

AN
AMERICAN MERCHANT
IN
EUROPE, ASIA, AND AUSTRALIA:

A SERIES OF LETTERS

FROM

JAVA, SINGAPORE, CHINA, BENGAL, EGYPT, THE HOLY LAND, THE
CRIMEA AND ITS BATTLE GROUNDS, ENGLAND,
MELBOURNE, SYDNEY, ETC., ETC.

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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space allotted, from which it is transplanted to the irrigated patches, of about an acre each, prepared to receive it. Many of the plantations were of immense size, and further along inland cover square miles in space. Vast numbers of natives were traveling on the road, staggering under their heavy loads; and carts drawn by ponies without a bridle, and buffaloes with a bamboo yoke, were bringing in the produce—while the distance was ornamented by native villages—towering mountains seen at a distance of a hundred miles, covered with the teak wood forest—long plains, the water passing from field to field with the utmost regularity—and rivers and cocoa nut groves, deep ravines and irregular fields. At the several stoppages I amused myself by throwing a little copper coin out of the carriage to see the children scramble for it. At one place there were about thirty, between the ages of two and ten years, of both sexes, most of whom were entirely naked. These natives marry at twelve. At Buitenzorg, I was so fortunate as to have the opportunity of witnessing the ceremony of a Javanese marriage. Attracted by a most singular concord of sounds, I pushed my way through the groves of trees to the house or shed, where were collected a large number of natives—the grown people on one side, and about one hundred children, in a state of nature, on the other. The musicians were seated round an old box, and kept time by striking different metals and skins—while a child of six years, dressed as an old woman, with long hair and a horrid mask, was walking with a tragical air, and gesticulating in a most grave manner, up and down the platform, to the great delight of the children, whose black eyes and bronze figures, as they lay grouped along the shed, was a picture for an artist.

At six o'clock this morning, the Aid-de-camp, F. Bering Leisberg, Esq., attendant on the Governor-General, was at the

Hotel by appointment, with a beautiful pony, and accompanied me about twenty miles over groves and through rice plantations—all of which were divided by a green horse path, into native villages, and by rivulets which feed the rice canals. No pen can express, no tongue can utter, no pencil can paint the sublimity of nature in the interior of Java. All I see or hear, about and around me, enchants my senses. It is the land of poetry and of song; and when you gaze upon the burial place of a native prince, or a Hindoo Chief; when you contemplate the massive ruins of past ages; when you walk over and around the immense native temples—built God knows when—admiring their architecture and revering their venerable age; when you pass through monster estates of rice, of sugar and of coffee—all cultivated with the simple implements of the natives—and see no modern tools of culture; when you smell the odour of the spices, and admire the beauty of the nutmeg and the pepper; the singing of Java birds, and chirping of insects and lizards, as you ride through forests, curiously absorbed in the wonderful beauties of the earth; the cocoa groves, the cotton and the bread fruit tree; the banyan, with its numberless branches, all taking root again to strengthen the old trunk—an affectionate emblem of parent and child supporting each other through earthquakes, storms and tempests; the mangostine groves; the rattan winding itself about the teak-wood forest; the bamboo shooting up through all the rest; the cultivation of European fruits and native vegetables; the simplicity of the native girls as they bathe so innocently before you as you stand upon the river's bank, noting them plunging, singing, laughing and swimming about—now below the water and now above; the frightful look of some of the older men and women, whose shocking custom of chewing the beetle nut, mixed with pepper plant and

tobacco, gives their lips an unnatural red, and blackens their teeth 'till they resemble charcoal; the monkey resembling appearance of the babes and children, and the monkeys themselves in the Governor's park; the immense herd of native deer; the wild hog; the tiger and the rhinoceros; the cassowary, a huge black bird, not unlike, except in color, the emu of Australia—when you have seen all these wonders of this wonderful country, in a three hour's ride, you will come to the conclusion that personal observation will teach a man more in one day than he can learn from books in an age.

The dreams of my youth are all revived again, and the pictures of my school books give me the form, but not the life of nature. When the foregoing changes have been rung before ten o'clock in the morning, and you have drank deeply of such grand and picturesque scenery as the view presents far and near about the Government House, you cannot but imagine and feel that you are in a fairy land, and all that is required to complete the illusion, and make a Garden of Eden of the grounds is to see but one Adam and Eve, instead of such a swarm of semi-clad beings.

Mr. Leisberg invited us to the Palace, and after refreshments we passed again through the Park to the botanical garden, where his Excellency has collected a large and beautiful quantity of European plants and flowers. The situation of the Government House is on high land, and commands a view of the entire range of mountain scenery for a hundred miles. The tops of one or two of the old volcanoes could be seen far above the clouds—a most imposing sight.

Five years is the time allotted to the Governor-General, and shortly he will return. He is a man, I should say, of fifty years. I am told that he is a very talented man, of a religious turn;

CHAPTER XXII.

CALCUTTA, March 8, 1856.

Botany and Natural History at and from Barrackpore—A Visit to the Gardens—Hindoo Temples, Piety and Worshippers—Burning of the Dead—European Tradesmen in Calcutta—Native Gambling—The Ochterlong Monument—A Look at the City from the Top, &c.

My trip to Barrackpore—some twelve miles by the river—I was much pleased with, for our party was a jovial one, composed of Americans and Englishmen, and the day was cool for the season. A native boat and a native crew, a fair tide and a flowing sheet, took us to our landing place in two hours time, and, with umbrellas over our heads, we passed the day in walking through the extensive grounds of the Governor's country park and residence, and could but admire the art that made the grounds so much resemble nature. The forest trees are dotted over the green lawn, which rises and falls, through plains and hills, with irregular tastefulness. You can hardly believe that all has been done by man. Many of the trees were of great size, and the bamboo clusters covered large spaces of land. The menagerie was the magnet that brought us here, and that, of course claimed the most of our attention. Van Amburgh's collection paled before the Governor General's, notwithstanding that many of the cages are empty. Most of the animals here I have seen in the Jardin des Plants, at Paris, and the Zoological Gardens in

London; but the chief attraction was to see the native animals on their own ground. Tigers, bears, leopards, jackals, &c., and other Indian animals, were growling under the excessive heat of their cages, while the monkeys kept up the most incessant chattering, and the parrots and beautiful Indian birds were striving to make their voices heard amid the noise. There were two rhinoceroses, of most ungainly dimensions, and their ugliness was only exceeded by their ferocity. I don't know which animal is the most ungainly, when you start them on the run—the rhinoceros or the giraffe—either are as awkward as can be imagined. There were some twenty elephants, for war and other purposes, some of which were of gigantic size; they were not piling timber by the river in town as they often do, I am sorry to say, for I should like to see such huge monsters show their sagacity. Just opposite to the park is the Danish settlement, which recently has changed hands. On a grass plot, under a palm tree, we found our picnic spread; and as our appetites were sharpened by the exercise and a long fast, we did justice to the repast, while huge carrion birds were sweeping over our heads and near our food with unpleasant familiarity. The wind was against us, returning, and it was dark before we got to Calcutta, but I was in time for the dinner party.

Yesterday I visited the Botanical Gardens, where for many years large sums of money have been expended to make it worthy of the Bengal public. Here I saw the great banyan tree, which I at once recognized, for I had seen it in my primitive school book, in miniature when I went to a woman's school. It would be worth a half a million in Wall-street, and Barnum is just the man to import it and make another fortune. It is an imposing spectacle, with its one hundred and ten trunks, covering more than an acre of ground, and is one of the great ob-