

Literary Register.

Supplement
to Daily
"Observer."

VOL. V.—TUESDAY, MAY 5, 1891.—No. 40.

Price 12½ cents.
R4 per annum.

ON QUIET RIVERS IN CEYLON.

(From the "Cornhill Magazine" for April 1891.)

Perhaps the most fascinating feature of Ceylonese scenery is the number and the beauty of the rivers, ranging from picturesque mountain torrents (which form cascades and waterfalls as they hurry from their cradle among the rhododendrons) to stately streams flowing swiftly though silently to meet the thundering surf.

Their course is so short that their descent from the mountains is necessarily rapid; consequently very few of them are navigable, except within a few miles of the sea, where flat-bottomed boats and canoes ply. By far the longest river is the Mahawelliganga, which rising near Adam's Peak, wanders through the mountains till it reaches Kandy, the mountain capital, whence, descending to the plains, it travels northward a total distance of 134 miles, and finally enters the sea by several branches near Trincomalee.

Next to this ranks the Kelany-ganga, also called 'The Mutwall River,' which is eighty-four miles long, and which flows into the sea near Colombo. All the other rivers of Ceylon are from ten to twenty miles shorter.

As a natural result of so short and swift a descent from the mountains, these streams are laden with sand and soil, and a very remarkable geographical feature is due to the meeting of these surcharged waters with the strong sea currents, which in the north-east and south-west monsoons sweep along the coast and are likewise saturated with sand. These prevent the rivers from carrying their earth-freight further; consequently it is all deposited in sandy bars, which, likewise receiving the deposits of these gulf-streams, rapidly increase and form such effectual barriers as compel the rivers to flow north or south behind this embankment of their own creation.

Thus strangely indented lagoons, many miles in length, of still silent fresh water lie separated from the booming surf by only a narrow belt of sand, perhaps only partially carpeted with marine convolvuli, but generally clothed with quaint screw pines, mangroves, palms, and other trees. The effect of the roar of the unseen surf, as heard while one's boat glides silently on these still rivers embowered in richest vegetation, is very impressive.

This peculiarity is most strikingly developed on the east side of the isle, as at Batticaloa, where the rivers have formed one labyrinthine lagoon fully fifty miles in length, divided from the ocean by an embankment of their own construction, nowhere exceeding a mile and a half in width, and all clothed with cocoa-palms. The same formation extends all the way from Trincomalee to the far north of the isle.

These very peculiar estuaries are known as "gobbs," and they were turned to good account by the Dutch, who cut canals to connect some of the most important, and thus formed a continuous calm water-way on each side of the isle, connecting

sea-coast towns. Thus, on the west coast, you can travel by these canals and lagoons all the way from Calcutra to Colombo, and thence right north up to Galpentin. Such delightful house-boats as those in which foreign residents in China make their water excursions are here unknown luxuries; but, with a little contrivance, an ordinary flat-bottomed rice-boat may be made to do duty instead, and thus furnishes the means for a very enjoyable cruise.

Most fortunately for me, soon after my arrival in Ceylon, the Bishop* had occasion to visit various churches and schools along the coast to the north of Colombo, and resolved to travel by water. He had decided that his daughter should bear him company, and—greatly to my delight—I too was invited to join the expedition.

I confess that when I think of all the difficulties in arranging 'house-room' for guests in luxurious British homes, I often remember with amazement the unselfish kindness which contrives to make the smallest colonial houses so wondrously elastic (exemplifying the good old proverb that 'where there's heart-room there's hearth-room'); but never, in all my wanderings, have I met with so very practical a proof of such hospitality as that which assigned me an extemporised berth on board 'The Castle Jermyn,' as we dubbed our craft when commencing our voyage, though, long ere our return, the title 'Noah's Ark' better described the floating home in which were congregated so great a variety of curious living creatures—to say nothing of the skins of various birds of gay plumage and animals presented to us by many kind friends.

The live offerings included six or eight land-tortoises of various sizes and several large handsome turtles, which shared 'the hinder part of the ship' with the picturesque Singhalese crew and the Bishop's Singhalese major domo, and were turned out at night to swim in the shallow water, while our own quarters became the playground of a ubiquitous bull-dog puppy and a very young mungoose—so small as to earn from my companions the nickname of 'The Rat.' A more affectionate little pet never existed. It at once recognised me as its special mistress, never seeming so happy as when trotting along beside me, and at night curling itself—uninvited—into one of my slippers, whence the little soft hairy creature darted out to greet me with a gentle little murmurous cry the moment I stirred in the morning.

I am bound to add that, as it advanced in months and increased in stature to the size of a small cat, its hair, which was partly brown and partly silvery grey, became hard and wiry, and, though its devotion to me as its adopted mother continued to be most touching, it was occasionally inconvenient. I was therefore not altogether sorry that on my return to Colombo, after an absence of some months, I found that 'Goosie' had transferred its

* Bishop Jermyn, now Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland.

allegiance to the friend in whose care I had left it, and in whose garden it had done valiant combat with several cobras, the plucky little creature having developed all the abhorrence towards them for which its race is so remarkable.

Sad to say, it soon fell a victim to its valour; for though, by its marvellous agility, it contrived in several instances to elude the darts of the serpent, the first bite also proved the last—no wise old mungoose having instructed this poor young one in the healing properties of that herb which, it is said, the wild mungoose eats as an effectual antidote to cobra poison. So my poor 'Goosie' died; but what concerns us at present was only her place in our boat-house, where her infantile sporting instincts found scope in chasing the pretty little lizards which found refuge in the thatched roof.

As seen on our first visit, the said boat was not attractive, being dingy, dark, and airless; but a little ingenious carpentering soon worked wonders. In the first place, the thatched roof was raised bodily, so as to leave four inches all round admitting light and air to our sleeping quarters. Then the deck was matted, and the interior was lined with white calico,* and divided into compartments, so that we each had our special quarters, with our beds, chairs, tables, hanging-trays and pockets, bags, books, sun-umbrellas, butterfly-nets, writing and sketching materials of all sorts. To these were soon added constantly renewed baskets of fruit, great bunches of green or yellow bananas and plantains, oranges and mangoes, custard-apples, and ever-increasing stores of quaint seeds, shells, and divers curiosities.

The boatmen, who were all fishermen (which is almost equivalent to saying that they were all Roman Catholics) had their quarters astern, as had also the cook and his flock of ducks and hens; and how eight human beings could stow themselves away in so small a space and carry on their existence so silently was a marvel. When they had work to do 'forrard,' they ran lightly over the thatch without disturbing their unworied passengers, for whom they were never weary of collecting lovely flowers and exquisite climbing ferns, with which we adorned our quarters devoting one basin to the most gorgeous jungle blossoms (scarlet, white, and gold), and another to dainty water-lilies (white, pink, and blue), while all else found a resting-place on the foundation of ferns with which we fringed the edge of the roof, part of which was constructed to draw backwards or forwards, so that in case of rain our 'sitting-room' would have been protected. Happily we were favoured with lovely weather, and so enjoyed to the full the peaceful beauty of both days and nights.

A tiny canoe (just the trunk of a tree scooped out, and balanced by a log floating alongside of it, attached to it by a couple of bamboos) floated astern, ready to land us at any point where the cool loveliness of the river-banks proved irresistibly tempting; and strangely fascinating indeed was the deep shadow of the beautiful forest-trees overhanging the clear sunlit waters, the intense silence broken only by the cry of some wild bird or the deep hooting of the large wanderer monkeys, while at short regular intervals came the low roar as of distant thunder which told of mighty green waves breaking on the sand reef of their own creation.

It was in the middle of February that we embarked for the three weeks of water-gipsying, every hour of which proved so full of novelty and interest. A beautiful drive from St. Thomas's College, Colombo, brought us to the Mutwal River or Kelany-

ganga, where our boat-home awaited us.

Crossing that broad majestic stream, we entered one of the canals cut by the Dutch, parallel with the sea, and thereon glided smoothly into the wide shallow Lake Negombo, where we anchored for the night at a picturesque village of the same name. All along the canal we passed a succession of winding streams and marshy places with special beauties of their own, and several small lagoons—lovely glassy pools covered with pure white water-lilies, and one variety with petals just tipped with lilac and the under side of the leaf purple. These lakelets are fringed with various species of graceful palms, with an undergrowth of luxuriant ferns and handsome shrubs, while the marshes are glorified by the rich glossy foliage of the mangrove, with clusters of white blossom and large green fruit resembling oranges, but very poisonous.

These eventually turn scarlet, as do also the pine-like fruit of the pandanus, or screw pine (so called from the corkscrew pattern in which its leaves grow from the stem). The roots of this plant are among the oddest vagaries of the vegetable kingdom. Here and there a patch of the flame-blossom, called by the Singhalese *eribuddu*, glowed really like fire as the setting sun shone on its scarlet pea-shaped flowers, set in a crown of scarlet leaves. Then there was a sort of prickly acanthus with large blue flowers, also pea-shaped, and a sort of acacia with bright yellow star-shaped blossom.

Negombo Lake is about four miles in width, and all around us were picturesque canoes, whose owners were diligently fishing in its quiet waters. They have a curious method of frightening fish into the net, which is held by some of the men, while others wave long fringes of torn plantain leaves or cocoa-palm, similar to those which are hung up as decorations at any festival. The fish thus alarmed are expected to jump netwards. At night the fishers carry a blazing torch downwards, so that the glare is all on the water. The torch consists of a faggot of sticks, and from its centre projects a long sharp knife with which to impale any large fish which is seen resting in the shallows.

This was our first night on the water, and to our dismay we found that we had neglected to bring our mosquito-nets, an omission which left us wholly at the mercy of those venomous little insects, who all night long hummed a chorus of delight, as they took it in turn to feast on us, their helpless victims. Of course their onslaughts involved a sleepless night and a feverish morning, but ere the next sunset we extemporised very efficient nets by hanging up muslin petticoats, which effectually protected our heads, though an incautious foot occasionally revealed itself and suffered accordingly.

Before sunrise we were once more under way, and leaving the lake, turned into a most picturesque canal, running right through the native town of houses embowered in large-leaved tropical shrubs, overshadowed by tall palms, and the water covered with very varied boats and canoes.

Leaving the town, our quiet water-way still lay beneath overarching palm-trees and between banks matted with the dark glossy foliage and large lilac blossoms of the goat's-foot ipomoea, a handsome marine convolvulus which forms a thick carpet, binding the arid sand-banks along the sea-board.

Presently we crossed the mouth of the Maha-Oya, or 'great stream'—a broad, majestic river gliding silently to join the ocean. It was a vision of wonderful peace to look along its calm waters to the equally calm ocean, whose margin was only defined by the periodical uprising of a great green rolling wave which broke in dazzling white surf with a deep booming roar.

* White hangings are used by the Singhalese to denote the deepest respect for an honoured guest.

That strange, solemn sound continued for hours to reach us from the unseen ocean, as turning into the Ging-Oya, another most lovely stream, we followed its windings almost parallel with the sea, which yet was effectually hidden by a narrow bank of luxuriant jungle and tall palms which cast their cool deep shade on the glassy waters. But for that ever-recurring reminder of

The league-long rollers thundering on the shore.

there was not a sound to break the silence, save only the rustle of dry reeds or the gentle ripple of our boat, sailing with a light breeze. Even the shy creatures which haunt these banks were undisturbed, and amongst others we observed several large iguanas (or, as the Singhalese call them, *kabra-goya*), huge lizards from five to six feet in length. Though very prettily marked, they are ungainly-looking creatures, and I confess to having felt somewhat qualmish the first time I came suddenly upon one in the forest; but they are quite harmless, though they can defend themselves by striking so sharp a blow with their strong tail as sometimes to break the leg of a rash assailant. They feed on ants and insects, and are amphibious, being equally at home on marshy ground or in the water.

Another lizard very nearly as large, called *taka-goya*, is so tame that it scarcely moves away from human beings, and even comes and lives in gardens, though it thereby courts its doom, its flesh being considered as delicate as that of a rabbit, and its skin being in request for shoe-making. Certainly its appearance is not prepossessing.

We caught glimpses of various smaller lizards, especially a lovely bright-green one about a foot in length. Strange to say, when angry, these creatures turn pale yellow and the head becomes bright red. I believe they are akin to the ever-changing chameleon, which, however, prefers the dry districts farther to the north of the isle.

Glorious large butterflies skimmed lightly over the water, some with wings like black velvet, and others of the most lustrous metallic blue, and kingfishers, golden orioles, and other birds of radiant plumage, flitted over the water. One bird, something like a plover, is known as the "Did-he-do-it?" because of its quaint inquisitive cry, which seems ceaselessly to reiterate this question.

As the evening drew on, we were treated to a concert of croaking frogs and jackals alternately barking and calling in eerie tones. Finally we anchored for the night beneath an overhanging tree which was evidently specially favoured by the fire-flies, for their tiny green lamps glittered in every corner of the dark foliage, ceaselessly flashing to and fro in such mazy dance that when we looked beyond them to the quiet stars it seemed to our bewildered eyes as if these too were in motion.

I use the word 'fire-flies' in deference to a common error. In reality these fairy light-bearers are tiny beetles which carry their dainty green lantern beneath the tail, and veil or unveil its light at pleasure, as a policeman does his bull's-eye lantern, hence the intermittent light which vanishes and reappears several times in a minute.

On the following morning a kind European heard of our arrival and brought us most welcome gifts of fruit and milk. Strange to say, the Singhalese have an invincible objection to milking their cows, even when they possess large herds of cattle and the calves might very well spare a certain amount. This prejudice has been in a measure conquered in the immediate neighbourhood of towns where foreigners require a regular supply; but, like the Chinese, no Singhalese man, woman, or child seems ever to prink cow's milk, though a little is occasionally

used in the form of curds, and eaten with *ghee*, which is a sort of rancid butter.

From the Ging-Oya we passed by a short canal into the Luna-Oya, another even more lovely river, but first we crossed a fascinating lagoon, literally covered with water-lilies of various sizes and colours—small white ones, larger ones like cups of creamy ivory with green calyx, exquisite pink lilies with brown calyx and the under side of the leaf a rich purple. Besides these, there were myriads of tiny white blossoms, no bigger than a silver penny, which together with their flat floating leaves, were so like Lilliputian lilies that we could scarcely believe they were not, till we pulled up a cluster, and found that leaves and flowers all grew in a bunch from one little rootlet near the surface, instead of each having its own stem, three or four feet in length and smooth as a piece of india-rubber tubing, rising from the bed of the lake.

Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention, and great was my satisfaction when, having lost my black hair-ribbon, I found that one of these half-dried stems answered the purpose admirably, being rather elastic and perfectly flexible. But the water-gipsies soon discovered many such treasures in the jungle. The smooth tendrils and filaments of various climbing plants supplied us with excellent string several yards in length, and as to pins, we had only to select the length we required from the too abundant supply of needle-like thorns, which in truth were so marked a characteristic of the Ceylonese forest that one might almost accept it as a proof that here indeed was the original Paradise, for notwithstanding all its wonderful beauty, Ceylon assuredly bears a double share of the curse anent thorns and briars.

We soon discovered that most of the jungle flowers we saw and coveted were thus guarded—the jessamine-like stars of the crimson ixora, the fragrant blossoms of the wild lemon, and many another. There is even one sort of palm whose whole stem bristles with long sharp needles. And, besides these dangers, we soon discovered that almost every branch of every flowering shrub is the home of a colony of large red ants, which glue the leaves together, entirely concealing their nests, so that however carefully you may have looked for them, no sooner do you venture cautiously to gather the flower which tempts you, than in a moment a legion of vicious insects rush forth from their ambush, and, covering your unwary arm, swarm into the innermost recesses of your sleeve, all the time biting most painfully. What with ants biting, and mosquitoes and small sandflies feasting on us, we certainly suffered a good deal, the irritation produced being such that we had simply to take our hair-brushes and brush our poor arms and shoulders to try and counteract it!

But we were very fortunate in escaping more serious dangers. One evening, as we sat on deck in the bright starlight, I suddenly observed a gruesome centipede, fully seven inches long, coiled up in my lap. With sudden impulse, the Bishop flicked it with his handkerchief, when it fell to the deck and escaped, leaving us with a horribly l-overish sensation of centipedes in every corner. Happily, neither it nor any of its family favoured us with another visit. It is really wonderful, in a country where venomous creatures abound as they do in Ceylon, how very rarely one sees any of them, and how quickly one acquires the instinctive habit of beating the grass or withered leaves before one's steps, in order to warn possible snakes to wriggle out of the way, which they seem all ready to do if they have time. Indeed, the mere vibration of a booted footstep generally suffices to give them the alarm, the sufferers

from snake-bite being almost invariably bare-footed natives, whose silent approach is unnoticed. •

On the other hand, the land-leeches, which swarm in damp places and luxuriant grass, have no tendency to fly from man; on the contrary, the footfall of man or beast is a welcome dinner-bell, at sound of which the hungry little creatures hurry from all sides; and, as each is furnished with five pairs of eyes, they can keep a sharp look out for their prey, which they do by resting on the tip of the tail and raising themselves perpendicularly to look around. Then, arching their body head-foremost, and bringing up the tail, they rapidly, step by step, make for their victim, and being only about an inch long, and no thicker than a stout pin, they contrive to wriggle through stockings and commence their attack so gently that a dozen or more may be feasting without attracting attention, till, being gorged and distended to about a couple of inches in length, and the size of a quill pen they cease sucking; but blood sometimes continues to flow till checked by a squeeze of lemon-juice.

In this respect, also, we fortunately suffered little, thanks to constant watchfulness and precautions; but our bare legged coolies were cruelly victimised, and we saw both cattle and dogs terribly worried by much larger leeches, which infest the tanks and attack all animals coming to drink, attaching themselves to the muzzle and thence passing into the nostrils and throat. But on our river voyage we were free from these pests.

Just before leaving the canal which connects the Ging-Oya with the Lily Lake, we halted at a village where we saw a Singhalese wedding procession the attentive bridegroom (whose knot of glossy black hair was of course fastened by a very large tortoiseshell comb, besides a circular comb on the forehead) holding a large umbrella over a very sedate looking bride, who walked beside him dressed in brocade, with a wreath on the back of her head, and the hair fastened with golden pins and a golden comb. This bridal dress, however, was not becoming, and we awarded the palm of beauty to a young girl in white, shading herself with a large banana-leaf.

The people crowded to the banks to see the novel sight of European ladies travelling in a 'padda-boat.' Most of the children were dressed with the elegant simplicity of our ancestors in the original Eden, except that some were adorned with one pearl tied round the arm, whilst others wore a tiny tin cylinder, containing some fetish, fastened to the waist. The little Roman Catholics are generally distinguished by a small crucifix or locket with dedication to some saint, but many wear tiny bits of embroidered rag, which are sold, by priests as charms.

Nowhere have I seen more fascinating little children, with such soft brown eyes, coming so coaxingly to offer us gifts of flowers, and their mellifluous speech is as attractive as is their personal appearance. One handsome man brought his beautiful little girl and asked us to sketch her. She was quite naked but a few minutes later he brought her back in all the magnificence of her green jacket and red skirt, with coral necklace and ear-ring. As the proud father brought her on board, his own long silky black hair got unfastened and fell in rich masses over his shoulders. The effect was most artistic, but unfortunately in Ceylon it is not considered respectful to wear the hair, hanging down in presence of a superior, so it is always coiled up in a knot. (In China it is just the contrary—the man who, for convenience while working, twists his long black plait round his head, must always let it down in presence of any superior.)

(To be continued.)

* Rice cargo-boat.

MR. GLADSTONE ON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

[Mr. F. H. M. Corbet, Librarian of the Colombo Museum Library, sends us a copy of the *Library* for March, with the request that we should reprint therefrom Mr. Gladstone's speech at the opening of the St. Martin's Free Public Library, London. We extract from the speech as follows.—Ed. L. R.]

Well, ladies and gentlemen, this is not a very old movement. The Act under which you have been enabled to carry this design into effect dates from 1850, when I was myself beginning to be a somewhat old member of Parliament. The author of that Act was a gentleman of the name of Ewart, a name which I have the honour to bear as a surname, and he was a man whom I very well remember, and whom I had the honour and pleasure of knowing. Mr. Ewart, the author of that Act, was a cultivated man, a scholar, and highly respected in every relation of life, and his name deserves to be recorded, in that he was a man of more than one subject, a pioneer working his way forward, doing the rough introductory work in the interests of the nations upon subjects which at that time but few were beginning to appreciate. The appreciation of his work in regard to libraries, which produced the Act of 1850, has resulted in a great deal of progress. The progress for a length of time was not very rapid. In thirty-six years, from 1850 down to 1886 there were 133 places which availed themselves of the benefits of the Act. That was not a very large number, not quite an average of four in each of those thirty-six years. But still slow progress in infancy is not always a bad sign. We are not a people whose minds move rapidly, but we hope that they move securely, and that the progress which we do achieve is solid progress, and that we are not so much given, as possibly some people might be, to stepping backwards when we have once made up our minds that it is our duty to step forwards.

SEE THE CHANGE WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE IN FOUR YEARS, FROM 1886 TO 1890.

No less than seventy places have taken advantage of the Act, so that instead of less than four places in the year we have an average of more than seventeen places in the year. That is a rate of progress which we ought to regard as satisfactory. No doubt many questions with regard to the Act arise, and most of them have been ably discussed by Mr. Greenwood. But on some of these there may be difference of opinion. You are aware, for example, that it is now in the power of any qualified person to demand a poll of the parish upon the acceptance of the Act. That is not an unreasonable proposition, because at the time it was first imported into the Act, this foundation of libraries was not like the ordinary recognised functions of municipalities, it was in the nature of outside operation, and it was therefore not unreasonable or impertinent that the people themselves should be distinctly consulted on the question whether they would have a library or not. They have availed themselves of the privilege of refusing in some instances, and Mr. Greenwood states that in a single year twelve places declined to have the Act put into operation among them. But until the country has fully recognised that the foundation of these libraries is the ordinary duty of a local municipality, it probably will not be a bad thing that the public—the local public—should be consulted upon the question.

LIBRARIES IN RURAL DISTRICTS.

There is another great difficulty undoubtedly, and that is in the extension of libraries of this kind from places of comparatively large population, to which they are now confined, into the rural districts. That is a very serious difficulty, because where you have a large population concentrated upon a very small space you can give the whole of that population a nearly equal interest in the library, for it is accessible to all; but where you have in purely rural districts a much smaller population, distributed and diffused over a space perhaps twenty or fifty times large

there it is very difficult, as persons conversant with rural districts will know, to put all on anything like an equality with regard to access to the library and of course it is to be expected that where people do not recognise either an immediate or an immediately prospective benefit to themselves and their families, they should be disinclined to undertake the burden which the Act enables them to impose upon themselves. Mr. Greenwood, who is a vigorous and zealous advocate, has a remedy for the difficulty, a very simple remedy, that the first Lord of the Treasury with whose presence we are honoured for this occasion, will at any rate appreciate. His remedy is a small dose of public money—a short and invaluable specific for supplying all deficiencies, for surmounting all difficulties, and for curing all evils. I must own it may be that in old age one loses one's nimbleness and power of keeping up in a competition of pace, but I am not entirely equal to following Mr. Greenwood in the recommendation that the Consolidated Fund should be made the source of supply for institutions of this kind. But I hope you will understand that I don't wish to give up the case of the villages and rural districts. We have got in this country a very peculiar distribution of the land. It is held in large quantities by wealthy men, by wealthy men who recognise to a great extent—and who I hope, from generation to generation, will still more largely recognise—the proposition that the possession of landed property entails great social duties.

Instead of the Consolidated Fund, what I hope is that the liberality and the enlightened judgment of these large proprietors scattered all over the country will meet the difficulty and enable the villages also, either upon their own basis or by affiliating themselves to the town libraries—which is a plan which, I believe, has been adopted with very good effect in some places—will enable them to enjoy the great advantage of institutions of this kind. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I have spoken to you of the general progress achieved, but besides being parishioners of St. Martins, you are Londoners, and as Londoners it is well I think, that you should understand how the metropolis stands in this matter. Now, for a long time the metropolis was stiff, reluctant and hard-hearted. A gentleman* sent me only yesterday a letter written by Mr. Ewart himself, from which I will read you a quotation. Mr. Ewart had been cognisant of the fact that in the year 1855 an attempt had been made to induce the City of London—which certainly need not have been apprehensive of an undue or exhausting pecuniary burden of a penny in the pound—to induce the City of London to accept the Act; but the City of London declined to accept the Act, and Mr. Ewart wrote a letter to a friend in which he said: "I trust that, notwithstanding our recent unsuccessfulness, the free library system will flourish even in the City of London."

METROPOLITAN LIBRARIES.

Well, now, had Mr. Ewart been amongst us today he would have seen that the faith which he entertained—that faith which is a very characteristic quality of men who see far into the future and work for the future, and not merely for the present day—had been amply justified. For a long time London was most obdurate. Down to 1886—that is thirty-six years after the passing of the Act—London had only two libraries, but in the month of June 1890, instead of two it had nineteen. That is to say, the rate of increase going on in London was more rapid than in any other part of the country, and what appears likely is, that these valuable institutions will, in a very short time, be strewn thickly all over the whole face of the metropolis, and that there will be no parish without an establishment of the kind. That is a very satisfactory state of things; and if we are content with a moderate but ever-growing success—and that is what a prudent man in this world ought usually to be content with—I think we may be thankful to see what has been done in this direction, and may look forward to the future with a confident anticipation of still greater achievements. This institution is not an isolated phenomenon. The foundation of libraries is one

amongst many features of the modern tendency and movement of British society. There is a rough question put by Mr. Carlyle,—“Why is it that there is not a library in every town? You will find everywhere police, a prison, the gallows; why have we not a library?” No doubt as we go back to the period of my own entrance into this world the broad indications of the social system were penal and coercive, I remember once I was at the house of a friend in a certain county which I will not name, and I told him I had read that in that county there was a great number of gallows in the rural parishes. That was the case in the old time—it was not an arrangement confined to great towns, but it went through the country as a local parochial institution, very much like that almost forgotten, but venerated institution, the stocks. My friend observed that I was mistaken, that it wasn't his county, but a neighbouring one. So it was. But on a little further investigation into the matter I found that there was a place in the village called Gallows Green, and that was nearly putting conviction on the point in question.

Happily a great change has taken place. We have less to do with gallows, less with the prison, than in former times.

SOCIOLOGY.

There is a word which has come into existence since I was young, and which indicates this change in a wide and comprehensive way—that word is sociology. It is rather an awkward word, because it is not a word of pure parentage. It is partly Latin and partly Greek, but we are so poor we cannot manage any better, so the word sociology has been started, and a very important word it is. It indicates the great system of education which has now gone over the country; it indicates the foundation of museums; it indicates the foundation of art galleries and of libraries; and it indicates, I am very glad also to say, it indicates the foundation of institutions having a view to the corporal health and development of the people and the maintenance of their physical properties. Because we attach great importance to the foundation of museums, art galleries, and so forth, and because we think that pen, ink and paper are indispensable to human progress, let us not forget that we can never separate the properties of a man's body from those of his soul. If you want a man healthily developed you must develop him as a creature of body, soul and spirit; and therefore I rejoice to think that great attention is being given to these pursuits by means of gymnasia and other places, which I couple with the institutions directly addressed to mental improvement, and I regard them all as being jointly responsible in a great and good work. I don't mean to say and I do not think you will believe that institutions of this order are institutions which will of themselves enable man to attain the highest purposes for which he came into the world, or that they will effectually supply all his needs or what he may require in consequence of his infirmities and sins. It would be a very great mistake if we were to place institutions of this kind in competition with the religion it is our happiness to profess. On the contrary, they own religion as their very parent, in the same way that Christianity is the parent of philanthropy, from which all forms of benevolent principles extend themselves. We know that not to be an idle boast or an arbitrarily expressed opinion. We know it in this way, that if we go back to the greatest people of antiquity in whom intellectual acquirements were developed perhaps in a greater degree than they are even at the present day, philanthropic developments were almost lost. Never until Christianity came into the world did they begin to make themselves known in the form of the doctrines now implied by the term sociology. In any case it is in no spirit of rivalry or hostility that these institutions find themselves standing upon the same ground. This is really a symbol of the friendly relation which ought to obtain, and which, I am happy to think, does as a general rule obtain, between the smaller developments of our time and those still greater, higher, holier, and

* Mr. C. W. Sutton, Public Librarian of Manchester.

more powerful and profound influences which are connected with the Gospel of our Saviour.

READING AND RELIGION.

But in how many ways these institutions are preparatory for religion, and in how many ways they are helpful to it! These libraries, these gymnasia, these museums, this system of popular education—they are the enemies of what? They are all the instruments with which a war is carried on, and a war against what?—A war against ignorance, a war against brutality, a war against idleness; and ignorance, brutality, and idleness are among the greatest of the auxiliaries by which the kingdom of evil and mischief is sustained and supported in the world. You cannot doubt that the action of these institutions is a great and enormous good conferred upon mankind, and when we speak of brutality happily we are enabled to think of it now as of an idea and tendency that has become remote. It seems as if it were buried in the long-gone past; but it is not a very remote past. If we go back less than two hundred years we find that pastimes that were distinctly brutal were the habitual pastimes of the people of this country, nor do I see that they are to be blamed for it. Cruelty has a tendency to show itself in connection with the thoughtless enjoyment of mankind, and I recollect that in those times the people had little option, for they had no employment for the mind. After labour of the body, when it is severe and continuous and pressing heavily upon the physical faculties of the man, he must and will seek and find some relief, some alternation, and some refreshment and it is the fault of those who omit to provide him with that refreshment that is good, if for the want of it he is driven to the refreshment that is bad. I am reminded of the drink question, which is now more or less in the minds of everybody, and though it would be very hard upon a particular class of the community that they should be held up as the enemies of public improvement, still there is no doubt that these institutions are to a very great degree directly in competition with the public-houses of the country. It is a very pleasant thing to know that the condition of our labouring population has changed in respect of the means of mental and bodily improvement in two ways.

LABOUR AND LEISURE.

First of all, institutions necessary for the people which did not previously exist at all have been largely provided, more liberally than ever; and secondly, there was another difficulty, and that was that the hours of labour, such as they were one hundred or even fifty years ago, after deducting the hours absolutely necessary for food and the hours absolutely necessary for sleep, left no margin in which the mass of the labouring population could apply themselves to mental improvement. Now, happily a great change has taken place in that respect, a change which has been associated possibly in some quarters, with expectations that are of doubtful prudence or possibility—but these are the mere outlying incidents of very great and beneficial alterations. It can now be said that the hours of labour for a very considerable portion of the working population are fixed within bounds so reasonable—although they still leave the lot of labour a lot sufficiently severe—yet they are fixed within bounds that when the necessary hours for rest and food are added to them, there still remains a margin available for real leisure to the working man. Now there is a competition of evil assaulting him, visible, sensible in the streets through which he must pass; but there be also a competition of good in beneficial institutions of every kind which will offer him the means of employment of that leisure, not only without difficulty or disadvantage, but with a promise of the greatest satisfaction to himself and the greatest advantage to his family, to his home, and to the children who succeed him in the world. His leisure may be employed in these libraries. How happy it is to see with what zeal and promptitude all over the country the working population have exhibited their eagerness to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them. There are other uses for libraries such as these. I have been promised the power of

reference to books here—a very useful power it is especially with regard to books in series which run out into great bulk. To all classes this power of reference will be of advantage. It is to the masses of the community that libraries are principally valuable; it is by these masses that they have been largely, and will be I believe still more largely, appreciated. There is one kind of appreciation which I cannot help contemplating with a greater interest than many—that is their use by the very young, by the intelligent growing lad, by the lad who is just beginning, perhaps only in the humble capacity of a messenger, perhaps as an apprentice, but in one way or the other beginning to show the mettle of the man and faculties which, if well used, will develop into something valuable and comparatively great in the future. It is in libraries, like this that a youth of that kind may derive the greatest benefit. His mind is full of material; it is such an institution as this that many impart the vital spark to it, that may inspire him with ideas altogether new, with the sense that his mind is capable of progress, that his faculties, if used assiduously, continuously, and manfully to a given purpose, will assuredly obtain a valuable end. There is no place perhaps among the various occasions that ordinary life may offer where he is more likely to receive these benefits than within the walls of an institution of this kind. I do not speak of the selection of books of an institution—a task ever arduous and ever difficult, but which I have not the least doubt in this instance has been admirably well performed. On every ground I feel that in taking part in inaugurating and in commending to public notice and public interest this library, every one present is discharging a valuable and important public duty.

FIREFLIES.

(From the *Timhri Journal* for December 1890.)

BY LADY BLAKE, JAMAICA.

* * * *

The glow-worm is not the only luminous creature found in the British Isles. Some species of centipedes are said to emit a phosphorescent light;* and on one occasion in the West of Ireland, we observed some brilliant creatures when driving home on a dark night, lying in the middle of the road. On investigation they turned out apparently to be common earthworms, though I believe it is a moot point whether the worms are ever in themselves luminous, or if the appearance is caused by the centipede, which preys on earthworms, having crawled over and left some portion of its phosphorescence on them. If we leave England to go further south, how exquisite it is to see the myriads of winged gems flashing their minute lanterns in the meadows of the Tyrol, or the lowlands of Lombardy. No wonder the Italian peasant considers fireflies to be spirits arisen from their graves, though it is strange that the dread with which all spiritual appearances have become invested amongst civilized people makes the ignorant contadino shun the lovely apparition with terror. In the Tyrol, fireflies are known amongst the country people as "Johannes Käfer," that is "John's Beetles," as after St. John's Day in Midsummer they are no more seen till the following year.

But going still further, if we are fortunate enough to find ourselves in the tropics, how unspeakably beautiful is a moonless night in the West Indies, when mountain, forest, and plain are throbbing with light of various sizes and intensities, from the minutest fire-fly of about $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch in length, to the splendid "cucuyo" or fire-beetle over an inch long with two large eye-like lights in the thorax and the abdomen glowing like a living emerald. It is singular that the life history of creatures so numerous and so common should be almost unknown, the theories on the subject

* A small, sluggish phosphorescent centipede, is pretty common in Ceylon houses. When crushed to death, the remains of the creature emit phosphoric light for some time.—ED. L. R.

being very conflicting. It is an interesting field for exploration that awaits some future biologist.* Scientists are prone to set inordinate value on names and genera, so the fireflies have been placed amongst the *Lampyridæ*, while the fire-beetles are pronounced to belong to the *Elaterridæ* family, but where the "cucuyo" as the Spaniards name him, (*Pyrophorus noctilucus*) emerges from the egg, or how he passes this larval youth and acquires the power of shining in the world, is still a matter of conjecture. Rotten wood is by some supposed to be the cradle of all this brilliancy, while others hold that the imago, anticipating the votaries of "Sweetness and Light" draws his nourishment from the sugar-cane, and roams the earth in the humble guise of a wire-worm. Every one has read how the Creole ladies sometimes put diamonds to shame by wearing fireflies in their hair and on their dresses at balls in Cuba and the other islands, but one of the most picturesque uses to which fireflies were ever put, was on the evening the band of French settlers first landed at Montreal. Their first care was to raise an altar "on a pleasant spot near at hand." Some of the high-born ladies who were with them, decorated the sylvan altar with such flowers as the place afforded, and then all the company, soldiers, artisans, sailors and labourers, devoutly knelt on the sod while the Priest celebrated Mass, and by and bye when evening closed in and fireflies began to twinkle around the pious French emigrants captured the glittering visitors, tied them into shining festoons and hung them before the altar where the Blessed Sacrament still remained. Then tents were pitched, watch fires lighted and sentries posted, and the first French colonists lay down and slept peacefully on Canadian soil.

The Spanish discoverers on returning home did not fail to enlarge on the wonders of the fireflies in the newly found lands. Peter Martyr's account of what he learnt on the subject from the voyagers is so curious that I quote it at length:—"In Hispaniola and the rest of the Ocean Islands, there are plashy and marshy places, very fit for the feeding of herds of cattle. Gnats of divers kinds, engendered of that moist heat, grievously afflict the colonies seated on the brink thereof, and that not only in the night, as in other countries: therefore the inhabitants build low houses, and make little doors therein, scarce able to receive the master, and without holes, that the gnats may have no entrance. And for that cause also they forbear to light torches or candles, for that the gnats by natural instinct follow the light, yet nevertheless they often find a way in. Nature hath given that pesilent mischief, and hath also given a remedy, as she hath given us cats to destroy the filthy progeny of mice, so hath she given them pretty and commodious hunters, which they call cucuy. These be harmless winged worms, somewhat less than bats (bats) or reere mice, I should rather call them a kind of beetles, because they have other wings after the same order, under their hard-winged sheath, when they have flying. To this living creature (as we see flies shine by night and certain sluggish worms lying in thick hedges) provident nature hath given 4 very clear loosing glasses; 2 lying hid in the plank under the sheath, which he then sheweth when after the manner of the beetle, unshathing his thin wings, he taketh his flight into the air, whereupon every Cucurus bringeth 4 lights or candles with him. But how they are a remedy for so great a mischief, as is the stinging of these gnats, which in some places, are little less than bees, it is a pleasant thing to hear. He, who either understandeth he hath those troublesome guests (the gnats) at home or feareth lest they may get in, diligently hunteth after the cucuy, which he deceiveth by this means and industry, which necessity (effecting wonders) hath sought out. Whoso watcheth cucuy, goeth out of the house in the first twilight of the night, carrying a

* The late Mr. Wm. Ferguson collected information on the subject of the phosphorescent beetles, with drawings, which he intended to publish, but which remained incomplete at the time of his death.—Ed. L. R.

burning fire-brand in his hand, and ascendeth the next nook, that the cucuy may see it, and swingeth the fire-brand about calling the cucuy aloud and beateth the air with often calling and crying out Cucuy, Cucuy. Many simple people suppose that the cucuy delighted with that noise, come flying and flocking together to the bellowing sound of him that calleth them, for they come with a speedy and headlong course; but I rather think the cucuy make haste to the brightness of the fire-brand, because swarms of gnats fly unto every light, which the cucuy, eat in the very air, as the marlets and swallows do. Behold, the desired number of cucuy, at what time the hunter casteth the fire-brand out of his hand. Some cucuy sometimes followeth the fire-brand, and lieth on the ground, then is he easily taken, as travellers may take a beetle (if they have need thereof) waking with his wings shut. Others deny that the cucuy are wont to be taken after this manner, but say, that the hunters especially have boughs full of leaves ready prepared, or broad linen cloths, wherewith they smite the cucuy flying about on high, and strike him to the ground, where he lieth as it were asonished and suffereth himself to be taken, or as they say followeth the fall of the fly, they take the prey, by casting the same bushy bough, or linen cloth upon him, howsoever it be, the hunter having the hunting cucuy, returneth home, and shutting the door of the house, letteth the prey go. The cucuy loosed, swiftly flieth about the whole house seeking gnats, under their hanging beds, and about the faces of them that sleep, which the gnats use to assail, they seem to execute the office of watchmen, that such as are shut in, may quietly rest."

Unfortunately, the Spaniards seem to have been mistaken in regard to the supposed voracity of the cucuy in regard to mosquitoes, but it is singular that to this day the negroes in Jamaica believe that the "peenies" as the insects are commonly called there may be taken in a way very similar to that described by the Abbot of Sevilla Nueva. If you hold a peenie between your fingers on a dark night and stand in the open air, shaking it about and calling aloud "Peenie, peenie weary, come to be fed" the other peenie, say the negro peasants, will come hastily flying up to their fellow and can easily be taken.

To return to Martyr: "Another pleasant and profitable commodity proceedeth from the cucuy. As many eyes as every cucuy openeth, the most enjoyeth the light of so many candles; so that the inhabitants spin, sew, weave and dance by the light of the flying cucuy. The inhabitants think that the cucuy is delighted with the harmony and melody of their singing, and that he also exerciseth his motion in the air according to the action of their dancing. But he, by reason of the diverse suits of the gnats, or necessity swiftly flieth about divers ways to seek his food and our men also read and write by that light, which continueth until he have gotten enough whereby he may be well fed. The gnats being cleansed, or driven out of doors, the cucuy beginning to famish, the light beginneth to fail, therefore when they see his light to wax dim opening the little door, they endeavour to set him at liberty that he may seek his food. In sport and merriment, or to the intent to terrify such as are afraid of every shadow, they say that many wanton, wild fellows sometimes rubbed their faces by night with the flesh of a cucuy being killed, with purpose to meet their neighbours with a flaming countenance knowing whether they want to go, as with us sometimes wanton young men, putting a gaping toothed vizard upon their face, endeavour to terrify children or women who are easily frightened, for the face being adorned with the lump or fleshy part of the cucuy, shineth like a flame of fire, yet in short space that fiery virtue waxeth feeble and is extinguished, seeing it is a certain bright humour received in a thin substance."

The insect certainly retains a small amount of light for some time after death. The luminous portion of the abdomen easily separates from the remainder, it is a tough, slightly elastic substance, the light becoming

more brilliant when the separated portion is squoedle many authorities hold that the light is phosphorescent in its nature, but the distinguished Italian Scientist, Matenni, has demonstrated by chemical analysis, that it does not contain phosphorus but is apparently an elaborate nervous mechanism. Martyr has much to tell about the beetle. He continues:—"There is also another wonderful commodity proceeding from the cucuius. The islanders appointed by our men go with two cucuy tied to the great toes of their feet (for the traveler goeth better by direction of the lights of the cucuy than if he brought so many candles with him as the cucuius open eyes) he also carrieth another cucuius in his hand to seek the Utiaë by night. Utiaë are a certain kind of cony, a little exceeding a man in bigness and bulk of body, which four footed beast they only knew before our coming thither, and did eat the same. To go also a fishing by the lights of the cucuy, unto which art they are chiefly addicted, and exercised therein from the cradle, that it is a l one with either sex of them to swim, and to go upon the dry land * * * * * While I was writing this discourse of the pretty cucuius, a little before noon, accompanied with Camillus Gullivus (whom I make my continual companion, both because he is Your Excellency's servant, Martyr is addressing Viscount Francisco Sforzia, Duke of Milan (as also for his pleasing disposition and behaviour) Jacobus Canizares the doorkeeper of Cæsar's chamber, came with me unexpected, who also from the first beginning of these things (together with no small number of Palatines, the familiar friends of the Catholic Princes Ferdinando and Elizabeth, young men desirous of novelties) went with Colonus himself, when having obtained the second fleet of 17 ships he undertook the matter or discovery of the ocean, whereof I have sufficiently, and at large discoursed to Ascanius. He declared many things in the presence of Gullivus while we were at dinner. Who when he saw I had made mention of the cucuius, saith, that in a certain island of the Canibals, in an exceeding dark night, when they went ashore to lay on the sands, he first saw only one cucuius, which came forth of a wood near unto them, so shined upon their heads, that the company might perfectly see, and know one another, and he affirmed with an oath, that by the light th' roof, letters might easily be read. Also a citizen of Sville, a man of authority, called P. Fernandez De Las Varas, one of the first inhabitants of Hispaniola who first erected an house of stone from the foundation in Hispaniola, confesseth the same, that by the light of a cucuius he had read very large letters."

Anyone who visits the West Indies can easily verify this statement for themselves, and it is easy to understand that the native Indians who possessed neither candles nor lamps, and who only knew of torches made either of some light wood or of the fibrous interior of the Dido cactus, often availed themselves of the brilliant beetles when busy after night-fall in their very simple domestic avocations. Even with all the complicated comforts of the present day, it was the common practice of members of our family when entering a room at night, to catch a firefly in order by its light to find the match box.

Gosse, who during his residence in Jamaica made valuable observations on fireflies, states that he met with about 14 species during his eighteen months' stay in the island. A larva was once brought to him which he believed to be that of the fine beetle, it was luminous. He describes the whole insect as being pellucid in the dark, the divisions of the segments showing distinctly, a pale blue light, not very vivid. When touched the creature bit fiercely but ineffectually at the disturbing hand. As it is stated that some of these insects pass no less than three years in the larval stage, it must evidently be a matter of much difficulty to keep them successfully under observation during so long a period, so as to be able to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as to their history. As yet the glow-worm can boast a more important rôle in literature and poetry than its more brilliant West Indian relation, but the fireflies of tropical America have not altogether escaped the observation of our poets, and I will conclude this with Southey's descrip-

tion in "Madoc" of a tropical night:—

"Sorrowing we beheld
The night come on; but soon did night display
More wonders than it veiled; innumerable tribes
From the wood cover swarmed, and darkness made
Their beauties visible; one while they streamed
A bright blue radiance upon flowers which closed
Their gorgeous colours from the eye of day;
Now motionless and dark eluded search,
Self-shrouded; and anon, starring the sky,
Rose like a shower of fire"

OUR REVIEWER.

THE MYSTERY OF RITHERDON'S GRANGE.*—"A considerable portion" of "Ritherdon's Grange" is stated to be "founded on fact," and so far as the scenes within the Docks, the Barristers' Chambers and the Temple, the voyage to the East, and the incidents of a planter's life are concerned, we are not prepared to impugn the accuracy of the statement; but the author has certainly mistaken Rider Haggard for fact when he asserts as a fact the discovery of the Ceylon Treasure Chamber. That fact was certainly discovered in "She" and not in Ceylon, but as the relator of the discovery has afforded us half-an-hour's forgetfulness of the heat of the dol rums, we will forgive the author for the audacity of the statement; The story is sufficiently full of incident and destitute of probability to rank with the best productions of the caterers to the morbid love of blood and insatiable desire for the discovery of boundless wealth under impossible conditions of mystery which distinguish the 19th century. Two briefless barristers on the point of starvation elect that one of them shall work at the Docks during the strike, while the other waits for fortune. A happy discovery by this attendant upon luck of a forgotten L. O. U. leads to the recovery of £200 and the finding of a lost love on the point of having her throat cut by an insane husband. The labouring man finds meanwhile in a comrade the possessor of a secret which leads them to the foot of Adam's Peak and the acquisition of great wealth, strewn about in the orthodox manner in a chamber to which the door swings noiselessly on its hinges and is carved out of the solid rock. These are the salient points of the story of which it would be cruel to take away the interest by a fuller revelation of its secrets. We may however draw attention to the interview between the Banker and the once-wealthy planter as being drawn with considerable cleverness and historical accuracy. The work is full of grammatical faults and literary blemishes, but it will serve to wile away a sleepless hour. There is nothing in it sufficiently exciting to drive away sleep while the "freshly caught green turtle" and "wild-rice-fee snipe" and "iced catawba champagne" of the dinner on the Laxapæ Coffee Estate under the Peacock Hill may cause a smile.

* Written by Saumarez de Havilland; Published by Trischler & Co., London.

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