



Archipel

Études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien

94 | 2017

Varia

Alfred Raquez Over Java

Alfred Raquez sur Java

William L. Gibson and Paul Bruthiaux



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/archipel/452>

DOI: 10.4000/archipel.452

ISSN: 2104-3655

Publisher

Association Archipel

Printed version

Date of publication: 6 December 2017

Number of pages: 171-190

ISBN: 978-2-910513-78-8

ISSN: 0044-8613

Electronic reference

William L. Gibson and Paul Bruthiaux, "Alfred Raquez Over Java", *Archipel* [Online], 94 | 2017, Online since 06 December 2017, connection on 27 June 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/452> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.452>

All rights reserved

PAGES D'EXOTISME

WILLIAM L. GIBSON¹ AND PAUL BRUTHIAUX²

Alfred Raquez Over Java

On 28 April 1898, a Frenchman boarded the steamer *Giang Seng* in Singapore, bound for Batavia. He disembarked three days later on 1 May, and according to his own account, spent the next month traveling in Java.

The man was born Joseph Gervais, but on 16 June, six weeks after his stay in Batavia, he appeared in My Tho in the Mekong Delta in Cochinchina using the name “Alfred Raquez.”³

He continued traveling under that name throughout the Far East as far as Guizhou in China, before settling in Hanoi, where he declared himself a publicist.⁴ In 1904, he was appointed to organize and lead Mission Raquez, a fifteen-month expedition to collect material in Laos for the upcoming Colonial Exposition in Marseille, where he would act as delegate for the Laotian section.⁵ The same year as the Exposition, 1906, he was named an official correspondent for the École Française d'Extrême-Orient.⁶ For Mission Raquez, the Ministry of War awarded him a medal of honor at a ceremony in Paris on 18 June.⁷ He

1. William L. Gibson is an author, researcher, and sound artist based in Southeast Asia.

2. Paul Bruthiaux is a language consultant based in Thailand.

3. Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer GGI 22425.

4. *Annuaire général Administratif, Commercial et Industriel de l'Indo-Chine*, Première Partie, Commençant le 4 février (Hanoi: F. H. Schneider, 1905), p. 730.

5. *Bulletin officiel de l'Indochine française*, Année 1905, 3 (Hanoi: F. H. Schneider, 1906), p. 192.

6. *Bulletin officiel de l'Indochine française*, Année 1906, 3 (Hanoi: F. H. Schneider, 1907), p. 390.

7. *La Presse* (18 June 1906). For a contemporary account of his confidence scam, see Cognosco [alias], “Les Dessous de L’Affaire Gervais,” *L’Égalité*, (24 March 1898), p. 1.

died on the Corniche in Marseille in January 1907, supposedly of the smallpox, though rumors of suicide were in the air.⁸ Shortly after this death, his true identity was revealed in the press, stirring a minor controversy, before he faded into oblivion. He is remembered today for the nearly 200 postcards of Laos he created for sale at the 1906 Exposition, which today are highly sought after by collectors. Though it was known that Raquez was a pseudonym, it was not until very recently that his true name was uncovered.⁹

In his brief time as Alfred Raquez, Gervais made a name for himself as a respected journalist and explorer. He wrote three book-length works, the first two travel narratives: *Au Pays des Pagodes*, which details his trip through China in 1899, and *Pages Laotiennes*, which relates the story of his travels through that country in 1899 to 1900.¹⁰ *Entrée Gratuite* is his account, partly collected from articles he published in *La Revue Indochinoise*, of the 1902 Colonial Exposition in Hanoi.¹¹ In 1904, he would assume the role of Editorial Director at *La Revue Indochinoise*, but he also wrote extensively for other colonial periodicals, including *L'Écho de Chine* (which also published his first book) and *L'Avenir du Tonkin* (owned by F. H. Schneider, the publisher of the *Revue Indochinoise*). He also published in the Parisian press, with articles appearing in *La Dépêche Coloniale* as well as its supplement *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*; he also published in *L'Illustration: Journal Universel*, and wrote a long article about Siam for the *Bulletin du Comité de l'Asie Française*.¹² An avid photographer, Raquez's images were sometimes published without any accompanying text, though he often published them in combination.

Scattered throughout these works are references to his month-long sojourn in Java in 1898. Most of these references are fleeting, though one long article in *La Revue Indochinoise* and an extended anecdote in *Entrée Gratuite* merit reproduction.¹³

8. Antoine Brébion, *Dictionnaire de bio-bibliographie générale, ancienne et moderne de l'Indochine française* (Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales, 1935), p. 319. Brébion's two-paragraph notice constitutes the only biography of Raquez published in the twentieth century.

9. William L. Gibson, "Alfred Raquez." *PHILAO: Bulletin de l'Association Internationale des Collectionneurs de Timbres poste du Laos* 102 (2016), p. 8.

10. *Au Pays des Pagodes. Notes de Voyage, Hongkong, Macao, Shanghai, Le Houppé, Le Hounan*. (Shanghai: La Presse Orientale, 1900); *Pages Laotiennes: Le Haut-Laos, Le Moyen-Laos, Le Bas-Laos* (Hanoi: F. H. Schneider, 1902). See the annotated translations by Paul Bruthiaux and William L. Gibson: *In the Land of Pagodas* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2017) and *Laotian Pages*, NIAS Press (forthcoming).

11. *Entrée Gratuite* (Saigon: Claude & Cie, 1903).

12. A full bibliography of Raquez's writings has never been compiled, though one is currently underway.

13. "Java (à suivre)," *La Revue Indochinoise* 180 (31 March 1902), p. 287-290, and *Entrée Gratuite*, pp. 86-87.

Raquez's style is journalistic. His writing is concise, often with single-sentence paragraphs that show him keeping a sharp eye out for the telling detail. In his longer works, Raquez includes snippets of dialogue, transcriptions of song lyrics, even entire menus. There is also an emphasis on the personal experience. He relates his own sensations, including his bodily and emotive reactions to the environment, which give a sense of immediacy and dynamism to his writing that is not found in the works of his contemporaries. He is also fearless, trying new foods, chatting with strangers of all races, and often striking far off the beaten path. All of this makes for a style that is refreshingly modern. Although brief, his observations about Java are worth examining as they add a new perspective on the French experience in colonial Southeast Asia.

There is also the delicious mystery surrounding the man himself.

Much has already been uncovered about Gervais, but the gaps that remain in his narrative are frustrating. Nonetheless, the beginning of a biography can be sketched out.

Gervais was born in Dunkirk in 1863 and later became a lawyer in the city of Lille, where he was also active in secular Catholic societies. He founded and became president of the *Cercle des Étudiants et de la Jeunesse Catholique* de Lille in 1885 and served on the commission for "Press and Propaganda" for the *Assemblées Générales Catholiques du Nord*.¹⁴

In the mid-1890s, Gervais set up a confidence scam, a sort of investment scheme that went wrong, and quickly found himself in over his head. He fled France in March 1898, and was reportedly in London on the twentieth of that month. On 15 April, an arrest warrant was issued in Paris for fraud and breach of trust, but by then, he was long gone.¹⁵

He surfaced about a month later, based on his own telling, in Singapore aboard the *Giang Seng*. In his article in the *Revue Indochinoise*, he only tells us the ship's name, but the Singapore newspapers date the ship's clearance for departure to 28 April, so we can confidently place him there. The *Giang Seng* was owned by the Tan Kim Tian and Son Steamship Company, one of the first Chinese-owned shipping companies in Singapore, whose usual route was the trade triangle between Singapore and the ports of Batavia, Cheribon, and Semarang on Java's north coast.¹⁶ The trip from Singapore to Batavia normally

14. *Revue de Lille* 4, May 1896 (Paris: J. Lefert, 1896), p. 161, and *Les Assemblées Générales Catholiques du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais tenues à Lille du 23 au 28 Novembre 1886* (Lille: Victor du Colombier, 1887), p. 353.

15. *Le Journal* (15 April 1898), p. 2.

16. *The Straits Times* (28 April 1898), p. 4. The *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (2 May 1898) confirms the arrival of the ship on the previous day. See also Joseph Norbert Frans Marie à Campo, *Engines of Empire: Steam Shipping and State Formation in Colonial Indonesia* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), p. 331, note 535.

took forty-eight hours to complete, so it would appear that this voyage was briefly delayed, perhaps still in Singaporean waters, which may explain Raquez's grumbling about stomach trouble over the previous "three days."¹⁷

While the names of arriving and departing passengers were often listed in local newspapers, because the *Giang Seng* was considered a trade ship and not a passenger ship, no list of passengers was printed in either the Singapore or the Batavia newspapers for this sailing. So while we can accept that Gervais was in Java in May of 1898, we do not know what name he used while he was there.

After his arrival in My Tho the following month, Raquez traveled up the Mekong, getting at least as far as southern Laos by July.¹⁸ He then showed up in Saigon on 25 August, where he gave a public presentation about his Java trip to the Society for the Study of Indochina. The notice in the *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indo-Chinoises de Saigon* gives his profession as "avocat du barreau de Paris" and claims he spent a month in Java.¹⁹ The notice also says that Raquez promised to write a brief description of his Java journey for publication in the Society's bulletin, but it would appear he never did. His later writing about Java in the *Revue Indochinoise* may well be a portion of this proposed description of his journey.

Beyond that long article and the anecdote that appears in *Entrée Gratuite*, there are a few other scattered references to his trip.

In *Au Pays des Pagodes*, he boasts that he is a "Java enthusiast" and describes the well-known Tangkuban Perahu volcano north of the city of Bandung.²⁰

In *Pages Laotiennes*, he says he visited the famous Borobudur temple and claims to have spent evenings being entertained by the dancers of the Sultans of Jogjakarta and Solo (Surakarta).²¹

These claims are somewhat astounding. While French citizens did not use passports at the time, they would carry government-issued travel documents known as *laissez-passer*, which would have been required by Dutch officials in Java. As the Dutch kept a tight grip on the press and restricted travel, even Dutch citizens required permission to travel overland.²² Tourists had to register within a few days of arrival, and to travel overland, they had to obtain a *toelatings-kaart*, or admission card, from the local Town Hall.

When such permissions were granted, they were often (though not always) announced in local newspapers. For example, when Joseph Chailley-Bert, the

17. On the timing, see Eliza Ruhama Scidmore, *Java: The Garden of the East* (New York: Century Co., 1898), p. 7.

18. *Pages Laotiennes*, p. 531.

19. *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indo-Chinoises de Saigon* 36 (Saigon: Imprimerie Commerciale Rey, 1898), pp. 91-92.

20. *Au Pays des Pagodes*, p. 258 and 333.

21. *Pages Laotiennes*, p. 522 and 535.

22. The rules can be found in Jan de Louter, *Handleiding tot de kennis van het staats- en administratief recht van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: H. M. Van Dorp, 1875), pp. 27-30.

founder and secretary general of the Union Coloniale Française made a trip to Java in 1897, his permission to travel was announced in the *De Locomotief* newspaper of 11 May 1897 in the following terms: “Mr. Chailley-Bert, in the interest of his colonial studies, is authorized to travel in Java for three months.”²³

As far as we can ascertain, no announcements of permission to travel for anyone named Gervais or Raquez were printed in 1898 in the Dutch Indies newspapers scanned and uploaded to the Dutch digital library.²⁴ Perhaps he was using a third name during his transit?

The Dutch colonial apparatus held a special interest for the French, who wanted to study models of administration that could be deployed in their own relatively recent acquisitions in Indochina. As H. L. Wessling has shown, between 1890 and 1914, there were no fewer than twenty-three separate French study missions to the Dutch East Indies.²⁵ Chailley-Bert's book on the 1897 mission entitled *Java et ses Habitants*, first published in 1900 in Paris, is a polemical tract wrapped up as a textbook, with a didactic tone and a penchant for hectoring the reader while demeaning both the Dutch and the native population.

In addition to such studies, there were commercial travel books published about Java. For instance, *Un Séjour dans l'île de Java*, from the pen of the prolific writer and explorer Jules Le Clercq, was published in Paris the same year as Raquez's journey.

The Dutch in Java were amused – if not annoyed – by all this French attention. In a review of Le Clercq's 1898 book in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, the author opens with outright mocking of what was becoming a sub-genre of French travel writing:

Marvelous: Another announcement of a piece about Java! There's no end to Java! And again from a Frenchman. This will most certainly go wrong in the worst possible way. Since we can already read from the preface of Le Clercq that our beautiful island is visited so seldom by travelers since it is out of the main sailing route of the mail boats, that there are hardly any written pieces on Java in any of the foreign languages, and that we, like the Russians, do not allow foreigners to set foot in our colonies, then these relative truths are already capable of letting the ever haughty critics think to themselves: “Sure, we'll take care of this.”²⁶

23. “Aan den Heer Chailley Bert is, in het belang zijner koloniale studien, vergunning verleend voor den tijd van drie maanden over Java te reizen.”

24. Available at: www.delpher.nl

25. “The Dutch Colonial Model in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914,” in Alf Andrew Heggoy & David E. Gardinier (ed.), *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society*, vol. 2, Milwaukee, WI, April 8-10 1976, Athens, GA., The Society, pp. 107-130, 115.

26. J. G. Doorman, “Jules Le Clercq Over Java,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (4 May 1898): 5. Much appreciation to Freek Olaf de Groot for this translation.

When it comes to questions of style, however, the French writers are differentiated by purpose. While Chailley-Bert's style is bureaucratic, LeClerq writes in a florid mode that seems antique to modern readers.

Here, for instance, is LeClerq's description of the famed Dutch meal of *rijstaffel*, or "rice table," adapted from the local style of serving food known as *padang*:

The Javanese meal par excellence is the *rijstaffel*, a kind of curry so complicated that I am forced to abandon any attempt at description. The basic element of the dish is an immense mountain of rice cooked in water; but there are so many accessories, so many spices serving as seasoning that it takes several comings and goings by the coolies to bring them all in from the kitchen, so that serving a *rijstaffel* is the work of almost a quarter of an hour. There are chunks of beef or buffalo, poultry, vegetables swimming in broth, small golden fish from Makassar, half a dozen clever curry sauces, salads, chili peppers that leave the most stinging sensations in the mouth, twenty unknown treats arranged on the same dish in distinct compartments: happy is the veteran who knows the name and taste of all of these; but woe to the novice, who can only choose by chance! The *rijstaffel* is followed by a dessert composed of the tastiest fruits of India: mango, mangosteen, rambutan, dukuh, papaya, banana, and especially succulent grapefruit, a kind of orange with purple flesh, larger than a melon, whose name Bernardin de Saint-Pierre spread throughout the world through his immortal poem *Paul et Virginie*. Most of these fruits have an exotic flavor which does not please the newcomer, and which one must get used to.²⁷

Chailley-Bert, on the other hand, only notes the *rijstaffel* as a lamentable outcome of the Dutch adopting native habits and tastes:

Being tenacious colonizers, the Dutch have endeavored in their enterprises to have the odds on their side. The climate was one of their adversaries, so they resolved to defeat it, and they succeeded. After mistakes which lasted only a while, they shed their old European skin and found a way, some only superficially, others deep into the regime of Java. This led to the *rice table*, regrettably counter-balanced by the *bitter* [beer and gin] *table*, then the bath without tub, which forces one to be active and precipitates a reaction, and finally the appropriate costume: loose jacket, wide pants, barefoot in sandals.²⁸

Raquez's journalistic writing style presents a voice quite distinct from these mainstream modes. As noted, it creates an immediacy that seems modern when set beside other period texts. His brief writings about Java offer an excellent introduction to his style and sensibilities as well as a unique perspective on late nineteenth century Dutch Indies culture.

The first passage is taken from *La Revue Indochinoise*. While the article was announced as the first in a series, this is the only writing on the subject Raquez published in that periodical. It centers on Batavia and Dutch colonial life, with digressions into "native quarters" and some thumbnail histories of Java. A number of errors were introduced by the typesetter in Hanoi, and while obvious errors have been silently corrected, we present the text as it appears in the original.

27. *Un Séjour dans l'île de Java, le Pays, Les Habitants, Le Système Colonial*, second edition (Paris: Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1898), pp. 19-20.

28. *Java et ses Habitants*, second edition (Paris: Armand Colin et Cie, 1901), p. 72.

The second passage is an anecdote about a night in Bandung, with an emphasis on *angklung* music. Raquez was keenly interested in music. As Gervais, he was a choir director in Lille.²⁹ In his writing, he frequently mentions classical composers as well as contemporary popular tunes, yet he was also interested in local music and in Laos frequently photographed singers and musicians; he also made the first audio field recordings in that country; unfortunately, these are now lost.³⁰

In Bandung, his appreciation of the *angklung* performance leads to a breach of colonial etiquette. The racism inherent in the Dutch colonial reaction to the native population is precisely why he inserts this anecdote into his book about the 1902 Colonial Exposition in Hanoi.



Java

Dimanche 1^{er} Mai 1898

À bord du paquebot chinois *Giang Seng*, se trouve avec nous un jeune Hollandais, fils d'un colon de Java et qui fut envoyé en Europe, sept ans déjà passés, pour faire son éducation. Il a maintenant 22 ans, parle le français, l'anglais, l'allemand mais il se demande s'il reconnaîtra son père qu'il n'a pas vu depuis si longtemps.

Nous approchons de terre. La côte est basse, sans attrait. Aucune ville ne se montre. Batavia s'étend à l'intérieur. L'on débarque au quai de Tandjoeng Priok et un chemin de fer conduit à la ville.

Quelques navires de guerre battant pavillon de la jeune Reine stationnent dans un beau port artificiel. Voici les grands docks, les quais superbes de Tandjoeng Priok. Tout est calme. C'est jour de dimanche dans un pays protestant. Une foule de parents endimanchés attendant les voyageurs. Le père de notre jeune camarade justement impatient de serrer dans ses bras le fils dont il fût si longtemps privé saute dans un sampan pour venir plus tôt couvrir son revenant de gros baisers sonores.

Et le *Giang Seng* est à quai. Adieu, sale bateau et non certes au revoir !

La douane est peu exigeante. Mais à la gare, déception. Midi dix brillent au ciel en même temps qu'au cadran de l'horloge. Un train vient de partir et le suivant ne se mettra en marche qu'à deux heures. L'estomac soumis à une rude épreuve depuis trois jours fait entendre de violentes protestations contre tout retard, aussi nous décidons-nous à faire prix avec un louage de l'endroit qui nous entraîne ventre-à-terre vers la ville.

29. *Les Assemblées Générales Catholiques du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais tenues à Lille du 23 au 28 Novembre 1886*, p. 184.

30. William L. Gibson, "Alfred Raquez and the First Recordings in Laos," *For the Record* 58 (2016), pp. 81-85.

Fort curieuses ces voitures publiques, les seules usitées dans le pays : charrettes légères à deux roues avec double banquette l'une en avant, l'autre face en arrière et séparées par un dossier unique d'où leur nom bien donné de « dos-à-dos » conservé par les Hollandais et les Malais depuis l'occupation française.

Le cocher se plaçant d'ordinaire sur la banquette de devant, son client est peu commodément installé à l'arrière et obligé de prendre des positions anormales pour conserver l'équilibre de la charrette.

Il est bien plus simple de faire passer à l'arrière l'automédon mal blanchi qui trouvera toujours moyen de conduire son vigoureux petit cheval en s'accroupissant au besoin comme un singe.

Pas banal ce Malais avec son *sarong*, pièce de cotonnade à dessins qu'il porte serrée aux hanches et descendant jusqu'aux pieds nus, une courte veste, les cheveux relevés en chignon puis enfermés dans un madras ou parfois un turban. Très respectueux pour recevoir son salaire, l'homme se tient à distance, avance la main droite en soutenant son poignet de l'autre main et s'incline profondément, non sans grâce.



Le dos-à-dos court le long d'un canal. De tous côtés, des marécages d'où déborde une végétation furieuse de bananiers, de palmiers, de cocotiers et d'aréquiers.

Cette partie de l'île était jadis un terrible foyer de pestilence. Bien qu'on ne puisse encore la choisir pour y venir passer une saison, elle a été beaucoup assainie.

Quelques docks et les grands bâtiments de la « Standard's [sic] Oil Company ».

Sur le canal, des Malaises en pirogue s'en vont, payant, porter à la ville leurs bananes ou leurs pamplemousses à chair rosée.

Une gare apparaît et un quartier d'anciennes maisons. C'est le vieux Batavia, Kali-besar, comme l'appellent les Malais, quartier des affaires où les grandes maisons de commerce et de banque tiennent leurs bureaux dans les anciens bâtiments et dépendances de la fameuse Compagnie des Indes, quartier délaissé matin et soir où seule règne alors l'activité des petits marchands, surtout des ébénistes et fabricants de meubles de bambou ou de rotin qui sont légion tout le long de la route.

Un tramway électrique s'engage de là dans la ville qui est d'une étendue considérable car pour atteindre le faubourg de Master [sic] Cornelis il nous faudrait parcourir 14 kilomètres.

Trois catégories bien distinctes de voitures dans chacun de ces petits trains. Européens, Malais et Chinois ne voyagent pas ensemble et possèdent chacun des wagons spéciaux.

En suivant la voie du tramway, nous longeons un canal ou plutôt une rivière canalisée, la rivière du Moulin ou Molenvliet. Des escaliers ont été aménagés tous les vingt mètres ; en bas, court un rebord de maçonnerie qui permet aux ménagères de venir s'installer pour faire la lessive, si tant est que ces eaux

jaunes et limoneuses puissant servir à cet usage. Il faut le croire car elles fourmillent, les Malaises de tout âge, qui, épaules, bras et gorge nus lavent des sarongs ou se baignent elles-mêmes dans la rivière. Ces femmes passent presque toute leur journée dans l'eau, dignes de servir de modèle à cette école hollandaise ennemie des formes délicates et grâciles !

L'Hôtel des Indes. Mais c'est tout un monde ! Et de fait l'hôtel couvre cinq hectares, me dit l'un des gérants qui parle très correctement notre langue.

Dans la cour d'honneur, véritable parc, un kiosque-bar éclairé le soir par des lampes électriques. Un immense multipliant (*ficus indica*) que les Hollandais appelant *waringeu* étend ses branches sur plus de vingt mètres de diamètre.

Toute une série de bâtiments à rez de chaussée ou à un seul étage et séparés les uns des autres par des pelouses et des jardins.

Devant les chambres, une large vérandah ouverte protège contre les ardeurs du soleil. Chacun de nous a, sous la vérandah, sa table, son service à café, à thé, un rocking chair et un fauteuil à bras articulés. Les chambres éclairées à la lumière électrique, éblouissantes de blancheur et pourvues d'un lit où toute une famille trouverait place. Sur le lit, le boudin de cuir garni de crin ou de paille que les Anglais appellent la « *deutsch wife* » [ou] « la hollandaise » et qui permet la nuit d'éviter le contact des jambes avec le drap en laissant circuler le peu d'air qui passe dans les chambres.

Il fait, en effet, terriblement chaud à Batavia et l'on y craint si peu les courants d'air que dans cette vaste salle à manger où je pénètre, quinze ou vingt grandes baies sont percées et n'ont jamais reçu ni portes ni fenêtres.

Le repas de midi ou *rystaffel* (table de riz), n'est pas encore terminé. J'entre en plein dans la vie coloniale hollandaise, et me trouve face à face, un peu ahuri, avec le plat national.

Du riz comme base, et, tout autour, entassés pêle-mêle par les convives dans leur ou leurs assiettes, des œufs sur le plat ou en omelettes, du poisson frit, bouilli ou au gratin, du poulet rôti, des abatis de poulet nageant avec les pommes de terre dans une sauce au curry, du hachis au piment conservé frais dans des feuilles de bananier, du gâteau de hachis gratiné et doré au four, des légumes de toute espèce confits dans des mixtures au gingembre ou au poivre de Cayenne, des petits poissons séchés, etc, etc.

Non loin de moi un gros capitaine livre assaut à trois grandes et profondes assiettes qu'il a consciencieusement remplies. Il dévore. Je l'admire, n'ayant jamais soupçonné semblable capacité chez un humain. O Gargantua ! O Pantagruel ! Quels repas et festins vous dûtes faire ici en colonisant quelque peu vos facultés dégustatives !

Plus calme et puis timide, j'hésite et use de prudence. En face de moi quelques jeunes gens m'observent du coin de l'œil et le sourire pas méchant que je vois sur leurs lèvres m'engage à leur adresser la parole en français. Ils en sont tout joyeux car, me disent-ils, je leur avais paru de tournure anglaise.

Ils se défiaient. Si je suis Français, vive la France !

Une bonne étoile brille dans notre ciel. A Batavia, aujourd'hui, se donne la fête des fleurs avec « corso carnavalesque » et veglione tout comme sur la Côte d'Azur.

Je termine donc mon *rystaffel* avec le second service réglementaire : un excellent bifteck aux pommes et, avant de quitter le département de la bouche, je me renseigne sur la vie d'hôtel en ce pays.

Dès le matin le boy vient déposer sur la table, devant la chambre, le café au lait traditionnel. Je devrais plutôt dire le lait au café car le lait seul est chaud. Le café exquis, est obtenu par la distillation lente d'eau froide à travers des grains de café concassé et non moulus. L'on arrive de la sorte à une véritable essence délicieusement parfumée et qui n'a rien de commun avec nos mazagrains-chicorée.

Les cabines de bain avec leurs grandes jarres d'eau et leur baquet ne permettent pas le bain complet mais seulement les ablutions à grande eau répétées soir et matin.

A huit heures, le déjeuner à la fourchette auquel assistent les florissantes hollandaises, pieds nus dans de légères babouches à talons souvent dorés, le corps enveloppé du *sarong*, une ceinture en guise de corset et la *cabaja*, sorte de camisole de mousseline épaisse. Très capiteuses !

Midi voit le *rystaffel* et ses fanatiques. – Quatre heures, le thé servi sous la véranda des chambres. – Sept heures, le dîner. Les vins très bons et pas chers.

Avant les repas, des carafons de schiedam et de bitter sont à la libre disposition des pensionnaires. Il faudrait qu'un Hollandais fût bien malade pour ne pas prendre son apéritif « *half and half* » dans les grands verres à Madère. C'est le *paï*.

Le service est fait par des Malais qui glissent silencieusement sur les dalles de marbre. Ils ne connaissent que leur langue mais ici tout le monde la parle. Attentifs et soigneux quoique peu emballés, ils ne se départiraient pour rien au monde de leur grave et digne lenteur.

En compagnie de notre aimable voisin de table et d'un jeune Italien, nous nous rendons en voiture au jardin botanique où se donne la Fête des Fleurs mais un crochet fait visiter le quartier ou plutôt l'un des quartiers indigènes.

À Batavia, comme dans toute l'île du reste, indépendamment des colons, trois éléments cohabitent sans se mêler les uns aux autres : les indigènes, les Chinois et les Arabes.

Les indigènes forment eux-mêmes trois races : les Soendanaï (de Soenda – Îles de la Sonde) qui se trouvent à Batavia et dans cette partie occidentale de l'île — les Javanais, proprement au centre, sur les terres des sultans — et les Malais dits, plus à l'est.

Races distinctes comme mœurs, comme idioles, comme coutumes. Les Javanais ont une littérature, des caractères spéciaux, deux langues l'une pour le supérieur, l'autre pour l'inférieur. Le Malais au contraire se sert des caractères arabes. Tous sont de religion musulmane, mais de nom bien plutôt

[que] de fait, car le peuple est d'une indifférence absolue et plus que sobre de manifestations extérieures de foi religieuse.

L'on sait que ces îles ont subi l'invasion arabe après l'invasion des Hindous. Les brahmanistes et les bouddhistes avaient bâti les temples merveilleux dont nous aurons l'occasion d'étudier les ruines mais la domination arabe est survenue terrible, faisant abandonner à ce peuple le culte de Brahma de Vishnou, de Bouddha pour le Coran et ses pratiques. Et ce peuple doux, bon, fait pour la servitude, s'est incliné devant le croissant comme il se couchera plus tard, sous la main de fer du maître Hollandais.

Des Arabes sont restés dans le pays, unis entre eux, surveillés par le gouvernement avec soin car on craint le fanatisme de pèlerins retour de la Mecque et le Maître ne veut que le calme, l'obéissance indifférente à tout, de ces 32 millions d'indigènes auxquels commande une poignée d'Européens.

Les Chinois de Batavia sont d'une espèce particulière. Tandis qu'à Singapour, semblables à des oiseaux de passage, ils viennent amasser un pécule pour retourner bien vite au foyer des ancêtres, les Célestes de la colonie hollandaise y sont installés à demeure, y ont fait souche, s'y multiplient comme le chiendent dans nos campagnes et souvent même ont choisi une ou plusieurs Malaises pour partager avec eux les joies et les tristesses de l'existence.

Mais tous ces éléments étrangers sont groupés et menés à la baguette par l'administration.

Les Chinois occupent surtout un quartier de Batavia, peu éloigné du Kali besar [*sic*] et que l'on nomme « Kampoeng tjina ». Ils sont près de cent mille dans la capitale. Comme les Arabes, ils ont un état-major responsable vis-à-vis du gouvernement hollandais. Un major, un capitaine, des lieutenants de leur race, toute une organisation les surveille et répond de l'ordre, de la police, des impôts.

Les indigènes proprement dits habitent dans des groupes de maisons qui forment un *kampoeng* comme celui que nous avons admiré à l'Exposition de 1889. Admirer, c'est bien le mot, car elles sont très belles ces maisons sur pilotis dont les cloisons de bambou natté sont aussi solides qu'agréables à l'œil par la perfection et la régularité de leur assemblage.

Tout comme du chef du *kampoeng*, les indigènes doivent être rentrés à la tombée du jour. Aucun d'eux, homme, femme ou enfant ne peut s'absenter la nuit sans une autorisation ou un motif reconnu valable le lendemain. Les châtiments sont très sévères. Les préposés à la surveillance reçoivent parfois de singuliers billets portant une signature européenne et permettant à telle ou telle agréable enfant de réintégrer le domicile légal.

L'asservissement est absolu et le respect à l'Européen sévèrement exigé. Il en cuirait au Malais qui dans la rue ne céderait point le pas au représentant de la race blanche. Les indigènes n'ont pas le droit d'apprendre la langue hollandaise et, à ce point de vue, la nécessité dans laquelle se trouvent les Européens de parler le langage du pays est excellente pour la colonisation.

Les Hollandais eux-mêmes sont soumis à certaines règles que l'on peut estimer les uns arbitraires et les autres au moins bizarres.

C'est ainsi que vous ne pourriez prendre à Java de domestique européen et que défense expresse vous serait faite de couvrir votre occiput de cet incommode couvre-chef à huit-reflets que d'aucuns dénomment tuyau de poêle.

Le chapeau haute forme que personne n'envie du reste aux colonies est l'apanage exclusif des représentants de sa Gracieuse Majesté Wilhelmine.



Mais pendant que je bavarde, la voiture nous entraîne par la place de Waterloo où le palais désert du Gouverneur Général étend ses colonnes blanchies à la chaux. Le haut fonctionnaire, véritable vice-roi des Indes néerlandaises, peut disposer à son gré des forces de terre et de mer et faire la guerre ou la paix, passer des traités, légiférer, nommer les fonctionnaires sous sa haute responsabilité personnelle, n'ayant à rendre compte de ses actes qu'à la Reine et au Parlement.

Autour du Gouverneur, un Conseil Consultatif de cinq membres, puis les directeurs et commandants des différents services qui forment le Conseil des Directeurs.

Mais son palais de Batavia est en ce moment désert. Le Gouverneur Général réside la plupart du temps sous les frais ombrages de Buitenzorg à deux heures de chemin de fer de la capitale.

Plus loin, l'immense place Royale, véritable esplanade entourée des riches hôtels de Batavia. Il faut, je crois, justifier d'un certain revenu pour habiter sur cette place dont on ne peut faire le tour en une heure de bon pas.

Enfin, le jardin où se promène une foule de curieux et de joyeuses compagnies en costumes frais et pimpants. Fleurs, serpentes, confettis voligent de tous côtés. Le jour tombe. Les globes électriques s'allument dans le feuillage tandis que le cortège s'organise. Chars fantaisistes, voitures élégantes garnies de bouquets, bicyclettes fleuries, un vrai Lundi gras sur la promenade des Anglais à Nice. Rien n'y manque et l'entrain ne fait certes pas défaut.

Au milieu des blondes et corpulentes Hollandaises passent des demi-sang au teint mat, à l'œil de feu, ayant tout le charme des créoles et aussi toute leur nonchalante allure.

Nos bras se fatiguent. On ne s'ennuie pas à Batavia. Mais la fête n'est pas terminée. Des dîners à petites tables sont servis dans une immense salle où nous arrivent les flonflons de l'orchestre annonçant l'ouverture du bal.

Idéale cette salle de fêtes ou plutôt ce hangar de soixante mètres de long sur vingt de large, soutenu par d'élégantes colonnettes et entièrement dallé de marbre blanc. Autour, de larges vérandas permettent au public d'admirer les ébats de la jeunesse tout en dégustant les délicieuses mixtures à la glace que l'artiste buffetier de céans réussit en maître.

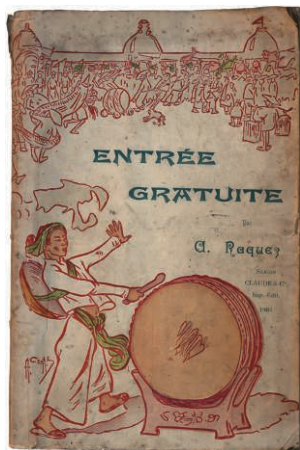
Non moins d'ardeur au bal qu'à la bataille des fleurs, mais ne pas s'engager à la légère, à la française. La société de Batavia est très fermée et sous ces dehors enjoués, se cachent une certaine pruderie et, comment dirai-je, certains calculs tout américains.

Les jeunes gens sont moins nombreux que les jeunes filles. Ces fleurs des tropiques brûlent du désir de convoler en justes noces et s'unissent à leur maman pour tendre des filets à maris. Parfois un bon jeune homme se trouve, sans s'en douter le moins de monde, avoir compromis une blonde enfant qu'il est mis en demeure d'épouser.

J'en parle croyez-moi, par oui dire et sans connaissance de cause car je me suis amusé comme un fou, fatigué comme plusieurs et je ne suis menacé d'épouser aucune de ces jolies filles.

A noter une danse du pays, très gracieuse, rappelant un peu notre pas de quatre, et que l'on ne se lasse pas d'admirer tant elle est menée avec charme pas ces couples élégants.

Entrée Gratuite



— Vous venez, monsieur, de commettre une grosse faute sans le savoir. Si nous agissions comme vous, nous ne pourrions conserver notre prestige vis-à-vis des indigènes.

C'était à Bandoeng, en l'île de Java, voilà tantôt six ans. Par une soirée délicieusement exquise, nous étions quelques-uns étendus dans nos *rocking-chairs* sous la large véranda de l'hôtel Homann. Une troupe de chanteurs vint à passer. Ils répondirent à notre appel.

L'orchestre — un *anglounk* — se composait uniquement de bambous de différents calibres. Suspendus dans un léger cadre de bois qu'agitaient les musiciens, les cylindres heurtaient les montants du cadre et rendaient un son. Choisis toujours avec soin ils sont combinés

en vue d'un accord rigoureux.

Les Javanais que nous avions devant nous tenaient chacun en main leur instrument pendant qu'ils dansaient avec des contorsions des jambes, des bras et des mains. De temps à autre, ils se faisaient face comme dans notre quadrille français, se croisaient, se suivaient en cercle ou serpentaient en agitant l'*anglounk*. Ils répétaient sans trêve la même courte phrase musicale, appuyée par une flûte et un tambour, eux aussi de bambou, et dansaient la *tandak*. L'ensemble de la musique très harmonieux et suavement doux.

Or, les danses terminées, le chef de la bande, s'avancant jusqu'au bord de la véranda, avait mis genoux à terre, puis joignant les mains dans l'attitude de la prière, s'était incliné, attendant son obole.

Me levant de ma chaise, je lui remis une pièce de monnaie qu'il reçût en se baissant jusqu'au sol.

Telle était la cause de l'apostrophe de mon voisin de chaise.

J'avais manqué à tous mes devoirs. Il me fallait non me lever, mais jeter sur le marbre de la véranda la piécette que l'homme eût emportée comme un chien emporte un os qu'on lui jette à ronger.



Java

Sunday 1 May 1898

With us aboard the Chinese mail ship *Giang Seng* is a young Dutchman, the son of a Java colonist sent to Europe seven years ago to receive an education. He is now 22, speaks French, English, and German, but wonders whether he will recognize his father, whom he has not seen for such a long time.

We are nearing land. The coastline is low and without interest. No city is visible. Batavia spreads into the interior. We disembark at the Tanjong Priok quay, and a railway takes passengers into the city.

A few warships flying the young queen's flag are berthed in a fine artificial port. Here are the great docks, the superb quays of Tanjong Priok. Everything is quiet. Today is Sunday in a Protestant country. A crowd of parents in their Sunday's best await the travelers. Our young comrade's father, understandably impatient to hug the son from whom he has been separated for so long, jumps into a sampan the sooner to be able to smother the returning lad with great loud kisses.

The *Giang Seng* is moored. Goodbye, dirty ship, and definitely not *Au revoir*! The customs are not demanding. But the train station is a disappointment.



It is noon by the sun as well as the face of the clock. A train has just left, and the next one will not leave for two hours. My stomach, which was sorely tried for three days, emits violent protestations against any delay, so we decide to strike a deal with a hired local vehicle, which whisks us toward the city at breakneck speed.

These public conveyances, the only type used in the country, are most peculiar: light carriages with two wheels and a double seat, one in the front, the other facing the rear and separated by a single backrest, hence their apt name of "*dos-à-dos*," or back-to-backs, retained by the Dutch and the Malays since the French occupation.

The driver normally sits in the front seat, with his client uncomfortably

settled at the back and forced to take up abnormal positions to keep the carriage balanced.

It is much simpler to shift the unwashed charioteer to the rear as he will always find a way to steer his vigorous little horse by squatting like a monkey if necessary.

This Malay man cuts a singular figure in his *sarong*, a length of patterned cotton cloth he wears tight about the hips and down to his bare feet, a short coat, his hair raised into a knot and enclosed in a madras bandana or sometimes a turban. Most respectful as he receives his wage, the man stands back, holding out his right hand and supporting his wrist with his other hand and bowing deeply and not without grace.

Here is the *Hôtel des Indes*. This is a world of its own! In fact, the hotel occupies five hectares, one of the managers, who speaks our tongue most correctly, informs me.



The *dos-à-dos* speeds along a canal. On every side are swamps filled to overflowing with an untamed jumble of banana, palm, coconut, and *areca* trees.

This part of the island was once a veritable den of pestilence. Although it has been made much less unhealthful, even today, no one would choose to spend a season here.

Here are a few docks and the large buildings of the “Standard’s [sic] Oil Company”.

On the canal, Malay women paddling pirogues ferry their bananas or grapefruit with pinkish flesh to the city.

A train station comes into view, then a district with old houses. This is Old Batavia, or Kali Besar, as the Malays call it, the business district, where large trading houses and banks have their offices in the old buildings and dependencies of the famous East Indian Company, a deserted district from morning till evening, where the only activity consists of small traders, especially cabinetmakers and manufacturers of bamboo or rattan furniture, who are legion all along the route.

From this point on, an electric tramway enters the city, which covers a considerable area. To reach the Meester Cornelis suburb, we would have to travel 14 kilometers.

Each of these small trains offers three quite distinct categories of cars. European, Malays, and Chinese do not travel together and each have their own dedicated cars.

Following the tramway track, we travel along a canal, or rather a banked river, the Mill River, or Molenvliet. Stairs have been built every twenty meters. At their base is a concrete edge that enables housewives to do their laundry, to the extent that such yellow, silty waters can be used for such a purpose. It must, though, for Malay women of all ages swarm there with bare

shoulders, arms, and throats, washing sarongs or bathing in the river. These women spend almost all day there, worthy of serving as models for that Dutch school so inimical to delicate and graceful forms!

In the formal courtyard is a veritable park, with a kiosk-cum-bar lit at night by electric lights. An immense prickly pear tree (*figus indica*), which the Dutch call *waringeu*, spreads its branches more than twenty meters in diameter.

Here is an entire series of single-story buildings separated from one another by lawns and gardens.

At the front of the rooms, a wide open veranda protected from the sun's ardor provides each of us with a table, coffee and tea service, a *rocking chair*, and an armchair with articulated arms. The rooms are lit with electric light of dazzling white and furnished with a bed that could accommodate an entire family. On the bed is the leather roll filled with horsehair or straw the British call "Dutch wife" and which makes it possible at night to keep one's legs from making contact with the sheet while allowing what little air blows through the rooms to circulate.

It is terribly hot in Batavia, and draughts are so little feared that the vast dining room I now enter has fifteen or twenty large openings that have never seen a door or a window.

The midday meal, or *rystaffel* (rice table) is not yet over. I walk straight into Dutch colonial life, and find myself, somewhat astonished, face to face with the national dish.

Rice serves as the base, and all around, piled pell-mell by the guests in their plate (or plates), eggs fried or in omelets, fish fried, boiled, or baked, roast chicken, chicken giblets and potatoes swimming in a curry sauce, minced meat with chili kept fresh inside banana leaves, oven-baked golden minced meat cakes *au gratin*, vegetables of every description cooked in ginger- or chili-based mixed stock, small dried fish, etc., etc.

Not far from me, a fat captain assaults three large, deep plates he filled conscientiously before devouring their content. I admire him, having never suspected such capacity in a human being. O Gargantua! O Pantagruel! What repasts and feasts you might have had here had you allowed your taste buds to go native even a little!

Less excitable and then timid, I hesitate and then proceed cautiously. Opposite me, a few young men observe me from the corner of their eye, and the gentle smile I see on their lips encourages me to address them in French. This makes them very happy, they tell me, as my appearance first suggested an Englishman. They lower their guard. If I am French, *Vive la France!*

Our lucky star is out in the heavens. Today in Batavia is the occasion of the Flower Festival, with a *corso carnevale* and *veglione*, just as on the Riviera.

I conclude my *rystaffel* with the mandatory second course, an excellent steak and potatoes, and before departing the feeding department, I inquire about hotel life in this country.

Each morning, the boy deposits the traditional *café au lait* on the table outside the room, or rather the *lait au café* as only the milk is hot. The exquisite coffee is made by slowly distilling cold water through coffee beans that are crushed but not ground. The result is a kind of deliciously fragrant essence that has nothing in common with our chicory mazagrans.

With their large jars filled with water and their basin, the bathing cubicles do not permit full baths but only ablutions with a great deal of water, repeated morning and evening.

At eight o'clock, a cooked breakfast is served, attended by Dutch women in bloom, their feet bare inside light babouches with often gilded heels, a sarong wrapped around their body, a gray belt in lieu of corset, and the *kebaya*, a kind of camisole made of thick muslin. All highly intoxicating!

Noon sees the return of the *rystaffel* and its devotees. At four, tea is served on each room's veranda. Dinner is at seven. Wines are very good and not expensive.

After each meal, pitchers of free *Schiedam*³¹ and *bitter* are placed at the guests' disposal. It would take a very sick Dutchman to pass up his *half and half* aperitif served in a tall Madeira glass. It is the godhead.³²



Service is provided by Malays, gliding silently along the marble flagstones. They know only their own language, but everyone speaks it here. Attentive and meticulous though hardly hyperactive, they would not relinquish their grave and dignified slowness for anything in the world.

Accompanied by my friendly dining neighbor and a young Italian, we take a carriage to the Botanic Garden, where the Flower Festival is taking place. But a detour takes us on a visit to the native district, or rather one of the native districts.



In Batavia as in the rest of the island, apart from the colonists, three groups coexist without mixing: natives, Chinese, and Arabs.

The natives themselves consist of three races: the Sundanese (from Sunda, or the Sundanese Islands), who live in Batavia and in the western part of the island, the Javanese proper in the center on the Sultans' land, and the Malays further east.

These races are distinct in mores, sense of what is appropriate, and customs. The Javanese have a literature, special characters, and two languages: one for social superiors, the other for inferiors. The Malays use Arabic characters. All are Muslims, though in name more than in practice, as the people are totally indifferent and excessively moderate when it comes to manifestations of religious faith.

We know that these islands were subjected to an Arab invasion and following that by Hindus. Brahmanists and Buddhists built marvelous temples,

31. City in southern Holland known for its gin.

32. Raquez uses the word *pai*. Playing on "Madeira," he ironically introduces this Portuguese word, which means "father," "progenitor," or "origin"; *Pai do Céu* means "father in heaven."

whose ruins we will have occasion to study. But the Arab domination turned fearsome, forcing these people to abandon the cult of Brahma, Vishnu, and Buddha in favor of the Koran and its practices. Being gentle, kindly, and made for servitude, these people laid down before the Crescent, just as they would submit later to the Dutch master's iron hand.

Some Arabs remained in the country, united among themselves but closely watched by the government, which fears the fanaticism of pilgrims returning from Mecca, while the Master wants only calm and obedience in all circumstances from these 32 million natives commanded by a handful of Europeans.

The Chinese of Batavia form a species unto themselves. Whereas in Singapore they come like migratory birds to accumulate savings before quickly returning to the cradle of their ancestors, the Celestials of the Dutch colony settled here for good, took roots, and multiplied like weeds in our countryside and often even selected one or several Malay women with whom to share the joys and sorrows of existence.

But all these foreign elements are herded and led with an iron hand by the administration.

The Chinese live mostly in a district of Batavia a short distance from Kali Besar called Kampong Cina. There are almost 100,000 of them in the capital. Like the Arabs, they have a military cadre that answers to the Dutch government: a major, a captain, lieutenants of their own race, and an entire organization that keeps an eye on them and is responsible for law and order, policing, and raising taxes.

The natives proper live in clusters of houses forming a *kampong*, like the one we admired at the 1889 Exposition. And admire is the word as it consists of very beautiful houses on stilts whose bamboo partitions are as sturdy as they are easy on the eye thanks to the perfection and regularity of their construction.

Like the *kampong* chief, the natives must be back at nightfall. None, be they men, women, or children, may absent themselves at night without authorization or a motive deemed valid in the morning. Punishments are very severe. Those in charge of monitoring their comings and goings sometimes receive singular notes bearing European signatures and allowing such or such comely young lady to rejoin her legal domicile.



Servitude is absolute and respect for Europeans strictly enforced. Woe betide a Malay who does not give way to a representative of the white race in the street. The natives are not allowed to learn the Dutch tongue, and in this sense, the obligation in which Europeans find themselves to speak the language of the country is excellent for colonization.

The Dutch themselves are subjected to various rules, some of which can be deemed arbitrary while others seem bizarre, at the very least.

For example, you may not hire a European domestic in Java, and you are strictly prohibited from placing on your head that inconvenient headgear of eight reflections³³ some call a stovepipe.

Top hats, which no one in the colonies misses wearing, is the exclusive prerogative of representatives of Her Gracious Majesty Wilhelmine.



But while I prattle, the carriage takes us to Waterlooplein, where the deserted palaces of the Governor General display their tall whitewashed columns. This high-ranking civil servant, in practice the Viceroy of the Dutch East Indies, has both terrestrial and seaborne forces at his disposal and can declare war or peace, conclude treaties, legislate, and appoint functionaries under his personal responsibility with only the Queen and Parliament to answer to.

Around the Governor is a Consultative Council consisting of five members, then the directors and commanders of the various services that form the Council of Directors.

But for now, his Batavia palace is deserted. Most of the time, the Governor General resides among the cool, shady foliage of Buitenzorg, two hours from the capital by railway.

Further on is the immense Koningsplein, a veritable esplanade surrounded by Batavia's wealthy private residences. I believe it is necessary to demonstrate a certain income level before being allowed to reside in this square, around which it is not possible to walk in less than one hour even at a brisk pace.

Finally, we come to the park, where a crowd of curious onlookers and joyful groups in clean, fresh costumes wander about. Flowers, streamers, and confetti fly on every side. Night is falling. Electric globes come on as the procession is being organized. Fantastic floats, elegant carriages decorated with bouquets, bicycles adorned with flowers: this might as well be *Lundi Gras* on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. Nothing is missing, and there is no shortage of high spirits.

Women of mixed blood mingle among blonde, corpulent Dutch women, with their olive skin and fiery eyes and all the charm and nonchalant demeanor of creoles.

Our arms are getting tired. Life is not dull in Batavia. But the festivities are not over. Suppers are served at private tables in an immense hall where the orchestra's *oompahs* announcing the start of the ball reach our ears.

This meeting hall is perfect, or rather this hangar sixty meters long by twenty wide, its roof supported by elegant slim columns and paved entirely in white marble. All around are wide verandas that allow the public to admire the young people's exertions while enjoying delicious iced concoctions the master confectioner of the house creates to great levels of artistry.

33. French slang: *huit-reflets*, or "eight reflections," due to the shininess of the silk material of the top hat.

The dancing is no less energetic than the flower fight, but it cannot be joined lightly in the French manner. Batavia society is very closed, and beneath those cheerful exteriors hides a certain prudery, even certain American calculations, so to speak.

The young men are less numerous than the young women. These flowers of the tropics burn with the desire to enter into rightful matrimony and team up with their mothers in spreading husband-catching nets. Sometimes, a nice young man discovers without seeing it coming in the slightest that he has compromised a blonde child, whom he is now obligated to marry.

Please believe me then I say that I know of what I speak only from hearsay and without direct experience as I had tremendous fun, I am as tired as six, and I am not threatened with having to marry any of these pretty girls.

I particularly note a very graceful local dance, which recalls our own *pas de quatre* and which one never tires of admiring, such is the charm of its execution by elegant couples.

Entrée Gratuite

“Come sir, you commit a great fault without knowing it. If we act like you, we cannot preserve our prestige vis-à-vis the natives.”

It happened in Bandung, Java Island, almost six years ago. One deliciously enjoyable evening, several of us were lying back in our *rocking chairs* on the veranda of the Hôtel Homann.

A troupe of singers happened to come by. They responded to our call.

The orchestra, an *anklung*, consisted entirely of bamboos of various calibers. Held inside a light wooden frame shaken by the musicians, the cylinders strike the uprights of the frame and emit a sound. Invariably selected with care, they combine to form a rigorous harmony.

The Javanese musicians standing before us each held their instrument in their hands while their dance involved contortions of legs, arms, and hands. From time to time, they faced each other as in our French quadrille, crossed over, or followed each other in a circle or line, shaking their *anklung* all the while. Again and again, they repeated the same short musical phrase supported by a flute and a drum, also made of bamboo, and danced the *tandak*. The musical ensemble was highly harmonious and deliciously gentle.

The dances over, the head musician stepped up to the edge of the veranda, kneeled, joined hands in the attitude of prayer and bowed, awaiting his meager reward.

I rose and gave him a coin, which he accepted while bowing down to the ground.

This was the source of a reprimand from my nearest neighbor.

I had failed in my duty. I was supposed not to rise but to throw the small coin onto the marble floor of the veranda for the man to pick up, just as a dog carries off a bone tossed in its direction.