

Life in Java. By W. B. d'Almeida. Two Volumes.
Hurst and Blackett.

This very amusing book is filled with curious anecdotes of Batavian habits and society. There is great novelty and interest in the spirited details, and the lovers of sporting adventure will delight in the stirring stories of tigers and crocodiles, wild boar, and monkeys, not to mention snakes, birds, and gigantic bats, about which there are enough of amusing anecdotes to excite a whole family of young would-be adventurers in the holidays. *Life in Java*, though written for the elder public, is a boy's book too, and a first-rate one. It is a book, in fact, to be popular all round the reading circle of whatever family it enters. This is the Dutchman's mode of life in Java:

He rises generally at five a.m., lights his cigar, and then sallies forth to take his stroll, or, as the natives term it, *makan angin*, signifying literally, to eat the wind. About seven he returns to partake of a collation of eggs and cold meat, after which he drinks his tea or coffee, and smokes again. He then takes his bath, throwing buckets of water over his head, after the manner adopted by all who reside in Eastern climes. After the enjoyment of this necessary luxury, he puts on his day suit, always of light texture on account of the heat, and generally white, and entering his carriage, is driven to his kantor, or house of business. If he is a wealthy citizen, he probably returns home at twelve, at which hour the breakfast—as it is termed, though at mid-day—awaits him, consisting of all kinds of Eastern delicacies, rice, curry, and endless sambals, or small piquant side dishes. After this heavy meal, Morpheus waves his wand over Batavia, and all his votaries who can spare the time, retire to digest their food in a siesta of from two to three hours' duration.

Rising from this sleep, the first cry is *Spada*—a contraction for *Sapa ada*, "Who is there?"—which is immediately followed by *Api*—"light"—a demand promptly attended to by some boy, who, prepared for the summons, quickly appears with a cigar-box, containing five hundred or more Philipinos, or primeros, in one hand, and a lighted Chinese joss-stick in the other: while another boy brings a tray, on which is a cup of tea and some cakes. Another delicious cold bath generally succeeds the smoke, after which the luxurious

European retires to dress for the evening, reappearing with the usual mouth appendage, and a stick in hand—no hat, of course, for the Batavian fashion is for neither gentlemen nor ladies to wear anything on their heads, except when they go to church on Sundays. Thus attired, he wends his way quietly to the Koningen's Plain, or to that of Waterloo, to gaze on the *élite* and fashion walking or driving about, which the ladies do in full dress—*décolleté*—and wearing ornaments in their hair.

The carriages containing gentlemen are distinguished by the lighted joss-stick in the hand of one of the footmen, who stands behind his master, ever ready to present the aromatic torch. The quantity of cigars consumed in a day by one individual is really astonishing, and the rapidity with which each is smoked is remarkable. From personal experience, I should say Dutchmen in the East are much greater smokers even than Spaniards.

On reaching home after his promenade, our Dutchman partakes of orange bitters, diluted in *Kirsch-wasser*, Hollands, or brandy, as a stimulus to the appetite; and then, after the enjoyment of another weed, the *Mandoor*, head-servant, or butler, announces dinner. When the ladies retire from dessert, cigars are immediately handed round, and cups of excellent Java coffee. And here, I may beg leave to observe, we were told that a great quantity of the coffee which is sold as Mocha in reality comes direct from Java, assuming the name of the famous Arab port on its arrival in Europe. The gentlemen generally sit but a short time after the ladies leave, adjourning after them to the drawing-room, where they continue to puff vigorously at their lighted cigars, to the perfume of which the ladies never make any objection. As this room always opens on a verandah, some retire to seek the coolness of the night air, while others while away the time by music and chit-chat, &c., retiring generally about eleven or twelve, to renew the same life next day.

The police of Java have an effectual method of securing a runaway, thus described:

The three implements which are seemingly indispensable for constabulary use are the bunday, the kunkum, and the toyah. The first is a short pole, about four feet in length, upon the top of which are tied two pieces of wood, so placed as to meet in an acute angle, and open towards the ends, like the distended jaws of an alligator; the resemblance being made greater by the addition of dried stems of sharp thorns, tied on the two pieces of wood, and looking somewhat like rows of teeth. These effectually serve the purpose of detaining any runaway around whose neck they are fixed, lacerating the flesh to a terrible extent should he offer the slightest resistance.

The man into whose keeping the bunday is confided is called upon to act on the escape of a prisoner. In pursuing him he runs at full speed, endeavouring to fix the instrument round the neck, waist, arm, or leg of the pursued, who, as soon as he feels the sharp thorns encircling his body, generally comes to a full stop. Should he prove, however, one of those determined ruffians who are dead to all feelings of pain, another instrument, the kunkum, is brought into play. This heavy-looking weapon, which is of a very formidable aspect, consists of a bar of iron in the shape of a small sword, attached to the top of a stave some five feet long. The third of these singular instruments is the toyah, which is as simple in its construction as the use to which it is put is novel. It is in the shape of a pitchfork, the points of which are purposely made blunt. This is certainly the most humane-looking of the three, and it is to be hoped, therefore, the one first tried against the delinquent. The object for which it is used is that of bringing the pursued down on his knees, and thus effectually stopping his further progress. This is accomplished by thrusting the open space between the prongs against the knee-joint—from the back of course—and so compelling the man, by the force and suddenness of the attack, to make a genuflection; the result of which is, that he becomes an easy prey to the pursuer.

The Javanese *nautches* or dancing spectacles are duller than those of India, dreary in European eyes, and accompanied by the fiddle called *Rabup*, which emits no sound, must be anything but animated:

The *danseuse* was a plain-looking woman, with a face of the ordinary Javanese type, coarse features, high cheek bones, and very large mouth, disfigured with black teeth, which, however, they consider a mark of beauty. Her feet were small, as is the case with all of this race, both male and female. Her hair was dressed in the usual manner, tightly drawn back from the forehead, and rolled in a large *conday*, or knot, at the back, through which a large solid-looking pin, like a silver skewer, was thrust; whilst a few flowers of the *bunga-molur*—a sweet-scented white flower—were inserted between the knot and the head. The skirt she wore, called by the natives *sarong*, was fastened to the waist by a *pindeng*, or ceinture of silver. A long cabaya, or kind of loose coat, with sleeves to the wrist, formed her upper garment, and reached below the knee, being fastened together in front by two *crogangs*, or brooches of silver, so as to leave a small portion of the chest exposed. Beneath this, and attached to the *sarong* by the *pindeng*, were no fewer than fourteen handkerchiefs of different colours, folded cornerwise and placed one above the other. Her movements had some degree of natural grace. In one hand she held a Chinese fan, which in the dance she coquetted with as well as a Spanish donna might have done; whilst in some stages of the performance she concealed her face beneath a frightful mask, removing it occasionally with the unemployed hand.

Her partner was more simply dressed, but certainly not with equal modesty, for his body down to the waist was naked. His trousers were short, and faded in colour, and he wore a coloured kerchief on his head, which concealed all his hair—rolled like that of the woman in a knot behind. On rising to dance, he threw a *sarong* over his right shoulder, which partially concealed his body, giving him a style, as the capote does to the Matador.

I cannot say the combined performance of the company inspired us with the wish to applaud. The music was poor and unmelodious, and the dances very monotonous. It was, however, highly appreciated by their own countrymen and women, who clapped their hands, and made loud and hearty *basoras*, or cheers.

The manner of advertising for a husband in Java is by placing an empty flower-pot on the portico roof, which is as much as to say, "A young lady is in the house. Husband wanted." There are good descriptions of the scenery of the province of Japara, offering well-defined pictures of the coast, the forts, the mountains, and volcanos, and many new trees and shrubs are introduced to notice. Amongst them the Attap or Bujuk tree, the root of which resembles a cocoa-nut in shape and contains a kernel, often preserved in sweetmeats and pickles. The Verengen tree is described as very peculiar. The road from Passerpan to Pespo, leading past the Bromok mountain, with other ranges in view, must be a lively one to travel:

As the road was now broader and more even, we proceeded at a much more rapid rate, passing through jungles of lofty umbrageous forest trees, their sides and branches covered with lovely parasites and creepers, under which, in some parts, were coffee plantations, with husbandmen tending and trimming them; their white flowers, something like those of the jessamine at a distance, impregnating the air with delicious perfume.

Wild boars are as common as rabbits in a warren. Fat, burly-looking monsters sprang out of the jungle before us, and crossed the

road, apparently quite unconcerned at the appearance of strangers, though some of the smaller and more frisky ones scampered away grunting, probably with dissatisfaction at their privacy being intruded on. From the depths of the thicket, as it became more dense, issued sounds resembling a series of "ohs!" uttered in a melancholy tone. On inquiry we found that these sounds were made by the ape known as the Untah, some of which, before we reached our journey's end, we saw jumping from branch to branch, and from tree to tree, in a most agile manner.

A native gave me a curious version of his belief as to the origin of these monkeys. "Their ancestor," he said, "was the son of a Malay king, who, although possessed of extraordinary power as a sorcerer, had but this one child, of whom he was, therefore, very fond. One day, whilst at their morning meal, the prince vexed his father, who became so enraged that he snatched the ladle from the rice piro, or pot, and struck the young man on the forehead, exclaiming as he did so, in a loud tone, 'May you be known by that mark, and your children after you, until the last day!' Instantly, like Epimetheus, son of Japetus, the prince was transmuted into an ape, with a white mark on his brow. Thus disgraced, he left his home to roam with the beasts of the jungle, until the judgment day, when he will resume his former shape. What makes these creatures cry in that sad way," continued the man whose words I have translated, "is, that they pine to be readmitted to the society of men."

The skin of the Untah is black, as also their coat, except on the breast and stomach, which are covered with grey hair. On their forehead they have a white mark, like an arched patch, which is all the more conspicuous as the rest of the face is perfectly black.

The Ayam Alas, or Jungle Cock, is plentiful in all the thick jungles of Java. We heard their crow very frequently, though, like all birds of a wild nature, they are so shy and difficult of approach that we seldom caught a glimpse of one.

The travellers ascend the Bromok in hope of witnessing an eruption: what they do see is sufficiently terrific, but on a second visit they behold a religious ceremony of great interest, which changes the usually desert scene into a fair of devotees. Bagno Biro, a popular bathing place, has attractions which may rival those of Baden Baden:

Our carriage drew up under an avenue of trees, where we got out, and along which we walked, taking the first turning to the right. It led us to an extensive garden, in which was a large square pond fed by spring water of the deepest blue, on one side of which was a bath-house, and on the other ruins and fragments of Buddhist images, collected from the surrounding neighbourhood. The place is shaded with beautiful Ansana trees and the broad-leaved teak, the former reminding me of our stately elms.

The water, either from its clearness or buoyancy, gives a ludicrous appearance to the bathers; the boys who had jumped in for cents seeming unnaturally dwarfed in stature, while their limbs were apparently doubled in number, making them look like Indian deities. Many come here for weeks or months, for the benefit of pure country air and bathing. One great source of amusement to such visitors is that of feeding the monkeys which abound here, and, from a naturally wild state, have become so tame as to approach strangers, and in some cases even eat from their hands.

We were curious enough to pay them a visit, and ordered Drabman to purchase several bunches of Bananas. Our messenger returning shortly with the fruit, we held some of it temptingly in our hands, when down from numbers of trees came a troop of the animals, old and young, making the air ring with their yells and screams of pleasure. They were soon, however, interrupted by the appearance of three very large specimens of their kind, for whom, to my great surprise and amusement, the others immediately made room—some skulking away to a neighbouring tree, from the branches of which they could see their more favoured brethren, others only retiring to a short distance, from whence they looked longingly at the fruit, the first bit of which they were ready to snap up. Some of it we threw beyond the powerful trio, who would turn and stare at us with a truculent visage, followed by a fierce, angry growl, and an occasional dart at those whose *penchant* for plantains made them more than usually bold.

The largest of the three is called by the natives the Rajah, and the other two may be considered in the light of *aides-de-camp* to his serene highness.

These monkeys were all of a dark grey colour, with black feet and hands; their faces were generally nearly black, with the addition, in the three large ones, of a long beard, hanging, like a semi-circle, from their cheeks and chins.

These monkeys have relations in every grove, who are seen swinging from tree to tree:

We steered under the shade of leafy bowers, occasionally emerging into the broad sunlight, until we reached the head of the lake, where, on lofty trees, the bark and branches of which were completely hidden by the loveliest creepers I ever saw, monkeys, known as the Lotong, Si-a-mang, and Budang, were swinging from branch to branch. The mothers of this curious tribe we could easily discern carrying their young, whose tiny arms and legs were tightly clasping round their careful parents. The Lotong, which seem to be the Anaks of the three tribes, being larger and longer than the others, are of a jet black colour, and have very long tails, apparently possessed of great power and strength, for they often made use of them as a sort of hook or lasso by which to hang from one branch while busily occupied in eating the fruit from another.

Wild duck and teal ornament the waters here, and amongst other birds is the Puchio:

A large bird with beautiful jet black plumage, richly streaked with feathers tipped with gold, darts through the air with the speed of an arrow. Its neck, which is much longer than the body, is something like that of the crane, or the rice bird, but not so graceful; the feathers on it are of a greenish hue. The length of the neck, together with its small head, and an eye like a little black bead, made it somewhat resemble a winged serpent. It is sometimes called the Melewis, and in the Philippines the Corvo Marino, or Sea Crow. Their principal food is fish, but they live also upon fruit and insects. The Mum-ti-ara is of a similar species, but smaller.

Wild pigeons also flew from tree to tree, seemingly undisturbed by our presence, and turtle and ring-doves kept up an incessant chorus, while king-fishers of varied plumage shot through the air, with their piercing, discordant shrieks. The presence of these feathered denizens gave variety to a scene of mingled beauty and wildness.

Strange serpents vie with the monkeys in fearful interest; one called the Sawah or rice-field serpent was seen by the travellers; it measured twenty feet in length, with a girth of eighteen inches. The following anecdote raises the hair in true porcupine fashion:

These serpents are by nature shy and timid, and, unless very ravenous, seldom attack human beings. A native of Malang, fatigued with his day's work, was indulging in a nap on a plot of meadow-land adjoining that on which the serpent we saw was found. He had not slept long when he was awoken by a curious sensation in his right leg—a warm, moist, creeping feeling. Opening his eyes, and looking down, he beheld, to his horror, the whole of his foot and the calf of his leg in the mouth of a huge serpent. For some moments he remained motionless, too terrified to make any exertion for his own deliverance, or

even to cry out; but finding his leg gradually disappearing within the jaws of the monster, he was roused to a sense of his critical position, and found voice to call out loudly for help, at the same time moving his leg rapidly to and fro in his endeavours to shake the serpent off. It was now, however, in no humour to relinquish its prey, and consequently, when the poor man's cries had brought several other labourers to his side, they all tried vainly to draw the huge reptile off, and were at last compelled to cut it in two before it could be made to release its hold. The man was laid up for some time, his leg, though not broken, being much bruised. This story was told me as a positive fact, and, though the Sawah serpent is toothless, yet such is its enormous size that there is no reason why one should not give credit to so extraordinary an incident.

The marriage of the Verengen trees of Modjokerto is poetical:

Amongst the number of Verengen trees, two grew directly opposite the Resident's and Regent's houses, known as the married trees, the marriage of Verengens forming a native ceremony. On the wedding-day numerous guests are invited by the Regent, among whom great feasting and merriment goes on, in the midst of which the young couple are planted. The Hadji, or priest, in pronouncing his slamat, or benediction, goes through a certain ceremony, on the conclusion of which a low brick fence, ornamented to suit the Regent's taste, is built around the trees, and they are watched and tended until they are considered old and strong enough to bear the "vicissitudes of life." The trees, when thus married, are called Verengen Kuroong, and are henceforth regarded with almost superstitious veneration.

Here is a note of a beautiful white bird, credited with fairy power:

A man in one of the adjoining provinces had a Morobo, which had been caught in a wood by his son. This songster, much thought of, like all birds from Modjopahit, was perfectly white, and consequently rare and valuable. Some wealthy prince, hearing of the wonderful little creature, offered its owner a large sum for it, which he refused. This royal personage, however, not yet despairing of gaining the object he so much desired, despatched a second messenger with four pure white and four jet black horses from his own stables.

"Bid him," said he to the messenger, "choose between these. Surely four of my own horses will amply recompense him for the loss of a little bird."

But the prince was still doomed to disappointment, for the poor man would not consent to part with his favourite.

"Poor as I am," said he, in reply to the prince's message, "I would not give up my little bird for the richest gift from the Soesuhunan's Palace. A great blessing has been given to me; if I sell it, I forfeit all my luck."

I have told this simple tale merely to prove the estimation in which any bird from these woods is held.

Less picturesque than the birds are other denizens of the forests:

Hanging from the branches of two or three large trees growing close together, were myriads of what appeared to me long black bottles.

"These are some curious kind of fruit," said I to Mr H——.

"Fruit!" replied he, "why, they are bats, or flying foxes, as some people call them—you will see, when we get nearer, how they will fly about the tree."

And true enough our near approach was the signal for a general flight. These curious-looking creatures are called by the Javanese the kalung; their zoological name is *Pteropus edulis*. I had frequently seen this species of bat before, flying in the air; but never in such clusters on a tree. They were hanging by a claw, with their heads downwards, partially concealed by extensive wings of a dark brown hue, which, as impervious to wet as a piece of oil-cloth, were folded round each like a cloak.

A remarkable instance of presence of mind is told of a soldier, whose curiosity in peeping at some tigers in a den had placed him in an awkward predicament:

While stooping over the space purposely left open for the keeper to drop the food in, his cap came off, and, as he failed to seize it, fell on the floor below. Knowing that to return without it would subject him to punishment, he endeavoured to raise it up by means of a pole, but finding this ineffectual, he rashly jumped down into the den. His comrade, on witnessing this foolhardy leap, concluded he was lost, and ran as fast as his legs would carry him, to acquaint the officers of his regiment. The report spread like wildfire, and before many minutes had elapsed several soldiers had hurried to the spot, calling out, "Franz! Franz!" the name of their comrade. To their great astonishment and delight, his voice was heard in answer.

"I am alive, but want to be out of this vile-smelling place."

"Himmel!" exclaimed a young German, "lose no time—hand up the ladder," and he climbed up to the top in a moment. "Now, Franz," he exclaimed, as he lowered it through the aperture, "be quick!—run up as fast as you can!"

Franz needed no second bidding. In less than two minutes he had joined his comrades, none the worse, and nothing daunted by his strange interview.

"When first I jumped down," said he, in reply to the queries of his comrades, "I came sprawling on all-fours, and had no sooner got up again, than I began to think I had done a very silly thing. In one corner I saw, as I looked round, six glittering eyes—like golden balls—glaring at me; and at the opposite side a tiger, apparently bolder than the rest, advanced towards me. Seeing the beast's intention, and knowing how utterly defenceless I was, I gave utterance to an awful yell, and to my no small delight he turned, and, as though terrified at the unusual sound, cowered down again. 'You are not very hungry, my boy,' was my thought, as I picked up my cap, and took my seat on one of the cross-beams, to await the arrival of some kind friend; and you may judge with what pleasure I heard your voices as you came to liberate me—for, besides the fear of danger, the smell of the place quite made me sick."

The princes of Java are held in the utmost reverence:

The sacredness and greatness of the present Emperor of Java was foretold, as they assert, in their religious books. He is also said to be the possessor of an umbrella and sword of wondrous power, which has been in his family for generations. The general belief is that, if an individual touches either of these with an impure hand, he is sure to go mad!

Numerous descriptions of the ruined temples of the mountains are given in these volumes, all full of mysterious interest; and amongst their wanderings the travellers come upon a tank famous for a sacred animal of a strange sort. In this tank are black fish called Salay, whose sting is venomous, but which are good eating nevertheless; but the revered inhabitants of the waters are white turtles:

The woman who attends to the place asked us if we would try our luck, to which we readily assented. She accordingly despatched a girl for some raw meat, and on her return, fastening a large piece to the end of a long stick, she leaned over the water, and mumbled a few words, amongst which we distinguished, "*Kiaidudo amboloro cooning*"—meaning "the yellow virgins." Recollections of the lake at Gratie came before us, and expecting a similar result, we were

agreeably surprised when we saw ere long a large white turtle, about two feet long, rise nearly to the surface, place her fore paws against the side, and raise her head high enough to reach the tempting morsel, which she seemed thoroughly to appreciate.

A pair of these creatures were afterwards procured, and might have been brought home, but it was found impossible to keep them from returning to their native tank, and the author lost his prize, as his Javanese attendant had predicted. He perseveringly, however, got possession of another pair, one of which died on the passage, and his mate was accidentally killed by a fall after reaching England, which is much to be regretted, as there is no specimen in the Zoological Gardens.

Java is very rich in legends, and they follow each other quickly in these pages: most of them are good, and all well told. The adventures of an English sailor rescued by a native girl from painful duress is amongst them, and will be read with pleasure. We know not what scientific or medical men will say to the following:

Many of my readers have doubtless heard of the stones found occasionally in the heads of serpents, fish, and other animals, which are said to possess the property of curing different diseases, allaying the pain of stings, &c. A relative of Mr Z—— showed me a dark green one, which had been brilliantly polished, and resembled a malachite. It was found, she told me, in the head of a serpent, and had already been the means of effecting many cures. On one occasion a native of the town, whilst working in the country, having been bitten on the foot by a venomous snake, was taken to the hospital, where he suffered agonies for two or three days, at the expiration of which time his foot was swollen to an enormous size, every effort of the medical men in attendance having proved ineffectual to allay the inflammation. The poor man, in great torment, at last betought himself of the stone in Mrs V——'s possession, the fame of which had spread through Djokdja, and earnestly implored that they would try this remedy. The doctors smiled incredulously, but readily assented to gratify the man's whim, as they called it, and despatched a messenger with a polite request for the loan of the stone, which was at once granted. On application to the wound, and before many seconds had elapsed, it adhered so tightly to the flesh, that it was found impossible to remove it; and not until the swelling had completely abated, and the foot had resumed its natural size, did the wonderful stone detach itself and fall, leaving the patient free from pain.

This stone, being porous, possessed the property of absorbing diseased or venomous matter. When it was placed in a basin of water the liquid soon became quite discoloured, and it was not till fresh water had been put into the vessel several times that the stone became perfectly cleansed from the bad matter it had absorbed from the wound.

A stone I saw, on a different occasion, which was found in a cocoa-nut, was marked with the same lines as those on the exterior of the shell. This was set in a ring, and was said to possess the property of curing weak eyes.

Perhaps it will be safest to close our extracts from this attractive book with the above piece of the marvellous. In every respect this new account of Java and its natives, both Dutch and Javanese, is a singularly entertaining work that will win to itself many readers.