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VI.—*On the Progress of Civilisation in Northern Celebes.*
By A. R. WALLACE, ESQ.

[Read January 24th, 1865.]

THE large and curiously shaped island of Celebes is settled by the Dutch at its extreme northern and southern points only, the vast intervening region and the two eastern peninsulas being entirely in the hands of native governments or occupied by savage tribes. The early voyagers in the East give us scarcely any information about this extensive island; for, as it was not known to produce those valuable spices which were the chief object of their adventurous expeditions, they did not care to visit it. Its coasts, too, are everywhere surrounded by reefs and shoals, which were the dread of early navigators, and were as much as possible avoided by them; and it thus happens that, except as regards the neighbourhood of Macassar, where the Dutch early established themselves, we have more scanty accounts of Celebes than of any other island in the Archipelago.

In the present paper I propose to give a short sketch of the extreme northern portion of the island only, to point out its physical and ethnographical peculiarities, and to explain the interesting and instructive changes that have recently taken place in its political and social condition.

The district of Minahassa, as this region is called, seems to be the only part of Celebes that is of altogether volcanic structure. A considerable portion of it is elevated about two thousand five hundred feet above the sea, forming the plateau of Tondano, on which is a beautiful lake twenty miles in circumference. Scattered about this plateau and on its borders, rise volcanic peaks and ridges to the height of six and seven thousand feet above the sea, and the whole region is thickly dotted with villages up to a height of near four thousand feet. Nowhere have I seen such a depth of soil as clothes even the steep sides of these mountains; they are continually watered by the warm equatorial rains, and it is not, therefore, surprising that they are clothed to their very summits with a vegetation of the utmost luxuriance and beauty. Noble palms, elegant tree-ferns, and the singular pandani or screw-pines abound; and many of the larger forest trees are thickly festooned with *orchidææ*, *bromeliææ*, *arums*, *lycopodiums*, and mosses. Ferns are in infinite variety; some with gigantic fronds ten to twelve feet long, others barely an inch in extent; some with massive and entire leaves, others elegantly drooping their finely-cut foliage.

The subterranean forces which have raised this plateau and

furnished the materials for its fertile soil, still manifest their activity. Volcanic eruptions both of lava and ashes are not unfrequent; earthquakes are of weekly or monthly occurrence; while boiling springs, often resembling, on a small scale, the geysers of Iceland, and craters of boiling mud on the level plateau, impress the mind with the idea that some terrible catastrophe may at any moment devastate the country.

When these remote seas were first visited by Europeans the district we are speaking of was nominally subject to the Sultan of Ternate, who exacted tribute from the coast tribes and introduced the Mohammedan religion among some of the maritime inhabitants. When the Portuguese obtained power and influence in Ternate and made its Sultan their vassal, they took possession of Minahassa and established a factory at Menado about the year 1540.

In the following century, the Dutch assisted the native chiefs of the Moluccas to expel the Portuguese, whose influence in these countries they acquired and have ever since steadily maintained. In 1677, they expelled the Portuguese from Menado and occupied the place as the capital of one of the districts under the government of the Moluccas.

The inhabitants of Minahassa, more particularly those of the central plateau, differ much from those of all the rest of the island, and in fact from any other people in the Archipelago. They are of a light-brown or yellow tint, often approaching the fairness of a European; of a rather short stature, stout and well-made; of an open and pleasing countenance, more or less disfigured as age increases by projecting cheek-bones; and with the usual long, straight, jet-black hair of the Malayan races. In some of the inland villages of the plateau where they may be supposed to be of the purest race, both men and women are remarkably handsome; while nearer the coasts where the purity of their blood has been destroyed by the intermixture of other races, they approach to the ordinary types of the wild inhabitants of the surrounding countries.

In mental and moral characteristics they are also highly peculiar. They are remarkably quiet and gentle in disposition, submissive to the authority of those they consider their superiors, and easily induced to learn and adopt the habits of civilised people. They are clever mechanics, and seem capable of acquiring a considerable amount of intellectual education.

Up to a very recent period these people appear to have been thorough savages, and there are persons now living in Menado who remember a state of things identical with that described by the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The inhabitants of the several villages were practically distinct tribes, each under their own chief, speaking languages unintelligible to

each other, and almost always at war. They built their houses elevated upon lofty posts to defend themselves from the attacks of their enemies. They were head hunters like the Dyaks of Borneo, and were said to be sometimes cannibals. When a chief died his tomb must be adorned with two fresh human heads, and if those of enemies could not be obtained slaves were killed for the occasion. Human skulls were the great ornaments of the chiefs' houses. Strips of bark were their only dress. The country was a pathless wilderness, with small cultivated patches of rice and vegetables or clumps of fruit trees, diversifying the otherwise unbroken forest. Their religion was that naturally engendered in the undeveloped human mind by the contemplation of grand natural phenomena and the luxuriance of tropical nature. The burning mountain, the torrent and the lake, were the abode of their deities, and certain trees and birds were supposed to have especial influence over men's actions and destiny. They held wild and exciting festivals to propitiate these deities or demons, and believed that men could be changed by them into animals, either during life or after death.

Here we have a picture of true savage life, of small isolated communities at war with all around them, subject to the wants and miseries of such a condition, drawing a precarious existence from the luxuriant soil, and living on from generation to generation with no desire for physical amelioration and no prospect of moral advancement.

Such was their condition down to the year 1822, when the coffee plant was first introduced and experiments were made as to its cultivation. It was found to succeed admirably at from fifteen hundred up to four thousand feet above the sea. The chiefs of villages were induced to undertake its cultivation. Seed and native instructors were sent from Java; food was supplied to the labourers engaged in clearing and planting; a fixed price was established at which all coffee brought to the government collectors was to be paid for, and the village chiefs who now received the titles of "Majors" were to receive five per cent. of the produce. After a time, roads were made from the port of Menado up to the plateau, smaller paths were cleared from village to village, missionaries settled in the more populous districts and opened schools, and Chinese traders penetrated to the interior and supplied clothing and other luxuries in exchange for the money which the sale of the coffee had produced. At the same time, the country was divided into districts, and the system of "controleurs", which had worked so well in Java, was introduced. The "controleur" was a European, or a native of European blood, who was the general superintendent of the cultivation of the district, the adviser of the chiefs, the protector of the people, and the means of communi-

cation between both and the European Government. His duties compelled him to visit every village in succession once a month, and to send in a report of their condition to the Government. During these circuits, he lodged in the houses of the chiefs, who soon began to vie with each other in being able to entertain the "controleur" handsomely. By the joint labour of the community, commodious houses were built in each village for the accommodation of strangers, and the chiefs, becoming comparatively wealthy by the receipt of their percentage on the coffee, furnished their houses in the European style and adopted European clothing. Disputes between adjacent villages being now settled by a superior authority, the old inconvenient semi-fortified houses were disused, and under the direction of the "controleurs" most of the villages were rebuilt on a neat and uniform plan.

In order to give some idea of the present condition of these people, I must extract a few passages from the notes of my first excursion into the interior of Minahassa. I was accompanied by the controleur of the district of Tondano. At six miles from Menado we reached the beautiful village of Lotta, whence a continual ascent for six miles more brought us on to the plateau of Tondano at an elevation of about two thousand four hundred feet. We passed through three villages whose neatness and beauty quite astonished me. The main road, which is much cut up by the bullock-waggons which bring down the coffee, is always turned so as to pass outside the village. The street can thus be kept neat and clean. It consisted of a narrow roadway with a broad border of turf on each side kept as neat and well cut as the drive up to an English villa. The houses stand back a few yards from the road and are separated from it by a neat hedge of roses, which in this delightful climate thrive luxuriantly and blossom all the year round, and are the more striking and beautiful to a European from coming upon him so unexpectedly. The cottages are built regularly and neatly of wood, raised about six feet on substantial posts generally painted light-blue, while the walls are white-washed. They all have a wide verandah in front, with a neat balustrade and steps. Before them are rows of orange trees, a few flowering shrubs or coffee bushes, and the inhabitants are all neatly dressed in light cotton clothing. The scenery around is in the highest degree picturesque and beautiful. Coffee plantations, regular, but luxuriant, alternate with rice fields and vegetable grounds; while wooded hills and volcanic peaks, clothed with noble tree-palms and tree-ferns, form a magnificent background. Much as I heard of the beauty of Minahassa, the reality already surpassed my expectations.

About one o'clock we reached Tomohon, a large village and the centre of an extensive coffee district, and dined at the house of

the "major", a native chief. Here was a fresh surprise for me. The house was large, airy, and most substantially built. Ornamental lamps hung from the ceilings. The chairs and tables were handsome and well made, of native woods and constructed by native and well-taught workmen. Madeira and bitters were handed round as we sat in the verandah, after the Dutch fashion; then two boys neatly dressed and with smoothly-combed hair brought water and clean napkins to wash our fingers. The dinner was excellent. Fowls cooked in a variety of ways; wild pig roasted, stewed, and fried; a fricassee of bats, with potatoes, rice, and several native vegetables. We had good claret and English beer, white china, finger-glasses, and fine napkins. Our host was dressed in black with satin waistcoat and well-polished shoes, and really looked comfortable and gentlemanly in them. The conversation was in Malay, and he did the honours very well. I staid here till the next day and had a little gem of a bedroom with blue and white gauze curtains, clean linen, and every convenience of civilisation. Yet my host's father, who was chief before him, wore a strip of bark for his whole clothing, and lived in a dark hut raised high in the air to defend him from the attacks of his neighbours.

In these villages the coffee plantations and rice fields are cultivated in common. The chief and a few of the old men decide what days in the week it is required to work in them, and a gong beats at seven in the morning to assemble the labourers. Men, women, and children work together at weeding, coffee-gathering, or rice-harvesting; an account is kept of the hours' work given by each family, and when the crop is gathered each receives his proportionate share. This system of public fields and common labour is one not uncommon during the first stages of civilisation, and wherever it exists, should be carefully maintained, as it offers great facilities for the introduction of new agricultural crops and new modes of cultivation. The people having been accustomed to this mode of growing their rice, readily adopted the cultivation of coffee in the same manner; and it is quite a mistake to suppose, as many do, that they are driven out to work at stated hours like slaves. They go out cheerfully to their labour along with their relations and neighbours; they have no taskmaster over them; and they work pretty much as they like under the general direction of their chief and the "contrôleur". They are working, too, for themselves; the produce is all their own, and each family's share enables them to purchase luxuries and comforts which they formerly could never obtain. Time-honoured custom, the force of public opinion, and self-interest, combine, therefore, to ensure a regular attendance of workers in the coffee plantations; and, though I believe punishments are occasionally inflicted for neglect

of work, yet this is quite exceptional, and it is on the whole not correct to apply the term "forced labour" to this system of cultivation.

When I was staying at the little village of Rurukan, I lived opposite the school-house, which also did duty for the church, and I had a good opportunity of observing both teacher and pupils. The schoolmaster was a native educated by the missionary at Tomohon. School was held every morning for about three hours, and twice a week in the evening there was catechising and a lecture. The children are all taught in Malay, and, among other things, I could hear them daily repeating the multiplication table up to 20 times 20,—a task which few of our school-boys can perform. They always conclude by singing, and it is very pleasing to hear old familiar psalm tunes in these remote mountains sung with Malay words. Singing is one of the real blessings which European missionaries introduce among people whose native chants are so monotonous and melancholy as those of all savage nations; and these people seem to enjoy it, for it is a common thing to hear two or three of them singing together in their own houses.

On catechising evenings the schoolmaster is very great, preaching and teaching for three hours at a stretch (very much in the style of an English ranter) to an audience consisting of the younger people of the village. The missionaries have undoubtedly done great things in this country. In connection with the Government, whose policy has greatly assisted their labours, they have changed a savage into a civilised community in a very short time. Thirty years ago the country was a wilderness, the people naked savages garnishing their rude houses with human heads. Now it is a garden, worthy of its sweet native name of "Minalassa". Good roads and paths traverse it in every direction, some of the finest coffee plantations in the world surround the villages, interspersed with extensive rice fields more than sufficient for the support of the population. The people are now the most industrious, peaceable, and civilised in the whole Archipelago. They are the best clothed, the best housed, the best fed, and the best educated; and these results are attributable in a great measure to the system of government now adopted by the Dutch in their Eastern possessions. The system is one which may be called a "paternal despotism". Now, we Englishmen do not like despotism,—we hate the name and the thing, and we would rather see people ignorant, lazy, and vicious, than use any but moral force to make them wise, industrious, and good. And we are right when we are dealing with men of our own race, and of similar ideas and equal capacities with ourselves. Example and precept, the force of public opinion, and the slow, but sure, spread

of education, will do everything in time, without engendering any of those bitter feelings, or producing any of that servility, hypocrisy, and dependence, which are the sure results of despotic government. But the case is different when the governed are in an admitted state of inferiority to their rulers; and in the family and the school even *we* use a certain amount of despotism and believe it to be necessary, because we know that children and pupils are unable to decide for themselves what will be best for their permanent welfare. Children must be subjected to some degree of authority; they have to be taught many things, the use of which they cannot comprehend, and which they would not without some pressure take the trouble to learn. Habits of order, of industry, of cleanliness, of respect and obedience, are inculcated by authority as well as by example, and that which the adult and more intelligent portion of the community believe to be of the greatest importance in morals and manners, is forced upon the young and inexperienced by means which, however mild and persuasive, are still essentially despotic. The scholar and the apprentice are subjected to a mild despotism for the good of themselves and of society, and their confidence in the superior intelligence of those who ordain and apply this despotism, neutralises the bad effects and bad feelings which are in other cases its inevitable results.

Now, there is not merely an analogy,—there is in many respects an identity of relation between master and pupil, or parent and child, on the one hand, and an uncivilised race and its civilised rulers on the other. We know, or think we know, that the education and industry, and the common usages of civilised man, are superior to those of savage life; and, as he becomes acquainted with them, the savage himself admits this. He admires the superior acquirements of the civilised man, and it is with pride that he will adopt such usages as do not interfere too much with his sloth, his passions, or his prejudices. But as the wilful child or the idle schoolboy, who was never taught obedience and never made to do anything which of his own free will he was not inclined to do, would in most cases obtain neither education nor manners; so it is much more unlikely that the savage, with all the confirmed habits of manhood, and the traditional prejudices of race, should ever do more than copy a few of the least beneficial customs of civilisation, without some stronger stimulus than mere example.

If we are satisfied that we are right in occupying the country, and assuming the government over a savage race, and if we further consider it our duty to do what we can to improve our rude subjects, and raise them up towards our own level, we must not be too much afraid of the cry of “despotism” and “slavery,” but must

use the authority which we possess to induce them to do many things which they may not altogether like, but which we know are indispensable to their moral and physical advancement. The Dutch have shown much good policy in the means by which they have effected this. They have in most cases upheld and strengthened the authority of the native chiefs to whom the people have been accustomed to render a voluntary obedience, and by acting on the intelligence and self-interest of these chiefs, have brought about changes in the manners and customs of the people, which would have excited ill-feeling and perhaps revolt had they been directly enforced by foreigners.

In carrying out such a system, much depends upon the character of the people, and the system which succeeds admirably in one place could only be very partially worked out in another. In Minalassa, the natural docility and intelligence of the race has made their progress very rapid; and how important this is, is well illustrated by the fact that in the immediate vicinity of the town of Menado are a tribe called Banteks, of a much less tractable disposition, who have hitherto resisted all efforts of the Dutch Government to induce them to adopt any systematic cultivation. These remain in a ruder condition, but engage themselves willingly as occasional porters and labourers, for which their greater strength and activity well adapt them.

No doubt the system here sketched is open to some objections. It is to a certain extent despotic, and interferes with free trade, free labour, and free communication. A native cannot leave his village without a pass, and cannot engage himself to any merchant or captain without a government permit. The coffee produced is all sold to Government at less than half the price that the local merchants would give for it, and they of course cry out against the monopoly; but they forget that without these restrictions on free communication and free trade, the product itself would never have existed, and the population, whose slavery they commiserate, would probably have been still savages.

The coffee plantations were established by the Government at a considerable outlay of skill and capital. Roads have been made, and education has been given freely to the people, and if in return for this outlay the Government claim the monopoly of the produce as the most economical and least oppressive mode of taxation, what right have we to cry out against them while we maintain a salt tax and an opium monopoly in India, neither of which can be shown to have been as directly instrumental in improving and elevating the people as this coffee culture of the Dutch has certainly been. Neither the monopoly nor the restrictions on freedom should be considered permanent, or as anything but a step in the march of civilisation; and it is satisfactory to know that

the present Dutch Government acknowledge this principle, and are steadily abolishing them; but, as a first step towards the civilisation of a savage race, the system and the mode in which it is here carried out, appears to me worthy of our most attentive consideration.

Competition and free trade are excellent things of themselves, and produce excellent results, but we do not think of turning out our boys and girls at twelve years old to get their own living and education by free competition in the world. It appears to me, however, that we do an equally unwise and unjust thing when, having obtained power over a country inhabited by a savage people, we expose them at once to the full tide of competition with our highly elaborated civilisation, and expect them to thrive under it. Who can doubt but that the New Zealanders were capable of improvement and civilisation under some system which, treating them for a while as children, should have educated and protected them. Instead of that we have brought them into direct contact with English wealth and energy, vigorously developing itself for its own ends, and the result must inevitably be, sooner or later, the extermination of the native race. In Ceylon and in India we have English capital largely invested in coffee and indigo culture, but can we point to any corresponding improvement in the moral or social condition of the natives? In Java and in North Celebes, on the other hand, the population is steadily increasing, and is greatly improved in material and moral condition. The people get wealthy, and the Government obtains a large revenue without direct taxes, and at the same time is carrying on the education of the whole race towards a higher state of society. The system which produces such results I believe to be a good one, and I think that we should hesitate in applying the principles of free competition to the relations between ourselves and savage races, if we ever expect them to advance in civilisation or even to maintain their existence upon the earth.

NOTE. The effects of freedom of trade and free competition for labour in Western India, are thus alluded to by a writer in the *Times* of January 26th, 1865:—"Labourers are recruited (chiefly from the Madras provinces) by native sub-agents, who are paid so much per head for the labourers whom they can persuade to take the "bounty" (an advance of money which is subsequently recovered from their wages); these sub-agents itinerate among the villages, and as they have a direct pecuniary interest in the occupation, and as they are safe from contradiction, and the native imagination is fertile and the moral standard rather low, it is not difficult to set before the listener a picture of tempting brilliancy. Under such conditions, gross deception and bitter disappointment must be rather the rule than the exception, when recruiting is carried on among a very ignorant and credulous population. One such instance came under my own observation a few months ago. A gang of about ninety labourers, who had been taken to Ceylon from one of the northern districts of the Madras Presidency, were

placed upon a plantation in the interior of the island. Whether the labour was new and strange to them, or the conditions of their employment such as they had not been led to expect, or from some other cause, these men absconded in a body, and were, in consequence of this breach of agreement, captured and imprisoned. The cholera broke out among them, and, when the order for their liberation was received, not more than half the number survived, and these were seen in miserable plight endeavouring to reach the coast.

“Now, sir, without attempting to throw the blame of this occurrence on any particular person, it can scarcely be said that these men left their native villages with a clear understanding of the nature and conditions of their future employment; such misconception might result from their own stupidity, but it should be a warning of the cruel fate to which the most ignorant, and therefore the most helpless, part of the population may be exposed under the so-called emigration system.”

In Cameron's work on *Malayan India*, he alludes to the effect produced on the barbarous aborigines of the Malay peninsula by their contact with the semi-civilised Malays, an effect exactly analogous to that of our own rough settlers and traders on the natives in many of our colonies. Mr. Cameron says:—“The meeting of the two peoples has proved an unfortunate one for the aborigines; for wherever the contact has taken place, it has introduced among them tastes to which they were formerly strangers, but which, when once acquired, they cannot control. To satisfy these, they regardlessly place themselves under a bondage of debt, which in many cases ends only with life. In their dealings with these child-like people, the Malays are most unscrupulous, and practise all sorts of imposition; but the aborigines, though conscious of their own simplicity, and alive to the roguery they suffer, are yet too honourable to throw off obligations into which they have voluntarily entered, no matter by what deceits they were induced to do so.”
