



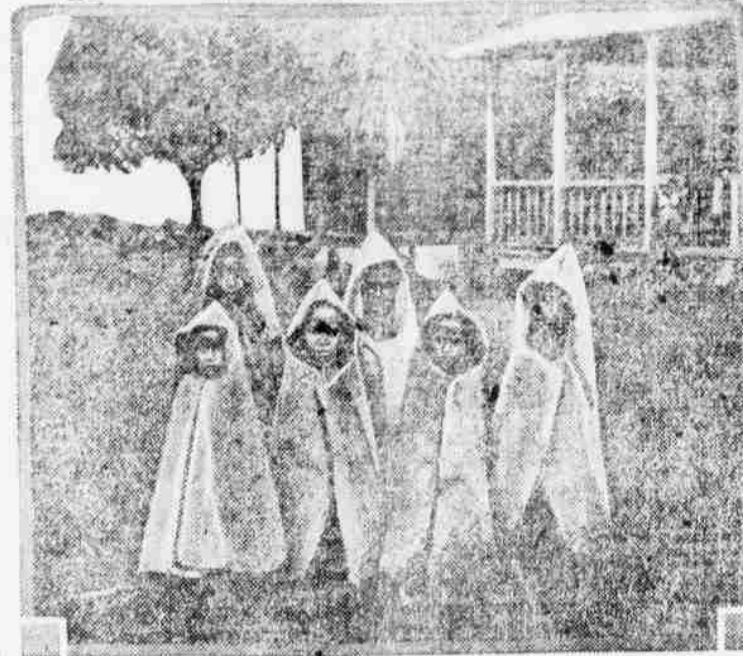
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WONDERLAND OF PAPUA



Mountain Children in Raincoats of Leaves.

AUSTRALIA being considered a continent, then Papua (British New Guinea) is the largest island in the world. This territory is made up of the mainland of Papua itself and many small island groups. Papua lies to the north of Australia, and includes the much-talked-of territory formerly called German New Guinea. It is a land of wonderful scenery, of strange peoples, of the grandest commercial possibilities. It is the richest asset of the commonwealth of Australia, writes Thomas J. McMahon in the Illustrated London News.

Through the center of the island runs a great mountain chain, termed the central mountains, many of the summits running from 6,000 to 10,000 feet in height. These mountains are covered all the year round to the utmost peaks with the most vivid verdure. Under the bright blue skies of the tropics and the flashing sun, they are at all times grandly imposing, standing out, as they do, like masses of burnished gold. Away in the summits, seldom traversed by the white man, are most uncommon scenic beauties. The effects of sunlight and mists to be seen in looking over the great valleys are wonderful in the extreme. Such mist effects are not to be found in any other part of the world. Some day tourists will flock to Papua, and to the wonderland of its mountains. The mists are remarkable, coming and going, folding and spreading, rising and falling, changing from a snow-white to gray, and sometimes in the flashing of sunbeams to brighter colors. At times with magic suddenness the mists vanish, leaving the mountain tops above and valleys below standing out sharp and clear, and revealing the great red rocks in the hillsides, from the amazing landscapes that are ever going on, accompanied by noise like the booming of great artillery.

Mountain Villages and Valleys.

Round about and all along the mountainsides are hundreds of small native villages—brown spots for all the world like the nests of some great bird. These villages are perched on the ends of spurs, and even on the very peaks of precipices, and are approached only by hidden tracks, such is the caution of the natives to guard against the sudden appearance of any tribal enemy. The valleys are superb as seen from the mountain spurs and looking over the dense, dark jungles, through which are streaked flashing bands of silver, the courses of the mighty rivers so numerous in Papua. Beginning in some mountain torrent—some waterfall, perhaps—these wide, swift-flowing rivers rush to the sea through jungles that are thickly planted with an amazing variety of commercial timbers, and from which some day soon thousands of sawmills will be sending to the countries of the empire immense quantities of timber and the pulp for paper.

The mountainsides are with of moss and fern. Giant trees of immense girth shoot up, the branches thickly festooned with bright flowering creepers, the great trunks gripped by monster vines with powerful clinging stems, and leaves whose length and breadth are measured in feet. High in the branches sounds the strange, unimpaired view of the gorgeous bird of Paradise; for this bird of the most brilliant plumage—more brilliant than any other bird in the world—is, after all, but of the same, low family of the common crow. Papua is the only country in the world that knows it is the home of the bird of Paradise. There is a wide variety, and the law protects the bird with such severity that a very heavy punishment is inflicted for shooting it, or even for stealing its feathers. No sale of the feathers is either permitted or tolerated, and customs officers search hunters' baggage very diligently for any hidden piece of plumage. The wing or tail of a bird will be worth hundreds of pounds—some say more, when they are sold in London because so valuable.

Some Wonderful Insects.

In this wonderful land of Papua is found the world's greatest, the most beautiful. These beautiful, most-valuable insects, known as the "Six o'Clock" beetle, are found from Wingham to Wingham, and they have bodies the size of a small bird. Specimens of these beetles are to be seen in the collection of the

late Baron Rothschild, who sent out to Papua a scientist to collect rare insects and birds. Another marvelous insect, of the cricket class, is what is popularly called the "Six o'Clock" beetle. This little creature exists abundantly, and is really wonderful in its habits. It gets its name from the fact that every night at precisely six o'clock it gives forth a resonant, far-reaching chirp, exactly like a loud electric bell. At six o'clock one will begin, and in a few minutes the mountains will resound with the deafening noise of these punctual timekeepers. But long after the insects have ceased to chirp, the amazing echoes of the hills will throw back the sounds, lasting for several minutes. Travellers in doubt as to the correct time set their watches to this insect's evening chirp.

A companionable little mite also known only to the mountains of Papua is the "Bell-frog," which produces the notes of a bell, sweet, soft, and clear, and all day long can be heard the musical and friendly tinkle. A tiny gray frog from under a stone is responsible, and gives out its cheerful sound as a warning that its home is not to be disturbed by a careless foot.

In the mountains of Papua roam a pigmy-sized people, the pure Papuans. They are a race quite distinct from the coastal peoples, and with customs that are very primitive and strange. Though small, they are perfect in stature, and the young people are quite good-looking. They are now fast coming within the pale of civilization, owing to the splendid work of the traveling magistrates of the Papuan administration—a very fine body of civil servants. A few years back, before these magistrates got in touch with these people they were constantly at war, one tribe fighting another, sometimes destroying or wiping out whole villages, or, more often, killing the men and carrying off the women. Men and women dress very modestly—in fact, their main covering is necklaces of dogs' teeth or shells, with a long white bone pined stick through the lower portion of the nose, and called "nose-sticks." The men paint their bodies with red and yellow pigments, and carry big bows and arrows, much larger than themselves. The women, always very slender to the men, are slim and lithe, and do not decorate themselves much. In time of widowhood or family mourning they blacken their faces and hair, already very black, with charcoal, giving them a most grotesque appearance. While the natives of the coast lands of Papua demand tobacco as a present, the hill peoples delight in common coarse salt, and, given a handful, they will treasure it up to make it last as long as possible.

Huts Built Up on Poles.

The native villages have the huts built up on poles, and while the family live on the upper story, pigs wallow in awful filth below, and, in consequence, it is possible to smell a village miles away. These people are very fond of dogs and pigs as pets. Pigs are natural to the island, but dogs are not, and this is how the natives came to get them. Many years ago, when Papua (then called New Guinea) was only occasionally visited by some plucky British traders, a dog belonging to one of them proved an immense attraction to the natives; and the trader, seeing a good opportunity to make money—or rather, a cheap way to get large supplies of copra (dried coconut for oil), of which the natives had plenty to barter away—went to Australia and in one of the Queensland towns bought up all the mongrel dogs that could be had. He got quite a ship full, and returned to Papua, doing a roaring trade, every dog selling for at least over twenty pounds—of that value in copra. In turn, the coastal natives bartered their dogs to the mountain natives, but the breeds from mongrels have deteriorated until the wretched things now seen are hairless, ugly creatures, spotted white often, but much prized after death for their teeth, which make the principal article of jewelry.

Papua will presently have large tin resources, for it is a land of inexhaustible resources, and its soil is of rich fertility. Many tropical trees produce rubber wonderfully, and British enterprise has shown that, with wise and progressive administration, this island should be one of the brightest jewels of the British empire.

STILL USE ST. BERNARDS

Tunnels, However, Have Greatly Decreased His Importance in the Alps.

Although the tunnels which now connect Switzerland with Italy have greatly decreased the importance of the St. Bernard and other passes, especially during the eight months of snow, it is still deemed advisable to employ St. Bernard dogs. It is no longer customary, however, to send out the dogs alone with baskets of food and drink; a man always accompanies them. These dogs are not really of the famous old St. Bernard breed. That originated in the fourteenth century, through a cross between a shepherd dog from Wales and a Scandinavian dog whose parents were a Great Dane and a Pyrenean mastiff. The last pure descendant of this tribe was buried under an avalanche in 1816. Fortunately, there were found subsequently at Montigny and on the St. Julien pass a few dogs which, by crossing with ones from Wales, yielded the modern St. Bernard dog, which is physically even stronger than his medieval namesake, and shares most of his traits.



Spearman Lewis of the Chicago Tribune's foreign staff, was the man who obtained the secret copy of the peace treaty which was brought to this country and delivered to the senate.

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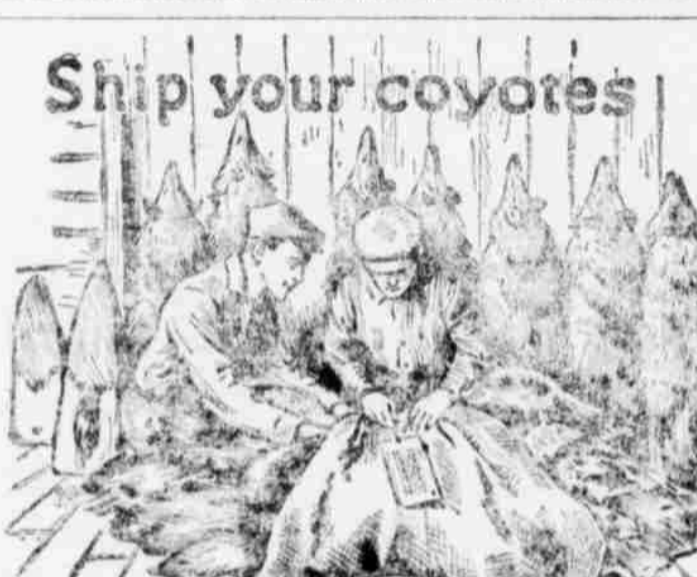
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