

PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

JAVA

BY

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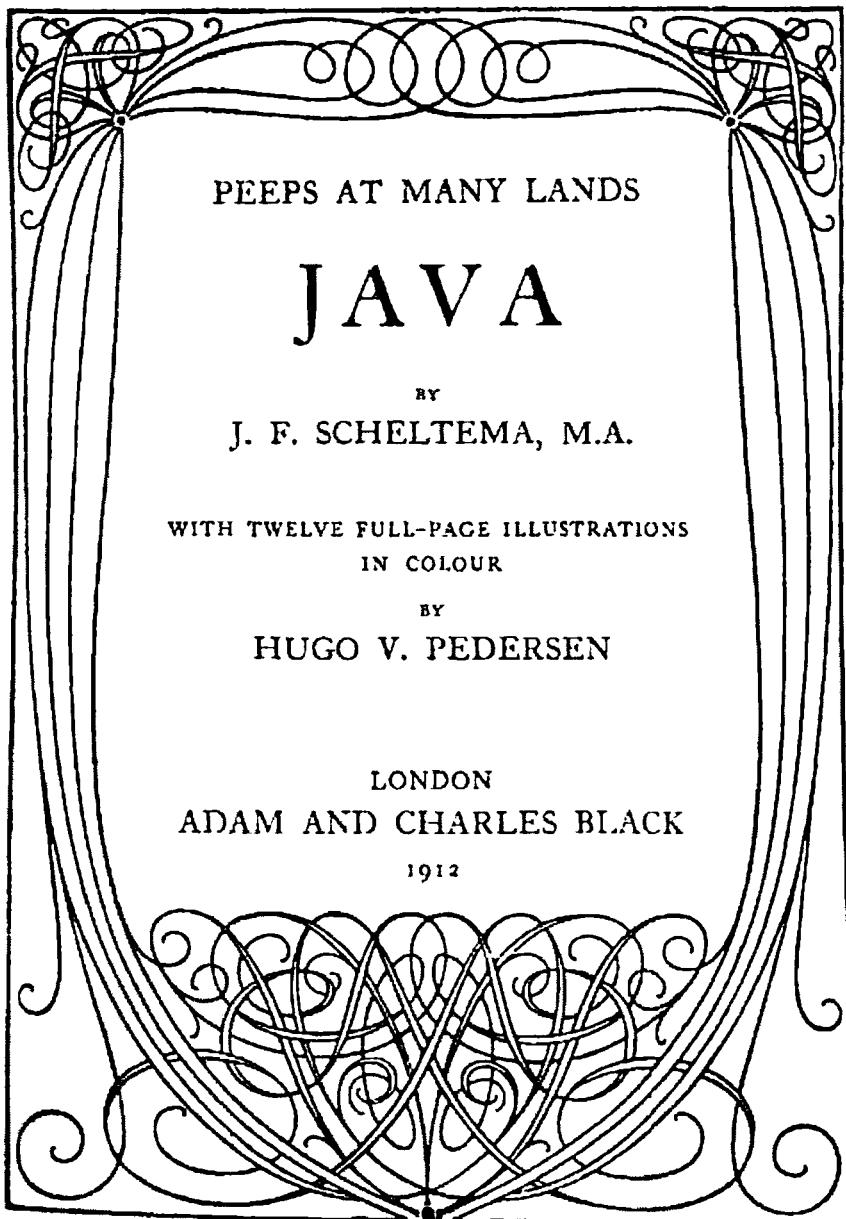
WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

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A Peep at Java

insects, so numerous and in so great variety that, whenever a hole or a crevice opens, one of the proper size will be sure to come forward and inhabit it, the white ant enjoys an especially bad reputation for its destructiveness. Many are the means devised to keep it away from bookcases, wardrobes, provision rooms, etc., but somehow, if not constantly watched and scared by the noise of sweeping, it bores its way through all obstacles and eats everything. On several occasions its healthy appetite has even done away with large quantities of bullion, not to speak of banknotes in heaps—that, at least, was the excuse of those in charge and responsible for the shortages.

The jungle teems with wild animals and hunting is a pastime much indulged in. There are no elephants in Java, as in Sumatra, but the rhinoceros roams in herds. If one of them is, for some reason or other, expelled by its mates, it becomes much more ferocious by forced seclusion and, like an elephant in the same circumstances, requires a good deal of nerve to deal with. Wild cattle are hardly less dangerous but the shooting of deer and birds, either for the table or for their plumage, entails less excitement. Wild pigs are generally killed with the gun, nobody caring for pig-sticking, and old boars can be very nasty as I have strong cause to remember, for my left leg was on one occasion ripped up by the fangs of one that objected to my presence dealing death to his tribe. Panthers and tigers are getting comparatively scarce, and one seldom hears now that the post is delayed because they

The Garden of the Spirits

down into the burnt-out crater, leads to Telaga Warna (Lake of Many Hues). Silent and deep and changing its colour when the sun's rays, reflected by its wooded banks, penetrate for a short time, at noon, its mysterious recesses, it shows at the very threshold of the Tanah Priangan (Garden of the Spirits) the truth of the saying that the beauty of Java's volcanic landscapes is set off by lakes and lakelets as is the beauty of her sky by the languid moon and the sparkling stars. Well do I remember a night spent at Telaga Warna, "the moonlight sleeping on its banks," with a nervous pony that refused to jump the trunk of a tree fallen across our path, blown over by the last west monsoon. In going it had not objected but returning in the dark it refused to obey. To go round the obstacle in the dense undergrowth was out of the question and so I had to wait for daylight, not wishing to leave my borrowed mount, chancing an encounter with a mad, solitary rhinoceros which, according to native reports, frequented the place in the small hours of morning to quench its thirst. Alone and unarmed, I could have climbed a tree if the worst had come to the worst, but no rhinoceros showed up, notwithstanding an occasional rustling of leaves and snapping of twigs as if some animal was forcing a passage, probably a wild pig or deer. My pony getting more tractable with dawn, after a watch extremely tedious except when such noises broke the deep silence, I was at last able to make it clear the barrier and trot back to Sindanglaya where my unaccountable absence had begun to cause anxiety.

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Sindanglaya is a finely situated sanatorium but its military hospital has been vacated; sick and convalescent soldiers are sent to Chimahi since the railway gives easy access to the more elevated Bandoong plateau. Not far distant lies the Governor-General's country-seat Chipanas, its name being derived from a hot spring in its grounds. With Sindanglaya as headquarters, several interesting tours can be made, a visit to the crater of the Gedeh crowning all, especially if, by camping overnight at Kandang Badak (Rhinoceros Pen), one arrives at the summit with sunrise to enjoy the beautiful views in all directions before the clouds gather round the mountain tops. It is good advice for excursions everywhere in Java and in tropical countries generally, not to let the first streaks of light in the east catch you sleeping. Up to Kandang Badak the path leads through a dense forest past Chibodas, the hill annex of the Botanic Garden at Buitenzorg referred to in the preceding chapter, past the waterfall and the echoing *guwa lalai* (bats' grotto) of Chibeureum. Beyond Kandang Badak the surroundings assume an Alpine character, then vegetation ceases and both the old and the new crater are reached through a desert strewn with the large boulders flung out on different occasions. To good pedestrians I can recommend, from experience, the descent to Sukabumi (World's Delight) on the other side, first traversing a meadow with white flowers sadly nodding at the disturbers of their rest when stirred by the sea breeze; they are the never dying