

MALAY COSTUME AND CUSTOMS.—But the delicacy of limb, and the glorious hair usually found among eastern races, exist in perfection with the Malays. Although their movements are never cramped and confined as among the Chinese, I have seen many full-grown women whose feet were not the length of my hand; but the habit of walking barefoot destroys something of the graceful shape which nature moulded. Long and heavy black hair adorns the head of a Malay woman to a surprising age, and with her small and regular teeth, would go far towards redeeming the plainness of her other features, were not the latter filed, and stained, and corroded with the juice of the Penang nut, which she is constantly chewing. The costume of the male sex is very simple but pretty, from its neatness of colour. It consists of a tight jacket of silk or cotton of a brilliant pattern, trousers usually white, a handkerchief for the head, and a "sarong" round the waist. This latter article is the distinctive feature of the Malay attire; it is made of silk or cotton, the pattern is always a tartan, and in shape it exactly resembles a wide sack with the bottom cut open. It is twisted around the body and looped up in graceful folds; the tying of his head handkerchief and the draping of his sarong are the great points of a Malay "swell." But the costume of the "pangerans" or nobles, though the same in design, is much more brilliant and costly. When the head-handkerchief is not replaced by a Persian turban, it is adorned with a heavy fringe of gold lace; the jacket, trousers, and sarong, are stiff with gold embroidery, and over the latter is worn a "kain bandar" of cloth-of-gold. The hilt of the "kris" ornamented with jewels, or richly mounted in the precious metal, sticks out in front like the sword of an Albanian soldier, giving to their walk somewhat of the haughty swagger in which those warriors delight. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the Malay nature is the strange madness called "amok," to which all individuals of this race are liable. Any strong passion may rouse the latent phrensy, and anger, revenge, or the discovery of a calumnious accusation, are frequent sources of deadly mischief. The gambling table sends out its homicides with regularity, but in nine cases out of ten, "la donna" will be discovered in the dressing room when the tragedy is over. The madman does not necessarily avenge himself upon his injurer; if that person should happen to be near when the fit comes on, he will be destroyed in the blind tempest of passion, but the "amok" does not seem to seek out his enemy in particular. He snatches up the first weapon that meets his eyes, and dashes to the nearest frequented spot, where he cuts and thrusts at every living thing until shot down like a mad animal. Nevertheless courage, and the instinctive ascendancy of the white race, will produce their effect upon the most bloodthirsty "amok." A story is told in Singapore—for which I do not in the least vouch—of a certain doctor who, driving in his gig, encountered one of these maniacs flourishing a bloody parang. The doctor stopped, jumped out, and advanced to meet the man armed only with his whip. The "amok" hesitated, and dropped his weapon; his pursuers came up, put him into the gig, and carried him in triumph to gaol. Supposing that this story be true, I should recommend no one to make it a precedent.—*Boyle's Adventures in Borneo.*