NEW GUINEA



New Guinea Natives in Full Dress.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

DESPITE the steady work of missionaries and the creation of skeleton government organizations by Australia and Holland, New Guinea (or Papua) continues to be the least known of the large islands of the world. Much of this obscurity is due to size itself. New Guinea is the most extensive island in the world outside the polar regions.

The island is strikingly different from nearby lands. In coming to Papua from Malasia it is the sudden contrast in the people which makes the most startling impression on one's mind. The Malay, grave, reserved and dignified, is as unlike his New Guinean neighbor as a Chinaman is unlike a European. These islanders are a happy, boisterous lot until some little thing offends them, when they at once become sullen and treacherous.

The pure Papuan is very dark brown, usually a well-built, thick-set man of medium height. Occasional individuals are seen who are slight, short, and who have strongly marked Negritos characteristics. These probably represent survivals of the very earliest human inhabitants of the region, as were the Negritos in the Philippines. Out on the Pacific coast toward the old German territory the human type is markedly different. Here in varying degrees one meets people who have characteristics of other island groups to the eastward, for there probably have been accidental colonizations along this shore.

When the Pacific territorial transfers began during the World war, German New Guinea was added to the British possessions in the island and placed under Australian control; the western half has for 75 years belonged to the Netherlands. Though the island cannot properly be considered as part of the Malay archipelago, its population being Polynesian and Negrito, it is often so classed because part of it is politically a portion of the Dutch East Indies.

Interior Almost Unknown.

Great tracts of the more than 300,000 square miles of this enormous island have not been explored and practically nothing is known about the great range of mountains in its interior, many of the peaks of which are more than 12,000 feet in height. Five or six of them dwarf every mountain peak in the United States in comparison. Were the island itself set down on continental United States it would cover a strip of land from the eastern tip of Massachusetts to Nebraska and as far southward as the city of Washington.

Cannibalism exists among the wilder tribes. They are spirit worshipers though they are too deficient in mental development to have made their system of religion at all complex, but they are hemmed about by thousands of superstitions and taboos.

Neither the men nor the women of the island bother much about tailoring and dressmaking bills. The one dress of a New Guinea woman lasts her a lifetime—for it usually consists only of the tatooing made upon her skin or of a series of small scars made in a pattern across her chest and shoulders. But the "curse of rags," which has spread through the South Sea islands with the coming of the white man, is taking hold in New Guinea, too, and the native is now trading birds of paradise for tawdry pieces of cotton print.

Even in their most primitive state the various tribes of natives of the island love personal adornment. Some of the islanders pierce the septa of their noses with a sharp heated bone, and through the holes thrust flowers, feathers, or one of the bones of an enemy. The dwarfs of the interior, who, when full-grown, average four feet nine inches, thrust a boar's tusk through the holes pierced in their noses, giving them a sinister expression. Often to enhance their beauty they paint their faces red with clay, black with charcoal or white with powdered sago.

Widows Harshly Treated.

The island enjoys one distinction not many other large areas of the earth can boast—a great shortage of women, hence polygamy does not exist. Even so, the poor widows are made to suffer such indignities because of the death of their lords that few of them are able to attract another husband. The widow's "weeds" of some of the tribes are queer little poke bonnets made of bark, and among other tribes the benighted must wear suspended around their necks by a fiber rope a coconut shell filled with rancid lard, which is sufficient in itself to keep all aspirants at a distance.

The principal commodity which New Guinea produces is the coconut, and more than a million and a half dollars' worth of copra is shipped to the United States each year. To Germans is due the credit for having discovered the many uses of this valuable product and for developing the industry to some extent before 1914. But the real merchant prince who made the wheels of the industry go round was a woman, Half Scotch, half Samoan, this remarkable person, whom the natives nicknamed "Queen Emma," opened up thousands of acres of coconut trees and employed thousands of natives. Recently one of the plantations, which she bought for a box of tobacco, sold for almost $350,000.

Strange Variety of Dialects.

Missionaries find a big problem in the complexities of language and idiom. Dialects vary not by provinces or physical divisions, but actually by villages. And the worst of it is that words pronounced in exactly the same way may mean something entirely different a few miles away. Sometimes there is a variation of one seemingly inconsequential letter which reverses a meaning.

In one case it was found after some years of teaching that a word used to designate the Holy Spirit actually meant, in that locality, sweet potatoes!

Along the coast the natives have become superficially civilized and a number of them have become Christianized. Cannibalism has disappeared there, but contact with the economic system of the whites has not been without its evils. Especially has the indenturing of the natives to work for several years away from their homes tended to break up their family life and to give them habits and points of view not conducive to happiness when they return to their old environment.

The islanders are tremendously superstitious. Especially do they fear the ghosts of their departed fellows, and engage in fantastic and noisy ceremonies to propitiate them or frighten them away.

A thoroughgoing communism is practiced by the New Guineans. In many of the interior communities one huge "long house" shelters scores of natives. In some localities the entire families live in these communal shelters; in others, however, they are club houses for the warriors alone, women and children being rigorously excluded. Where the "long house" is reserved for men, the women and children live in nearby smaller dwellings. These become veritable household factories, the women being constantly employed in preparing food and producing other things to meet the needs of their lords.

Why Rapid Evaporation Cools the Atmosphere

It is fairly well known that if a wet towel be hung in the window the room becomes almost immediately several degrees cooler. If a little alcohol or ether is spilled on the hand the cool sensation experienced is due to the rapid evaporation. Now, the atmosphere contains water vapor, and when this reaches a certain percentage, taking into account the temperature, the humidity becomes oppressive. The reason is that at a certain temperature the air can hold only a certain amount of this water vapor, and consequently no more can evaporate.

This principle is applied on the plains and in hot, dry regions. A porous jug filled with water is suspended from the rear axle of the wagon, and the water gradually seeps through the pores of the jug. As it reaches the outside it is at once dried up or evaporated by the sun and by the wind created by the motion of the wagon. This makes the water contained very cool, indeed. In India even ice has been made by this principle alone. The water is put in shallow pans, on the outside of which are bundles of straw saturated with water. As this evaporates ice is formed in the pans.

Why Mussolini Bars Fetes

Mussolini's declaration "no more ceremonies," made at a conference of representatives of Italian mayors, is taken to be the final order to the effect that receptions, banquets, official teas, "vermouths of honor" and the like interfere with the serious work which Italy must accomplish in the next ten years. Throughout the almost five years of Mussolini's tenure of office there have been extremely few of those ceremonial functions which in most countries pertain to the office of prime minister. In future, he promises, they shall be almost nil, and all the little functionaries under him must follow this example. This is a real "self-denying ordinance" to a race which is notable for its love of gracious ceremonial.

Slants on Life

By J. A. WALDRON

An Error in Diagnosis

"IS IT anything serious?"

Mrs. Nordlaw looked at her physician with apprehension as he studied his thermometer and felt her pulse.

"That remains to be seen," replied the physician solemnly and with a wise glance. "What have been your symptoms?"

"Why, I've had flushes and chills, nervousness, fluttering here,"—she indicated her heart—"and strange alternations of depression and—"

"Yes—yes! I understand."

"I'm naturally strong, am I not, doctor? You've said so more than once."

"Naturally. Yes. But even the strong, you know, are sometimes—"

"But, really, is there anything to fear? I am terribly nervous, as you see!"

"Your condition may be temporary—your indisposition slight. Your appetite is—"

"Oh, always the same. Good. I ate a very hearty dinner last night, and it wasn't until after breakfast this morning that I felt so strange I thought I should go back to bed and call you."

"Do you eat much candy?" and he indicated a partly emptied box on the bed.

"I love it! I eat it whenever I crave sweets. And that happens to be often."

"So? But too much is not good for you. How about exercise—your activities? You go about a good deal—and perhaps dance much?"

"Why, I'm on the go all the time! As for dancing, really, I can't refrain from it. I adore it!"

"Well, tell me of your activities, say, for the past two or three days."

"Let's see. This is Sunday, is it not?"

"Yes. Don't you hear the church bells? I was about to start for church when you called me. Do you go to church very often?"

"Always on special occasions. And now and then. My late husband was not a church-goer, you know." There was a suspicion of a tear. "But you must not think me a barbarian, doctor!"

"No. You are full of life and must have social excitement. Quite right."

"But as to my activities, what I do one day is much like what I do another—except as to Sundays. Yesterday, for example, I rose early to attend the auction of the belongings of the Princess Zou-Zou. She was quite the model for dress and other things, you know. I just wanted to see what she had. Then I kept an engagement for luncheon and danced at the same place—"

"How long?"

"Why, until it was time to come home and dress for dinner, which I took out. And then I danced again until—until—they closed, you know. They closed quite early, because today is Sunday."

"And if it had been Friday or Thursday, you might have danced longer?"

"I might, I'll confess."

"You must refrain from dancing for two or three days and get more sleep. And here's a prescription that may help. It is nothing serious. Good-day!"

As the physician retired the 'phone rang. Mrs. Nordlaw answered, "Who is this? Oh, Mr. Belford! Call you Jack? Somebody may be listening! Well, then, Jack! Call you dear Jack? Why, Mr. . . . Jack! Afraid to propose last night? Why, Jack! Dear Jack, then! . . . Oh! Oh! Well, I'll give you an answer tonight, Jack! I've called you that once, haven't I?" And she rang off, laughing happily.

In a moment she stopped laughing and began to sing. Then she began to dress hurriedly.

A maid entered. "Mrs. Rundell is waiting, ma'am. She said you had called her up."

"Bring her right in, Flora." And Mrs. Nordlaw continued her song.

"Why, dear!" said Mrs. Rundell, a very pretty woman, entering. "You said you were ill, and here you are as gay as a girl. You were even singing. And I met the doctor at the door going out as I came in!"

"Yes."

"And you look just as happy as you've looked for weeks dancing with Jack Belford."

"Yes. And what do you think of a widow—a widow, mind you—who mistook a plain case of love for some serious illness?"

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