

"RUNNING A MUCK."

(From "The Malay Archipelago." By Alfred Russel Wallace.)

One morning as we were sitting at breakfast, Mr Carter's servant informed us that there was an "Amok" in the village—in other words, that a man was "running a muck." Orders were immediately given to shut and fasten the gates of our enclosure; but hearing nothing for some time we went out, and found there had been a false alarm, owing to a slave having run away, declaring he would "amok" because his master wanted to sell him. A short time before, a man had been killed at a gaming-table because, having lost half-a-dollar more than he possessed, he was going to "amok." Another had killed or wounded 17 people before he could be destroyed. In their wars a whole regiment of these people will sometimes agree to "amok," and then rush on with such energetic desperation as to be very formidable to men not so excited as themselves. Among the ancients these would have been looked upon as heroes or demigods who sacrificed themselves for their country. Here it is simply said,—they made "amok."

Macassar is the most celebrated place in the East for "running a muck." There are said to be one or two a month on the average, and five, ten, or twenty persons are sometimes killed or wounded at one of them. It is the national and therefore the honourable mode of committing suicide among the natives of Celebes, and is the fashionable way of escaping from their difficulties. A Roman fell upon his sword, a Japanese rips up his stomach, and an Englishman blows out his brains with a pistol. The Bugis mode has many advantages to one suicidally inclined. A man thinks himself wronged by society—he is in debt and cannot pay—he is taken for a slave, or has gambled away his wife or child into slavery—he sees no way of recovering what he has lost, and becomes desperate. He will not put up with such cruel wrongs, but will be revenged on mankind, and die like a hero. He grasps his kris-handle, and the next moment draws out the weapon and stabs a man to the heart. He runs on, with bloody kris in his hand, stabbing at every one he meets. "Amok! amok!" then resounds through the streets. Spears, krisses, knives, and guns are brought out against him. He rushes madly forward, kills all he can—men, women, and children—and dies overwhelmed by numbers amid all the excitement of a battle. And what that excitement is those who have been in one best know, but all who have ever given way to violent passions, or even indulged in violent and exciting exercises, may form a very good idea. It is a delirious intoxication, a temporary madness that absorbs every thought and every energy. And can we wonder at the kris-bearing, untaught, brooding Malay preferring such a death, looked upon as almost honourable, to the cold blooded details of suicide, if he wishes to escape from overwhelming troubles, or the merciless clutches of the hangman and the disgrace of a public execution when he has taken the law into his own hands, or too hastily revenged himself upon his enemy? either case he chooses rather to "amok."