

at Sumatra Like



Sumatran Women of the Rural Districts.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

SUMATRA, largest of the Dutch East Indies, and until fairly recently in the hands of savages, is rapidly undergoing development by its methodical rulers. It is an immense island, nearly four times the size of Java and thirteen times larger than Holland itself, but its waded population amounts to less than 3,500,000, most of which, for various reasons, is not available for labor. Because of this the island has been slow in attracting attention, although more favorably situated than Java and richer in natural resources.

Java has already been developed. Sumatra is an island of great future. In the development of that future practically all the labor has to be imported on short-term contracts. Chiefly it is Chinese, which is expensive; Kling, which is viewed with disfavor by the British Indian government; or Javanese, which is unwilling to come and does not thrive in the climate.

The best idea of current life in Sumatra is to be had by leaving the towns behind and striking into the interior. From the capital, Medan, the road to the south at first leads through some miles of country dense and green with vegetation, with tiny thatched native huts making picturesque brown spots in the midst of fruit trees and coco palms. As one approaches nearer to the hills, this gives way to open plains covered with high grass and low bushes, the characteristic tobacco land of Deli.

The larger estates, especially those of the Deli company, are divided into sections under the administration of assistant managers. Each year only one-tenth to a fifth of their enormous area is under cultivation, since to maintain the high quality of the tobacco grown the land is left fallow for from five to ten years after each crop. During the first year the natives are permitted to grow rice upon the fallow fields; then the soil is left to itself and to the bushes and rank grass which soon cover it. The tobacco crop is a rich one, but the demands it makes upon the land and upon labor are such that it is not surprising to find the newer estates annually devoting more and more of their attention and territories to rubber and other less exacting products.

Up Through the Plantations.
Gradually ascending in altitude, the road passes through many miles of these monotonous, fallow-lying plains, their desolate appearance only increased by an occasional row of unused drying sheds and a few fire-blackened trunks of huge totoling trees, solitary survivors of the primeval forest.

The sections actually in cultivation, however, are extremely interesting, with many acres of magnificent tobacco plants growing to a height of five or six feet in closely planted parallel ridges. Frequently they hedge the road on both sides and extend in unbroken rows as far as the eye can follow over the rolling fields.

The work of the plantation is manifold and the various nationalities employed are usually engaged in their own distinctive branches of labor. Thus, although sometimes replaced by other races, Chinese predominate in the actual work on the tobacco plants; the bullock-cart drivers are Klings; the carpenters are Boyans; the Javanese are woodmen, road builders, and gardeners; and the Bataks and Sumatran Malays, who are not obtainable in large numbers nor reliable for sustained labor, clear the land preparatory to planting, and build roads and sheds.

Imported; nevertheless, the chief highways of the coastal plains and the pass over the mountains are all macadamized. In the highlands, where metaling has not yet been attempted, such roads as exist are of a very different type. These are of dirt or clay, well built and maintained, and good in dry weather. But Sumatra has an enormous annual rainfall, and during the wet season these clay roads become almost impassable.

Mountains and Great Forests.
The road from Medan to the interior, however, gives no warning of what is to follow. Leaving the plains and the tobacco plantations, it gradually ascends through wilder country, and presently, with well engineered zigzags, begins to climb into the mountains.

As the road climbs higher the semi-tropical vegetation which has succeeded the coarse grass of the denuded plains gives way in turn to magnificent virgin forests, unbroken except for the narrow, winding path of the road. The enormous straight-trunked trees, ensnared by giant creepers, vines, and huge air plants, make so thick a canopy overhead that only a dim twilight filters in, and that falls to reach the ground through the dense, impenetrable tangle of vegetation.

Little brooks of clear water rush steeply down the mountainside, hurrying to the sluggish yellow rivers of the plains their tiny contributions for the extensions of Sumatra's coast. Butterflies flit in the blue-black shadows; jungle fowl, their brilliance all subdued in the obscure half light, vanish silently from the edges of the road as one approaches, and other little creeping and fugitive things seek the security of the unbetraying jungle.

Insects with voices out of all proportion to their probable size scream shrilly from the branches, and the occasional whistle of a bird or the dull boom of a falling tree echo through the silent, dark recesses of the wood.

Much of the life of the jungle is to be seen along this little frequented road which opens up the very heart of the virgin forest; but infinitely more is the observer observed. Sometimes the crack of a broken branch betrays the hurried withdrawal of a larger animal, or a whirl of wings that of some startled bird; but only one's own sixth sense tells of the hidden watchers who silently follow an intruding man's progress with wondering, unfriendly eyes.

Hordes of Monkeys.
The swaying of branches overhead as one zigzags up the pass does not mean wind in the quiet forest; it means monkeys, and their antics are an unending amusement. Some wait in silence until the traveler draws near, then plunge back into the forest with a crash of branches which inevitably produces the shock they seem to have designed. Some tear furiously along through the trees in a desperate attempt to cross in front of the car.

When they do cross, far overhead, in a stream of small gray bodies flying through the air between the treetops, they as furiously race along on the other side and cross back again. Others cling to swaying branches and bound up and down in a frenzy of excitement, shrieking gibes in sharp crecendos.

Often in the midst of their agitation they suddenly lose all interest and forthwith pay no more attention to the intruders; or sit in silence with weakened, whiskered faces peering solemnly down from the trees.

As in Ceylon, it would be disastrous to leave the motor unguarded anywhere in a Sumatran forest, for everything that prying fingers could unscree or remove would soon be reposing in the treetops.

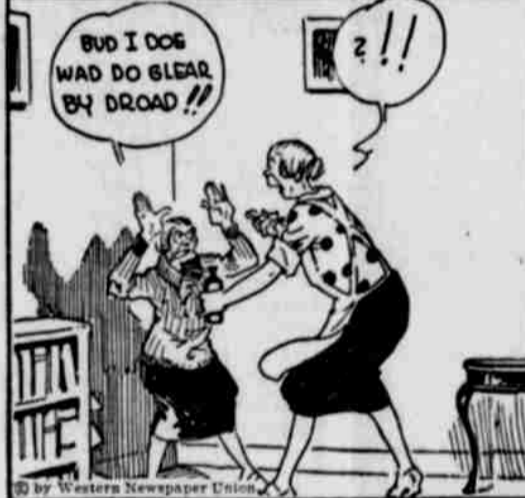
There are many tribes of the monkey people: little black fellows with very long tails; troops of impudent brown ones; shy black-and-white monkeys with fine silky coats; and hordes of big gray beasts who chase and tweak each other, evoking shrieks of protest. Afloat from the hands that feed and gambol together, are a few enormous black bulks which from the distance might be curious vegetable formations in the trees. But they move, and when examined through glasses, are seen to be orangoutangs found here and in Borneo.

OUR COMIC SECTION

Along the Concrete



FINNEY OF THE FORCE



Snoop's Proud of That Voice



THE FEATHERHEADS



Little Nature Studies



Bulls Used in the Arena

Bulls used in bull fights in Spain are of well-known lineage and reared in special establishments. The best bulls are worth from \$200 to \$300. About 1,300 are killed annually. In many of the bull fights as many as a dozen at a time may be employed. It is also estimated that 6,000 horses are used annually in Spain for this amusement.

Sense of Humor Defined

"As I understand the phrase," said Adam, "sense of humor is the ability not to show that you think a thing is funny. It is to the inner man what laughter is to the outside. If, instead of laughing at you, I reflect on your condition and enjoy myself in silence, then I have a sense of humor."—From "Adam and Eve," by John Erskine.

Who Knows

We often speak impatiently of the interruptions that hinder our work, but in our shortsightedness we may be sadly mistaking values. It well may be that the few minutes we give to helping or cheering another is the most important work of our whole day.

Their Tastes Differed

A curious fact in connection with Chang and Eng, the famous Siamese conjoined twins, was that one was very fond of wine and drank it freely while the other was a teetotaler, and this often gave rise to strife.

Osteopathy

The principles of osteopathy were first discovered and formulated in 1874 by Dr. Andrew T. Still, a physician of Baldwin, Kan. The first college of osteopathy was opened at Kirksville, Mo., in 1892.

Uncle Eben

"A hard-hearted man," said Uncle Eben, "loser friends so fast dat purty soon he can't find nobody to get into conversation 'bout how hard-hearted he is."—Washington Star.

Supervision Needed

If the master takes no account of his servants, they will make small account of him, and care not what they spend, who are never brought to an audit.—Fuller.

Lake of Asphalt

On the island of Trinidad is a famous lake known as "Pitch lake," from which asphalt is exported annually. The lake is about 100 acres in extent.

Progress

The world needs to pause once in a while. Once in a while a pause is progress. And occasionally rushing headlong is not progress.—Acheson Globe.

Forests Cause Cold

Belts of trees make a country warmer, but forests, because they detain and condense passing clouds, make a locality colder.

And Then Where Are You?

A word to the wise may be sufficient, but the wise frequently ask for further enlightenment.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Real Friendship

"A friend in need," said Uncle Eben, "is de one dat lends assistance instid o' givin' big advice."—Washington Star.

Ancient Legislation

The acts of the English parliament go back to A. D. 1235, of the Scottish parliament to 1430, and of the Irish to 1310.

Diamond to Cut Diamond

Diamonds can be cut only with other diamonds. Therefore they are cut with diamond drills.

Highest Explosive

The bureau of mines says that the most powerful explosive known is benzoyl peroxide.

Think It Over

It is by the benefit of letters that absent friends are in a manner brought together.

Scrapple's Other Name

"Ponhaus" in Pennsylvania Dutch dialect is synonymous with scrapple.

Cotton Picking

An expert cotton picker can gather 500 to 600 pounds per day.



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