged women have retained physical charms of which the fleeting years could not rob them. Old Father Time treats women in Bali with exceptional kindness.

The belles of Bali are extremely camera-shy, and bolt at the first sight of one being used. Consequently, photography is no easy task on the island. This is particularly unfortunate. Throughout Malaysia the only times in the day when a camera can produce good results are between the hours of nine and eleven o'clock in the morning, or between two and four o'clock in the afternoon. The limited time, coupled with an excess of shyness on the part of these coy maidens, was most discouraging ; but where there is a will, there is generally a way over most difficulties.

Seeing that they walked about semi-nude, this camera-shyness caused me considerable astonishment. I sought enlightenment from a Dutch official in Den Pasar. He explained that the Balinese believe that a human being's soul is not within the body but exists all around it ; so, if a photograph is taken, the soul will follow the picture and desert the subject of the camera's art or, at least, divide attentions between the two of them. Naturally, they argue, a soul hates to feel torn between two domiciles, often situated very far apart. So they resolutely refuse to allow such a catastrophe to happen. In course of time, if it has not already happened, this fancy will be killed by the influences of Western civilization and the constant streams of tourist photographers to Bali.

In one village I spent some time in showing an interested crowd of Balinese men, women and children exactly how a camera was operated and what happened as a result. Tambéh patiently interpreted my lecture to the enthralled audience. Finally, I told him to tell them that millions of Europeans all over the world had a photograph of the Queen of Holland, and that no harm had befallen her soul. Even this logic failed to convince them that my intentions were harmless. They simply stared at me doubtfully, shook their heads, and walked away grinning. Probably, they thought us a brace of inveterate liars. It was hard work getting any photographs of these people, and this had to be done when they were off-guard. Seldom, indeed, would man, woman or child pose even in return for a generous fee.

I can well imagine a sculptor or artist spending the best part of his or her life among the Balinese. Here can be found an abundance of exquisite models for their art. Both sexes are really handsome and have clear-cut features, but their noses are often inclined to be flat and broad. All are tall and stately, and they stride past you with chins in the air and stare straight into your eyes.

The gait of the women is always one of unconscious grace and dignity. Their *kain* (the Balinese *sarong* or waist-cloth) is fastened around their middles with a soft scarf of gaudy colours, and often tucked up so that it does not reach below the knees. The Balinese are a mixture of Malay and Polynese blood, the latter fact being strongly evident in their wavy or curly hair. It is seldom straight

like that of the pure-bred Malay. Quite frequently you will see them on the roads, carrying heavy loads on their heads—several baskets being piled one on top of the other ; and, as often as not, the women's hair is loose and hangs down their backs or else is caught up at the nape of the neck with a gay piece of cloth. The European is still somewhat of a strange being in their eyes, and they stare with wide-open eyes of astonishment as you speed past in a car or walk among them.

Truly Nature is seen at her best in Bali. Yet I was often struck with the fact that rarely were any small infants seen. At the last census the island had a population of about a million ; and is increasing steadily year after year. The Balinese would appear to hide their very young from the public gaze. Those children seen about the villages are all about three to five years of age ; while the older ones all have to work in the field. Only once do I recollect seeing a mother with an infant at her breast. This was in striking contrast to the other lands through which I had just come ; but none could tell me the cause of this phenomenal absence of infants. Obviously enough, there was no lack of population in the north, south or south-east of the island. It is quite possible, of course, that the small babes are left at home in care of an elder child while the mothers go out to work in the fields.

The women seem to do all the manual work ; and even carry the loads from place to place when no other form of transport is available. The men devote their energies to cock-fighting, kite-flying, drinking, smoking and gambling. No doubt, they also add gossiping and naughty-story telling to those other "ings." The one thing they shy at is hard work.

Cock-fighting and kite-flying may be considered the prime sports of Bali. The former is responsible for the fact that outside almost every house in all the villages may be seen bell-shaped bamboo cages, in which live much-cherished and battle-scarred cocks. The Balinese gamble on the results of these fights in much the same way as we back a horse for the Derby. Village will challenge village to prove which owns the best fighting-cock, and everyone in each village backs their representative bird with every penny they can find, borrow or steal. Frequently, I saw these contests in progress beside the road or in a village ; while an anxious-eyed throng of squatting men watched every moment of the titanic struggle for victory. Within recent years the Dutch have banned cock-fighting, but have been unable to wholly suppress this Balinese sport. At certain times in the year, such as at great religious festivals, a special permit is granted for this amusement. At other times, they engage in a battle only at risk of arrest, a heavy fine or imprisonment. The main objection to it, apart from the humanitarian aspect, is that the Dutch Government knows this encourages most extravagant

gambling. The Balinese cock-fighting "fan" will bet his last cow, pig or the current crop of rice on his favourite bird; and is quite prepared to risk utter ruin on the result of just one fight.

In kite-flying there is also much gambling. They are extremely proficient, and the kites used are of immense size and curiously shaped. On one I saw a design which looked like a German aeroplane's wing-markings. They will fly one kite against another, betting heavily on the result of each contest. So heavy is this gambling that the Dutch Government is trying its utmost to stamp out this sport and find a less harmful means of amusement for the people. Their path is beset with rocks, for the Balinese are born gamblers.

The "national sport" of the women appears to be one popular among the Tibetans, and by no means peculiar to either them or the Balinese. They devote their leisure moments to a determined pursuit of those persistent little strangers in each other's hair. In every village, doorway and at the roadside, I constantly saw groups of women squatting down and painstakingly searching each other's hair for the presence of these uninvited guests. They were as busy and intent on the process as a wagon-load of monkeys. Every day is eviction-day in Bali, in so far as "little strangers" are concerned.

Watching these bronze-skinned, handsome women at this task, I was inclined to wish that the services of one of them had been available in the Sanctuary Wood sector of the Ypres Salient in 1915. These Dianas of the Chase could have been usefully employed wholesale there, and would have been popular!

So far, despite the occasional heavy showers of rain between noon and four o'clock that day, it had been a wonderfully pleasant and interesting drive. I had taken my time over it, stopping just wherever something of interest engaged my attention. Bali had already exceeded all my most sanguine hopes—even the promises made.

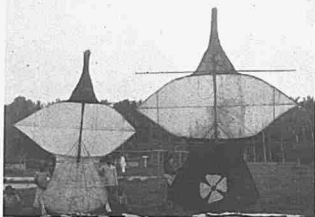
Shortly after four o'clock the day's rainfall ceased entirely, and instantly the green countryside was bathed in glorious sunshine. We had travelled through mile upon mile of cultivated lands, mountainous scenery and across deep gorges filled with foaming cascades of water. All the rivers and streams were in spate. Everywhere generous vistas of marvellous scenery greeted my eyes, only comparable to the Padang Highlands in Sumatra.

Near Tabanan there was just a fleeting vision of the limpid waters of the blue Indian Ocean; and just as suddenly this was obliterated by a vast fringe of coco-nut palms beyond more acres of water-logged rice-fields. I had come through exquisite woodland and river scenery, rice-sawahs on mountain slopes, temple-strewn and Venus-stocked country to Den Pasar. The great impression conveyed to my mind was one of the remarkable fertility of the soil,





1. RICE FIELDS AND SAWAHS NEAR DEN PASAR
2. BALINESE IRRIGATION WORKS IN RICE FIELDS
3. BRIDGE BETWEEN GIANJAR AND KLOENGKOENG



1. COCK-FIGHTING IN VILLAGE STREET  
 2. BALINESE KITES  
 3. SUSPENSION BRIDGE ON ROAD NEAR BANGLI

of the peace and contentment, and of the genuine beauty and industry of the women.

As we neared the outskirts of Den Pasar a magnificent rainbow of many vivid hues arched the sky ; and a blood-red and golden sunset bathed the rice-fields. The sight drove all the tired feeling out of my bones, for it had been a long day of driving and walking about.

Den Pasar is rightly termed the jewel in the brilliant crown of Bali. I found it fully merited that description. It is in the south rather than in the north of the island that the real fascination is to be found ; and from there you turn gradually northwards to Boeleleng. It is well, therefore, to bide awhile in Den Pasar before leaving the heart of the south, for such time as the traveller has to spare can be more profitably employed there than in any other district.

The town was formerly known as Badoeng, and is the largest in southern Bali. It was here that the last Raja and his Court performed the heroic act of *puputan* before the Dutch forces. Den Pasar is not really of any great size, but in late years more and more Europeans have settled down there ; and here are the headquarters of the Assistant Resident of Bali, as well as the centre of the largest rice-growing area in the whole island. As things go, it may be written down as a highly prosperous district.

In the *aloon-aloon* (village square) is quite an interesting museum, built in all the different styles of architecture found in Bali. It repays a visit, for on exhibit is a very creditable collection of the many arts and handicrafts of the Balinese people. A little further on from thus museum is the *Pura Satrya*, which in olden times was the largest " place of offering " to the deities used by the Princes of Badoeng. It is still greatly revered by the people in and around Den Pasar.

Benoae, the port on the southern shores of the island, is roughly six miles from the town, with a good road leading to it. It boasts of a pier alongside of which steamers can berth, being less exposed to the weather than Boeleleng in the north. Yet Benoae is neither so large nor so important commercially as the latter, but takes pride in being the finest harbour on the whole island.

The *pasanggrahan* in Den Pasar is the best in all Bali, but accommodation is limited. I received an unusual and totally unexpected degree of kindness from the Dutch manageress, who insisted on vacating her own private bungalow and handing it over to me during my stay. Protests were of no avail, for she would not hear of any change in this arrangement. Seeing that she manages all the *pasanggrahans* throughout Bali for the Dutch Government, her courteous action came as a surprise.

It was through her kindly offices that I saw much that would have escaped me in my excursions about the island. For all her generous treatment of me during my prolonged stay in Den Pasar, I owe a deep debt of gratitude.

On the night of my arrival she had arranged, for my special benefit, a Balinese dancing performance. This was the very best thing of its kind I have ever witnessed in Oriental lands. Being entranced by this initial performance I asked for it to be repeated next day in the sunlight, so that photographs could be taken. The manageress of the *pasanggrahan* came to my help and soon had settled everything with the Balinese manager of the troupe of dancers and their *gamelan* orchestra.

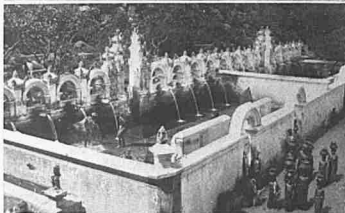
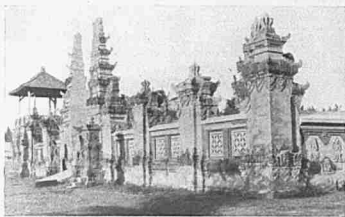
I went to bed dreaming of that delicious example of Balinese dancing. Isadora Duncan and Adèle Genée would have raved about it; Anna Pavlova would have reproduced it in the West with infinite art and character; and Bakst would have found therein still another gem of inspiration. About the time this is in print, a *leggong* (dance) troupe of Balinese girls and the tuneful *gamelan* will be performing in London. They are sure to prove popular. It will be the first time these Balinese dancers have appeared in the West.

On the day arranged I went to the outer courtyard of the *Pura Satrya* in Den Pasar to witness a special performance in daylight. This proved an ideal setting and enabled me to get a splendid set of photographs of two types of dances.

Two small girls, twins of not more than ten years of age, were the star *danseuses*. Promptly, I labelled them the "Dolly Sisters of Bali." They were alike as two peas. The musical accompaniment was supplied by the *gamelan*, the instruments being mounted on gloriously gilded and artistically ornamented frames. The musicians produced a most tuneful melody of sound, which added greatly to the enjoyment of the dances. This was produced from percussion instruments only, and these sweet-toned gongs made Burmese, Siamese and Javanese orchestras seem paltry in comparison. The instrumentalists were either old men or young boys, the latter being dressed like Boy Scouts. I was told that they are constantly practising to attain increased proficiency; and certainly are well versed in obtaining melodies from the genders employed.

The dancing of these two mites was grace personified. Their facial expressions seldom changed, but the pupils of the large, lustrous brown eyes rolled in rhythm to the melodies of the *gamelan*. The Javanese, on the contrary, nearly always dance with their eyes shut. The faces of the Balinese dancers were an immovable mask and utterly devoid of expression throughout the performance, which characteristic is equally true of the Javanese. Their steps, however, were all life and movement; and only on rare occasions did this change abruptly to plastique poses.

These small girls had the most lithe and supple bodies imaginable. The *leggong* calls for frequent, violent bendings of the body to quick time; and the joints of their bones appeared to be capable of



1. OUTER WALLS AND GATEWAY TO TEMPLE AT DEN PASAR
2. BATHING ENCLOSURES FOR MEN, WOMEN AND PONIES AT TEDJAKOELA, NORTHERN BALI
3. BALINESE WOMEN POUNDING RICE FOR GRAIN



1. BALINESE DANCING GIRLS AT DEN PASAR  
2. BALINESE DANCING GIRLS WITH *GAMELAN* (ORCHESTRA) IN  
TEMPLE COURTYARD, DEN PASAR

being bent in every conceivable way. Every single movement of body, hands, feet or fan was a thing of artistic grace. Their writhings and contortions often resembled convulsions; but, notwithstanding, each movement was in perfect time and sympathy with the music of the *gamelan*.

Their costumes were every bit as effective as their dancing. They were dressed in close-fitting garments of coloured *kains*, both of silk and cloth. The *galungan* (head-dress or crown) was made of leather and richly gilded; while framing it were tastefully arranged masses of the cream and white blossoms of frangipani. The latter scented the air with their sickly yet pleasant fragrance. This appealed to the senses and added charm to the sensuous movements of those young bodies. The rest of their costume is beyond a mere man's powers of description; only a fashion artist could possibly do the subject justice. Suffice it is to say, all was most pleasing to the eye.

Several pieces of dark red and gold embroideries hung down from their shoulders; while the fans were of the same colour and material. When they moved there was a splendid riot of colours—gold, deep red, violet, purple, brown and white. Their arms were entirely covered by tight-fitting sleeves of white cloth, which sadly needed a visit to the laundry. To be strictly truthful, their dress looked much more attractive from a distance and really did not bear close inspection.

I was told that the dancers are trained from almost the moment they stand upon their feet unaided, but do not make a public appearance until ten years of age. They generally cease dancing five years later or when married—whichever event occurs first. In any case, they seldom continue dancing after twenty. I should imagine that their life is a strenuous one, especially for such young folk.

Fanning themselves coquettishly, they danced with graceful swayings of the body—sometimes close together, and then drawing apart with gestures of intense hatred and outraged pride. They were extremely skilled in portraying animal and bird figures, especially water nymphs, peacocks and butterflies. All their studied and natural grace was then exhibited to best advantage. At times they appeared to be hovering over a flower, as if alighting from flight; and then again seemed to be ascending on wings of ethereal lightness.

These two mites performed for my sole edification without a halt for thirty-five minutes in the first part of their programme, and for twenty minutes in the second portion. They would have continued longer, but I insisted on calling a halt. They were breathless and bathed in perspiration when, finally, I persuaded them to cease the performance.

When rested, I offered to drive them back to their village in my

car. Tambeh scornfully took the wheel, while I sat beside him. As the back of the car was loaded with luggage and cameras, I invited the two little girls to sit upon my knees. They were still dressed in their dancing costumes and puffed away at cigarettes I had supplied.

Judging by the startled looks on the faces of both Europeans and Balinese, our passage through Den Pasar to their village on the outskirts created a lively sensation. As the two children were still dripping with perspiration, and their costumes none too clean, I was not ungrateful for the powerful scent of the frangipani blossoms in their *galungans* and the fumes of the tobacco-smoke. It did much to smother the unpleasantness of their hot bodies.

They both seemed to enjoy that ride home and told me, through Tambeh, that this was their first ride in a motor-car. Rather a different experience to that of our Western *premières danseuse*!

The *leggong* of Bali is nothing less than an exquisitely artistic masterpiece : in a class by itself.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### A BULWARK OF HINDUISM

THE small island of Bali is the sole surviving bulwark of Hinduism in the Malay Archipelago. Six centuries ago that creed succumbed to the aggressive teachings of Islam throughout Malaysia ; but Bali remained faithful to the golden age of Java and has never wavered in its devotion to the earlier religion, except in a small portion of the northern coast. The Balinese of Boeileng, Singaradja and Sangsit have always had more intercourse with the outside world and so have been more susceptible to the teachings of Islam ; but these few thousands changed their faith mainly for economical considerations. The remainder of the island's population has clung tenaciously to the ancient religion of the earliest immigrants from Java.

This obstinate attachment to Siva throughout twelve centuries is remarkable, for even Java became a Mohammedan country after the collapse of the powerful Empire of Manjapahit in 1475. In vain has Islam striven to break down the resistance of the Hindus in Bali.

Bali was visited by Hindu adventurers from Java in the eighth century. They settled down in large numbers in this new-found paradise and intermarried with the indigenous people. Prior to this invasion, the Balinese were animists worshipping a demon cult ; but this was soon submerged in the vigorous worship of Siva introduced by the new-comers from the neighbouring island.

From the ninth century all the Rajas of Bali were Hindus, and the bulk of the people have remained so for over twelve hundred years. However, the Balinese Hinduism is not pure but mixed with remnants of their earlier animistic demon idolatry. This is very evident in the many temples on the island, where the higher and lower Hindu gods are strangely mixed with the grotesque figures of the demon world. The same also applies to all their religious dances, festivals and ceremonies.

History is strangely mute in regard to the relations of the original Princes in Bali with the old-world Hindu Empire in Java. However, it has definitely been established that numerous expeditions were despatched to Bali from Java during that stormy period. Although the Mohammedan invasion of Java involved the downfall of Hinduism there, yet Bali continued to follow the creed of Siva.

Perhaps this can largely be attributed to the fact that the penetration of Java by the Moslems was not followed by the invasion of the small neighbouring island.

That the Balinese, at one time, were under the dominion of these Javanese Empires is proved conclusively by the deep respect accorded to those who are entitled to call themselves *Wong* (men of) *Menjapahit*, the mighty Hindu Empire which flourished at Modjokerto, near Soerabaya, in the fourteenth century. The *Wong Menjapahit* consider themselves to be the direct descendants of the early Hindu immigrants from Java and, as such, infinitely superior to the *Bali-aga*, or indigenous people of Bali, who are spread over almost the whole island.

After the fall of the *Menjapahit* Empire, the Balinese, who already professed Hinduism, were reinforced by refugees from Java; and the majority of the people in the island became more and more arrogantly followers of Siva. To-day, the population consists of the *Wong Menjapahit*; the Indo-Javanese colonists who profess Hinduism; the *Bali-aga*, who are pure-blooded natives of the island; and, on the northern coasts, a much smaller section of *Bali-Islam*. These latter people originally came from Java and Madoera, and have since been converted to Islam.

Physically, the *Wong Menjapahit* are the finest and most handsome specimens of humanity found in Bali. Slenderly built, they are yet more robust than the Javanese whom they so closely resemble; and are much lighter in colour than either the Malays or Javanese. Their skins are of a light bronze colour.

The form of the shrines, which are seen with such astonishing frequency about the island, clearly marks the origin of the faith so unique in Malaysia. Hindu temples and weird idols are scattered about the landscape everywhere, and increase in numbers the further you get into the heart of the south. They are all so very much alike and so typical of Balinese design in architecture that the traveller soon gets bored with them. In no single instance did they strike me as so splendid as some of the Hindu temples in India. They are very different in style and general plan.

It is in the architecture of a people that you most generally discover the true essentials of their character; indeed, this is much more so than in any other form of art expression. This may be stated to be especially true in Bali. Their temples, religious observances and ceremonies, dramas and dances, feasts and festivals all bear the hall-marks of the joy and exuberance in life which are so essentially a Balinese characteristic. This may account, perhaps, for everything in this sunny fairyland blending so obviously and happily into a pure beauty of design and colour.

The modern Balinese *Puras* (temples) and *Puris* (houses of the Brahman castes) disclose the *motifs* and details of the Hindu-

Javanese influence, which followed in the wake of the Menjapahit Empire's invasion in the ninth century.

A *Pura* in Bali is not really a temple, such as we imply by the term—that is to say, a building wholly enclosed in which religious services are held. It is much more a walling in of a number of separate buildings—either roofed sheds or wholly enclosed. Within the outer wall are other walled enclosures, each containing its own particular *sangghah* (shrine) or a number of them. This style is much better adapted to local conditions, for there is less danger of collapse in the event of earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. This fear is never entirely absent in the Dutch East Indies.

In Bali, therefore, a *Pura* consists actually of three courtyards, which are connected to the main outside wall by interior walls running parallel to each other. Each of these latter has its own entrance gate; and every such courtyard contains a number of small buildings or open-sided, roofed sheds for the celebration of religious services.

Usually, you enter the outer courtyard through a *tjandi bentar*, which is a pillared gateway without a roof. Some of these gateways are built high above the surrounding walls of the *Pura*, being very beautiful in design and elaborate ornamentation. The first courtyard, just inside the main entrance, never contains more than just a few open-sided roofed sheds; and that at the *Pura Satrya* in Den Pasar has only one.

From this outer courtyard you approach the next one by a flight of steps through a gateway—covered this time—which can be closed by a wooden door. In this second courtyard are held feasts, meetings and other religious ceremonies. Here you find a large *bale agung*, whereat are deposited the many offerings made to the Hindu gods by devout believers in Siva. In this second courtyard there are also a bell-tower; one or more cooking-places where meals are prepared during a religious festival; and a few small and scattered temples for the exclusive use of the priests who serve these ugly, queer-looking gods.

You pass through one or more covered gateways, also with wooden doors, from this second courtyard into the innermost one—the real Holy of Holies. Here, along the wall opposite to the gateway, stand the shrines of the Hindu deities, each with its accompanying niche or niches for the reception of the worshippers' offerings. There are always a vast quantity of gifts, chiefly edibles, as the Balinese do obeisance to a great many gods. The priests of the temples need never go hungry.

For the lower grade of deities there are provided some very simple, open-sided but roofed sheds, the roof being of *idjuk* thatching on a wooden frame; for the medium strata of gods there are *gedongs*, or small wooden buildings, resting on a stone foundation which can be closed all round the sides; and for the most sacred and highest

grades there are even more magnificent buildings in the shape of *Merus*, such as seen at Boeileng. Those in the *Pura Satrya* at Den Pasar were the finest examples I had yet seen of these unique shrines. A number of them here had the maximum number of tiered roofs—eleven; but a few only had nine or seven. Those at this temple were strongly reminiscent of the *prachedis* in the *Wats* in Siam or the *pyathat* of a Burmese pagoda, but without the rich gilding and ornamentation.

Although having already stated that the temples in Bali appear to have been built according to sealed pattern, yet I observed a distinct difference between those of the north and those of the south parts of the island. In the latter districts you see a certain degree of control, notwithstanding the wealth of the decorations and the jubilant notes of the design; but in the north there seems to be no visible attempt at control, for not a yard of the temple is devoid of ornamentations. The *Pura* at Sangsit is an example of this, and the general effect is utterly spoiled by this far too lavish a hand.

China plates, built into the walls, are the favourite form of embellishment; and the bluish green tiles imported from China add still another quaint touch to the general colour scheme of these *Puras*. Not infrequently, this extravagant expenditure of coloured plates gives to the temple an appearance of being made of solid porcelain. Alas, only too often, large quantities of crude European chinaware have been substituted for the lovely Chinese material! The temple in Bangli offers a good instance of the delightful effect which can be obtained by the judicious employment of bluish green, open-work Chinese tiles upon the dull grey or red brickwork of the building. Here, at least, they can be said to harmonize to perfection.

When first I saw one of these *Puras* decorated with ordinary European plates, and of none too beautiful a pattern, I was tempted to laugh. It looked exactly as if the gay lads of the village had spent a riotous evening at the local inn and amused themselves childishly, when homeward-bound, by indulging in a frolicsome game of seeing how many of mother's plates could be made to adhere to the outer wall without smashing them. Some looked as if they had stuck to the walls where they had landed, but had broken badly in the attempt.

Everything in Bali is founded upon the Hindu religion. The rice harvest festivals, the dances and dramas, the immunity of the multitude of pariah dogs from harm, and the sacredness of their gentle-eyed cattle are all wrapped round with ritualistic practices of their creed.

Rice cultivation is the staple agricultural industry of the island. There is a quaint but picturesque legend regarding the origin of rice-growing in Bali, but too long and fantastic to be repeated here. From this legend have been built up a number of strictly observed

religious ceremonies in preparing the fields and *sawahs* for the crops; and, thereafter, through the successive stages of growth to the ultimate harvesting. All these ceremonies are connected with the Hindu faith and have been observed throughout the centuries. Every single stage in the production of this cereal is marked by elaborate religious festivals. In every rice-field or *sawah* may be seen an image-house, where offerings are made to the gods in order to ward off evil and insure a rich harvest.

The various rites commence with the preparation of the fields. Before starting to work on fields or *sawahs* at the beginning of every season, there is held a feast to the goddess Danuh, who must be propitiated with offerings. Sacrificial cattle (*banten segahan agung*) are slaughtered before the *Pura Sawah* (rice-field temple) to provide her followers with food, so that they may refrain from playing evil tricks on the fields. Three days are devoted to the feast of the flooding of the fields. Then the water-conduits to the fields are cleansed, the small partition dams reconstructed, other dams strengthened, and all damaged dykes repaired. While these various labours are in progress, other offerings are made to the appropriate deities. Then the water is allowed to flood the dry soil and drench it thoroughly.

Shortly afterwards follows the *Pengendag* festival, which is even more elaborate. Offerings are made at the *Pura Sawah* to gain the goodwill of the five *butas* (spirits) who rule over the five points of the wind—north, south, east, west and central—by which it is hoped they will not harm the growth of the crops. The offerings consist of a dog with a black mouth and red hair; a duck with white feathers round the throat and white spots on the body; and five chickens, all of different colours. The latter all have some bearing on the gods of the compass. White is for the east (*Iswara*), red for the south (*Brahma*), yellow for the west (*Mahadewa*), black for the north (*Vishnu*), and a combination of all four colours for the central (*Siva*).

Immediately after the preparation of the fields and *sawahs* has begun by draining off the flood waters and ploughing, still another festival is held when offerings are made to the goddess Batare Ume, so that the work may proceed favourably. Then follow a succession of lesser feasts to coincide with the various stages of cultivation.

When the small rice-plumes in the nursery-beds have all been replanted evenly over the fields, "colour offerings" are made to the goddess Sri with a view to making the seed grow well and procuring a splendid harvest. The amount and the colour of these offerings depend mainly on the Balinese week, which only consists of five days. The actual month also has a strong influence on the colour; for instance, in the sixth month it is always red.

There are frequent little feasts and offerings to the goddess Sri from the time of replanting from the nurseries until the rice is ripely yellow. When, at the fourth month after transplanting, the rice is ready to be harvested, a big feast is held at the *Pura Sawah*. The offerings again include cattle, ducks, chicken and fruit. Thereafter nobody is permitted to enter the fields or *sawahs*, under penalty of a heavy fine, until the actual day of harvesting begins.

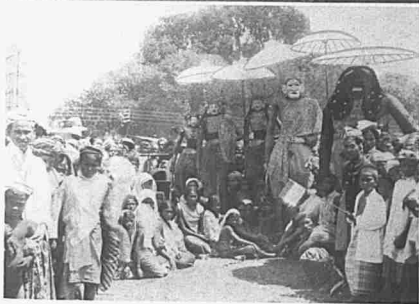
Before starting to cut the rice-plants, two puppets are made from ears of rice fashioned into the shape of a man and a woman; but these are tied together so as to look like only one puppet. Each figure contains fifty-four ears of rice, and the cord with which they are bound together must be black in colour. The faces are made either from wood or metal material, while a piece of cloth is tied round the heads. This puppet is deposited near the site of the small conduit where the water runs into the field; and is left there until the actual harvesting is completed. Then it is suspended above the stack in the rice-shed.

Then comes the final grand festival, the *Mantennin*. This is never delayed, for the rice may not be used for any purpose until the *Mantennin* festival is over. It approximates to a birthday party for the rice crop.

As with their rice-growing, so with their dramas and dances. The latter are all founded on some ancient Hindu legend and staged at religious festivals or else on some special occasion. The performance of these *wayangs* (plays) at various important periods in the daily lives of the Balinese all point to their religious origin; but much of their earlier religious significance has been lost. A *wayang* is held when a child is three and a half years old; at the teeth-filing ceremonies; and at the temporary embalming of the dead, also later at their cremation. Not infrequently a vow will be made to hold a *wayang* in thanksgiving for recovery from a serious illness, or on the restoration of lost property or on attaining great wealth. When an infant is born on certain days of the year, a *wayang* is considered imperative to ward off threatening dangers to the new-born child.

Like the Malays, Javanese, Burmese and Siamese, the people of Bali are particularly fond of dramas taken from the historical legends, as well as of dances and music. They also follow the Javanese custom in the matter of *Wayang Kulit*s (shadow-plays), founded on Hindu legends. The *Wayang Kulit* of Bali was originally a religious affair and supplied a means of communicating with the spirits of their forefathers, who are supposed to appear as shadows upon the screen.

These interesting and clever shows are wonderfully done. The dolls used in these shadow-plays are projected on to a screen in front of the assembled audience. Behind the screen is erected a bamboo



1. CEREMONIAL BULLS AT RICE-HARVEST FESTIVAL, WITH PUPPET ABOVE THE YOKE
2. DEMONS CARRIED IN BALINESE CREMATION CEREMONY



1. RUSHING MUMMIES OF DEAD ACROSS BRIDGE  
FROM *PURA DALEM* IN BANGLI INTO *WADAH*  
(HEARSE) BEFORE CREMATION RITES



2. PROCESSION WITH *WADAH* PASSING THROUGH  
BANGLI TO THE CREMATION GROUND



platform, on which the doll manipulator squats while throwing the shadows on the screen by means of an oil-lamp. The audience follows the entire performance with rapt attention, punctuated frequently by a burst of hearty applause. Enthusiasm rises high when the hero of the play overcomes the villain after a hard-fought and thoroughly realistic battle. Although these shadow-plays last for four or even more hours, the interest of the audience never seems to flag.

The manipulator handles his strange-looking puppets with astonishing skill, and their fantastic shadows move vividly and quickly across the screen. They are experts in this art, and know full well how to grip the attention of their audience. The comic element is always provided by the followers of the leading figures in the play. The manipulator speaks their lines for them, and makes the lower jaws of the puppets move in synchronization with the words by means of a simple but clever bit of mechanism. They reminded me of the best ventriloquists on our European stages. These shadow-plays, if introduced into Europe or America, would soon make a tremendous hit—the more especially with children.

There are also a number of different types of plays, all of which are performed by human actors instead of puppets and represent some legend in Hindu mythology. For these a stage is erected in the open, generally beneath the welcome shade of some giant Waringin tree. The *gamelan* supplies appropriate music throughout, the performers watching the action of the play carefully. They accompany the actors or remain silent as occasion demands. Though there is no conductor, yet all is perfect harmony between stage and *gamelan*.

The Balinese have one specially favoured performance, known as the *Wayang Barong*, which is really an animal play. The creatures are represented by skins stretched over a framework, two men supplying the motive power much as is done in our Western pantomimes at Yuletide. The *Wayang Barong* is really little more than a grotesque dance, but the animals' movements are portrayed very cleverly and with realistic effects. I got considerable amusement out of watching one of these performances in Den Pasar.

The *Wayang Wong*, which I saw staged in Bangli, was equally interesting. The story was taken exclusively from the old Hindu fairy-tale of the Ramayana; and dealt with the adventures of Rama, elder son of a King of Oudh. Rama's wife, Sita, was abducted by Ravana, the King of Lanka, so her husband attacked the empire of Ravana. With the help of Hanuman, the Monkey Prince and General, he gained a splendid victory after a protracted struggle. Sita was rescued, and proved her chastity by the ordeal of fire. Hanuman, and his monkey army, were portrayed by actors who wore masks. All had a long tail attached to their costumes, which

were wired and had an upward curve ; consequently they always remained in the desired position and did not drag along the ground. The dramatic action of the play was conveyed by graphic gestures, and very little dialogue was employed. All of the female parts were played by young boys. They danced beautifully and with the utmost grace ; while the antics of the monkey-actors were really lifelike. This was a most enjoyable and first-rate performance.

The *Wayang Orang* is another Balinese drama performed by human players. In actual fact, both this and the *Wayang Wong* provide the logical sequel to the original Javanese shadow-play, in which either leather or wooden puppets impersonate the gods and heroes of the Hindu pantheon. Being orthodox Hindus, the Balinese have retained more of the mythology of that cult than have the Javanese. To the former people the ancient mythical legends remain just as full of pleasure, and just as new—though oft-repeated. How long this will endure it is impossible to predict. Already a growing taste for the modern cinema-palace is rearing its head like a spectre in these enchanting islands ; and the day of the unique and fascinating *wayangs* is surely waning.

The majority of these various types of performances take place at night ; but there are occasional matinees of the *Wayang Topeng*, the most important feature of which is the dancing. The story of the selected dramas is chiefly unfolded by means of action and dialogues of varying length ; while the plot is always based upon some picturesque legend of Hindu mythology. The *Wayang Topeng* more closely resembles the classical dancing of the modern ballet, when songs and stories are interpreted by movement alone. For instance, Anna Pavlova's renowned masterpiece, "The Death of the Swan," is a much advanced type of the *Wayang Topeng* of Bali. This is, perhaps, a grossly unfair illustration, for these should not be mentioned in the same breath. There can be no real comparison between the two forms of artistic expression, yet it may serve to convey my meaning.

In all of these various *wayangs*, the principal actors wear most gorgeous costumes, and the draping of the lovely Balinese cloths about their bodies is perfection of art. Some of the actors have masks, which are held in place by means of bits of cord or elastic bands. They do not speak any lines, but content themselves with gestures to convey the unspoken words. Even the unmasked players, who actually deliver dialogues, generally have some sort of a small covering over the upper part of their faces but leave the mouths free.

When choosing the players for any of these dramas, considerable attention is paid to the physical and facial qualities of the leading actors. Those who are selected to portray a prince must be favoured with a princely face and bearing, and so forth. It is worth mention-

ing that the tone of conversation changes with the character of the person impersonated, and is always in keeping with the facial expression. With a finely cut, amicable type of face there goes a high-toned voice ; but a stern one demands a sonorous voice.

The Bari dancers are famous throughout the Malay Archipelago, and always dressed as warriors armed with swords. Originally, they only took part in the feasts at the temples ; but now, sometimes, they perform as an added diversion or in connection with a *Wayang Gambuh*. They are always masked, never deliver any dialogues, and execute dance figures connected with their roles as warriors. I was fortunate to see a troupe of them in Karangasem, assisting at a *Wayang Gambuh*.

In their decorative attire, the most striking feature is the three-cornered hat. The back portion is flat, the front turned upwards, and the crown profusely decorated with flowers. Long hair and peacock feathers fall down from the hat over the shoulders ; while their costume consists of many pieces of woven cloth and gold brocade. When they move there is a wonderful play of colours. Their arms are entirely covered, and the hands gloved in white cloth with long finger-nails attached. The masks worn by the Bari dancers are either white or yellowish-brown in colour.

Many an evening in and around Den Pasar was enlivened by my attendance at one of these various Balinese *wayangs*.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### BALI'S "ROAD TO HEAVEN"

THERE is only one sure road to heaven from Bali, and that is through the purifying fires of a cremation ceremony.

Like all Hindus, the Balinese burn their dead; and in nothing else in the whole island is this religious creed more pronounced than in the ritual and underlying principles of these cremations. Such events only occur at irregular and infrequent intervals, for they are a costly business. Everyone intending to visit Bali should make inquiries beforehand and arrange, if possible, to synchronize with such a remarkable rite being performed.

Only one other such ceremony in the world resembles that of Bali—the *poongyi-byan* (cremation of a Buddhist bishop or venerated monk) in Burma; and, of the two, that of Bali is the more picturesque, interesting, elaborate and expensive. It is a spectacle not to be missed lightly, and worth going several thousands of miles to witness.

It was the promise of being present at one of these rare spectacles that really decided me to prolong my visit. I have never regretted it.

If I deal somewhat fully and in detail with this cremation ceremony witnessed in Bangli, it is because, from start to finish, everything connected with these rites breathes the essence of the worship of Siva; also because it sums up Bali and the character of the charming people. The particular cremation at Bangli, by good fortune, proved to be a most important and elaborate one. It was spectacular and utterly unique in Malaysia, for Bali is the only place where the dead are burned.

What immediately strikes the European observer at one of these amazing ceremonies is the strange blending of religious fervour with an audacious irreverence for the bodies of the deceased. The Balinese, it must be remembered, consider the actual human frame to be only the crude envelope which prevents the soul from attaining celestial bliss. This, of course, explains why every detail of a cremation ceremony is performed in such an off-hand manner when it merely concerns the dead body; whereas genuine respect, even fanatical religious hysteria, is displayed when the ritual concerns either the heavenly gods or the souls of the dead.

The Bangli cremation rites were a curious blending of religious

fervour and stark profanity. It was the more astounding because so utterly unexpected.

The highest ideal of the Balinese is to reach the summit of human perfection. This alone will gain them admission to the heaven of Siva the Destroyer, where they can enjoy a blessed existence for eternity. Such a happy state, however, is only possible for the really perfect human being; one, that is to say, who has completed his course of life in seven reincarnations. Only a priest of the highest caste, a Brahman, can hope to proceed directly after death to Siva in the third heaven. All others must first pass through the heavens of the two lower gods, Indra and Vishnu.

The entrance to the first heaven of Indra is not gained easily. Jama, the judge of the dead, stands before the gates and knows the sins of all mankind. He may condemn the soul to terrible forms of penance that may endure for a thousand years, and refuse admission to the first heaven of Indra. The dead are believed to be contaminated with the impurities of the life on earth, so they must first be cleansed by earthly fires before being allowed to join Indra's company. As long as this has not been done, the soul wanders outside the heavenly gates or else returns to earth in the guise of an animal. That is why the Balinese never injure the many half-starved pariah dogs that infest the island. They believe that these poor mangy brutes carry the souls of the *Sudras* (members of the fourth and lowest caste), who have not yet passed through the cleansing fires on earth and so still await entrance to Indra's heaven.

Once this first heaven is gained, the soul must wait there until permitted to proceed to the second heaven of Vishnu. In course of time they win promotion from there to that of Siva the Destroyer—their ultimate goal.

In order to escape the terrible fate of being excluded from these celestial blessings, the human body, which detained the soul during life, must first be consumed in the flames of the funeral pyre so that nothing of this envelope remains on earth. It is easy to understand, therefore, why the rite of cremation is considered wholly indispensable in Bali. In fact, it is the most important of all their religious observances.

Cremation, however, is a most expensive affair. The Brahman priests cannot be dispensed with, and their fees are always considerable. Without the priests and their retinue of attendants, a cremation would be valueless according to Balinese beliefs. In addition to the priests, innumerable offerings must be made to the legion of good and evil spirits; the professional mourners paid and fed; and the gaudy trappings of the *wadah* (hearse) to be bought, and many such-like necessities. All these various items cost a lot of money.

In consequence, all their lives the Balinese industriously save

up for this last sacred rite. It is the highest duty of all members of a family to exert themselves to this desirable end. Naturally enough, this takes time to accomplish and entails many grave sacrifices on the part of every member of a family.

The poor man buries his deceased relations until such time as he has saved up enough money to cremate all those awaiting purification by fire. Meanwhile the souls of his relatives wail their mournful protests at the delay through the mouths of the village pariah-dogs. Usually, when sufficient money has been saved up, there is very little of the bodies to cremate; but Indra is not a very exacting god. The burning of a few human bones will do admirably for the purpose; and when not even these are available, a small puppet substitute will serve instead. The Brahman priests, for a cash consideration, will entice the soul of the departed into this puppet and thus allow it to journey to Indra. Every possible effort is made, however, to burn the entire body on the funeral pyre.

The Balinese begin to save up for this final rite almost from the day of their birth. No bridal dowry was ever more assiduously collected. Even if it bankrupts the entire family for a generation or more, every one of their dead relations must be duly cremated and given the chance of going to Indra's heaven.

The wealthy Balinese do not bury their dead, but embalm the bodies so as to keep them intact until such time as the cremation can take place without undue financial strain. They keep these embalmed bodies in a separate building at the village, the *Pura Dalem* (temple of the dead), which has been set aside specifically for this purpose.

Death in Bali, as also in China, is an expensive event for the living! This exaggerated care for the dead reacts most distressingly upon the surviving relatives in almost every single instance. If there is one thing that calls for reform in Bali, it is this gross extravagance with which the dead are ushered into the next world while leaving the bill to be paid by the surviving relatives. At least the Balinese practise one Christian virtue, for they "do unto others as they would be done by."

A Balinese cremation ceremony varies in magnificence and extravagant cost just according to the status and wealth of the deceased person or family concerned. It frequently happens that, if an important and rich person is about to be cremated, lesser and impecunious relatives, who may have predeceased him, are offered the hospitality of the ceremonies. This is at least economical, for quantity makes very little financial difference. The same preparations will serve just as well for twenty or more bodies as for one, so they generally contrive to work off arrears by having a collective family purification by fire.

Some of these Balinese cremation ceremonies are most imposing and have been known to cost as much as £2500. The majority, however, are nothing like so elaborate or expensive. The actual one which I witnessed in Bangli concerned the bodies of fifteen dead relations, and must have cost the family a small fortune. I was careful to make inquiries afterwards, but was told so many varying costs that I prefer to leave the total sum blank. All I do know is that I am glad not to have been called upon to foot the bill.

The most important feature of the preliminaries is the provision of the *wadah*, a tall and splendid tower which serves as the hearse. It is man-hauled from the *Pura Dalem* in the village to the cremation site with an astounding display of joyous hilarity and complete abandonment of decorum. The Oriental is seldom known to take his pleasures sadly, even when they are connected with death in the family! The Chinese funerals are amazing frolics with firework displays as they process to the cemetery; and the Burmese *poongyi-byan* is a riot of horseplay among the mourners.

The *wadah* is really a gorgeous affair, and often from three to nine stories in height—much after the style of the *Merus* already described. Each stage is lavishly decorated with dragons' heads, monstrous human shapes, glittering mirrors, and a profusion of gold-leaf and vividly coloured paper flowers. Above the framework rises the slender pagoda with its tiered roofs. Nine tiers are only permissible when the deceased is of really high caste; and eleven tiers are the exclusive privilege of the *Merus* of the highest Hindu gods. Less exalted persons are only allowed three, five or seven roofs, just according to their status, to protect their remains from the rays of the sun in transit to the funeral pyres outside the village. The highest priests of the Brahman caste do not have a roof at all on the summit of their lotus-shaped hearses. In their life on earth they are deemed to have been so close to the highest gods that, after death, the sun—which is the highest expression of deity—may be looked upon without any fear.

The bodies of the dead are never allowed to be carried out of their homes through the doorway in common use, for here the evil spirits are thought to congregate in order to steal the soul at the first opportunity offered. The poor take exactly the same precautions in this respect as do the rich. To avoid all possibility of such a calamity occurring, a hole is cut in the wall of the deceased person's house, as well as in the enclosing wall of the compound, so that the body may be carried forth without any risk of the demons stealing the soul in passage. This, of course, entails more expense for the surviving relatives, who have to repair the breaches in the two walls.

The foregoing explanation will pave the way for what follows,

and make the actual ceremonies connected with a Balinese cremation better understood. Without a full appreciation of cause and effect, it would be difficult to fathom the meaning of the course of events.

I moved over to the *pasanggrahan* in Bangli on the day before the actual cremation ceremonies began. They occupy four days, each one having its own particular ritual. It was all most wonderfully interesting. I had seen a *poongyi-byan* in Burma some years earlier, also many cremations of Hindus in India; but none of these was so highly spectacular as the Bangli ritual.

On the first day took place certain elaborate rites connected with the actual body. It must first be cleansed ritually, before being consumed by the sacred fires, of all its worldly impurities. Nothing like that can be allowed near the flames. Even the articles that will accompany the body to the funeral *ghat* (burning place) must also be purified before the long road to heaven is taken; but this is done on the second day. None of the proceedings on either of these two days convey the impression of solemnity, for the rites concern only the cocoon of the soul—a thing of no particular moment. In fact the entire ritual from beginning to end lacks this quality, although the high priest and his assistants play an important part in everything.

If it had not been for the kindly offices of a Dutch official, who made my presence at the various stages of this weird ceremonial possible and then kindly explained all things to me most lucidly, I should have come away in ignorance of the meaning of the rites performed. In this, I was indeed fortunate.

On the first day we attended at the *Pura Dalem* to watch the proceedings. A crowd of men climbed on to the platform on which the mummies, or the puppets representing them, reposed in this temporary mausoleum. With quick movements they lifted off the bamboo matting from the bodies, exposing the mummies fully to view. Carelessly they were picked up and deposited in crude coffins, wherein they would now rest until about to be cremated. All this was accompanied by loud shouting, much laughter and considerable play-acting. Suddenly all became silent, for the *Padanda* (high priest) was approaching with stately strides. When near the temporary coffins, he began to recite the long litanies for the souls of the dead.

Then the others retired into the background, and some small girls approached the *Padanda* with a curious shuffling gait and silently offered him bowls filled with holy water on which floated white flowers. Taking one white flower between his fingers, the *Padanda* resumed his prayers. With solemn action he then sprinkled each mummy with holy water while walking slowly around the coffins. The women assistants were now all on their knees, the crowd was hushed, and the only sound was the low-toned voice of





1. CHIEF PRIESTESS BEING CHAIRED IN THE PROCESSION TO CREMATION GROUND
2. BRIDGE AND SHED WITH "COW-COFFINS" AT THE CREMATION GROUND



1. CHIEF PRIEST AND ASSISTANTS PRAYING BEFORE FUNERAL PYRES,  
BANGLI

2. PROCESSION WITH ASHES OF CREMATED TO THE RIVER, BANGLI

the celebrant uttering appropriate prayers. This brief ceremony concluded, the high priest returned to the head of the platform.

His assistants came forward and offered the various symbolical articles next to be used. Followed by them, he went to each coffin in turn, removed the gold ring set with a blood-red ruby from the mouths of the mummies (which had been there ever since death took place), and substituted five small pieces of gold, silver, brass, iron and lead. On these had been engraved in mystical characters the names of the five highest gods in the Hindu religion. In this way the dead are left to the protection of the deities until they are consumed by the purifying flames.

That was the final act of the first day's ceremonies, and the mummies were left in their crude coffins on the platform. The high priest, his assistants and the crowd quietly withdrew from the *Pura Dalem*.

On the second day all the articles that would accompany the body to the funeral pyre were purified, and absolution was given by the high priest for all the ordinary venial sins committed in life by the deceased persons. The mortal sins cannot be so absolved, for the soul has to answer for them to Jama, the heavenly judge at the gate of Indra's celestial sphere.

This time the ceremony took place in the house of the *Padanda* himself, where he exercises his esoteric cult. In a stately procession the crowd set out for his *Puri* (house); but the bodies of the dead, which are to be cremated on the following day, did not accompany the procession. They must not be disturbed. Therefore, they are represented by curious puppets made of *kepengs*—old Chinese coins of great traditional value. Each puppet will receive the absolution for venial sins and be burned with the body next day, so that it can go with the soul to Jama and serve as a certificate of freedom from venial sins.

In front of the procession proudly walked two small boys, holding aloft long bamboo poles on which were suspended old cloths. These belonged to relations who had long been dead, and whose souls are thus enticed to join those of the more recently deceased of the family.

At their heels followed a long train of women, with their chests now chastely covered with dark cloths and eyes discreetly held earthwards. At other times these women would not dream of shrouding their magnificent figures. They are the bearers of the family heirlooms, bowls of holy water, plates with flowers, rich offerings, and sacred oil to light the death lamp.

In their wake small boys carried huge puppets of fearsome aspect. They made play with these and forced the masses of spectators on either side of the road to shrink back in mock fear. The puppets are supposed to portray the good spirits who are to protect the

procession from surrounding demons, which always threaten the souls of the dead and try to steal them.

The *Padanda* was already enthroned in his private temple, awaiting the arrival of this procession.

The granting of absolution for the venial sins was a brief ceremony. The high priest muttered endless litanies; purified all present in the temple, by the simple process of ringing bells and swinging incense-burners; and then lifted his hands heavenwards in pious attitude. Presently a fit of ague overcame him; and he began to shudder violently, while his eyes widely dilated. He was now supposed to have established direct communication with the deities in the Hindu heavens.

Next a young priestess approached him reverently and held out a puppet in much the same manner as would a mother offer her infant for a blessing. She lightly touched the right foot of the *Padanda* with the head of this puppet. The deity, descending into the high priest, had now performed the essential miracle. He had set his foot on the neck of the dead and freely forgiven all the venial sins committed upon earth.

This done, it was now the turn of the articles that are to be burned with the bodies. They must be purified also. Only absolutely pure things can accompany the soul on its last journey to Indra's heaven. Yellow rags represent the skin of the deceased in the next reincarnation, while the leaves of the lontar palm portray his or her future growth of hair. These simple symbols guarantee that the dead person will have a healthy skin, beautiful hair and good eyebrows in the next reincarnation.

This ritual ended, the procession returned to the *Pura Dalem* with the puppets and other articles. These were all placed on the mummies in the coffins, in readiness for the morrow's final ceremony.

On the third day the actual cremation takes place. The village of Bangli was early astir and the crowds were all merging on the *Pura Dalem*. When I arrived there, an endless procession of men and women were striding through the *tjandi bentar* (pillared gateway) of this temple, where the dead had waited in their crude coffins for transportation to the site of the cremation. These were the bearers of the offerings to the good and evil spirits; and this motley collection of gifts will accompany the souls on the flames to Indra. To the accompaniment of loud reverberations from the *gamelan* and drums, the explosion of fireworks, and the shouts of many thousand Balinese, the procession arranged itself for the journey to the burning *ghat*.

A high, decorated bridge had already connected the *wadah* with the *Pura Dalem*. This is the road over which the coffins will be carried to the pagoda in the high tiers on the hearse. This must

be done with great speed, otherwise the evil spirits, who are lying in wait, will soon discover that they are being tricked and make a great effort to capture the souls in the passage across this crazy bridge.

Suddenly a loud shout went up from the vast multitude. On the elevated bridge appeared a few swiftly running figures, who passed the coffins from hand to hand as they rushed them to sanctuary in the *wadah*. The cheering of the crowd grew in intensity as the goal was reached; every face in the vast concourse of watchers depicted first acute anxiety and then immense relief. Immediately all the coffins were safely packed in the hearse, three hundred or more semi-naked and wildly shouting men rushed at the *wadah* like a lot of schoolboys let out for the play-hour. These were the bearers, who crowd beneath the bamboo poles of the platform of the huge hearse and will carry it all the way to the cremation site. In doing this they earn honour by carrying a soul to its deliverance from earthly imprisonment.

The tumult hushed unexpectedly. The passionate throbbing of the drums and gongs at the head of the great procession ceased abruptly and, while the crowd prostrated itself, the *Padanda* strode solemnly through a small doorway in the wall of the *Pura*.

He was dressed in his full ceremonial vestments. A tall, red cap covered his head, which was lavishly decorated with gold lace and closely resembled a bishop's mitre. In his right hand he held a silver-topped stave like a bishop's crozier. Round his waist was wound a monk-like girdle, which is the symbol of his priestly office.

The *Padanda* was followed by a procession of young and pretty priestesses, who are the acolytes carrying the sacred attributes of his office—incense-burners, prayer-bells, flowers and a gold bow and arrows.

With dignified steps and erect carriage, the high priest moved slowly towards the enormous dragon which was set up in front of the *wadah*, thus denoting that the deceased belonged to the *Kshatriya* caste. This dragon is a reminder of the old legend which says that a *Kshatriya* prince once evoked the wrath of a Brahman priest by his disdain of all religious matters. The priest was so enraged that he created this monster. After the erring prince had proved himself penitent for his scoffing at Siva, however, the priest slew the dragon miraculously with a single arrow. This quaint incident—or rather the slaying of the dragon—must be re-enacted symbolically.

The *Padanda* accepted the golden bow and quiver of arrows from one of the attendant priestesses, deposited a pure white flower in the hollow end of one of the arrows, and then shot it towards the evil-looking dragon. He repeated this action towards all four points of the compass, and then to heaven and earth. He was

now supposed to have driven away all evil influences from the dead.

All these various ceremonies take time to complete; but now everything was almost ready for the giant procession to march forward to the actual site of the cremation. The *Padanda* and his chief priestess mounted upon their elevated chairs, which were carried on bamboo poles by four powerful men. The hoarse, fanatical shouts of the crowd broke forth again; the bearers lifted the creaking chairs; others put their bare shoulders under the swaying *wadah*; and the sonorous reverberations of the *gamelan* and drums began once more.

At a signal from the *Padanda* the giant procession got under way. Yet there was still another rite to be performed, for the spirit-demons must be fooled again. The colossal hearse was carried round three times in a wide circle, so that these demons would lose their way to the souls of the dead persons. When the evil spirits were thus rendered thoroughly giddy and bewildered, the procession could proceed to the appointed place without any further fears of obstruction or soul-theft.

It started off at last, while I followed as close as possible to the huge crowd. Slowly it made its noisy way through the village to the funeral pyres on the outskirts. The shouting of the people, the incessant ringing of bells, the reverberating notes of the big drums, the loud crashing of gongs and cymbals, and the explosions of fireworks was simply deafening. Surely, I thought, that terrific din would frighten away even the most bold and venturesome of evil demons? How could they possibly face up to that hellish cacophony of passionate sound? Yet, apparently, the Balinese are not so confident in regard to this. There are yet many more efforts made to evade the evil spirits and bring the souls of the dead safely to the purifying flames.

The procession was striking in its exotic splendour and picturesque wavering, but there was nothing of reverence in that wild and strange scene. One might have been pardoned for thinking it was a public holiday or a Guy Fawkes celebration. Any particle of funereal solemnity was utterly lacking. They moved forward ahead of that shivering tower of gaudy magnificence at a funeral pace, it is true; but this could be attributed chiefly to the heaviness of the hearse, which had no wheels and had to be borne on the shoulders of human carriers.

At frequent intervals the procession was halted so that the colossal tower could be made to draw back. This act is a symbol of the soul's penchant for worldly desires, which make it shrink back from the greedy flames destined to consume the body. At last, however, the procession reached its destination.

In the centre of a wide, open plain was a stone platform under a

high thatched roof. On the platform were arranged the requisite number of coffins for the reception of the bodies, each made in the shape of comic-looking wooden cows. These stood on four bamboo legs, with heads adorned by imitation horns, and the expressions on the faces amusingly fatuous. The head and top half of the body formed the lid of the cow-coffin, which latter is dedicated to the dead and will be burned with the body inside.

Along the sides of the field were arranged the funeral pyres, a separate one for each of those who now would be privileged to win their way to Indra's heaven through the purifying flames. The pyres were built high with logs and brushwood, all neatly arranged and ending with a flat-topped platform for the reception of the cow-coffin.

As soon as the entire procession had arrived on this field, there began the most peculiar part of the whole ritual. I can only liken it to a game of musical chairs, played with much gusto and hilarious abandonment. Everybody suddenly started to race at top speed round the roofed shed. Lance-bearers, *gamelan* players and drummers, the women bearing the offerings, the relations of the dead, the dragon and the gaudy puppets, the *wadah*, the priestess perched on high on her man-borne chair and, last of all, the *Padanda* himself in his lofty chair—all participated with obvious enthusiasm in this wild frolic. It was an amusing spectacle to watch and ended almost in a riot. As I looked upon this scene, and saw the high priest and priestess being galloped past me in swaying chairs, I wondered how they were not thrown out of their seats or rendered sea-sick. This strange part of the ritual must be done three times, so as to completely bewilder the demon-thieves lurking nearby.

Creaking and swaying drunkenly, the giant *wadah* swung by me three times in succession. The whole scene conveyed to my mind an impression of a crazy nightmare, and there was every reason for thinking the whole assemblage had suddenly gone daft. It was wild orgy of utter irreverence for the dead. How could anyone in their normal senses feel reverent or maintain a funereal aspect under such amazingly frivolous circumstances?

At last the requisite number of revolutions had been done. With a benign gesture, but breathing heavily from his unusual experience, the *Padanda* called the assembly to order. From his lofty chair he proceeded to distribute handfuls of coins and flowers among the crowd, which are provided by the family of the dead persons. Some of the crowd were lucky: others were not!

This ceremony ended, the *wadah* was brought smartly alongside the high bridge, similar to that used at the *Pura Dalem*, which was already in position against the roofed shed. Then men carried the bodies swiftly down this crazy path to the cow-coffins, whose lids had already been removed in readiness. Thus, once more, were the

lurking evil spirits robbed of their prey. The bearers of the mummies rudely tore off the wrappings and placed the bodies in the coffins. Before the lids are replaced, however, any who wish may take a last look at all that remains of the dead person. I was not of their number!

Next the *Padanda* advanced on foot to the coffins and sprinkled them with holy water. Every bowl was broken immediately afterwards, so that they could never again be used for profane things and so become impure. Handfuls of flowers were now thrown into the coffins; and costly cloths spread over the bodies, but leaving the face exposed.

Then the high priest attended to the next reincarnation of the dead. In the mouth of each body he placed a white flower, two flower-buds in the nostrils, a piece of wax in the ears, and a mirror on the eyes. These last offices for the dead insure for the soul a return to earth with fluent powers of speech, a shapely nose, beautiful eyes and well-modelled ears. Then the cloths are drawn over the face. Large piles of lontar leaves were handed to the *Padanda* by the relatives of the dead, each being inscribed with the last good wishes of the members of the family. These were sprinkled into the coffins and are burned with them, so that the soul need not feel lonely on its flight heavenwards. Now the lids were replaced on the coffins, and the high priest began his interminable litanies for the dead.

Meanwhile the giant *wadah* had been pushed to one side and abandoned to the army of bearers who had carried it hither on their bare shoulders. They lost no time in exercising their traditional privilege to plunder it of everything worth taking. Soon the former magnificent structure stood bereft of its gorgeous trappings, and only the naked bamboo poles of the framework and the carrying platform remained. Presently, I was told, this skeleton of the hearse would be burned near the pyres.

The *Padanda's* prayers ended. All was now ready for the flames to shoot skywards. The cow-coffins were carried forth to their own individual pyre, placed on the summit of the wood pile, more firewood heaped on top and around them, and then the high priest gave the signal to apply the torches to each mass. In a few more minutes they were all burning furiously. On the high, shooting flames from the cow-coffins, the souls of the dead are believed to ascend to Indra to be received into the first Hindu heaven.

By this time it was dark. The ceremonies had taken all day, and yet food had been forgotten. I had been so absorbed in this fascinating ritual that hunger had not asserted itself. When all the pyres were alight and burning well, the giant framework of the hearse and the bridge were also set on fire. A huge sea of flames is the final apotheosis—a fiery cauldron amidst the shadows of night. All was still irreverent, the crowds behaving in holiday spirit. Slowly



the fierce fires died down into fitful bursts of short flames ; and the vast multitude of people began to stream away to their homes, laughing and talking loudly. I followed them, suddenly aware of the urgent need for a meal. Only a few late watchers—the close relatives of the cremated—lingered on the scene to make certain that everything was burned to ashes and nothing remained but red-hot embers.

Early next morning came the final rite. The women and a small body of men returned to the cremation site to collect the ashes of the dead from the cold, grey heaps. These were placed in urns and then carried in solemn procession to the banks of the river. Here the ashes were scattered upon the face of the swiftly flowing stream, thus to be borne to the Indian Ocean so that nothing of the human body may remain on earth ; otherwise, the soul might be hindered from gaining Indra. This final rite performed, the small procession returned to the village and attended the *Kulit Wayang* (shadow play). This concludes the festival of cremation.

Through such ceremonies, just described, alone can the soul of a Balinese Hindu be expected to travel along that difficult road to heaven, there to live in perpetual celestial bliss and be ministered to by heavenly houris until such time as promotion is gained to the second heaven of Vishnu. But Siva's heaven cannot be gained until after the seven reincarnations are completed.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### IN THE SHADOW OF GUNONG BATOER

I PLANNED a leisurely progress northwards to Boeleleng, after leaving Den Pasar.

The first part of the road from the latter town was bordered by coco-nut palms, melting gradually into somewhat hilly country until Gianjar was reached. There were many wonderful views. Rice-sawahs and coco-nut plantations seem to be the main agricultural products of this area. Several large rivers had to be crossed before Kloengkoeng; many had magnificent cable suspension-bridges of excellent workmanship. The Dutch have their own ideas on how to build bridges, and the design is unique in Malaysia. An expert engineer assured me there are none better.

I had already been impressed by the extent of the cultivation seen on every hand in the island. Rice, of course, supplied the dominant note. Later on, I also noticed plenty of good coffee plantations. Most of these had been acquired by Europeans from the native growers, and intensively developed. The quality of their appearance promised well for the future. There was not a vestige of rubber being grown in those parts of the island which I visited, though coco-nuts and lontar palms were plentiful enough.

The road-making and irrigation works of the Balinese were both wonderfully well done, often even ingenious. I marvelled greatly at such as seen, and could scarcely believe they were not the actual work of Dutch engineers. When the Balinese road-makers have to cross a river they first build a dam across it, cut sluices for irrigation purposes, and then carry the road across the summit. This obviates a steep descent into the river-bed, followed by a stiff climb to the opposite bank; also materially helps in the irrigation of their lands. These dams are locally termed "Balinese culverts." Not only are these people famous for their road-making skill, but also for their well-planned and constructed irrigation schemes. The innumerable dams and water-conduits seen everywhere on the island give ample proof of the heights to which the Balinese have climbed in this most important phase of agricultural engineering.

Often I saw ponies, goats, bullocks and even pigs with a weird contraption round their necks which puzzled me for a time. It was a wooden triangle fitted round their necks, and from this was

suspended a long bamboo pole. I learned later that this was designed to prevent them from straying through the fences of the fields or through the doorways into house-compounds. It is a simple enough device and thoroughly effective. I have never seen anything quite like this elsewhere in the world, and the plan is probably peculiar to Bali.

If every road seems to lead to a temple in Bali, it is also generous with its constant stream of bronze-skinned Venus-like women—generally with piles of heavy baskets on their heads. Their walk is very graceful, being a movement from the hips in a gentle swaying motion; their form and carriage are perfection. Mock modesty finds no place among these delightful children of Nature, and one experiences a sense of gladness that such is the case.

In this island of enchantment one sees far more women than men, and their manifold charms are so unusual that there is an inclination, possibly, to wax too enthusiastic over them. Yet the men, in their own way, are just as magnificent creatures. Sometimes I encountered a hand-cart being shoved along the road by some sweating, semi-nude men. Half a dozen beautifully built, light bronze men hauled or pushed each cart, and from these vehicles came a well-recognized grunt or squeal at intervals. I halted my car to more closely examine the contents. The cart was packed high with torpedo-shaped wicker baskets, in each of which was a fat porker, protesting vociferously and looking beastly cramped.

The pigs were on their way to the ports of the island for shipment to Soerabaya, and thence for distribution throughout Malaysia. I had met their brothers in the streets of Singapore, after the arrival of a steamer from Java. In a day or less these pigs, upon which I now gazed, would be dumped unceremoniously and ignominiously upon a lighter at Benoea or Laboean Amoek, still in these curious crates, and thereafter piled tier upon tier in the capacious holds of the bi-weekly "Pig Express." Thence they would be borne, still enthroned in their crates, to the markets of Java, Madoera, Sumatra or Singapore. For all I knew, these very pigs upon which I stared sympathetically were destined to be my fellow-passengers on my return voyage to Soerabaya. As it transpired, they were—or, at least, their exact counterparts!

Kloengkoeng's fame rests mostly on the fact that it is the ancient home of the Prince of Bali; but to-day he resides for the major part of his time at Karangasem. The town is almost equally famous for its beautiful wood-carving, silver, copper and gold work, *Batik* and *Kain* industries, and such-like arts and crafts. There are also a few good types of temples; and a very interesting Native Court, with a quaint roof, which is in the main street and called the Kertak Goese. On the walls and ceiling of this building are some handsome but peculiar Hindu paintings.

While the native textile industry of Java is gradually disappearing under the influence of imported modern machinery, and that of imported textiles from England and Japan, it is still very much alive in Bali. They weave the patterns into the cloth, and this may explain why the textile industry holds its own in some districts where cloths with certain types of woven patterns still belong to the daily or ceremonial apparel of the people. The European markets do not seem to supply this demand for a special kind of decoration. It is, perhaps, fortunately so, as an important branch of indigenous industries is thus enabled to hold its own. Furthermore, the hand-made goods are far more artistic and durable than the products of Western machinery seem to be.

There are four main groups of these Balinese industries—silk, cotton, gold and silver. To these may be added the so-called *ikat*, a texture of mixed silk and cotton. The material is more generally of cotton, a native product woven into threads by means of a crude hand-loom. Silk, however, is almost as much used as cotton, being imported by Chinese traders; while gold and silver thread are also imported by them. To colour the cotton thread, native dyes are employed. These are remarkable for their warm, deep hues; but sometimes they use aniline dye-stuffs, which are really inferior to the native dyes.

The weaving loom employed by the women possesses a warp, which consists of a row of parallel running threads. These run in a direction away from the actual weaver, and may be elevated in such a manner that part of the threads come on a higher level than the remainder. The weaver throws the shuttle through the opening between the two groups of threads, and the texture is developed by changing the groups of elevated threads. The design can be altered at will. The inclusion of the gold and silver thread results in the textures *de luxe* of Bali.

The *prada* texture is quite common in Bali, and usually consists of silk of an even colour, but decorated with pieces of gold-leaf pasted on to it. The piece of cloth is fixed on a frame, and then the desired patterns are drawn upon it. Often these are covered over with paste, and then the Chinese gold-leaf is affixed. It is this *kain prada* which one sees almost universally worn on the island, and the Balinese colours are daringly contrasted. They should be seen in the bright sunlight to really appreciate this fact; and it becomes still more evident if viewed in combination, much as the Balinese delight to employ them. They furnish a most pleasing feast of beautiful colours then, a splendid expression of the joy and deep-felt gladness which is so characteristic of these people.

Gold and silver embossing form another part of the artistic industries of Bali, but I found it rather inferior to, and not so beautiful as, that of India, Ceylon or Burma. Kloengkoeng is



1. BAROET VILLAGE AND TEMPLE WHERE LAVA FLOW HALTED
2. BAROET TEMPLE WITH MASS OF LAVA HEAPED AGAINST OUTER WALL



1. BALINESE TRANSPORT PONIES  
3. STREET SCENE IN SANGSIT, NORTHERN BALI

2. BAROET CRATER AND LAKE, WITH STORM GATHERING  
4. LOADING BALINESE CATTLE ON THE "PIG EXPRESS"  
AT BOELELENG

the main centre of this industry, as also that of the rather crude wood-carving work.

Karengasem, about twenty-five miles from Kloengkoeng and off the main road, is a place of some size. It is roughly five miles from the seaside village of Oedjoeng, on the shores of the Indian Ocean. At this latter place, to which there is a good motor-road, is a very picturesque summer palace of the Balinese Regent of the island, who also acts as the Chairman of the local Legislative Council.

Some ten minutes' walk from the *pasanggrahan* in Karengasem stands a handsome fountain, erected by the Queen of the Netherlands in memory of the late Balinese Prince. By great ill-luck, two days after I left Bali, a daughter of the present Regent was married in Karengasem. Thus I missed the chance of seeing a very brilliant and interesting ceremony.

From Kloengkoeng I had to retrace my way until within two miles of Gianjar. There I regained the main Bangli-Kintamani road. Many interesting village-markets were in progress all along that fascinating drive to Kintamani, my night's halting-place. Approaching Bangli, we climbed up into hilly country and thereafter continued to do so for the rest of the journey. Hereabouts, again were vast areas under intensive cultivation. Our old familiar John Chinaman was not much in evidence on this island, except to a minor extent in the northern districts. The Balinese, however, use some of the cheaper copper coins of China as small change—a string of fifty, each with a hole in the middle, equalling about ten cents of the Dutch coinage; and there are other evidences of the Chinese penetration into the island throughout the centuries.

At Bangli, the place of my amazing cremation experience, I spent several hours while taking photographs. It is a fair-sized town, and once boasted of a small military garrison. There was a very interesting native-market here, which was still crowded though the hour was late. The women in particular were extraordinarily camera-shy, more so than when I witnessed the cremation ceremonies at an earlier date. Six times in about twenty minutes they scattered in every direction at sight of my camera. The native constable did not interfere—though I half-expected he might do so—but watched my efforts with an amused smile of tolerance. I presume he considered me quite mad. The largest temple here, the *Pura Kehem*, as also the house of the native chief, was a handsome building.

After leaving Bangli, the road climbed still more steeply upwards into the mountains; while the air soon became cool and more bracing, which was a welcome relief after the hot stuffiness of the plains around Den Pasar. It was a well-wooded country with vast areas of grasslands scattered about. Fawn-coloured cattle grazed

in the meadows, which were marked off with ditches and hedges just like English fields.

At one spot along the road we encountered a dozen or more pack-ponies travelling in single file and tied together. Each wore a square-shaped nose-bag of rattan, and munched their evening meal as they ambled along. From the neck of each was suspended a chain of musically tinkling bells. These Balinese ponies were somewhat smaller than those of the other countries in Malaysia, but looked just as sturdy and were carrying heavy loads. They looked rather like Shetlands with their thick coats clipped short.

Rain-clouds were fast gathering in the sky ahead and it promised a heavy downpour shortly—the usual violent afternoon storm of the monsoons, which luckily held off during the Bangli cremation ritual. Soon a light drizzle began to fall. I cursed under my breath, for a photograph of the lake and crater of Gunong Batoer now would not be possible.

Hereabouts it was sparsely populated—rather a surprise after the density of the people in the southern parts of the island. It is cold and damp on these mountain ranges, and the Balinese prefer the warmth and sunshine which they find on the plains. The soil looked rich and was well-covered with luxuriant growth of bracken; but the air was definitely keen, and I halted to put on an overcoat.

Now the road ran through high-walled cuttings in the hills, which shut off the view; but, at one of the frequent bends, looking backwards, I obtained a simply marvellous view over the whole of southern Bali and the Indian Ocean. It was indeed a generous panorama. The brilliant afternoon sun had bathed the sea and land in golden lights, while overhead drifted the ominous storm-clouds.

I had been warned to keep a sharp look out for the small village of Panalokan, where a board-sign warns travellers to "Look Out!" It was well that I had been warned, or certainly I should have missed a very magnificent scene. When passing through one of the deep cuttings, and on a sharp bend in the road, I suddenly saw Panalokan ahead. On went the brakes, and I pulled up at the roadside. To my right was a scenic spectacle as strikingly beautiful as totally unexpected.

Climbing out of the car, I went to the edge and gazed out over the twin craters of Batoer, where there are two unpleasantly active eruption cones. On their right, and lying beneath them, were the still, blue waters of the lake. I stood on the very lip of the old crater wall, with a deep precipice descending steeply for a thousand feet or more, and felt silenced by the glory of the view unfolded before me.

To the extreme left there was just a distant glimpse of the small village of Batoer, nestling beneath the giant craters which ever-



lastingly shoot forth clouds of white or brownish-yellow vapours. I would rather live elsewhere than in the village of Batoer, for it looks anything but a safe spot in which to abide.

Further to the right of this beautiful lake, coloured like that of Lake Como, stand up the majestic slopes of Gunong Abang and Agoeng (the latter known as the Peak of Bali and 10,500 feet in altitude). The slopes of Abang descend steeply to the very edge of the lake, its thickly wooded sides contrasting wonderfully with the azure hue of the water. Just for a brief moment the sun obligingly peeped out from the rain-clouds and lit up the whole gorgeous landscape with a strong but tender light, emphasizing the effective combination of Nature's exquisite colouring. That view left a lasting impression upon my mind.

The slopes of Gunong Batoer were scored with dark brown streaks of lava, especially so on the side of the more active of the twin eruption cones. This was the path taken by the lava stream at the last big eruption in 1905. The wall of molten lava halted against the *Pura* in Batoer village, and to-day the Balinese pay particular reverence to this temple. All this I saw before a thick curtain of Scotch mist and drizzling rain shut off its perfections from my eyes. I turned away with a sigh of regret, got back into the car and continued my journey to Kintamani. The road and landscape was enshrouded in a dense white mist. Visibility was practically nil. It called for very careful driving to escape leaving the road and going over the terrific precipice to death.

Presently the mist lifted, much to my relief. The road from then onwards to the *pasanggrahan* followed the line of the outer lip of the old crater; but I could see nothing of the well deep below me, for high cuttings shut off every atom of view. Once we were through them and out on to the plateau, it was different. Then again, unexpectedly and without warning, the road, the valley below it, and the surrounding country were blotted out in a thick blanket of mist. I might have been travelling down the English Channel in a dense fog in November. The whole area of the old crater was a sea of thick white mist, out of which the nearest trees emerged vaguely and eerily. Again the utmost care in driving was a necessity.

Kintamani has a first-class *pasanggrahan* and enjoys a splendidly bracing climate; but is small and only had a few bedrooms. Here a couple or more blankets are essential at night, for the altitude is approximately 6000 feet. A party of two men and a lady were already in occupation, but made no effort to be friendly. They were the only tourists I encountered in Bali on my journeys, possibly because it was the monsoon and, therefore, rainy season of the year.

Next morning I was up early and witnessed a most amazingly fine sunrise over Batoer. I enjoyed a splendid view of the mountains,

the lake, the plains around Den Pasar, the distant Indian Ocean, and the small islands immediately south of Bali—Lembongan and Nusa Penida, the latter a former convict settlement. Tafelhoek Peninsula stood out in bold relief, too, immediately to the south of Den Pasar. It was an imposing and heartening outlook.

Shortly after sunrise I set out on foot to explore the village of Batoer. A path led down the face of the thousand-foot precipice from Penalokan village, making tortuous bends until the bottom of the old crater was reached. That descent can be done on pony-back, also ; but I infinitely preferred to entrust myself to Shanks' mare. As I stumbled and slid downwards during that hour's descent, I was glad of my wise choice. Coming up that high wall by the same path was even more fatiguing. Yet it was worth all all the exertion.

The small village of Batoer offers but a dreary prospect, for no vegetation can be seen and the only growing things were a small patch of pine-apples. Its chief point of interest is the temple, with the lava stream piled high against the wall. It is utterly astounding how this temple came to be spared when all else was swept away or engulfed by the flood of molten lava. Across the lake I could see the village of Troenjan, with its small temple. A little above this temple, the lava flow has been terraced and a small temple erected upon it. Batoer is so very unattractive and unproductive that you wonder why the Balinese still continue to live in such a highly dangerous neighbourhood. Their faces depict no sign of fear at the constant threat of another severe eruption. How very Oriental, this obvious indifference to the terrible dangers which hourly lurk at their very doorsteps ! But all Eastern peoples are born fatalists.

## CHAPTER XXX

### NORTHERN BALI

THE road from Kintamani into Singaradja is a splendid bit of engineering. First it climbs upwards to the Koeta Dalem pass, from where you obtain some perfect views over the central mountain ranges of the island, also of the Soenda Sea and Indian Ocean.

The road surface, however, was not so good here as elsewhere ; but gangs were at work on various sections to improve it for motor traffic. I had to drive with care, for there were many sharp bends and a constant stream of natives afoot or on pony-back, also of hand-pushed or buffalo-hauled carts. An occasional car coming from the opposite direction helped to enliven matters, for native drivers never think of sounding any warning of their approach. As a result, the drive was never dull : often distinctly thrilling.

Now toiling up a steep gradient, then descending just as steeply, the scenery was always captivating. As we dipped swiftly down into the plains, we began to pass an ever-increasing number of villages. The temperature now became noticeably warmer. Coffee and jungle-land were the keynotes of this unsurpassable scenery.

At two places on that downward journey I saw cheerful gangs of brown-clad native convicts at work on the road, each party in charge of two Balinese warders. The latter appeared not to be the slightest bit interested in their charges. The convicts were working lazily and doing exactly as they wished, while the warders sat down near at hand, gossiped and smoked. Some of the convicts were also sitting down, talking and smoking. The life of a convict in Bali must offer its compensations, for none seemed the least inclined to avail themselves of this laxity and bolt off into the jungle. They could have escaped easily, probably without the warders being aware of their absence until roll-call. At the second gang, I saw two convicts carrying on an animated argument with the warders ; while the rest of the prisoners squatted down around them and listened with amused grins.

The roadway hereabouts was all fenced in to keep the cattle from straying on to the land. At Klampoeak village, we reached the plains and the whole landscape changed. Once more we were among acres of rice-fields and *sawahs*, combined with coco-nut and lontar palms.

From the edge of the plains the Islamic influence began to assert itself ; and the gradual change in the characteristics was interesting to observe.

At Koeboetambahan, where there was a good sample of Balinese temple architecture, I made a brief side-trip to Tedjakoela on the northern coast. The road followed the seashore eastwards and the scenery was very varied. At this village there is a bathing enclosure, which is divided into three separate walled compartments—one for the women exclusively, another for the men, and the third for washing ponies or cattle. Water flows into these three compartments from springs in the hillside, being conducted through the wall by pipes. It was the third enclosure which amused me. I had never encountered such a great consideration for the comfort of dumb animals. This bathing place, unique of its kind, was the only thing of interest ; but I was glad to have seen it and taken a photograph.

We rejoined the main road by the same route along the northern coast. There was no other available. From Koeboetambahan we continued north-west along the coast. It was the best bit of road over which I had travelled on the island—well-kept, broad and shaded by splendid avenues of trees.

The temple at Singaradja was not all it was cracked up to be ; and the town itself rather disappointed me. But I tracked down my Balinese beauty, the bait to Bali, which was sufficient consolation for my disappointment with the capital town.

At Boeileleng I had to say good-bye, with the utmost reluctance, to this island of enchantment. I arrived there in good time to join the K.P.M. *Swartenhondt* (4,700 tons), which was that day's "Pig Express" to Soerabaya. Before leaving Singaradja I sold my Buick car to a Dutchman, who offered me a price slightly in excess of that which I had paid for it new in Singapore at the beginning of my travels. I was in luck. The car was surrendered to him at Boeileleng. I was sorry to part with it, for the car had served me excellently throughout the six months' travelling ; but it was no further use to me.

The *Swartenhondt* was at anchor in the roadstead, and completely surrounded by barges filled with Bali cattle, pigs and bales of fodder. Some of the queer crates of pigs had already been stowed away in the holds. It was interesting to watch the cattle being loaded from the barges on to the ship ; for instead of lifting them by mechanical aids, the beasts were walked up a steeply-inclined gangway on to the well-deck. While two natives pulled at their heads, three or four others whacked them vigorously on the rumps with sticks or else twisted their tails viciously. Some of the wretched beasts required considerable coaxing to walk the planks ; but others offered no objections and strolled casually on board, as if interested to see what was inside of their floating cow-shed. On arrival on board,

they were led along to the lower decks and tethered in closely packed rows, facing the bulwarks of crated and loudly squealing pigs.

I went below to inspect the latter. Each pig was stuffed into his own little torpedo-shaped crate of rattan, the latter of approximately the same size and shape as the pig. These crates were stacked into high barricades, tier upon tier, and with just a narrow gangway between each gigantic row. The chorus of grunts and squeals was like that of a thousand souls in purgatory.

The sight made me feel positively sick. I felt it would be impossible to fix my teeth into pork while in Malaysia; nor did I ever wittingly do so after that nauseating experience. Poor brutes! I do not know whether they are fed or watered during the eighteen hours or more of sea voyage, and am inclined to doubt it. I am glad that it was not my fate to be born a Bali pig. It all struck me as offensively cruel and inhuman to transport these dumb animals in such a manner. However, these Bali pigs were anything but non-vocal.

Returning to the fresh air on the upper deck, I found Fatima surrounded by a court. She is one of the most famous persons in Bali and an entertaining woman. Fatima—that is not her real name—is the widow of a former Prince of Bali; and, when her husband died, she was a real beauty and only seventeen years of age. To-day she is getting on in years and has lost much of her youthful good looks, but her wit and humour is only excelled by her thirst for *gin-pahits*.

Her history is not uninteresting. At the time of her princely husband's death the horrible Hindu custom of *suttee* for widows had not yet been abolished by the Dutch Government. It was decreed that she should be burned alive on her husband's funeral pyre. Fatima, naturally, had other ideas on this subject. She rebelled, having no wish to die such a terrible death for a man whom she had never loved yet had been forced to marry as a mere child. Secretly making her plans, she escaped one night from the palace and sought the protection of the Dutch Resident. He granted the appeal and shipped her to Java. Thus Fatima escaped her awful fate as a widow, was the first real suffragette of Bali.

It was chiefly through her rebellion against the ancient system of *suttee* on the island that the Dutch completely abolished this diabolical Hindu custom. The Balinese belles owe her a very real debt of gratitude. After some years of exile in Java, the little Princess was advised it was safe for her to return to the island of her birth. She came back not as a member of the royal house, but as a commoner under the assumed name of Fatima. Her past rebellion against *suttee* has now been forgiven by her co-religionists, and they allow her to live at peace in Singaradja.

Fatima is doing a thriving business in the sale of Balinese arts

and crafts ; also sells, to approved customers only, some exceedingly obscene Hindu pictures in colour. Every steamer is visited by her, and every Dutch ship's officer knows and makes her welcome on board. She is a favourite with all, despite her keen sense of business and shrewdness in bargaining.

The Captain of the *Swartenhondt* introduced me to Fatima with the words : " Not to know Fatima, is not to know Bali ! " Although she spoke and understood only a few words of English, we managed to strike up an *entente cordiale* with the aid of the Malay I had learned during my journeyings. A few exceptionally beautiful samples of Balinese arts and crafts passed from her keeping into mine ; and many of my remaining guilders went from my pocket into her capacious purse. No doubt I paid highly for my curios, but meeting Fatima was worth being stung over prices.

We sealed our business relations in the manner customary throughout the East. More in fun than in earnest, I invited her to have a gin-*pahit* (gin and bitters) ; and, to my surprise, she accepted with alacrity. She joined the Captain of the steamer, two Dutch fellow-passengers, the Chief Officer, Chief Engineer, and myself at a table in the smoking-room. Each in turn stood her a gin-*pahit*, and she lapped up the potent drinks with evident relish. When it came round to my turn again, I diffidently suggested a seventh. She was game, too ; and still more surprising showed no effects. How many more she would have swallowed I am unable to say, for the steamer left before others could be ordered for her.

The Dutch Captain told me later that Fatima was never known to refuse the cup that cheers yet sometimes inebriates, and had an exceptionally strong head for alcohol. I can vouch for it that her head was stronger than mine, for she walked down the gangway as lightly and easily as a bird, waved a hand in farewell from her row-boat, and went ashore as if she had imbibed plain water ; whereas I had an intense desire to sleep instead of having luncheon.

Of course, I did not understand her sallies, but they must have been very amusing if one could judge by the hearty laughs of the Dutchmen (who did understand). I rather suspect that Fatima's stories are not quite drawing-room ones. Certainly she is a character !

We sailed at one o'clock that day for Soerabaya, where I would connect with the K.P.M. express-steamer *Plancius* for Singapore ; and there catch the first mail-boat homeward-bound.

As I stood upon the deck and watched the island fade from my view, my heart was sad within me. The sun wreathed the Peak of Bali and other mountain summits in golden lights ; but over the lowlands the sky was overcast, and the afternoon rain-clouds were swiftly gathering.

There can be no gainsaying that Bali is an artistic wonderland. I commend it with the utmost confidence to the most jaded and

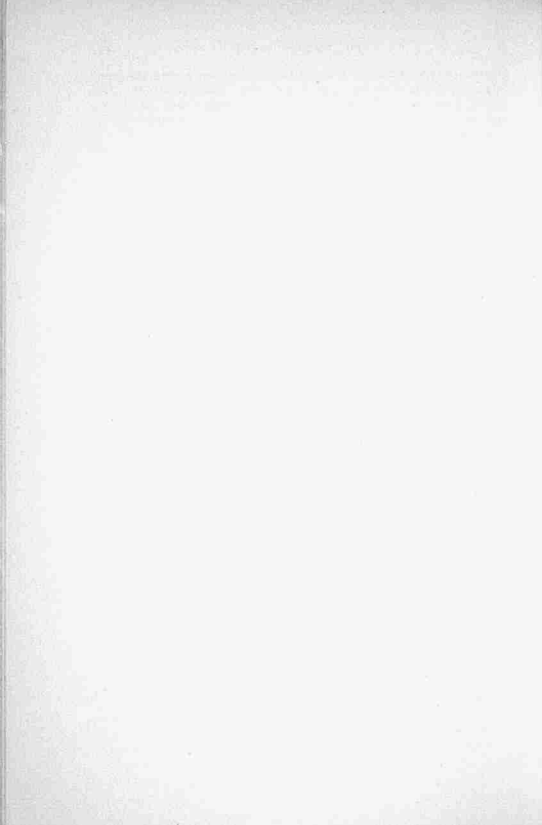
travel-satiated spirits, for it cannot fail to fascinate even the most blasé. It holds a strong appeal for every kind of nature. For myself, I can truthfully say that Bali is by far the most interesting spot ever visited in my travels; rivalled only, perhaps, by the South Sea Islands.

I am real glad that it was left to the very last of my six months' peregrinations through the major portions of Malaysia. If only the Fates are kind, I should like to return there before it is utterly spoiled by massed attack from tourists. It holds for me many joyous and splendid memories.

That last glimpse of Bali gave a noble and impressive view of ocean, island, and imposing peaks; while the surroundings lay drowsing in the dreamland of repose and serenity which are its abiding charms. It was bathed in exquisite colours, from azure sea to dark peaks. Here, indeed, is the enchanting East—a veritable fairyland of "dreams and romance," just as had been stated in the little brochure which lured me there.

With that last vision of Bali in my memory, it would be desecration to speak of the drab voyage that followed to Singapore. I like to think my wanderings concluded just there—for no finer curtain could have been provided.

THE END





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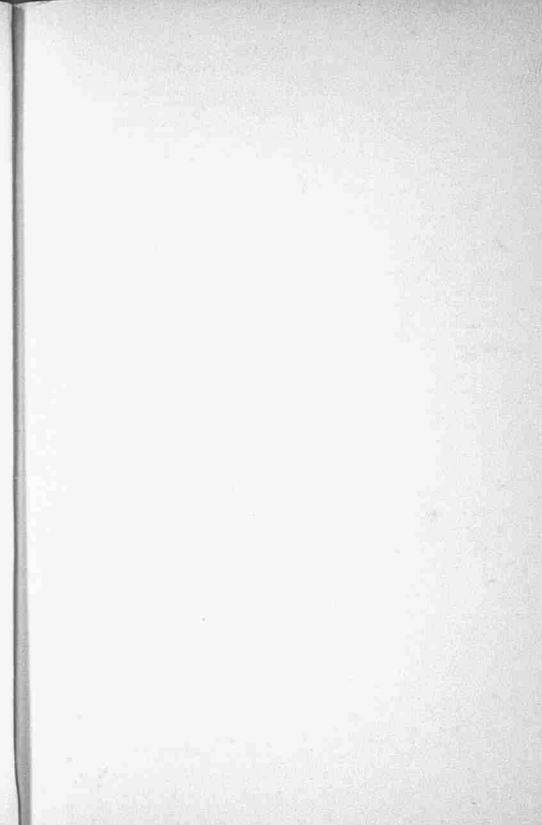
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