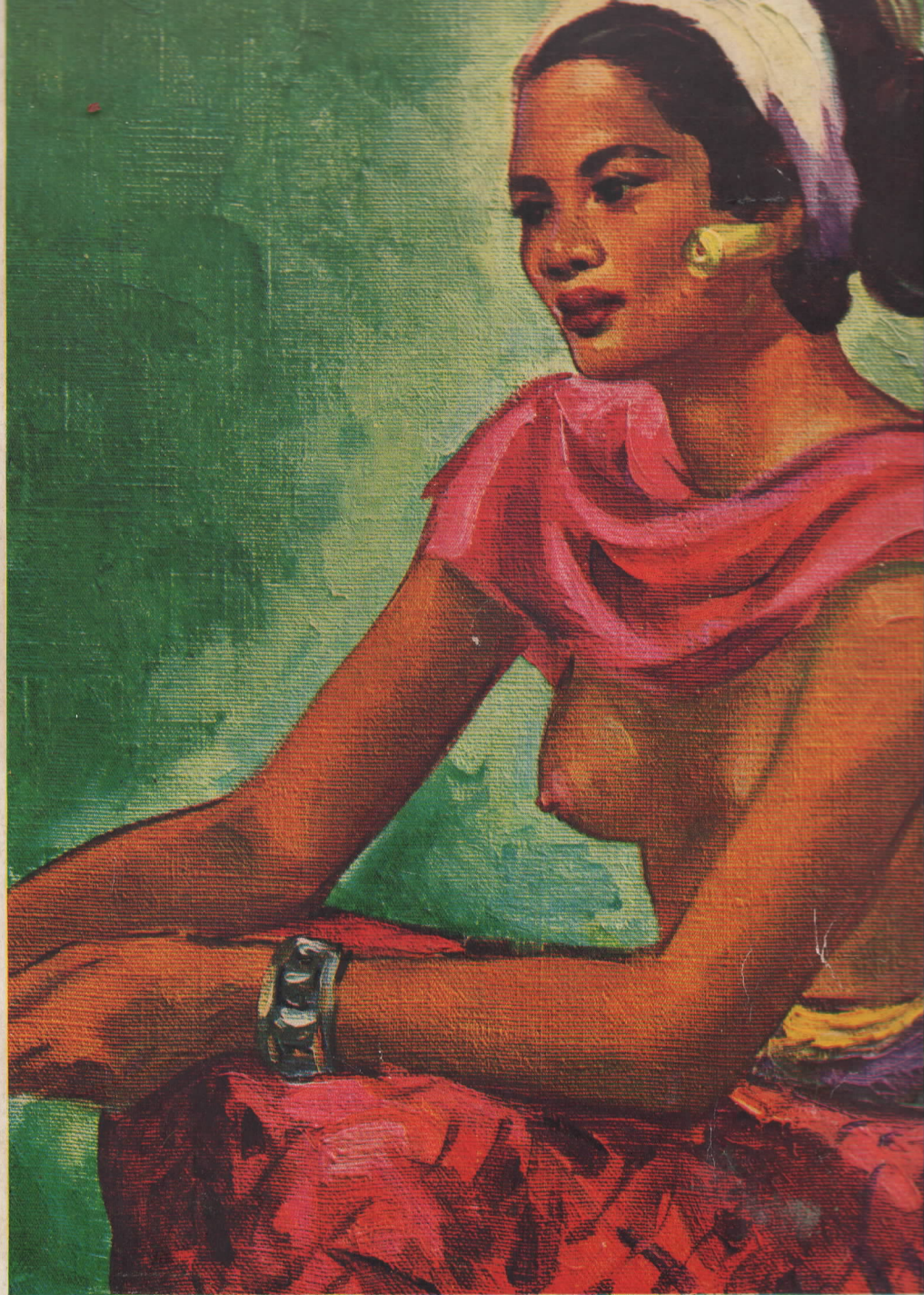
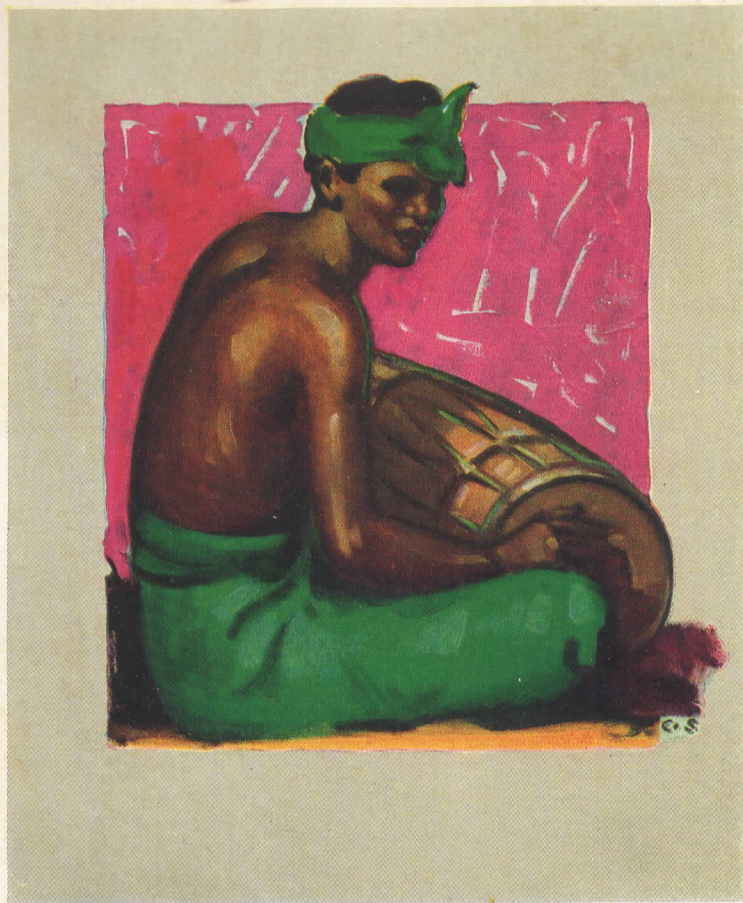


ROMANCE
ALLING



JAVA BALI
SUMATRA
NIAS SIAM
INDO - CHINA



HERE is nothing so fascinating as travel. Who has not felt the urge to know the soft seductive lotus-scented nights of the tropics, to seek the romantic adventures of distant horizons, and to fulfill this idealistic dream within his heart? What greater joy than to visualize the vast sunlands of jewelled isles caressed by pearl-sprayed foam, the sapphire seas, the mystery of the evergreen jungle, the cloudbound mountain peaks revealing in a thousand enchanting guises the endless wonders created by the Great Architect of Life?

Carl Shreve

INTRODUCTION

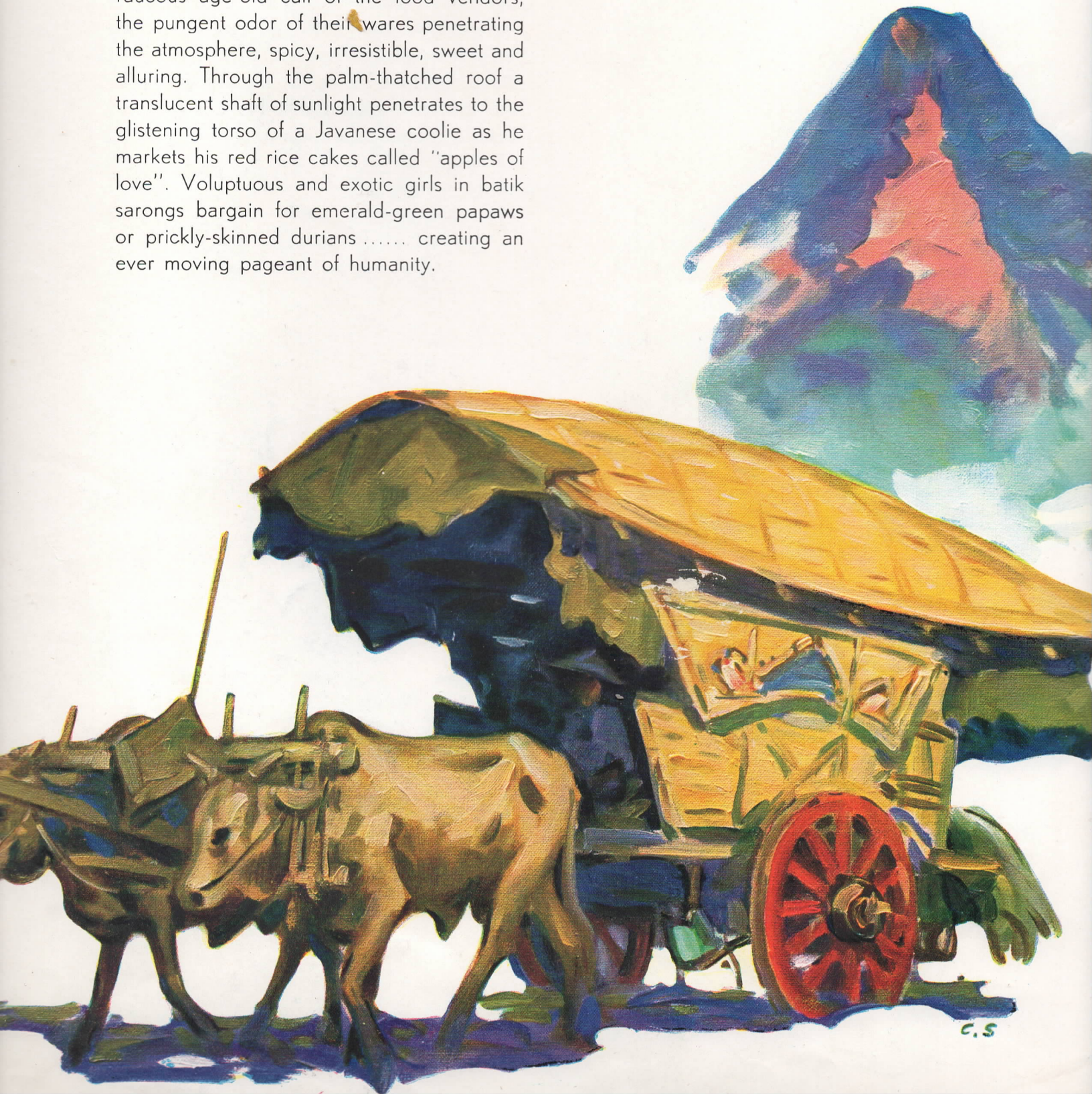
The K. P. M. Line has especially chosen Mr. Carl Shreve, a noted artist, journalist and world traveller, to interpret, in note and in sketch, the gloriously liberating spirit of the Far East, while journeying extensively throughout Java, Bali, Sumatra, Nias, Siam and French Indo-China.



An open motor car on a smooth winding road, with a breeze so soft it is almost a caress, by waterfalls which turn to stardust, and behold, one is above the clouds where the mighty fire gods of the crater "PAPANDAJAN" reign supreme, exhibiting Nature in her most dramatic mood: a boiling, seething inferno of molten lava belching forth liquid fire amidst tropical loveliness, weaving an ever changing pattern of billowing smoke and fantastic shadows upon the inner walls, as if to tell an awesome folk-tale of the crater's incalculable past



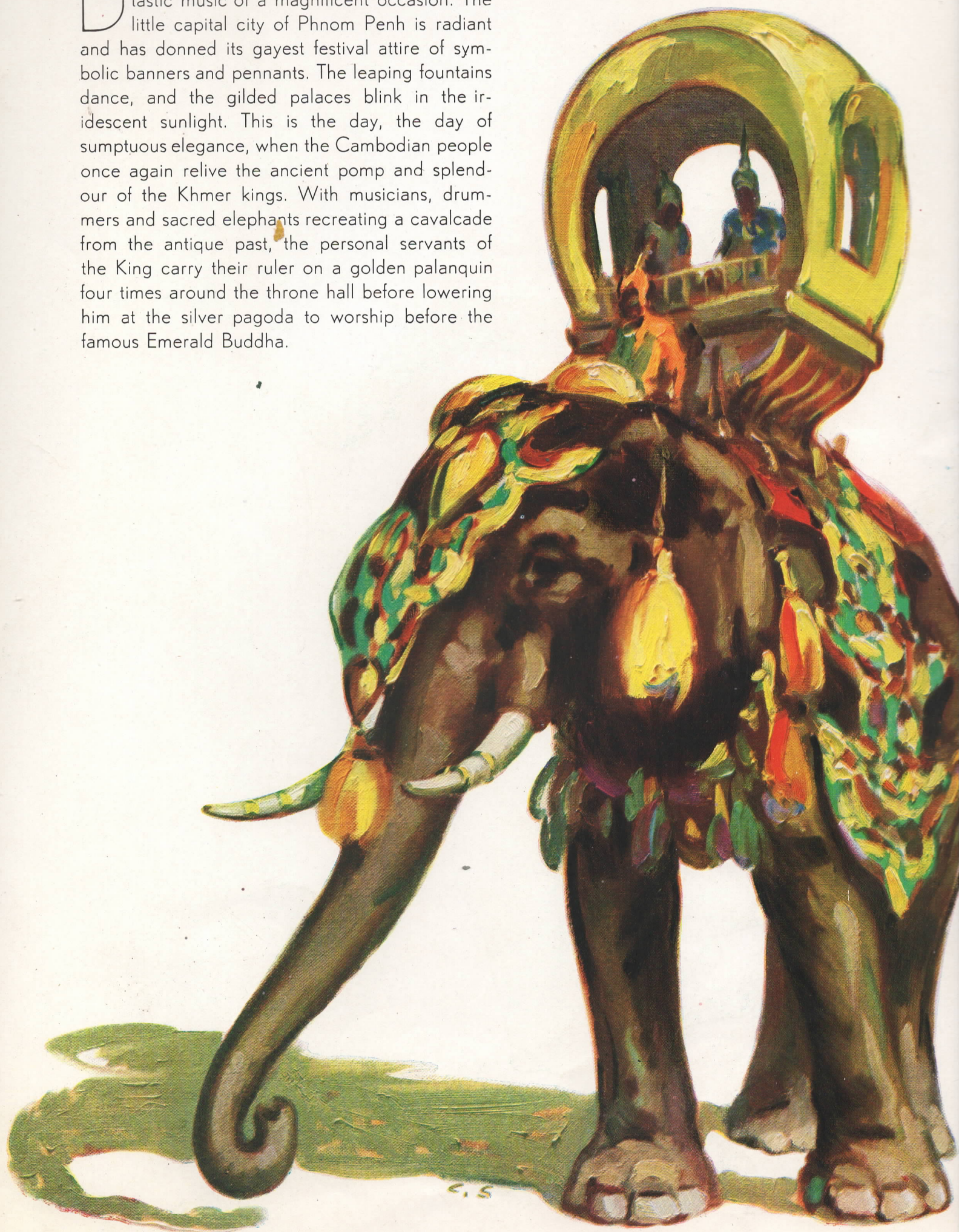
THE innermost heart of Java is revealed in its truest sense in the early morning hours, when the people forgather in the numerous market places. Here one may see colour combinations that would rival the palette of Leonardo da Vinci. Piles of luscious green coconuts, royal purple mangosteens, and bronze-coloured vanilla-scented custard apples are heaped in stacks in rich profusion. Over the drone of many voices rises the raucous age-old call of the food vendors, the pungent odor of their wares penetrating the atmosphere, spicy, irresistible, sweet and alluring. Through the palm-thatched roof a translucent shaft of sunlight penetrates to the glistening torso of a Javanese coolie as he markets his red rice cakes called "apples of love". Voluptuous and exotic girls in batik sarongs bargain for emerald-green papaws or prickly-skinned durians creating an ever moving pageant of humanity.



SILHOUETTED against a lacy cloud pattern the great inverted bowl of the "BOROBUDUR" is shrouded in mystery. A luminous moon breaks through, powdering the colossal dome with moondust, and revealing numerous stupas and galleries. Even in this subdued light one can see that it has been endowed with immortality by master builders who upon these stones carved the history of the Javanese and of the gods that ruled them. Far below on a moss-covered throne sits an immense Buddha who once held the place of honour in the uppermost stupa. But now He appears to meditate over the eleven centuries that He has guarded these incomparable ruins.



DOWN the broad avenue there swells, rolls and hums, like a giant tidal wave, the fantastic music of a magnificent occasion. The little capital city of Phnom Penh is radiant and has donned its gayest festival attire of symbolic banners and pennants. The leaping fountains dance, and the gilded palaces blink in the iridescent sunlight. This is the day, the day of sumptuous elegance, when the Cambodian people once again relive the ancient pomp and splendour of the Khmer kings. With musicians, drummers and sacred elephants recreating a cavalcade from the antique past, the personal servants of the King carry their ruler on a golden palanquin four times around the throne hall before lowering him at the silver pagoda to worship before the famous Emerald Buddha.



IN the days of Angkor Thom's ruling glory it was forbidden all criminals to enter any of the numerous gates which guarded this walled city. In order that all criminals be recognized one big toe was removed. But now, ornamented with the four faces of Siva, these colossal gates, through whose portals have passed great Kings on howdaed elephants, stand in ruin, a ready prey to the dank green jungle which is slowly but surely encroaching upon them, using the octopus-like roots of the wild fig tree to entwine and destroy the arts of man. Certainly there is tragedy written here.



THE Venice of the Orient", known as Bangkok, is a city of labyrinthic canals and scintillating temples, silhouetted against a golden sky. Upon these structures the Siamese have found an outlet for the expression of their artistic skill. It is an astonishing fact that ninety per cent of the Siamese young men enter the monkhood for temporary training. Thus Siam is known as the "Kingdom of the Yellow Robe". Each morning in the cool grey dawn thousands of these young monks in their canary yellow toga-like robes, with a rice bowl under their arm, may be seen along the streets and canals collecting their food for the day. To give food to these young monks is a favour to the giver, not to the receiver, as he will be rewarded with merit in a future birth.



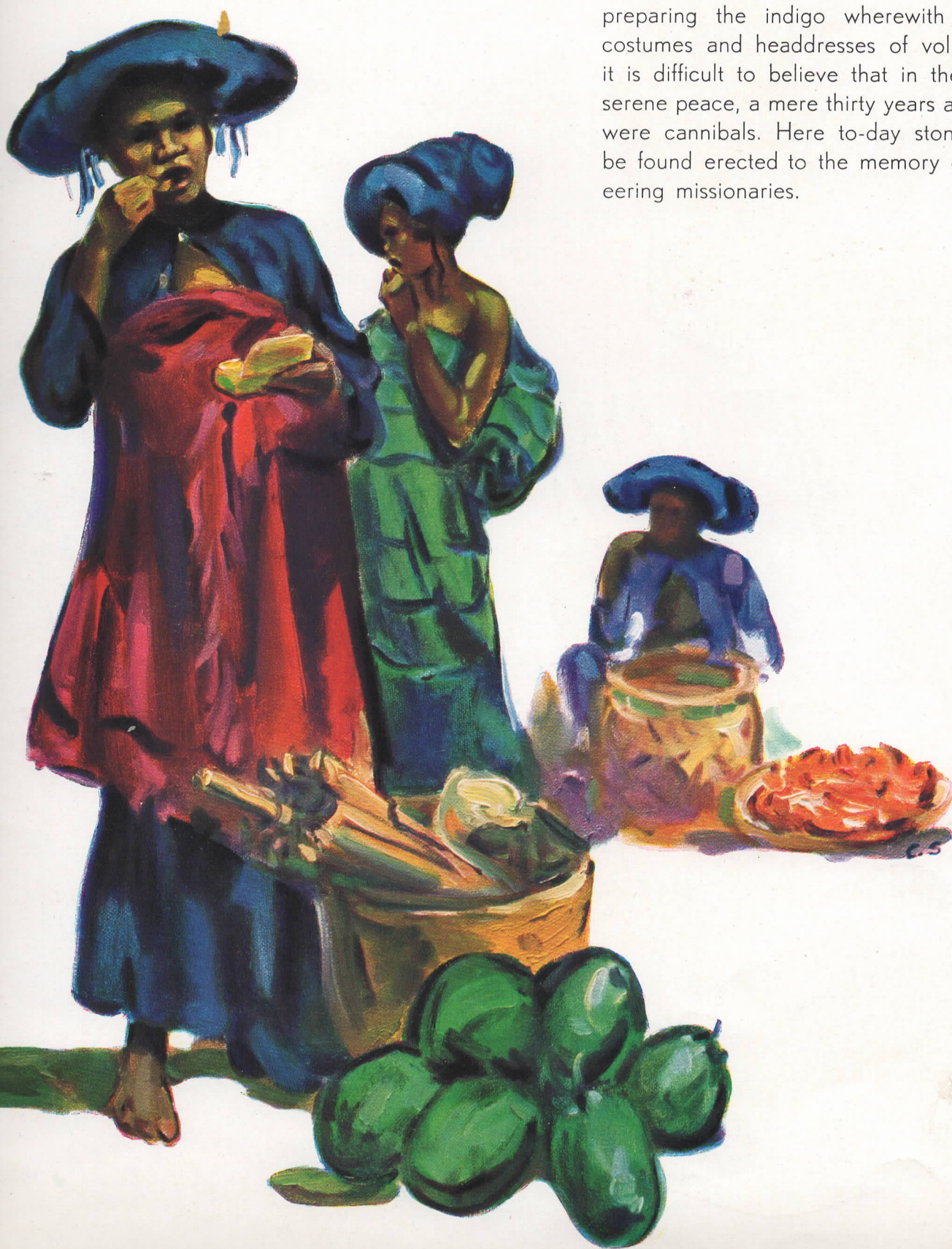
STROLLING through the coolie quarter at Saigon, where the heavy mysterious penetrating odors of the East envelope the streets like an opaque fog, one may see phases of life that are stranger than fiction. The day is ended and these people are returning to the waterfront and to the little sampans and junks they call their homes. Here the air is pierced by many weird and unusual sounds, the high shrill note of the Chinese clarinet wailing a melancholy love ballad, the clank-clank of wooden sandals, the lisp of bare feet. On some of these sampans, no larger than oversized canoes, little fires gleam like jewels from within the mauve shadows, while squatting housewives prepare the evening meal of fish and rice. Soon they will lie down to sleep, with only a matting roof between them and the stars. At dawn they will rise again for another day of gruelling toil. Throughout the Chinese waterfronts this struggling mass of humanity lives and dies without ever knowing a real home.



UNDER the overhanging branches of a great banyan tree, a ring of torches has been placed in readiness for the witch dance. From the depths of the weird shadows a figure emerges and glides to the centre of the ring. She is robed in a costume of gold and silver tinsel, resembling a giant iridescent dragon fly. One movement gracefully blends into another, and one sees her dancing as a combined posturing and whirling. The native orchestra has now changed its rhythm, and the air reverberates from its barbaric throb. Faster and faster she whirls, and under the torchlight glare she seems to be in every part of the ring at once, a figure of translucent and shimmering flame. It is nature's interpretation of passion unleashed. With the staccato beat of the gamelan she draws from beneath the folds of her girdle a twisted dagger and stabs the witch as the orchestra crashes to the finale.



In central Sumatra the magnificent panorama of Toba Lake, blue as melted sapphire, unfolds before one. This Lake fills a tremendous extinct volcano, and along its shores nestle numerous picturesque Batak villages. One of the quaint customs of these natives is the way their domestic relations are regulated, permitting the men to remain at home caring for the numerous children, whilst the wife does the marketing or toils in the rice fields. Watching these people preparing the indigo wherewith to dye their costumes and headdresses of voluminous folds, it is difficult to believe that in these villages of serene peace, a mere thirty years ago, the natives were cannibals. Here to-day stone tablets may be found erected to the memory of brave pioneering missionaries.



UNDER the orange glow of the palm torches the barbaric throb-throb-throbbing of the drums sends one's thoughts back to pre-historic days. Have we ever danced to this same wild bizarre melody, inspiring and awesome; probably telling of some life we have forgotten? Tonight, as in the utterly remote past, the Nias warriors relive the primitive war dances. The torchlight gleams on their armour and half-nude bodies, making them living bronzes. With the broad shimmering blades of their parangs raised above their heads, and with shields to protect their hearts, they advance and grimly face one another, slowly bending and swaying to the music. Then furiously they leap into the air and rush at each other, ready to slice their opponents' heads. But with agility they escape the murderous blade or spear thrust, before it be covered with gore or a head be severed. Never will one witness a truer exhibition of our barbaric past portrayed upon the modern screen of Life.

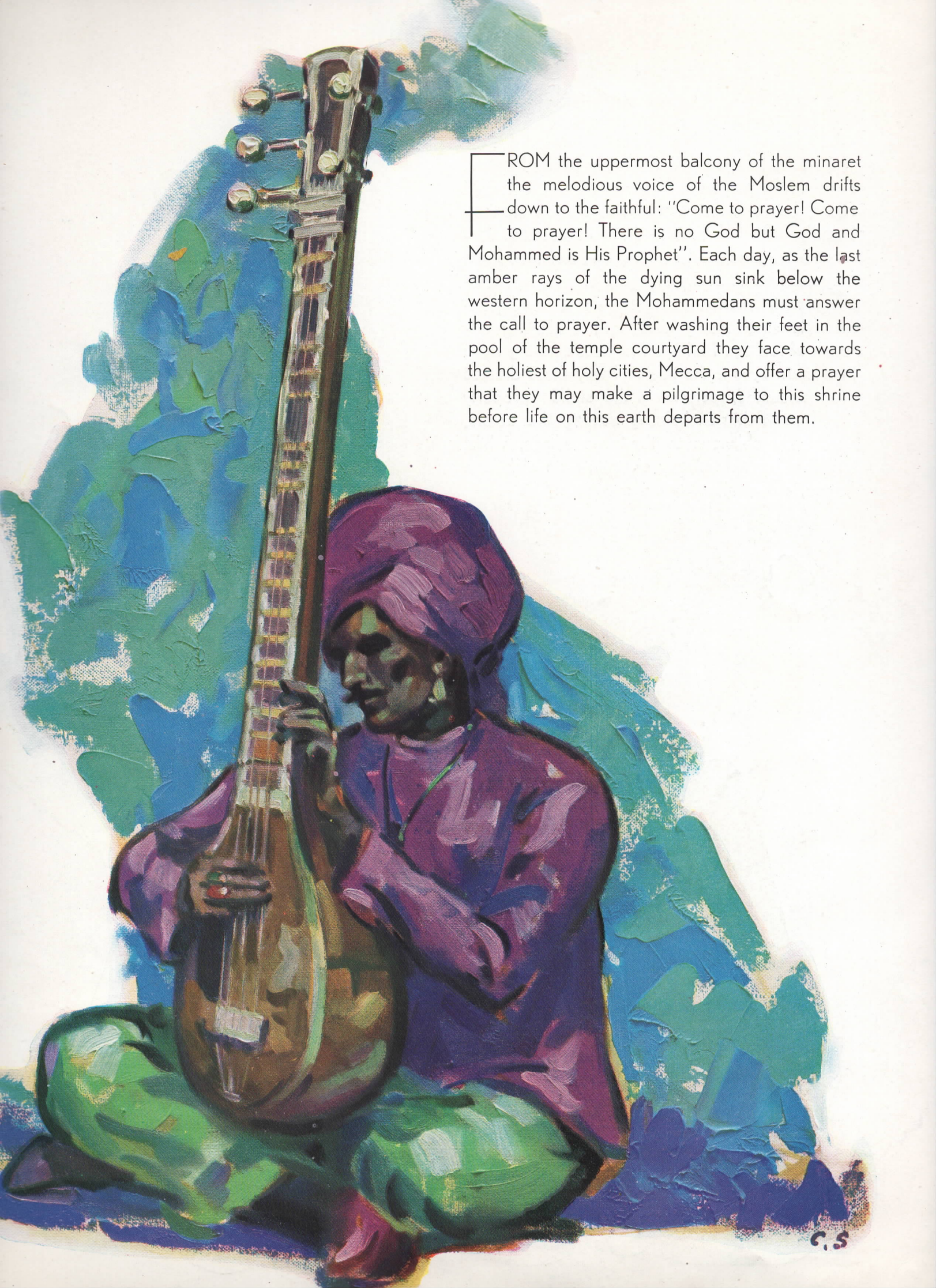


IN the early dawn, when the amber tints in the east announce the advent of another day, one may see the picturesque little Siamese men and women kneeling before the Buddhist shrines of their numerous temples making their offerings of fruit and flowers for the day, creating the impression that they are worshipping idols. However, this is incorrect. It is but the yearning of a simple mind as it pays homage to the great mind of the Buddha, made more realistic to them by a sculptured image. Most Siamese are Buddhists, and Buddhism is a wonderful philosophy especially suited to the requirements of the East, teaching purification through daily self-denial, self-command self-conquest, and patience with others' foibles.



THE Chinese drama characterizes the most mysterious of all eastern peoples and has hardly changed since the days of Confucius. Then as now the favourite theme of these plays is to interpret the court life of the Imperial Family. The players, in their regal and colourful robes, beseech one to use imagination on their behalf, as they confess to the audience that they are mere actors, whilst asking one to believe that they are not. With the clanging of gongs punctuating their marionette gestures, their deportment is emphatically theatrical, disdaining any touch of realism. Perhaps the most amusing thing in western eyes is the informal way these dramas are conducted, permitting the stolid "property men" to walk nonchalantly among the actors, apparently oblivious to the proceedings, whilst transforming an ordinary chair into an elaborate throne, or a molehill into a mountain.





FROM the uppermost balcony of the minaret the melodious voice of the Moslem drifts down to the faithful: "Come to prayer! Come to prayer! There is no God but God and Mohammed is His Prophet". Each day, as the last amber rays of the dying sun sink below the western horizon, the Mohammedans must answer the call to prayer. After washing their feet in the pool of the temple courtyard they face towards the holiest of holy cities, Mecca, and offer a prayer that they may make a pilgrimage to this shrine before life on this earth departs from them.

THE burning glare of the afternoon sun has enveloped the little roof-thatched village of the Minangkabau people of Sumatra. All the natives are asleep, oblivious to their surroundings, except one old warrior who looks as if he had stepped out of the past. His lean, sinuous figure is half submerged in the shadow of a palm tree as he labours over an immensely long drum. Approaching, I remark: "What call him drum?" To my surprise he replies in pidgin English: "Long fellah that make loud talk". He relates in his limited vocabulary how in the old days their heavy tone reverberated throughout the night, summoning the young warriors to reach for their spears and shields. But now they are used only to sound signals for meetings and festive occasions. He continues the story of glorious battles of the past and the ancient history of his people, describing the origin of their fantastical architecture, how the early tribesmen chose the water buffalo as the most powerful and majestic animal in the vast jungles. Wishing to transmit his strength and fighting stamina to their warriors, they conceived the noble thought of designing their homes to represent the upward curve of the buffalo's horns.



S HIMMERING in the sunlight of the Indian ocean, off the coast of Sumatra lies a primitive island as yet little known, and unspoiled by the contact of civilization. Thus Nias raises her proud head above the opalescent waters; an island whose people are shrouded in mystery. They possess many of the characteristics and customs of the early Egyptians, as well as immense hoarded wealth of gold, cast in symbolic Egyptian figures. To study these tribes in their primitive villages, and to see their craftsmanship in forming gold jewelry, one wonders if they are not truly descendants of the Pharaohs of mysterious Egypt.



THE great painted deities of the Suse Temple look down upon the pushing, turbulent masses of humanity during the "Juggernaut Sacred Car Festival" held once a year by the Hindus at Singapore. A whole week tom-toms beat and pandemonium reigns, while hundreds of ash-smeared vermillion caste-marked Hindus undergo the penances they have imposed upon themselves. Unbelievable as it may seem, the devotees submit to a priest preparing them for their penances by thrusting silver darts completely through their cheeks. Then with bare feet they must walk in wooden sandals containing hundreds of sharp-pointed nails protruding upward. Lastly two large hooks are inserted under the muscles of their backs and attached thereto are miniatures of the great Juggernaut car. One would imagine the strain would tear the hooks out of their flesh. They must haul these cars three miles to the Chetty Temple. Accompanied by weird barbaric music, the devotees begin their gruelling march slowly down the street in the blinding and pitiless sun.





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