

Around the house were wide paddy-fields, of deep, black mud, through which the great *carabaos* would wallow and plunge, dragging the primitive ploughs of the natives, with the half-naked farmers wading behind; and close by, ran the Pasig River, from its source in the Enchanted Lake up country, down to Manila Bay; and often during the rainy season in July and August, when the roads were almost impassable for carriages, I used to go down to my office in a queer native *banca*, or canoe, hollowed out of a single log, with a roof of matting to protect the passenger from the dreaded tropic sun; paddled in what would seem to a Canadian or American canoeist a very clumsy fashion, first on one side and then the other, with a heavy, round-bladed paddle; the sturdy *banquero* squatting on his heels in the stern, half-naked and bare-headed, perhaps, utterly regardless of a sun which would send a white man into high fever in no time. I created boundless astonishment on one occasion, by displaying my knowledge of canoeing with the single paddle, gained long before in the woods of far-away Maine.

I have omitted to mention one important member of our household—the house-snake. One of these creatures, of the native python species, is to be found in every well-regulated suburban house, where he serves in place of a cat, living inside the walls and between the floors and ceilings, subsisting upon rats, mice and cockroaches, and doing inestimable service in keeping the houses free from these and other vermin that swarm in the tropics. One particular snake always attended strictly to business and never issued forth except at night, when he would go to the water-tank to drink, and we would find his tracks upon the tiles in the morning; but often when reading in the evening I have heard his gentle

hiss, or the sound of his lowering himself from beam to beam, and seen the ceiling canvas shake as he writhed along overhead in pursuit of a squeaking rodent.

Attractive as life may seem in the islands to one who has never tried it, with these strange scenes and people, and the lazy, luxurious ways of living, there is a sense of monotony and loneliness about it which cannot be overcome by one from northern climes. Out of the track of the great steamship lines, the islands are seldom visited by "globetrotters," partly on account of their reputation for cholera, typhoons and earthquakes, and a new face was seldom seen in our little Anglo-American colony. Amusements were few and far between; the inevitable Spanish bull-fights, and, in the cool months of December and January, a few dances among the Spaniards and richer class of *Mestizos*; a little shooting, and a great deal of card-playing, whiskey-drinking and general club life, went to make up a rather wearying, not to say demoralizing round of existence. No form of out-door recreation except driving, could be indulged in from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on account of the deadly heat, and horse-back riding, tennis, etc., could only be undertaken early in the morning, or late in the afternoon, and even under these conditions the exercise was too violent.

After two years of this sort of life, I came away fever-stricken, weighing forty pounds less than I should, and glad enough to leave. But now I often look back with a feeling of longing for that queer, wild life among the palm trees and bamboos, with the great volcanic ranges towering in the south; in those islands of wonderful tropic beauty, where the birds never sing, the flowers have no smell, and the Southern Cross glitters just over the horizon at night.

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