Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

A Map of
CEYLON
Route followed shown by black line
Kayts
Jaffna
Chavakachcheri
Elephant Pass
Delft
Iranaitivu
Mannar
Giant's Tank
Murukan
Mankulam
Vavuniya
Medawachiya
TRINCOMALEE
ANURADHAPURA
Mihintale
Kantalai
Tabbowa
Puttalam
Kala Wewa
Habarana
Polonnaruwa
Minneriya Tank
Dambulla
Chenkaladi
Batticaloa
Chilaw
Kurunegala
KANDY
Maha Oya
Kalmunai
Negombo
Polgahawela
Rambukkana
Mirigama
Veyangoda
Kegolla
Mawanella
Kadugannawa
Peradeniya
Gampola
Bibile
Ambepussa
Warakapola
Pussellawa
Ramboda
COLOMBO
Nuwara Eliya
Badulla
Pottuvil
Arugam Bay
Kollupitiya
Dikwella
Passara
Obbekote
Bambalapitiya
Hakgala
Wellawatta
Welimada
Ella
Monaragala
Kotte
Dehiwala
Buttala
Mount. Lavinia
Adam's Peak
Diyatalawa
Bandarawela
Wellawaya
Moratuwa
Ratnapura
Panadura
Tissamaharama
Kalutara
Hambantota
Mulkirigala
Ambalantota
GALLE
Matara
Tangalla
Weligama
Dondara Head

Original Book
printed in 1940
with 377 pages.

CEYLON BEATEN TRACK

by

W. T. KEBLE

CEYLON OBSERVER PRESS,
LAKE HOUSE, COLOMBO.

Reprint
1951

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

R
915.5493

Dedicated to
H. C. M.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

CONTENTS

		Page
Chapter i	Negombo, Chilaw, Puttalam and Tabbowo-wewe	... 1
ii	Mihintale and Anuradhapura ...	... 9
iii	Kalawewa and Sigiriya	... 33
iv	Minneriya	... 43
v	Polonnaruwa	... 52
vi	Kantalai and Trincomalee ...	... 65
vii	The 'Great' North Road, Jaffna, The Islands, Nachchikkuda ...	... 73
viii	Mannar, Dambulla and Kurunegala	... 99
ix	Kandy	... 109
x	Peradeniya, Kandy Road and Railway	... 129
xi	Kandy—Nuwara Eliya Road, Gampola and Ramboda	... 158
xii	Hakgala, Ella, Bandarawela, Diyatalawa, Badulla, Bibile and Batticaloa Road	... 171
xiii	Batticaloa, The East Coast Road, Arugam Bay, Wellawaya and Diyaluma Falls	... 193
xiv	Tissamaharama, Hambantota, Mulkirigala, Dondra Head, Matara ...	... 209
xv	Weligama, Galle, Baddegama, Kalutara and Adam's Peak	... 229
xvi	Panadura, Moratuwa, Kotte and Colombo	... 248

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

PREFACE

This book is intended for those who, like myself, love arm-chair travel: especially for those, young and old, who through shortness of purse or shortness of wind, are not able to take the road themselves. But, if you travel with me, you must expect to hear travellers' tales: let no one, for instance, who has put his head into the sausage-machine of an examination, take this book for guide. He would very likely come out too long, or too short, and with the wrong kind of stuffing. The guides to accepted history are to be found elsewhere. I have followed old Herodotus who said, after describing how a horse gave birth to a hare, "This I heard, and I have set it down, but I know not if it be true or not." I have written down what I saw, and what I was told, and what I read. I have drawn as far as possible upon eye-witnesses of former ages or upon chronicles, the nearest that I could find to the times that I had to describe.

I think that for every part of my journey I had one or more companions who do not appear, because that would not fit in with the plan of the book, but, to whom I am none the less grateful for their kind company. I also owe thanks to Dr. G. C. Mendis, who gave of his valuable time to look through the manuscript, and to give many helpful suggestions; and to Dr. R. L. Hayman, Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Amarasinghe, Miss L. Blanchard, and Mr. N. G. Abeynaike who very kindly read through the manuscript and helped with the proofs. I thank too H.C.M. for much help and encouragement.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

The Pilgrims' Path on Adam's Peak

CEYLON BEATEN TRACK

CHAPTER 1.

Negombo, Chilaw, Puttalam and Tabbowowewe

I was running northwards along the coast road that leads to Negombo. The last houses of the suburbs of Colombo were left behind, and gardens of green coconut trees standing motionless in the noon day heat had taken possession of either side of the way.

I halted under a shady tree before a long stretch of fields where two men were engaged in shovelling water from a flooded channel into a paddy field with two large shovels like those that grocers use to handle sugar or coffee berries. The shovels were hung on bamboo frames which creaked rhythmically as the men swung steadily at their work in the blazing sun.

I attended to lunch. Colombo was far behind and this was the country where everyone had time to stand and stare. Two small children arrived first on the scene and gazed at the car with quiet dark-eyed solemnity. I offered them a sandwich. The smaller of the two, a little boy, newly promoted to a wisp of unwashed cloth around his ample tummy, climbed on to the footboard of the car and took his sandwich, and began to munch. The other, a little tousled headed girl of twelve or so, turned shy,

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

and would not come forward. She stood upon the grass by the roadside holding her water chatty in her hands, and nervously twisting her little bronze limbs into unconscious poses, each like a work of art perfected.

The urchin on the footboard waved his sandwich and began a long conversation, which gave both of us great satisfaction, because I was not required to take any part in it, and he was provided with a silent audience.

I was glad to meet these children for they were the end of my quest upon the journey, a lucky omen at the starting. I had set out to follow the beaten track of their history along the roads of Ceylon, and through her cities, and in her books and chronicles, and every track of history leads up to these bronzed children on the highway. The key to all their strength and weakness lies hidden in the history of their ancestors: and in the same place, for those who like to seek for it, lies the best guide to their progress and their future.

No races reflect their past history more faithfully than the peoples of Ceylon. Each of the races of the Island is clay of the pit whence it was dug, and each has been shaped and moulded by the long story of its past adventures: each has been burned in the fire of tribulation and come out with its characteristics burned deep into its members. The bright precocious spoilt child I had met upon the road, and his gentle timid sister carrying a water pot, were like a book of history in which a man might read the story of a wild adventure long ago; when a prince from India landed on an unknown Island; of a new faith that burned like fire in men's hearts; of a great age of art and architecture and mighty kings; of a long desperate killing struggle for mastery over the invaders; of civil wars and three foreign conquests; of the decline of kings and the ascendancy of chiefs; and of the rising of the morning star of a new awakening. I thought that they were fortunate to be alive at such a time, and still more lucky to be quite unaware of their fortune.

We got on very well, until it was time for me to move. But when I suggested that it was time to part, the small heir of all the ages was not at all disposed to lose his listener, and made unmistakable signs that I should give him a ride along the road. Weakly I granted the request, and it was immediately followed by a demand for a further ride. I began to have visions of adopting a precocious dark-eyed child who would not take the strongest hints that he should *paliang*. Two or three young men came along the road towards us. I called them to the rescue. One of them ordered the child in a very severe and peremptory manner to get off the footboard. My small friend took not the slightest notice of the command, but looked at me with the smile of the little devil who is too young to know that

he is a little devil. As everything else had failed, I was reduced to practise a base trick upon my guest. There was one sandwich left. I produced it. The everlasting hunger appeared in the child's eyes. I returned the sandwich to its bag, and threw both out of the car on to the grass by the roadside. The colour came back to the tiny knuckles and the small brown fingers were loosened from the door of the car, and my visitor darted after the prey. In the race which followed, the car just managed to win, not being so heavily and recently fed as its opponent, and I left my first acquaintance of the journey puffing and panting far behind upon the road.

The road ran on through a country, green with eternal spring. Away on the left were the remains of the Dutch canal, along which the padda boats, poled laboriously along by brown naked men, carried piles of sparkling salt from Negombo to the Kelani River. The salt monopoly was a strong weapon in the hands of the Dutch to control the King of Kandy, for he could obtain none for the use of his people except from the Dutch territories.

The Portuguese and Dutch had no roads to speak of along this coast, for paved roads were rare anywhere when they were in Ceylon. It was not till after 1800 that the loose sand of the Negombo road was covered with red gravel and workmen advanced foot by foot beating it flat to the rhythm of the road-makers' song. With the coming of the gravel road bullock carts began to increase in numbers, and men could travel swiftly and surely on horse back.

In 1825 the Negombo road heard the echo of galloping hoofs over the red cabuk. The flying feet were on a peaceful mission, and they achieved a great feat of a horse and horsemanship, in the age when men talked horseflesh as they talk motor cars today.

Major Skinner tells the story in his autobiography. 'One morning Sir Edward Barnes came down to the billiard-room, as he usually did, between 12 and 1 o'clock, where we all congregated after breakfast. Seeing me intent on a game, he said: 'What are you doing here, youngster? I thought you would have been at Negombo by this time.'

"What to do there, sir?" I asked.

"What! Have you not received your orders from the Quartermaster-General?"

"No, Sir; I have not seen him today."

"Go to him at once, and be quick in what you have to do."

It was nearly 2 o'clock before the Quartermaster-General could be found. When I caught him he directed me to proceed to Negombo—an old fort twenty-three miles north of Colombo—to make a plan of the barracks there and to prepare an estimate for their repair, so as to fit them for immediate occupation.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

This was rather a bore, for I was engaged to a very pleasant dinner party that evening, to which I knew the Governor and Lady Barnes were going. It was 2 o'clock when His Excellency saw me ride out of King's House grounds. I knew I could depend upon my grey Arab charger, so the moment I got clear of the fort I started at a moderate hand-gallop, drew bridle for a minute or two at every sixth mile, and found that I reached Negombo within two hours. There was no time to lose; I hooked my reins to a tree in the barracks square and took out my field book and tape; measurements for the plans were soon made, data for the estimates all taken within the hour, my horse girthed up, and I in my saddle on my return to Colombo. I allowed my Arab to go his own pace, which was always good, and found that he had done the twenty-three miles home faster than on going out. I had my bath, dressed, and jumped into the buggy of one of the A.D.C.s, and arrived at the dinner party very nearly as soon as the Governor and Lady Barnes.

The moment Sir Edward saw me he came up to me; there was no mistaking when he was displeased, though he had never found fault with me before. However, I thought to myself, "I will have a bit of fun; for I see you think I have neglected my orders." I was not left long in doubt upon that point, for the following dialogue took place between us:

"Well, youngster, what the———are you doing here? I thought I told you this morning to go to the Quartermaster-General for orders."

"So I did, Sir".

"And what did he tell you to do?"

"He ordered me to proceed to Negombo, Sir, to make plans of the barracks, to report the number of men they could accommodate, and to submit an estimate for their repairs."

"And what do you mean, Sir, by neglecting those orders; you ought to have gone off instantly. Colonel—should have given you your orders yesterday evening."

"I have not neglected them, Sir; I have been to Negombo, and Your Excellency will have all the information you require laid before you tomorrow morning."

"You have been to Negombo?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And taken plans of the barracks?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And framed an estimate for their repair?"

"Yes, Sir."

"At what time did you leave King's House?"

"Two o'clock, Sir; reached Negombo at nine minutes to four; and left it at a quarter to five."

"And what did you ride?"

"My own charger, Sir."

I saw the satisfaction he felt by his expression; he turned round, and although I pretended not to be looking at him, I saw the glee with which he was repeating my little exploit to our host, the Honourable Mr. Granville, and other members of the party. It was a fair ride and amount of work against time, but much more credit was due to my dear little horse than to myself." (Fifty years in Ceylon 67. Skinner).

The country side has long since forgotten the echoes of galloping red-coated officers, the road wound through its coconut gardens and passed the greenest of green paddy fields smiling up at the sky in a sleepy dream of peace. The midday sun and sandwiches made a thirst like salted kaju nuts, and the best drink God ever made hangs overhead upon every road on the West coast of Ceylon. I thought of king coconuts. Presently I came upon two men who appeared to be doing nothing in a grave and comfortable manner just over the fence of a small coconut estate. One of them looked like a Mudaliyar and the other like a Maha-Mudaliyar, but they were only villagers, the proprietor of the garden and perhaps one of his debtors who was able to pay his interest. I asked them for a king coconut. The more grave and more portly of the two made a lordly sign to the other, who immediately tucked up his flowing cloth, exposing a pair of strong hairy legs, and sitting frog-like on the trunk of a coconut tree, climbed, up as nimbly as a schoolboy.

Down came the coconuts in lavish profusion. The Maha-Mudaliyar deftly sliced a coconut with his knife into a golden cup overflowing with precious liquor, and handed it to me. There is great comfort in a king coconut on a hot day.

And then I feebly offered a small coin. Nothing could have been more superb than the gesture with which it was set aside. The mixture of reproof and of setting the victim at his ease was perfect. I had met one of nature's gentlemen. I went on my way feeling that I had left the city far behind.

I left Negombo and its fort behind, and passed Chilaw, and followed the road northward. In 1803 Percival wrote of this way: "Perhaps there is no road in the island more dangerous to travel, from the multitude of wild beasts with which it is infested." When Bishop Chapman travelled this way in 1847 he had to swim his horse over the Maha Oya a few miles north of Negombo; and from Chilaw to Puttalam he came through one continued jungle of thirty miles. He started from Chilaw at four o'clock in the morning to avoid the sun, and had to travel by torch-light to scare the elephants, whose tracks covered the whole district. I am told that there is good hare-shooting to be had now under the coconut trees between Chilaw and Puttalam.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Puttalam Resthouse looked cosy and inviting as its lights shone out into the darkness through rows of pillars and hanging pot plants. I turned in at the gate and came to a halt before the entrance under the dark branches of a flame-of-the-forest tree. There was the Resthouse-keeper ready upon the step.

He had tomato soup or mullagatawny; he had rice, and curries in great variety; or would master like a couple of chops? He would roast a fowl. Out of a tin he would produce any form of meat or fruit; or set succulent Californian asparagus upon the table. He would wait upon the thirst of his guest with a whisky and soda, and a deep glass of lager beer.

No wonder so many travellers have spoken their word in praise of the Resthouses of Ceylon. Most of them were built long ago when they were able to take special privileges in the choice of situations and outlook. Also they generally stand at the journey's end where the traveller would be well content with far less tempting quarters. No man should pass by a resthouse on the road in Ceylon if he can help it, for they are almost always the best view point for some lovely piece of her scenery.

After supper I sat under the midnight blue sky in the garden of the Resthouse and read the Mahavamsa.

Sinhalese history begins in the neighbourhood of Puttalam. The Mahavamsa records that Vijaya landed in Ceylon at a place which is supposed to be near Puttalam, at a date which is said to be about 483 B.C., or about the time that the power and culture of Greece were at their height. The prince and his men, sea-sick and weary from their voyage, sat down upon the ground to rest. When they looked at their hands and found upon them the red laterite dust of Ceylon, they called the place Tambapanni, "the red hand." Vijaya seems to have neglected to make William the Conqueror's remark that he had clutched the island and it had clung to his fingers.

Vijaya, according to the Mahavamsa, was something of a roisterer at home, in North India (nobody yet knows exactly which part), and his wild life caused his father to shave one side of his head and send him forth in a ship with his boon companions to seek their fortune. Fortune was kind to them and brought them to Ceylon.

At this time the people of Ceylon were Yakkas who had the power of being invisible. They gave Vijaya as much trouble as Circe gave to Ulysses, for a Yakkini, a female spirit, named Kuveni, seized his followers one by one and hurled them into a chasm. Vijaya was forced to catch her in the noose of his bow string, and taking her hair in his left hand, threatened to slay her unless she restored his men. She showed her appreciation of this treatment by "assuming the lovely form of a sixteen-year-old maiden, adorned with all the ornaments," and becoming his mistress. She gave back his followers and helped him to overcome the other Yakkas in the island.

Later, when Vijaya wished for a queen of royal race, he sent away his Yakkini with her two children and sought a bride for himself in South India. Kuveni returned to her people and perished at the hands of the enraged Yakkas; but her children escaped and dwelt in Malaya, the hill country of Ceylon, where they became the ancestors of the race of the Veddahs.

I went to sleep on the Resthouse verandah where I could see the stars looking down with twinkling eyes out of a sky that never seems so deep a blue as on a clear night in Ceylon beside the sea. I slept with the Mahavamsa under the pillow.

Next morning I was woken at dawn by the cat-like wail of the Resthouse peacocks. This is not a good sound to begin the day with, because the poor peacock is classed among the unlucky brids. However, it had no ill effects upon my breakfast, and I got away early in the morning to follow the Sinhalese race from Tambapanni along the road that led to the glories of Anuradhapura.

Soon after the way turned Eastward from Puttalam I found myself for the first time in the jungle. Some people dislike the jungle. I have even heard a lady say that she found the endless jungle along the road monotonous. I cannot understand that. To me it seems to call with an irresistible voice. I hear the distant past of my race summoning me out of the shadows. Everybody at some time feels a desire to keep tame animals, and a desire to dig and make things grow, but the call of the jungle is older and infinitely more sublime. It says with a silent voice, "You are children of mine. For a time you have wandered in a kingdom of your own making, but at heart you belong to me, and you must come back to me at last."

I looked out of the car at the game tracks and jungle paths that turned off on either side of the road. "This way, this way," each one of them said, "take off your shoes and follow me." I left the car and walked silently a hundred yards or so into the forest and there sat down to wait. Nothing at all happened. There was not a single sound of life to be heard all around. Only loneliness and peace. Then within ten yards of me I heard a rustling sound behind a fallen tree. I peeped over the mossy trunk. There was a jungle hen scratching away among the fallen leaves and looking intently at the result, as tame as a bantam in a barn-yard. She seemed to be a lone bird out prospecting on her own account for I could see or hear no male in attendance. Then I moved a little to get a better view of her. In a moment she had vanished completely. A

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

faint stirring of leaves told the way of her flight and I saw her no more.

At the tenth mile the road passed across the bed of a tank, the Tabbowa Wewa. The tank bed on the right of the road was a swamp of black mud where green marsh creepers were crawling over the trunks of great dead trees, like vampires sucking the life-blood out of giants lying chained and helpless; here was a perfect place for invisible Yakkas, an eerie spot, where strength died and weakness flourished, and the black cormorant, like an evil spirit, sat motionless with outstretched wings upon the dead limb of a mighty tree.

I hurried on along the road into the jungle beyond the tank. Bronze-wing pigeons shot up from damp shady hollows and raced the car for fifty yards before they turned with a dark green flash into the forest. A mongoose looked up sharply from his private business by the road side and scuttled off into the bushes. A cabaragoya stalked awkwardly across the way with his black forked tongue flickering in and out of a supercilious mouth: he came to life in a moment when he heard the car and darted out of sight.

Presently coming rather suddenly round a bend I came upon a jungle idyll. There was a fine full antlered spotted buck butting lovingly at a soft eyed doe. They were too intent upon their love-making to hear the approach of man. As the car came round the corner, the lady immediately made a shame-faced bolt into the jungle, and was out of sight in a moment. The buck followed her in a more leisurely manner, turning round his head defiantly upon his supple neck as if to say, "Confound your infernal interfering gas machine reeking round the country and playing the deuce with any little bit of privacy that is left to us these days."

I could only raise my hat to him and say, "Sorry, old fellow, but why choose the road side for your epithalamium?" He was naturally not in a position to consider the situation coolly.

CHAPTER II.

Mihintale and Anuradhapura

I sat upon the upper verandah of the Anuradhapura Hotel and read the fourteenth chapter of the Mahavamsa over my breakfast sausage, and looked out upon the fine collection of trees in the Hotel grounds which were once a Government Botanical Garden. The Appu was a kindly old gentleman and ready enough to talk. Visitors, he said, were scarce compared to the old days. The depression was said to have lifted but people had not really enough for their needs. It was hard to get a job for the young men, and not easy even for the old ones to keep one. He smiled pleasantly, as if to show that he at any rate was in no way down-hearted by the troubles of life.

I asked him how near the jungle came up to the town of Anuradhapura.

How near? he answered, Why, only two years ago a wild elephant walked through the town and killed a woman. He was himself going to his brother-in-law's sister's garden, when he saw the crowd of people. The elephant had walked through the gardens behind the houses and had met a cow feeding across its path. It had given the cow one blow with its trunk and killed it on the spot. Then it had killed a woman. Somebody had brought a gun and shot it. He had seen it lying dead. Perhaps it was a rogue.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

I left the hotel and passed through Anuradhapura in the cool of the morning, looking only at the busy people in the bazar. I wanted to see Mihintale first. The road ran through the forest where I could hear a jungle cock giving his challenge, 'George Joyce, George Joyce,' as he and his wives scratched among the dead leaves in the undergrowth. It was along this way that King Devanampiatissa came on foot with his attendants in 307 B.C. on a hunting expedition, moving, all unconsciously, towards an event that was to have a greater influence upon his country than any other that has happened to it before or since. Every child knows the story how the King saw an elk browsing in a thicket, and like a good sportsman as he was, he would not let fly his arrow at the unconscious animal. He twanged his bow-string, and the elk crashed away into the jungle. "The King pursued, but the stag in his flight drew near to the Thera." The Thera was Mahinda, the Apostle of Buddhism sent to Ceylon from India by the Emperor Asoka. "When the King beheld him, he stood still terrified. The Thera said to him: 'Come hither Tissa.' Then from the calling him by his name, Tissa, the King thought forthwith: 'That is a yakkha.'

"'Samanas are we, O great King, disciples of the King of Truth. From compassion towards thee are we come hither from Jambudipa,' (India) thus said the Thera. When the King heard this, fear left him. And remembering the message of his friend (Asoka), and persuaded that these were samanas, he laid bow and arrow aside and approaching the sage he exchanged greetings with the Thera and sat down near him."

I drove into the untidy little hamlet of Mihintale past the old rest-house, now closed. Here many a merry party spent the night in former times after driving out from Anuradhapura in a bullock hackery, before the motor car made Mihintale a place for the passing visit of a day. Turning to the right the road curves round until it comes to a standstill at the foot of one of the grandest staircases in the world. The great wide flight of yellow stone steps climbs magnificently up the hill. Tennent and Miss Mitton would not recognise the narrow jungle avenue of crooked stairs that they saw in 1848 and 1917, before the steps were excavated and restored. This grand stairway must have carried millions of pilgrims climbing the sacred mountain through the centuries, and yet those travel-stained feet being, for the most part, bare and unshod, have scarcely worn a groove in the ancient stones.

"One thousand eight hundred and four steps" said a voice beside me. There was a young man with a fine mop of curly black hair, and the half diffident and half assured manner of the tourists' aid, who has to size up the newcomer before deciding upon the best method of treatment. It was an interesting piece

of information, though perhaps it would have sounded better if he had kept it until we reached the top; however we started off together to climb the Holy Mountain.

To the right of the great staircase I found a newly excavated dagoba called, I think, Jiribandah. It stood out upon a shoulder of the mountain looking as fresh and new as if the ancient masons had just left the stone elephants and lions upon the dagoba ready for the plasterers and painters to set to work upon them. Even now the red and yellow paint was visible in places and much of the plaster work was still left upon the brick face of the dagoba. It is a most exquisite example of Sinhalese architecture at its best. The life and spirit of the artist breaks through the conventional designs of elephants and lions and human beings, and speaks with the living voice of long ago to the pilgrims of today. Beside the dagoba is a small cave cell with an inscription signifying: "Cave dedicated to the Community by the noble Asili, son of the righteous King Gamini." Mihintale is covered with such cells hidden in every nook and corner and perched upon the edge of precipices. They tell of an age even older than the coming of Buddhism when ascetics sought this hill as a refuge from the world. In the earliest days of Buddhism men lived in such jungle caves and meditated on the transience of all things on the earth. From them it is said, Buddhist architecture gradually evolved. The caves began to be walled in with brick and plaster and entered by narrow doorways with stone door posts and lintels. They were enlarged inside and turned into rock temples, from which in course of time came the magnificent monasteries built of stone which are seen today.

I suppose one ought to picture Mihintale in its prime as a great hill-city of monks with their attendants and slaves, living midst gorgeous painted and sculptured vihares, and dagobas, and stairways and bathing pools. Among these would be the buildings necessary for such a multitude of men, rice and oil stores and kitchens, washing and dyeing houses for robes, quarters for eating and sleeping, pirivenas where the novices were taught, places for meditation and for recreation, guest houses and ambalams for the crowds of pilgrims who visited the sacred hill; and hidden away outside the city the humble dwellings of slaves, the stables and the cart sheds and the dog kennels. Over the whole city must have grown a collection of the wonderful flowering trees of Ceylon, whose scented blossoms were the offerings made at the holy places upon the hill.

All this splendour was the gift of kings and great men. Mihintale belongs to the earliest age of Buddhism in Ceylon. It was an age when faith burned like a flame, when the things of this world seemed to many men to be as nothing to the glory that

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

could be won by the humblest who would forsake the world. Men had no doubts. They were borne along upon a great wave of faith in the midst of a multitude of believers. The priests believed that they could win freedom from earthly desires, and kings in reverence for their holiness made them dwelling places away from the busy world, where the everlasting rocks mocked at the vanity of man's puny buildings, where the city with its worldly business and worldly pleasures lay far beneath them, where the shade of the bo-trees sheltered the mendicant sitting in contemplation, and the deep black water of rock pools reflected his slow and solemn steps and his shaven head bowed in meditation. Those who served these holy men won the merit that should bring the server nearer to that great freedom which the ascetics themselves sought. Men lived in a society which gave little temptation to materialism except to kings and nobles, and the chronicles show how terribly uncertain the lives of kings often were.

"This is Mahinda's bath," said my guide, as we came out upon the platform at the top of the first long stairway. I was looking at the fine old rampant lion who opens his mouth to let the water flow out of the stone tank above him. Whenever I see him in photographs or in stone reality, I think of the little village boy who announced to the visiting lady that the lion's 'budda' was filled with precious jewels.

'And supposing I took a hammer and hammered him open to get the jewels,' said the irreverent lady.

The little boy opened his eyes wide in horror at the mere idea of such sacrilege, and determined to defend the work of his ancestors he said:

'If you did, the great red devil of the mountain would come and eat you up.' I feel sure that he was right, and I hope that the same devil will attend upon some of those who scratch the infinite smallness of their names beside the names of kings and benefactors of a thousand years ago upon the rocks of Mihintale.

My guide pointed to the cement patches about the lion's middle, and told me that it had been patched up in that way after some ancient invader had rifled its bowels for treasure. But I believe that the truth is that it fell to bits from sheer old age and was pieced together again by the Archaeological Department. The amount of opening up that has been done upon the hill of recent years may be judged from the fact that this lion bath, just before 1917, was "so hemmed in with trees, it is impossible to get a good photograph.' The bath itself is a work of art in stone, richly carved with lions and dwarfs and dancing girls. It is fed from an elaborately decorated stone spout, under which the bather stood while the water flowed out

at his feet through the lion's mouth. The man must have felt great satisfaction who first burrowed among the earth and tree roots above the stone tank and discovered the humble red clay pipe, that led the water to the spout, still in position after a thousand years. There it lies buried to this day, and the end of it is pointed out to visitors who examine the ancient bath.

We followed the path along the hillside over a litter of ancient bricks and fallen retaining walls until we came to the Naga Pokuna. The huge black five headed cobra stands guardian over his pool. "The carving of the snake goes on under the water for thirty feet," said my guide, "and the steps on this side are continued to the bottom of the pool." Little fish were swimming about in the water, and a large tortoise , who had been lazily floating with flippers spread out upon the surface, dived into the black depths at our approach. The guide pointed out the overflow channels cut in the rock from this little reservoir: and down below it he showed me a long stone conduit leading toward the Dining Hall of the monastery. This pool is mentioned in the Culavamsa where it is written that Aggabodhi I. provided 'on the cetiyapabbata......... a permanent water supply for the Nagasondi Tank.' The account goes on to say that, 'after having the Mahindata Tank constructed in the proper way, (that is the tank at the foot of Mihintale Mountain), he decided to set up the image of the Thera (Mahinda) on its dike and he decreed that when the great Thera Mahinda should be brought to the place, people of the Taraccha (hyena) clan should carry him.' This passage gives an interesting little peep into the manner in which the ancient works were carried out, and also into the organization of society in Ceylon round about 600 A.D. Professor Geiger says that the Taraccha was one of several totemistic clans, named after, and supposed to be descended from, various animals. "To these," he continues, "must be added the name of the Sihala themselves, the 'Lion men,' so called after Vijaya who belonged to the Lion Clan.'

I followed the track of the ancient pilgrims up the stone steps to the level platform of the holy place of Mihintale. The personality of Mahinda still dominates the mountain, and it was upon this spot that the Thera met the King. How startled the mighty King must have been to hear himself commanded by his name, "Come hither, Tissa." There is always a majestic calm and dignity about the apostle which shows itself even in the scanty record of the Mahavamsa. The King was terrified at first seeing him, and paid him royal honours from the first. Yet there must have been something very human and lovable about him, for at the sound of his voice fear left the King and he went and sat down near the strange teacher. Only one who could win men's hearts could convert a kingdom.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Some of Mahinda's remains lie upon this spot. His death is thus described: 'The great Thera, Mahinda, who had taught the fearless doctrine of the Master, the sacred writings, the precepts of righteousness and the higher perfection, full excellently in the island of Lanka, Mahinda the light of Lanka, the teacher of many disciples, he who, like unto the Master, had wrought great blessing for the people, did, in the eighth year of King Uttiya, while he, being sixty years old, was spending the rain season on the Cetiya-mountain (Mihintale) pass, victorious over his senses, into Nibbana, on the eighth day of the bright half of the month Assayiya. Therefore this day received his name.'

After Uttiya had carried out the elaborrate funeral of the saint, 'taking the half of the relics, the monarch caused thupas to be built on the Cetiya-mountain and in all the viharas."

Upon the platform in the middle of the double circle of stone pillars stands the white dagoba, the Ambasthale dagoba, and beyond it stand the huge boulders upon which Mahinda landed after his flight from India.

I found a man with a stubbly black beard and three merry littleboys sitting under the trees on the platform. They offered me coconuts to drink, but my guide, having perhaps ideas of his own as to where I should obtain my drinks ,said that it would be better to wait, and so I left the platform and followed him down the steep path to Mahinda's bed. Everybody who visits Mihintale goes down the hot little valley and climbs up the iron stairs and looks into the open cave made by one huge boulder lying over a corner in the rock face of the hill and forming a shelter open on both sides. Upon the floor is the rudely carved bed, upon which the guide politely asked me not to set my irreverent feet. The hill falls away on the far side in a steep precipice, and the watcher from the cave looks straight out over the wide plain towards Minneriya and the east coast. The world here is far below his feet.

I toiled back up the stony path under the hot sun, by the little bricked-in cell with its stone door posts, and up the steps, and past the buildings where the monks of the present day live, back on to the level terrace by the Ambasthale Dagoba. There was my bearded friend sitting solid as ever, and there were the three merry boys giggling with delight, and I noticed that they had five large coconuts all ready, one cut and opened and running over with the precious drink. If my guide kept a private bar in the village he lost his chance completely against those coconuts. We all sat down on a long wooden plank beside the statue of King Devanampiya Tissa and I drank the water while the little boys devoured the white meat of the coconuts.

"Do you ever see any bears on the mountain now?" I asked the stubble-bearded man.

He considered the question for some moments as if it were a weighty problem demanding deep thought; while the loud munching of coconut meat went on at his elbow.

"We used to see bears sometimes that side" he said at last pointing up in the air in a more or less northerly direction, "but they are not seen nowadays anywhere on the hill."

But the guide did not like his show place falling short of expectation so he began a long story of a party of pilgrims who came up the mountain with torches for a night festival, and met a bear on the left of the path close to the top of the steps. It happened about two years ago, he said. He was there himself. He did not see the bear but he heard it rushing away through the bushes.

"In wet weather says Miss Mitton in 1917 in 'Lost Cities of Ceylon," "bears still occasionally seek shelter in mysterious caves under the great boulder of Rajagirilena-Kanda."

I climbed up the ancient rock-cut steps to the Maha Seya, a partially restored dagoba upon the west of the hill above the Ambasthale terrace. There are other dagobas on the hill top not easily accessible, one of them very sacred to Buddhist pilgrims, but this dagoba is particularly interesting to visit, because from its paved court the three great dagobas of Anuradhapura can be seen rising from the green carpet of trees that covers the plain. From this distance it is easy to restore in one's mind their golden spires and the bright silver glory of their domes. The Brazen Palace raises itself again close to the Ruanwelli and flashes back the sun from the copper sheets upon its roof. The jungle opens and the ancient city of Anuradhapura, as large perhaps as modern London, stretches far to the north and south and east and sends out a long arm of road westward towards the sacred mountain. The busy hum of the city life comes up from below, mixed with the loud cawing of the scavenger crows, and the cries of men, and the barking of dogs; and the smoke of fires cooking thousands of evening meals rises into the still air. It must have been a splendid sight for the monk paying his evening visit to the Maha Seya, to see the lights of the mighty city coming out over the plain at his feet, and stretching away in twinkling disorder for many miles towards the darkening line of the horizon.

Returning down the steps my guide led me past what he called the Half-way House which is said to be a portico to the monastery beyond it. Before it is a large inscription written with exquisite art upon a polished stone slab. It defines 'the duties expected from the priests of the establishment, the manner

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

in which the revenues are to be disposed of, and the treatment to which the tenants and servants of the temple are to be subjected.'

In the monastery were two immense stone canoes. "The books say that this was used to hold boiled rice for the priests," said the guide, pointing to the larger canoe, "but now they think that they were used to store water." The Mahavamsa says that King Aggabodhi II "set up a canoe for the gifts of rice" in the Mahapali Hall at Anuradhapura, and this great stone vessel was evidently used for the same purpose. The other canoe has a flat slab at one end with grooves to drain off the water into the stone tank below it, which is curiously corrugated at the bottom. It looks as if it must have been used by the dhoby to wash clothes, but the guide told me what I think must be true, that it was a vat where the yellow robes of the priests were dyed.

I passed again down the grand staircase and along the road to a ruined building on the left of the way. "From an inscription on one of the guardstones the conjecture as to this being a hospital is confirmed," writes Miss Mitton in the "Lost Cities of Ceylon." The inscription translation begins, "'For the benefit of the hospital,' and ends, 'Anyone who takes by force what has been provided for this hospital will become a goat-sucking Rakshasa.'"

Close to the building is a block of stone with a hollow cut in it the shape of a man's body. "This," said the guide, "was a hospital. This stone was used to cure snake bite. They used to lie in a kind of medicine and get cured." That sounded an ingenious theory and I would give a good deal to know where he got it from. Elsewhere I was told that these curious stones were used to embalm the dead priests to preserve the bodies until it was time to burn them. The Mahavamsa says of the death of Mahainda, "When King Uttiya heard this he went thither (to Mihintale) stricken by the dart of sorrow, and when he had paid homage to the Thera and oft and greatly lamented over him, he caused the dead body of the Thera to be laid forthwith in a golden chest sprinkled with fragrant oil, and the well closed chest to be laid upon a golden, adorned bier." So perhaps it was in just such a stone chest as this at which I was looking that the saint of the Holy Mountain was laid when his gentle eyes closed in death.

When the long thirst of a day in the sun had been quenched in Kandy soda water at the only boutique I could find in the village, I parted with my curly headed guide and followed the road back to Anuradhapura. As I went I thought of the account of the funeral procession of Mahinda in the Mahavamsa: "And when the King had caused (the body of the saint) then to be lifted upon the bier, commanding solemn ceremonies, he caused it to be escorted by a great multitude of people, that had come together from this place and that, and by a great levy of troops; commanding due offerings (he caused it to be escorted) on the adorned street to the variously adorned capital and brought through the city in procession by the royal highway to the Mahavihara."

I followed the route of that procession as the night fell softly on the forest and the stars looked down upon the narrow white strip of jungle road.

* * * *

I set out in the morning to visit my favourite places in Anuradhapura, accompanied by a young man with an intelligent face, and long straight hair thrown back from his forehead. It soon appeared that I had found a treasure. The stones of the city were more than a rupee's worth of patter to him. They had been set up by men who had lived and expressed their thoughts and beliefs in what they built. I tender him my thanks and wish the pilgrim no better companion in his circuit of the ancient city.

We went first to the "Maha Vihara."

The great courtyard of the temple was very peaceful, a proper retiring place, after the noise and business of the little town outside. The ancient walls and the innumerable bo-trees gave pleasant shade from the growing morning sunshine. I suppose most visitors feel rather disappointed when they first see the famous tree in the Maha Vihara, the oldest historical tree in the world, a branch of the very tree under which the Buddha found enlightenment more than two thousand years ago. There seems to be no tree at all, only a number of branches. But that is because the trunk has been earthed up and terraced about by its protectors through the centuries so that now only the wide flung arms, still green and vigorous in spite of the long years, can be seen stretching out over the white railed terraces of the court-yard. Those outstretched arms speak to thousands of pilgrims of the message of freedom from the everlasting circle of rebirths which was won under this living foliage far away in time and place, but near enough to those who have set their hope upon it.

The holy tree is the greatest treasure of the Maha Vihara, but the monastery stood in the King's pleasure gardens in Anuradhapura before the tree was brought to Ceylon. And after it was brought there was somewhere in this monastery a cell where an aged monk sat among a pile of ola books reading and selecting, and putting together chapter by chapter the Mahavamsa, the great chronicle of Ceylon. His name was Mahanama, and every traveller should pay him a reverence, for without his patient work many of the ruins which now cover the land for

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

miles around would be nothing but nameless shells without a history.

It seems likely that Buddhist monks have lived in and clung to this holy ground through good and evil times from its first presentation to the brotherhood by Devanampiya Tissa in B.C. 247 up to the present time. Mahanama tells how, when the Abhayagiri heretics turned away the favour of King Maha Sena from the Maha Vihara and took away the very stones of the monastery, certain monks hid upon the site of the buildings so that they might preserve the claim of their order to its ancient heritage. The monastery must have been sacked many times by invaders from India in old days, but the coming of pilgrims to the temple of the Bo-Tree would soon make it a place of importance once more.

We left the Maha Vihara and went to the Thuparama, another work originally built by Devanampiya Tissa, the oldest, and I think, the most beautiful dagoba in Anuradhapura. I walked round its broad circular courtyard under the double row of slender graceful pillars which have become so familiar from innumerable pictures. I thought of its long history. Mahinda himself stood upon this spot and saw King Tissa raise the collar bone of the Buddha from his head and lay it in the relic chamber of the dagoba, and 'when the ruler of the earth had completed the beautiful thupa in the Thuparama he caused it to be worshipped perpetually with gifts of many jewels and so forth. The women of the royal household, the nobles, ministers, townspeople, and also all the countryfolk brought each their offering.' There must be some bricks of that original buildings still left in spite of many rebuildings and repairings of the dagoba. Eight hundred years later the Mahavamsa records how, "while the Thera Jotipala was performing his devotions in front of the Cetiya in the Thuparama a piece of masonry got loosened and fell in front of him. The troubled Thera called the King (Aggabodhi II) and showed it to him. When the King saw it he was horrified and had the work at once taken in hand............He had the work on the shrine finished in a short time, including the paintings and the like. Further he had four images and thrones of stone, a golden umbrella and work in stone and ivory made for the shrine."

As we came back towards the bund of the Tissawewa we talked of ancient Anuradhapura and its slow decay.

"When the British first came here in 1835," said the guide, "they found the place almost deserted. There were about twenty Moors living in a miserable little village in the bed of the Tissa Tank, and all the ruins were covered with jungle. This bund was all overgrown with trees in every direction." We had come out on the mighty bund which curves its long green arm

round the lovely stretch of blue water of the Tissa Tank and holds it back above the paddy fields that stretch out below it. Right under the bund we saw two baths where elephants gamboled in stone above green pools full of frogs, and close to them upon a great rock facing the bund is the curious drawing scratched upon the stone which is said to be a map of the world. Beyond these rose the Isurumuniya Temple. This is yet another work of King Devanampiya Tissa. Nature has heaped up a pile of huge grey boulders which man has embellished. There is the flat terrace and the stone moulding round the moat, whose water reflects the lifelike carvings of elephants and horsemen carved upon the rock that rises from it. These works are the glory of the Isurumuniya Temple, and it can boast too the well known carving of the man and woman upon a southern wall face.

Many visitors associate the Isurumuniya with the kindly personality of the Rev. H. J. Saranankara, the chief priest of the temple. With what delight he used to show its treasures, and the improvements that he had made, and those which he hoped to make; and he would then invite you to sign your name in the book, showing you with honest pride how many royal hands had signed there before you. There was no question of Buddhist faith, or Ceylon architecture or history, that did not interest him and that he would not answer with a scholar's humility. I asked the two young monks, who lived in the temple, where he was. He had died, they said, about two years ago. As I was going away, the younger of the two priests hurried after me with a paper in his hand. I took it, and found that it was a printed photograph of the old high priest, rather posed and stilted, but still it showed that a good friend and worthy guardian was not forgotten at the Isurumuniya temple.

From the times of Devanampiya Tissa I jumped a hundred years to 101 B.C. when the age of Duttha Gamini began in Anuradhapura. I went round to the Mirisavetiya Dagoba, which, says Miss Mitton, in 'Lost Cities of Ceylon,' has been restored with funds supplied by the King of Siam, who, as prince, stayed in Ceylon in 1888 and left a sum of money to be applied to the restoration of some Buddhist building. Every one knows how Duttha Gamini built the Dagoba in penance for failing to share a chilly pod with the brotherhood. So here we have a reference to the homely chilly in 100 B.C. as a thing in common use. The dictionary curry has reached the English language from far quarters, curry from the Tamil, rice from the Greek, and chilly from the Mexican. The name miris, chilly, has clung to the Dagoba built by Duttha Gamini on the spot where his spear and the relic enclosed in its shaft refused to be drawn out of the ground. The Dagoba is a sort of patron

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

of meal times reminding all comers of the duty of grace before meat.

I stood looking at the one thousand six hundred grey stone pillars that are all that is left of the mighty Brazen Palace, a skeleton of the nine storeys and nine hundred rooms loaded with priceless treasures, the lavish offerings of Gamini to the priesthood. This is the most dead-looking building in Anuradhapura, the city of a dead civilization. The rough pillars, stripped of every vestige of decoration, were shimmering in the heat, and Anuradhapura knows how to be hot. A couple of dogs flopped in the dust with lolling tongues, and a large black bull was luxuriously chewing the cud under the shade of a tree by the roadside. Close to him, sitting cross-legged upon the grass, a white-bearded Moorman was leisurely bargaining for large dried tobacco leaves with a grey headed fellow-religionist. Every living thing lay and simmered, except us pilgrims. As I looked, an old village woman, clad all in white, came hobbling rapidly along the road from the Maha Vihara. She stopped before the Lohapasada, and putting her hands together bowed towards the holy place. Then hastily fitting a white handkerchief over her head, she turned and hobbled off again in the direction of the Ruanweli Dagoba. I followed her, until we came in sight of the ancient building which beyond all others expressed the love of Ceylon's greatest king. What would he think of it now in the stark nakedness of the restoration in modern brick? Beyond all other buildings it received the reverence of succeeding kings: Water was poured upon it; it was studded with blossoms; it was buried under a huge heap of flowers so that no masonry was visible: the reward of King Dahatikabhaya's extreme virtues was to be allowed, alone of all men, to visit the relic chamber within the Dagoba. As I walked round the paved court I thought of another deed of piety that was enacted upon this spot. I saw the courtiers of King Siri Sanghabodhi standing in the pouring rain, in about 307 A.D., stopping up the outlets that let the water run from the platform of the Ruanweli Dagoba. In time of severe drought the pious king had lain down upon the platform and vowed that he would not rise until there fell enough rain to float his body. The rain came down according to his merit, but as he lay upon a raised place it did not float him, until his courtiers stopped the drains, and so enabled him to fulfil his vow.

Somewhere between the Brazen Palace and the Ruanweli Dagoba is the spot where Duttha Gamini lay dying, and gazed upon these two great works of his own making. He was Mahanama's hero King, and the scene of his death is one of the finest in the Mahavamsa:

"Lying on a palanquin the King went thither, and when on his palanquin he had passed round the cetiya going towards the

left, he paid homage to it at the south entrance, and as he then, lying on his right side on his couch spread upon the ground, beheld the splendid great Thupa, and lying on his left side the splendid Lohapasada, he became glad at heart, surrounded by the brotherhood of bhikkus.........

"When the King did not see the Thera Theraputtabhaya among them he thought: 'The great warrior, who fought victoriously through twenty-eight great battles with me nor ever yielded his ground, the Thera Theraputtabhaya comes not now to help me, now that the death-struggle is begun, for methinks he foresees my defeat.'

'When the thera, who dwelt by the source of the Kavinda-river on the Pangali-mountain, knew his thought he came with a company of five hundred bhikkhus.........., and he stood among those who surrounded the King. When the King saw him he was glad at heart and bade him be seated before him and said: 'Formerly I fought with you, the ten great warriors, by my side; now have I entered alone upon the battle with death, and the foe death I cannot conquer.'

"The Thera answered: 'O Great King, fear not, ruler of men, Without conquering the foe sin the foe death is unconquerable. All that has come into this transitory existence must necessarily perish also, perishable is all that exists; thus did the Master teach. Mortality overcomes even the Buddhas, untouched by shame or fear; therefore think thou: all that exists is perishable, full of sorrow, and unreal. In thy last mortal existence thy love for the true doctrine was indeed great. Albeit the world of gods was within thy sight, yet didst thou, renouncing heavenly bliss, return to this world and didst many works of merit in manifold ways. Moreover, the setting up of sole sovereignity by thee did serve to bring glory to the doctrine. Oh thou who art rich in merit, think on all those works of merit accomplished by thee even to this present day, then will all be well with thee straightway.'

"When the King heard these words he was glad at heart and said: 'In single combat also thou are my help.' "

A scribe was then called and bidden to read aloud the book of meritorious deeds. When he had read a part, the King took up the tale himself, but at the end of the long list he said: " 'But all this giving while that I reigned, rejoices not my heart; only the two gifts that I gave, without care for my life, the while I was in adversity, those gladden my heart.' "

The King then gave instructions where his body was to be burnt, and bade his younger brother, Tissa, complete all the work on the Great Thupa that was not yet finished, and observe the ceremonies and offerings of flowers to the Thupa.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

"But the King said to the Thera: 'Which of the celestial worlds is the most beautiful, venerable sir?' and the other answered: 'The city of the Tusitas, O King, is the fairest; so think the pious. Awaiting the time when he shall become a Buddha, the compassionate Bodhisatta Metteyya dwells in the Tusita-City.' When the most wise King heard these words of the Thera, he, casting a glance at the great Thupa, closed his eyes as he lay."

I was standing close to the very spot where this scene was enacted 77 years before the coming of Christ. The mighty King who received almost godlike honours from his people through his long reign of twenty-two years, appears in all his humanity at the gate of death. He seems a most human and loveable figure. He had been Duttha Gamini, the naughty boy, who sent his father a woman's ornament because his father would not let him fight the Tamils: he had been prince Gamini whose insatiable ambition could not brook being-hemmed in, and would not rest until the whole island was under his sway: he was King Gamini who repented of the bloodshed and sorrow that his long wars had caused, and who strove to wipe out their stain by refusing to overtax his people, by countless gifts and works of merit, and by the great buildings with which he adorned his capital. But now he is Gamini the man who on his death-bed longs for the old friend of his fighting days, who rejoices at the great works that he has carried out and yet feels how small they are compared to his acts of kindness when he was himself in trouble: who fears death and yet meets it with unfailing courage, who dies in the faith that he had learned from the gentle king, his father, and from Vihara Devi, his mother, who loved him.

"He who, holding the good life to be the greatest good, does works of merit, passes, covering over much that perchance is evil-doing, into heaven as into his own house; therefore will the wise man continually take delight in works of merit."

I went next to the extreme north of Anuradhapura to see the two stone bathing pools which cry aloud for further restoration so perfect is the exquisite stone work of their architecture.

'Come and see this road' said my guide. We went beyond the pools to a spot where the yellow gravel road passed through a gap in a long mound where the loose stone of an ancient wall lay half hidden under the grass.

"I believe," he said, "that this was the great road which led from the people's city into the great monastic city. Here the crowds of worshippers washed their feet and passed through the north gate which must have been here where the present road passes."

I asked him what he thought about the lot of the common people in ancient Anuradhapura.

He considered the question, and then answered in a half apologetic manner, as if any criticism were out of place and should be treated confidentially.

"It's my opinion," he said, "that the ordinary people had a hard time of it. Who built all these buildings and made all these tanks? The kings perhaps had a good time and the nobles, but the common people, they worked. Perhaps they were quite satisfied and contented, but they did the work."

"I believe," he went on, "that all these ruins which we see were in the inner city where the priests lived, and outside, all round especially this side," and he pointed to the north, "lived the different castes of workers in their villages. But, you see, Anuradhapura flourished for twelve hundred years, so it is not like one city. It grew, and changed, and perhaps it shrank at times like any other great city."

I thought to myself what the ancient city was like and how its inhabitants lived.

Before the coming of Buddhism Pandukabhaya who reigned about 394 B.C., "laid out also four suburbs as well as the Abhaya-tank, the common cemetery, the place of execution" as well as various places of religion. Five hundred Candalas cleaned the streets of the town and two hundred the sewers; a hundred and fifty Candalas were employed to bear the dead to the cemetery and as many more to watch the cemetery. 'For these he built a village north-west of the cemetery and they continually carried out their duty as it was appointed." This is a picture of a large and well organized town. There was outside the town a line of huts for huntsmen, a hermitage for many ascetics, and a lying-in shelter and a hall for those recovering from sickness.

The next King, Mutasiva, laid out the beautiful Mahameghavana-garden provided with fruit-trees and flowering trees. In this garden, after Mahinda came, Devanampiyatissa made the Maha Vihara and built the Thuparama outside the south gate of the city. Tissa was intimate with the Emperor Asoka and there must have been regular intercourse and trade with India through the port of Mahatittha near Mannar. The Mahavamsa mentions how Kuveni showed Vijaya and his followers "rice and other foods and goods of every kind that had been in the ships of those traders whom she had devoured:" wrecked ships gave up their jewels when Devanampiyatissa was crowned: the Merchants' Guild brought the Sacred Bo-Tree from the Ganges: the first Tamils to seize the throne of Ceylon were the "sons of a freighter who brought horses" to Ceylon.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Imported horses must have been numerous in the city. Waggons were used by those of high rank to travel: Tissa offered his to Mahinda to carry him from Mihintale to Anuradhapura. And later, at the enshrining of the relics in the Ruanwelli Dagoba the King's car of state was drawn by four pure white Sindhu-horses which came from the Indus country.

The legend that Devanampiyatissa was out on foot hunting elk when he met Mahinda seems to show that the country round Anuradhapura was fairly wild at that time. Though the city was large in area, much of it was covered by wide parks and gardens, and no doubt the jungle came close up to it in many places. When Tissa returned, the townsfolk, eager to hear the prophet, made a great stir at the palace gate. The elephant stables were cleaned out to receive the crowd, and when the stables were found too small, the King's garden by the south gate, full of trees, including mango trees, was used to accommodate the multitude of listeners. After these incidents the people must have seen the rapid rise of vihares all round them, and many must have become bikkhus.

If the influence of South India had not been strong before in Anuradhapura it became so soon after Tissa's time. It came through raids and invasions, through royal marriages, through merchants and scholars and priests who passed continually to and fro. In the reign of the Tamil King Elara the palmyra and coconut trees are mentioned; and we find the story of the old woman who spread out some paddy to dry in the sun, and of the calf that wandered on the road and was killed by Elara's son "going in a car to the Tissa-tank."

The war between Elara and Duttha Gamini gives us the siege of Vijitapura, which was defended with a wall and gates of iron and three trenches. The defenders "who stood upon the gate-tower hurled down weapons of every kind, balls of red-hot iron and molten pitch" as in any siege in medieval Europe. In the battle outside Anuradhapura the two princes fought upon elephants, though Duttha Gamini had previously fought on horseback against his brother, Tissa. The two armies had elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers. The common soldiers carried spears, swords and shields, and bows and arrows, and their bodies were protected with buffalo hides.

Duttha Gamini marched from Tissamaharama to Alutnuwara and so down the river until he came to Vijitapura, along a road that was already in existence. A merchant from Anuradhapura "taking waggons with him, in order to bring ginger and so forth from Malaya," the hill country, found near Kurunegala the silver that was used for the Ruanwelli Dagoba. His waggons seem to imply a permanent road fit for wheel traffic linking up Anuradhapura with the centre of the island.

Some of the special needs of the common people of the city are indicated by the wages which were given to them for their work. At the making of the Brazen Palace, Duttha Gamini supplied at each gate of the city "one thousand bundles of garments and many pitchers filled with ball-sugar, oil, sugar dust, and honey" as well as money: and "proclaiming 'No work is to be done here without reward, he had the work done by the people appraised, and their wages given them." At the building of the Ruanwelli Dagoba he supplied barbers free of charge and 1,008 waggon loads of clothes rolled in bundles, honey, clarified butter, and sugar. For this building the King commanded his soldiers to bring round stones, while Samaneras brought clay. The architect of the Dagoba who made a bubble in a golden bowl of water to show the shape of the building he proposed to make, received as a reward for his services a pair of garments and ornamented shoes as well as a large sum of money. Other payments to the builders included different ornaments, solid and liquid foods and drink, fragrant flowers, "as well as the five perfumes for the mouth."

Society in ancient Anuradhapura was divided strictly into castes, but true love was some times too much for them. The Mahavamsa records how Duttha Gamini's son Sali "tenderly loved a Candala woman of exceedingly great beauty. Since he was greatly enamoured,......because of her loveliness, he cared nothing for kingly rule," and so the people saw the great King's son give up his throne, and retire into private life, for the love of a low caste woman.

We came to the Abhayagiri Dagoba which Vatta Gamini built soon after 29 B.C., when he won back his throne from the invaders from South India. A monastery of Jain ascetics had been founded on this spot by the pre-Buddhist King Pandukabhaya, and his name still clings to the vihare. "When two hundred and seventeen years ten months and ten days had passed since the founding of the Mahavihara, the King (Vatta Gamini), filled with pious zeal, built the Abhayagiri Vihara." In these words Mahanama of the Maha Vihare seems to claim seniority for his monastery over the Abhayagiri which was often to be the rival, and even to threaten the very existence of the older vihare. In the reign of Mahasena (A.D. 334-361) the very stones of the Maha Vihare were taken to the Abhayagiri Vihare and used to build halls there so that the Abhayagiri Vihare became 'rich in buildings.'

In about 411 A.D. a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim stood in the Abhayagiri Vihare and worshipped. His name was Fa Hian or Fa-hsien. He ranks with Marco Polo, St. Paul, Ibn Battuta and Livingstone as a tireless wanderer in strange lands. He had left Chang'an in North China with several companions and his

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

feet had trodden the Gobi desert where 'gazing on all sides as far as the eye can reach in order to mark the track, no guidance is to be obtained save from the rotting bones of dead men, which point the way.' He had crossed Tibet where 'the land is rugged and barren.' 'Along the route they found the country uninhabited; the difficulty of crossing rivers was very great; and the hardships they went through were beyond all comparison.' He cross the Himalayas. 'On these mountins there is snow, winter and summer alike. There are also venomous dragons, which, if provoked, spit forth poisonous winds, rain, snow, sand, and stones. Of those who encounter these dangers not one in ten thousand escapes. 'Fa-hsien and his companions, three in all, went southwards across the Little Snowy Mountains (Safed Koh), which retain the snow summer and winter alike. On the northern side which is in the shade, it is frightfully cold; and when a gale gets up, it makes one shut the mouth and shiver. Hui-ching could go no farther; he foamed at the mouth, and said to Fa-hsien, "I too cannot recover; you had better go on while you can; do not let us all pass away here,"—and so he passed. Gently stroking the corpse, Fa-hsien cried out in lamentation. 'Our original design cannot be carried out; it is destiny; what is there to be done?'

But the modest old hero did carry out his design against all odds. With no passport but his priestly office he followed the footsteps of the Buddha across North India, and at last sailed from the mouth of the Hugli for Ceylon. And so his worn feet stood at length, in 411 A.D., in the Abhayagiri Vihare in Anuradhapura.

When he returned to China he wrote his wonderful book of travel, 'Records of the Buddhist Kingdoms.'

Of the Abhayagiri he says:—

'When Buddha came to this country (Ceylon) he wished to convert the wicked dragons (nagas); and by his divine power he placed one foot to the north of the royal city and the other on the top of Adam's Peak, the two points being fifteen yojanas apart. Over the foot-print to the north of the city a great pagoda has been built, four hundred feet in height and decorated with gold and silver and with all kinds of precious substances combined. By the side of the pagoda a monastery has also been built, called No-fear Mountain, (The word Abhayagiri means literally "the mountain of safety," says Tennent), where there are now five thousand priests. There is a hall of Buddha of gold and silver carved work with all kinds of precious substances, in which stands his image in green jade, over twenty feet high, the whole of which glitters with the seven precosities, (gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, ruby, emerald, coral), the countenance being grave and dignified beyond expression in words.'

Then the traveller of many years goes on to describe in simple words the feeling of homesickness that came over him as he stood in the Vihare. He says:—

'Fa-hsien had now been many years away from his own land of Han; the people he had had to deal with were all inhabitants of strange countries; the mountains, the streams, plants and trees on which his eyes had lighted were not those of old days; moreover, those who had travelled with him were separated from him—some having remained behind in these countries, others having died. Now, beholding only his own shadow, he was constantly sad at heart; and when suddenly, by the side of this jade image, he saw a merchant make offering of a white silk fan from China, his feelings overcame him and his eyes filled with tears.'

Whenever I see a Chinaman on the road with his load on his back, looking so like the pictures of Christian in old copies of the Pilgrim's Progress, I think, of Fa-Hian with his precious burden of images and sacred books collected in India and Ceylon with such infinite care and pains. In his book Fa-Hian shows himself a very ordinary and very human person, but his name has become immortal because of his extraordinary steadfastness of purpose. The wonderful achievement of his journey shows how widespread was the Buddhist faith at that time and with what strength the light of Asia burned in man's hearts.

"To the North of the Mahathupa this same King (Vatta Gamini) founded upon a lofty spot the Cetiya called 'Silasobbha Kandaka' that is the Lankarama Dagoba.

His successor Mahaculi Mahatissa showed the humility of kings when he 'went in disguise and laboured in the rice harvest, and with the wage that he received for this he gave food as alms to the Thera Mahasumma. When the King had laboured also in Sonnegiri three years in a sugar-mill, and had received lumps of sugar as wage for this, he took the lumps of sugar, and being returned to the capital he, the ruler of the earth, appointed great almsgiving to the brotherhood of bikkhus.' This humble monarch was on the throne of Ceylon just three years before Christ was born in Bethlehem in the far west of Asia.

The next King was Coranaga whose wife was the infamous Queen Anula. She had six husbands; Coranaga; Kuda Tissa; Siva, a palace guard; the Damila Vatuka who had been a city carpenter in the capital; Tissa a wood-carrier; a Damila named Niliya, a Brahman who was the palace-priest. She poisoned them all and then reigned without a consort for four months until she was slain by Kuta Kannatissa, Mahaculika's second son. She certainly avenged in anticipation, Henry VIII's queens upon the kings.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

In 127 A.D. the people of Anuradhapura saw the walls of their city rebuilt by King Vasabha who made fortress towers at the four gates 'for safety.'

The Jetavanarama Dagoba was originally built by King Mahasena (334-362 A.D.). He became a heretic and almost destroyed the Maha Vihare. The Mahavamsa, the chronicle of the great Dynasty which was made from records in the Maha Vihare ends with his reign. Mahasena was a great tank builder, but even after his reconciliation with the ancient monastery his reign was a contest between the crown and the church, because the monks of the Maha Vihare objected to the Jetavanarama Vihare being built within their boundaries. 'Thus did he gather to himself much merit and much guilt.' This is Mahanama's comment upon Mahasena and these are the last words of the Mahavamsa.

King Buddhadasa, c. 410 A.D., whose remarkable surgical operations are recorded in the Culavansa, the chronicle of the lesser dynasty, which is the continuation of the Mahavamsa, "made a summary of the essential content of all the medical text-books and charged one physician with the care of twice five villages and gave the physicians the produce of ten fields as livelihood. He also appointed physicians for elephants, horses and soldiers. For cripples and for the blind he built refuges in various places." He also made refuges with maintenance in the principal street, which Professor Geiger says were "evidently for travellers." Perhaps Fa Hian made use of these refuges, for it was probably in Buddhadasa's reign that he came to Anuradhapura. "In the reign of the same King," says the Culavansa, "the ascetic Mahadhammakathin translated the Suttas into the Sihala tongue," and this may be the "Shaman, the Reverent Dharmagupta" described by Fa Hian, "whom all the people of this country respect and look up to. He has dwelt in a stone cell (on Mihintale) for more than forty years; and by constant exercise of kindness of heart he has succeeded in so influencing snakes and rats that they will live together in the same cell without hurting one another."

Of the city of Anuradhapura at this time Fa Hian says:—"In this city are many elders of the Buddhist laity; the dwellings of the head merchants are very grand; and the side streets and main thoroughfares are level and well kept. At all points where four roads meet there are chapels (halls) for preaching the faith; and on the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, of each month a lofty dais is arranged, where ecclesiastics and laymen come together from all quarters to hear the Faith expounded. The people of the country say that there are between fifty and sixty thousand priests altogether, all of whom get their food from a common stock. The King separately provides within the city a common stock for five or six thousand more, and those who want food take their own bowls and go to fetch it, returning with them filled according to the capacity of each."

In Ceylon Fa Hian after repeated search obtained "a copy of the Disciplines, also copies of the long Agamas on Cosmogony, and of the miscellaneous Agamas on ascetic contemplation, and subsequently of a collection of extracts from the Canon, all of which China was without."

Fa Hian came to "the Land of the Lion" on "a large merchant vessel" and left it "on board a large merchant vessel, on which there were over two hundred souls, and astern of which there was a smaller vessel in tow, in case of accident at sea and destruction of the big vessel." His description of his journey gives a picture of the sea-traffic of the time. The ship encountered a heavy gale and sprang a leak. "The merchants wished to get aboard the smaller vessel; but the men of the latter, fearing that they would be swamped by numbers quickly cut the tow-rope in two." The merchants then began to throw all their heavier articles into the sea, and Fa Hian "also took his pitcher and ewer, with whatever else he could spare, and threw them into the sea; but he was afraid that the merchants would throw over his books and his images," but they were spared. With no guide but the sun and the stars the ship crossed the ocean "infested with pirates," until it reached its destination in Java. Here Fa Hian again shipped on board a merchant vessel bound for Canton. Again they encountered a violent gale with tempestuous rain, and "the Brahmans took counsel together and said, 'Having this Shaman on board has been our undoing, causing us to get into this trouble. We ought to land the religious mendicant on some island; it is not right to endanger all our lives for one man." A "religious protector" of Fa Hian took his part and threatened to denounce them to the king when the ship reached China if they put the religious mendicant ashore and "the merchants wavered and did not dare to land him just then." And so the toil and weariness of the long journey of fifteen years came to an end at last and Fa-Hian landed at Chang-Kuang, and went to Nanking. "Happily, he was accorded protection by the divine majesty of the Precious Trinity, and was thus preserved in the hour of danger. Therefore he wrote down on bamboo tablets and silk an account of what he had been through, desiring the gentle reader should share his information."

Fa Hian saw Anuradhapura in the days of its glory but the seeds of its decay were already sown. Civil war and the pressure from South India sapped the life of the ancient kingdom more and more. In 478 A.D. the capital was shifted to Sigiriya for a time. In about 626 A.D. Dathopatissa brought Tamil troops from India and dethroned Aggabodhi III, who in turn went to Jambudipa (India) and returned to dethrone Dathopatissa.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

"But the people suffering under the wars of these two kings, fell into great misery and lost money and field produce. Dathopatissa exhausted the whole property of former kings and seized all objects of value in the three fraternities, (Maha Vihare, Jetavanarama Vihare and Abhayagiri Vihare), and in the relic temples. He broke in pieces the golden images and took the gold for himself and plundered all the golden wreaths and other offerings. In the Thuparama likewise he took away the golden crowning ornaments of the temple and smashed the umbrella on the cetiya which was studded with costly precious stones. The canoes in the Mahapali Hall he left to the Damilas; and they burned down the royal palace together with the Relic Temple." "When Aggabodhi had by military superiority got hold of the Kingdom, the Yuvaraja Kassapa, the deluded one, to provide for his army led by evil-natured villains, broke open by force the cetiya of the Thuparama and plundered the valuable treasures given by Devanampiyatissa, the younger Aggabodhi, and former kings. He also...........had yet other cetiyas broken open. When he acted thus led away by evil-natured people, the King was powerless to prevent him."

The endless fighting for the throne which led to constant raids from South India was bringing poverty upon the country and the existence of Anuradhapura as the Capital was threatened. Polonnaruwa is first mentioned as a royal residence in the reign of Aggabodhi IV, 650 to 658 A.D. when the Culavansa says, "at another time he had taken up his abode in Pulatthinagara," though this was only a temporary residence.

After 831 A.D. the Pandu King from South India drove out Sena I and "took away all the valuables in the treasure house of the King and plundered what there was to plunder in vihara and town. In the Ratanapasada (part of the Abhayagiri) the golden image of the Master, the two jewels which had been set as eyes in the stone image of the Prince of Sages, likewise the gold plates on the cetiya in the Thuparama, and the golden images here and there in the viharas—all these he took and made the Island of Lanka deprived of her valuables leaving the splendid town in a state as if it had been plundered by Yakkhas."

The next King Sena II invaded the Pandu King's territories and recaptured the treasures of Lanka. But the days of Anuradhapura were numbered, and the power of the Pandu Kings was falling before the rise of the Chola Empire.

In about 1017 A.D., in the reign of Mahinda V., a "very weak character," the whole of the Rajarata, that is the kingdom of Anuradhapura was conquered and sacked by the Cholas. "Like blood-sucking yakkhas they took all the treasures of Lanka for themselves." The jungle which the followers of Vijaya had cut down to build the ancient city crept in again and took possession.

It was cleared from time to time by kings who were rich and powerful enough to restore some of the sacred buildings but for the most part the trees grew undisturbed upon the dagobas and among the stone pillars of the monasteries.

A Portuguese writer speaks of the "deserts of Anorajapure," but he names it as a place where a Sinhalese pretender to the throne set up his standard. The ruins were within the King of Kandy's dominions in late Portuguese and in Dutch times so that the ancient monasteries were preserved and attracted pilgrims. Knox speaks of Anuradhapura as being well inhabited when he passed through it in 1678. He writes, "To Anarodgburro therefore we came, called also Neur Wang. Which is not so much a particular single town, as a Territory. It is a vast great Plain, the like I never saw in all that Island: in the midst whereof is a lake, which may be a mile over, not natural, but made by art, as other Ponds in the country, to serve them to water their corn grounds. This Plain is encompassed round with woods, and small towns among them on every side." "Here and there by the side of this River (the Mulwatu Oya) is a world of hewn stone pillars, standing upright, and other great heaps of stone, which I suppose were formerly buildings." "And in three or four places are the ruins of Bridges built of Stone; some Remains of them yet standing upon stone pillars. In many places are Points built out into the River like wharfs all of hewn stone; which I suppose have been built for kings to sit upon for Pleasure. For I cannot think they ever were employed for Traffic by Water; the River being so full of Rocks that Boats could never come up into it."

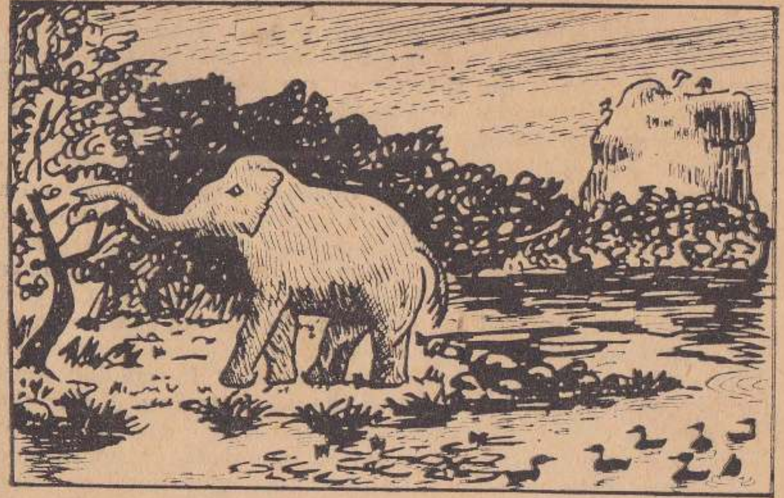
When Major Forbes visited the city in 1828 he wrote:—"All the ruins in Anuradhapura, even the lofty monuments which contain the relics of the Buddha, are either entirely covered with jungle, or partly obscured by forests .... The only place clear of jungle was in front of the Maha-wihara (great temple) where a shady tree occupied the centre of a square, and a stone pillar, fourteen feet high, stood beside the figure of a bull cut in granite and revolving on a pivot." He goes on to describe the courtyard and the four terraces round the Sacred Bo-Tree and the priests' dwellings much as they are today.

All the visitors to the ruins in early British times comment on the wild life round Anuradhapura. "The number of wild animals in the surrounding districts is quite extraordinary," writes Tennent. "Elephants are seen close to the ruins, buffaloes luxuriate in the damp sedge, crocodiles abound in the tanks, herds of deer browse in the glades, bears and jackals skulk amongst fallen columns, and innumerable birds, especially peafowl, jungle-cocks and paraquets break the still solitude by their incessant calls." One early writer tells how wonderfully tame

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

he found the deer and peafowl near the ruins. The sacred place had given them its protection, so that they lived in the forest almost without fear of man.

"It's still the most wonderful and fascinating city in Ceylon" said my guide as we walked back through the ruins in the cool of the evening. I think he was right, Anuradhapura has no equal in the Island and few in the world for historical interest and beauty of nature and art. It is a record in stone, wonderfully made, and wonderfully preserved, of a thousand years of a nation's life.



CHAPTER III.

Kalawewa and Sigiriya

I took the road to the southward which leads towards the Kalawewa. On my left hand the Malwatu Oya flowed through the jungle towards Anuradhapura and the west coast. In 1679, Charles II's time, when the Dutch held Colombo and Raja Sinha II. sat on the throne of Kandy, two British sailors (who had been used to hard life before the mast of the merchant service) were walking along the bank of the Malwatu Oya. Both were naked but for a span cloth, and their bodies were burned brown by the sun. Each had a great shaggy beard of many years' growth. Their feet were roughly shod with deer-hide, and in their hands they carried axes. They were Robert Knox and Stephen Rutland. For twenty years they had been prisoners in Kandy where Raja Sinha II kept a collection of Dutch, British and Portuguese captives whom he treated well, but would never allow to go out of his kingdom. Knox carried in his head the material for his Historical Relation of Ceylon which is perhaps the most vivid description of the people of Kandy that has ever been written. This bareheaded fugitive was to win renown by his book, to become the friend of Christopher Wren, and to have audience with Charles II: but most interesting of all was his future intimacy with Daniel Defoe so that some echoes of the account of the prisoner in Ceylon are heard in Captain Singleton and Robinson Crusoe. The story of his escape gives a good picture of the borders of the Kandyan country. Knox and his com-

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

panion peddling their wares had followed the road from Kandy from village to village as they went, until it led them right through the yard of the governor of the frontier. They walked boldly into his house and asked leave to trade their goods in the villages to the northward for dried deer flesh. The permission was granted. The fugitives diverted suspicion from their real purpose by leaving behind in his village a parcel of goods and a number of debtors. So they came to Anuradhapura where they stayed three days, and found what Knox calls "the great road that runs down towards Jaffnapatan." This road seems to have turned south-west towards Puttalam, and it was essential that the fugitives should find out where the Kadawatta or thorn gate, stood upon the road, for here the King kept a guard to watch all who went into, or came out of his territory. It was dangerous to ask questions which might lead the people to suspect that the two pedlars wanted to escape out of the King's dominions, and Knox was unable to find out where the guard was stationed, and so he was forced to go back from Anuradhapura until he came to the place where the path crossed the Malwatu Oya. Here in fear and trembling, in the evening, when few would dare to travel on the elephant-infested roads, he and his companion turned aside unseen into the jungle, guided by the river which was now almost waterless after long drought. They had good cause to fear. Their greatest dread was the thought of the gloomy old tyrant Rajasinha in his palace at Hanguranketa near Kandy, and his elephants kept always ready at hand to punish those who displeased the King. They feared wild men and beasts, hunger and thirst. Few men have ever undertaken a more perilous journey. They had not gone far when they were stopped by an elephant which refused to be scared out of their way. They expected the river to lead them through the jungle right to the coast, but it led them back into the heart of Anuradhapura and they suddenly fuond themselves "in the midst of a parcel of towns called Tissea Wava." They spent a terrible day in the damp hollow of a tree expecting every moment to be discovered and captured. "So soon as it began to grow dark, we came creeping out of our hollow tree, and put for it as fast as our legs could carry us." As they ran they were filled with terror by the sound of loud shouts behind them, which made them run the faster. At last they heard the sound of elephants between them and the cries they had heard, and they knew that they were safe. The cries came from the watchers in the paddy fields scaring away the elephants, and not from men pursuing after them. "These elephants were a very good guard behind us, and were methought like the darkness that came between Israel and the Egyptians, for the people we knew would not dare to go forward hearing elephants before them." As they pressed forward

they came into the midst of the ruins that travellers go to see today. "The river," Knox says, "is exceedingly full of alligators all along as we went."

The next day when they were safely past "the tame inhabitants of the country" they feared lest they should come among the wild ones for those woods were full of them. All along as they went they found the huts of the wild men made only of the boughs of trees, but they met none of them, for a shower or two had fallen, and they had left the banks of the river. Only once they were nearly spied by a number of women and children coming down to bathe at a pool in the dry river bed. As they advanced down the river their shoulders and arms were covered with blood being torn and scratched by the thorns which grew everywhere in the jungle. They often met with bears, deer, hogs and wild buffaloes, all of which ran as soon as they saw the intruders. "In the evenings," Knox writes, "we used to pitch our tent, and make a great fire both before and behind us, that the wild beasts might have notice where we lay; and we used to hear the voices of all sorts of them, but thanks be to God, none ever came near to hurt us."

On the fifth day of their march they came into country inhabited by Tamils, and though they wished to remain concealed they were forced to creep down the river bed during the day, because "the woods were so bad ,that we could not possibly travel in them for thorns: and to travel by night was impossible, it being dark moon, and the river anights so full of elephants and other wild beasts coming to drink; as we did both hear and see laying upon the banks with the fire by us. They came in such numbers because there was water for them nowhere else to be had, the ponds and holes of water, nay the river itself in many places being dry." So they went on down the river bed until about three o'clock in the afternoon, when they rounded a bend and came suddenly upon two men sitting under a tree boiling rice. After the first mutual fear and amazement the two men received them kindly and gave them food from their own store. In exchange for the little stock of money which Knox possessed one of the men undertook to guide them on their way towards the Dutch territory, but at the end of four or five miles he declared that he could go no further and left them. Knox adds, "We kept on our journey down the river as before, until it was night, and lodged upon a bank under a tree, but were in the way of the elephants; for in the night they came and had liked to have disturbed us, so that for our preservation we were forced to fling firebrands at them to scare them away."

The next morning, the sixth of their journey, they came out upon land as flat as a bowling green, but with the grass clean

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

burnt up for want of rain. Here they met a man whom they perceived to be free of all timorousness at the sight of them, so that they concluded that he was used to seeing white men. He spoke Sinhalese and they asked him the momentous question: "What Government do you belong to?"

He answered: "To the Dutch."

The captives were free at last. They were received kindly by the Hollanders in the fort at Arippu, and sent in a ship to Colombo. Knox gives an interesting account of Colombo of 1679 and of the kindness that he received there. He went to Batavia in a Dutch ship and finally reached England in 1680. It is sad to think that the exile of twenty years became the captain of a slave-trading ship carrying negroes from Africa to sell upon the continent of America.

The jungle holds this country firmly in its grip as it held it in Knox' day and elephants still drink from the Malwatu Oya in the dry season along the course of his flight: but there were no traces of them to be seen as I passed along the road under the cool morning shade of the forest.

Presently I turned down a road to the right and met a fresh breeze blowing over the mighty bund of the Kalawewa, the second largest tank in Ceylon. I did not stop on the bund for I had to visit another ancient monument of Ceylon that lies buried deep in the jungle below the tank: and I wanted to make the long tramp down the narrow grass-grown path before the heat of the day descended upon the jungle.

I followed a cart track leading from the bund of the tank through some rough plantations and gardens of young coconut trees to the railway line that runs south to Maho. A narrow path turns off from the line to the Au Kana Vihara. I passed the small buildings and bo-trees of the monastery and crossed the great bare rock until I came out at the feet of the huge stone statue of Buddha that looks with downcast eyes towards the rising sun. At his feet are excavations of a stone temple now many feet below the level of the ground. The water drips from the forehead of the statue upon a tiny lotus leaf between the feet. "This huge statue, hewn from the solid granite crag by order of King Parakrama Bahu, is 39 feet 9 inches in height, and the colossal foot measures 7 feet 8 inches in length. The big toe is 1 foot 4 inches in length and 9 inches wide." For centuries this wonderful work has been buried in deep jungle, but when it was rediscovered a solitary priest with one pupil to attend him was found guarding the holy shrine in the wilderness.

As I was examining the statue the priest of the temple came to see his visitor and seemed much interested in the purpose of my journey. He told the old stories of the Kalawewa and of

Dutugemunu's siege of Vijitapura which is supposed to have stood on the northern shores of the lake. I looked at the bare rock and the silent jungle that encircled it on every side a,nd I asked him if he was not troubled with wild animals in such a lonely place. He smiled at the idea. He had once seen an elephant, he said, down by the pale blue pool at the foot of the rock, and once or twice he had seen bears upon the rock itself, but they never harmed anyone or damaged the ancient stonework. Many pilgrims came and the place was not often left lonely. He told me that the name Au Kana meant "sun-eating" and the monastery was so called because the statue looked eastward towards the sun rise.

I wished him farewell upon his lonely rock and retraced my steps to the bund of the Kalawewa.

The beautiful stretch of water lay motionless under the noonday sun like some proud sleeping beauty whose passions of love and hate were laid to rest for a while. For the Kalawewa has seen the fiercest passions of man. When King Dhatu Sena (460-478 A.D.) was building it, "he saw a Bhikkhu sunk in meditation and as he could not raise him out of his absorption, he had a clod of earth flung at the Bhikkhu's head." Dhatu Sena had two sons: Kassapa by a mother of unequal birth and the mighty Mogallana by a mother of equal caste, also a charming daughter who was dear to him as his life. He married her to his nephew. "Without blame on her part the husband struck her with a whip on the thigh. When the King saw the blood-stained garment of his daughter and heard of the affair he in his wrath had his nephew's mother (his own sister), burnt naked. From that time onward his nephew nursed hatred against the King, joined Kassapa, woke in him the desire for the royal dignity, estranged him from his father, won over his subjects and took the ruler Dhatu Sena prisoner alive." The nephew persuaded Kassapa that Dhatu Sena was hiding treasures to give them to Mogallana, and Kassapa sent messengers again and again demanding to know where the treasures were concealed. "Dhatu Sena thought: It is well, I will visit my friend, bathe in the Kalawapi and then die, and he spoke to the messengers: 'If he lets me go to the Kalawapi he shall learn it.'" The friend whom he longed to see was his uncle, the priest Mahanama, the author of the Mahavamsa. "When the Thera (Mahanama) heard: the King comes, he put aside the bean soup and chicken he had received remembering: the King likes that, and took his seat awaiting the guest. The King came, greeted him respectfully and took a place at his side. Thus the twain sat side by side joyful as if they had gained a kingdom, and their mutual converse chased their cares away. After the Thera had entertained the King, he admonished him in many ways and encouraged him to

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

strive ceaselessly, showing him how the world is subject to the law of impermanency. Then Dhatu Sena betook himself to the tank, plunged as he liked therein, bathed and drank and spoke to the King's henchmen (pointing at the tank), 'This here, my friends, is my whole wealth.' " Kassapa in his rage commanded an officer to slay Dhatu Sena. The brutal officer "stripped the king naked, bound him with chains and fetters in a niche in the walk with his face outwards and closed it up with clay. What wise man, "says the author of the Culavamsa, "seeing this would still hanker after pleasures of life or fame?" It was after this barbarous deed that Kassapa fled to Sigiriya and built the rock fortress there. And there upon the following day, I determined to follow him.

* * * *

I turned to the right down the narrow road that leads to Sigiriya. The jungle shut in the road on either side for five miles: a flight of green pigeons shot across the strip of blue sky over my head, and a bronze-wing rose from under the wheels of the car and darted ahead into the shade of the trees. Presently some chena land appeared, then paddy fields, then a house or two by the road side. I passed a man carrying an aged gun and two dead jungle cocks gleaming gold and red. The gates of the rest-house, invitingly open, were left behind, and then suddenly I came in sight of the mighty rock that frowns defiance over the surrounding jungle from the midst of its little circle of cultivation. When I hear men speak in praise of mighty rocks I will remember the stark lines of Sigiriya thrown back from the mirror of its lake. For millions of years this grim giant stood above the jungle before the coming of man; for a million years its rugged sides defied man's climbing feet. In due time for a brief moment, the flood-light of history lit it with a blaze of glory, and then moved on, and left the ancient fortress as a lonely landmark for the dwellers of the jungle.

I ran up to the foot of the hill from which the mighty rock lifts its grey head to the sky, and left the car by a small monument on the road side. The track climbs the hill, and passes up the stone steps, until it reaches the foot of the ancient gallery that clings to the rock face like an elongated swallow's nest. It has clung to the rock for over fourteen hundred years. At the lower end where alone the rock does not overhang it, a piece of the gallery has fallen away, and the grooves and holes in the rock that used to hold it are exposed and show exactly how the rest of the gallery is held in its place. As I looked at those shallow depressions it seemed impossible that they could be made to hold the wide pathway that runs up the side of the rock; and I understood how the rocks at the foot of Sigiriya, which are honeycombed in every direction with holes and shallow grooves, were once made to bear a great city of palaces and temples and dwelling places.

It must have been a twisted city of steps and stairways and quaint buildings perched on rocky pinnacles and strange caves hidden under boulders,—a quaint elfin city, innocent of straight lines, and following the lie of the land without any assistance from geometry, like a city of a fairy tale.

To me the great fascination of the gallery of Sigiriya is the writing on the wall. Upon the shiny yellow surface of the parapet are countless lines of beautiful writing, almost all defaced beyond the possibility of deciphering now, and overlaid by modern vandalism in some places, but still telling a tale of men long ago who moved up and down this passageway and left these tokens of their passing. In one place I found a beautifully outlined figure of the Buddha faintly visible among the writings.

I should like to have climbed the gallery with Major Forbes who rediscovered the ancient fortress in 1831. There were no steps or ladders in those days, and he and his three companions scrambled over the debris of fallen bricks clinging to shrubs and tufts of grass until they reached the gallery. "The preservation of this gallery," he writes, "is to be attributed to the excessive heat of the sun increased by reflection from the rock to such a degree as totally to prevent vegetation on this exposed portion of the ruins." He points out how the rock has been hollowed out with the help of fire to make a ledge for the gallery to cling to and an overhanging roof. One of his companions in clambering over some fragments of the fallen gallery disturbed a leopard, which bounded down the steep and disappeared into the forest.

Upon the platform at the top of the gallery, where the steps now rise towards the summit of the rock, was a great mass of fallen bricks and debris covered with scrub. Forbes could not guess that underneath that great pile of ruined brick work was the battered and broken remains of two forefeet of a gigantic lion; and that the bricks, that covered it, perhaps once formed a lion's head guarding the way to the citadel and looking out over the plain to the northward. He and his party had to look in vain at the tree-clad summit of the rock. At that time it was quite inaccessible and had not been trodden by the foot of man for many hundreds of years.

I stood on the same platform and watched two men who were engaged in restoring the right foot of the ancient brick lion that gives its name to Sigiriya. They were black, naked men with sturdy limbs and simple eyes working patiently in the hot burning sun and gossiping together as they worked. I wondered how far they were like the workmen who made the original foot fourteen hundred years previously, when King Kassapa I., after murdering his father, Dhatusena, the builder of the Kalawewa, fled to his retreat to seek safety from the avenging army that his brother Moggallana was bringing from India.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Over the edge of the platform I could see other men at work restoring Kassapa's fortress with pickaxes, mammoties and sledge hammers. Six of them were toiling up the hill carrying a great stone slung with cords to a bamboo pole. The walls and terraces of the ancient city were covered with wooden derricks and crazy scaffolding of jungle wood poles tied with coconut fibre rope. If a few hundred elephants could have been added to the scene and thousands of buffaloes walking round and round kneading and mixing the plaster in shallow clay beds, it might have been the first building of the wonder city, which was all, so far as is known, the work of one reign of eighteen years.

When I looked up at the rock it was easy to trace how the ancient path continued its zig-zag course up the face of the cliff between the paws of the guardian lion, through a gateway in his breast, and on over his head, sometimes going almost level and sometimes climbing flights of steps. I went up the modern stone stairway and as I began to climb up the iron ladder I passed four pale yellow honeycombs clinging to the overhanging rock; and I thought of John Still who records how from a little above this spot the Governor of Ceylon was seen chasing the King of England's sister-in-law down the slope of the hill and beating her with his hat as they ran. The penalty of talking too loudly in this unfrequented spot used to be an attack from the bambara bees that had their nurseries and storehouses under the shade of the rock, and that is the reason for the mysterious little cage of fine wire mesh that has been made upon the platform at the end of the gallery as a refuge for loud-speakers. I wondered if a Veddah ever attempted to take those hanging combs in the days before men began to dig up and restore the dry bones of history, when the jungle had full possession of Sigiriya.

I went up the ladders and the grooved rock face where the iron rails stand between the climber and the precipice's edge, until I came to the last flight of steps that lead to the summit. The green plateau lay before me like a magic carpet: hanging in the air. Here was the grass at my feet and a few yards further on I was looking at the tops of jungle trees half a mile away and four hundred feet below. I could see the world as a hawk on the wing sees it. I was alone in that high burial place of a king's hopes. I drew out the Culavamsa to read the chronicler's description of the rock. It was short and crisp:

"Kassapa betook himself through fear to Sihagiri which is difficult of ascent for human beings. He cleared the land round about, surrounded it with a wall and built a staircase in the form of a lion. Hence it took its name Sihagiri. He collected treasures and kept them there well protected and for the riches kept by him he set guards in different places. Then he built there a fine palace and dwelt there." There was his palace before me with its buildings in terraces; its tank, its rock throne, its staircases, and its walled gardens: it was only necessary to put in the dancing girls with their hair flying in the wind, the peacocks, the king's leopard cubs, his fish and his flowers, the royal maidens sporting in the sunlit gardens and a chief in full dress walking up the steps towards the palace, followed by a deputation of priests: and then the picture only needed Kassapa himself sitting cross-legged on a carpet on the palace floor dictating to his scribe the letter which the Chinese Historians record as having been received from him at the court of Pekin in A.D. 527.

I climbed down over the rounded edge of the cliff crossing over grooves that had once carried a wall, by a drain cut deep into the living rock, down a long grass-grown staircase of broken tumbled bricks, until I came to a small cave made in the face of the rock. It was narrow now, but it had once had a platform built out in front of it. This little cave is called the "Look Out." From it I could trace far below the line of the walls of the inner city, where the palaces and viharas stood, and beyond them in the jungle the boundary of the outer city where the roofs of many hundreds of houses and thatched huts inhabited by many thousands of people must have looked up at the watchman in the cave in old times.

At the top of the steps that led down to this cave I found a little pool of clear water with light green velvet moss growing under the water, and blue dragon-flies poised upon the surface: it would have made a perfect setting for one of those rare oriental beauties who adorn the fresco cave above the gallery of Sigiriya. On the way down the rock I stopped in the gallery and climbed the iron ladder that leads up to this cave. What a triumph it must have been for the first man who scaled his rickety bamboo scaffolding and rediscovered those wonderful paintings where the heavenly maidens, the apsagas, and their dark-skinned attendants bear the unfading flowers to some forgotten shrine. The artist of old, who loved the beauty of form and colour, traced those exquisite lines and laid on the undying colours wherein the spirit of ancient Sigiriyia breathes again its sense of beauty and love as when those stately ladies moved before men's eyes in warm flesh and blood. How perfect the figures look in the seclusion of their cave within the royal fortress where only those may look who have made the pilgrimage and climbed the hill: and how odd and out of place they seem above the main staircase in the Colombo Museum, on a Sunday afternoon.

When I climbed down the ladder I found a belated village guide waiting in the gallery on the chance of picking up an odd rupee from the visitor. The cave, he said, was the watch house guarding the approach to the palace, and those things were drawn by the guards, perhaps when they were on duty and had nothing

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

special to do. They might be wives or perhaps sweethearts. It looked as if he was going to begin discussing the habits of soldiers as a class, so I hurried away down the hill to look at the Cobra Cave with its traces of ancient paintings, and the rocks that carried the monasteries, and the "King's Bath," and his Council Chamber. When I returned to the car I looked again at the little monument by the road side. It was a modest little monument, and it commemorated an officer of the Archaeological Department who had given long and faithful service to the restoration of the ruins of Sigiriya. Every visitor to the rock must be grateful for the patient work of rebuilding that has gone steadily forward through years upon the ancient fortress, so that he can now see the outline of a city where a hundred years ago there was nothing to be seen but tumbled stones and jungle-covered mounds at the foot of an inaccessible rock.

I left Sigiriya Resthouse, as every good traveller does, with two whisky bottles full of golden jungle honey tucked away in the back of the car, and memories of kindly hospitality and rum omelette in my thoughts.

CHAPTER IV.

Minneriya

I came to Habarana where four roads meet, and turned to the right, eastward, towards Polonnaruwa. Of all roads in Ceylon I love this one best, because it leads to Minneriya. Cars and 'buses have driven all the game off the road, and even the most daring wild sow dare not lead her litter across by daylight, but the jungle is still filled with unseen life; and in wet weather when the ground is soft you have but to go a few yards into the bush to read the latest news of the jungle in the tracks along the game paths. For fourteen miles I followed the road through the forest, until, of all incongruous things, I came suddenly upon a diminutive railway station with platforms and lamps and goods waggons. The railway track comes through the jungle out of the distance like a lost thing, and goes on, forlorn and desolate dead straight to the horizon as if it were trying to find its way back to civilization by the shortest possible route. It was like a railway across the prairies of America where a train passes once a week. It seemed incredible that Minneriya should ever see a railway engine or know the taint of coal smoke and oil, but here was a station, and perhaps some guilty engine comes this way with a truck or two from time to time. Evidently no train was expected as I sat looking at the lonely little station, for the only living creature in sight was a many coloured cat which was

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

sitting down in the middle of the railway line buried as deep in meditation as any ascetic of Ceylon a thousand years ago.

Those who live in Minneriya village seem to be chiefly concerned with the cattle that feed upon the wide grassland near the lake. When Tennent visited Minneriya in 1848 he wrote, "The level land, where it approached the lake, waved with luxuriant grass so high that it almost hid the horsemen." The game, he records, was already much thinned at that time, and so the grass ran high. Great herds of cattle and village buffaloes have eaten it all down close to the ground at the present time.

A little way beyond the village I came to a gravel road that branched off to the right. I followed this road until it came out on to the bund of the tank. There is no grander sight to be seen in Ceylon than the first view of Minneriya Tank, unless, like a good book, it be the second. The great lake lay stretched out without a ripple bounded by wooded headlands that hid the secrets of its wide flung arms. Far away across the water the grass lands came down from the jungle to the shingly edge of the lake. The low hills rose above the forests and fell back to meet the Matale mountains where they rose high over all into the snow mountains of the clouds. It seems incredible that man conceived and made Minneriya, the loveliest of lakes, so rich in all that is beautiful, so savage and untamed, a true refuge from civilization. It is monstrous to say that the lake was made only that men might have rice in plenty to eat. It is the expression of the spirit of a mighty king who ruled over a great civilization. It was made for the glory of a man become a god, whose power was great enough to make his fellows the builders of what his mind conceived and his great heart loved to look upon, something wide and spacious, something grand and limitless which carried power and life to thousands, and yet had no want and felt no loss. He chained the force of nature for man, in a work small enough to feed his body, but found large enough to fill his soul and overflow into the grandest and widest conceptions of his being. The villager may well see God in the spirit of the lake, for truth and beauty meet here in earth and water, in hill and valley, and in the great mirror that gives back the heavens to the eyes of gods and men.

The Rajavaliya chronicle records that "King Mahasena employed demons in his service, constructed Minneriya Tank, dammed up the Gara-ganga, and diverted its channel to feed Minneriya Tank; constructed an anicut across the Talawatu-oya tracing the marks indicated by the gods, and thereby supplied water to bring 20,000 fields under paddy cultivation............He employed the labour of demons at night and of men in the day-time." He built it between 334 and 362 A.D., "and, together with 80,000 amonams of ground" which it waters, he conferred it on the Jetavana Vihara which he had built in Anuradhapura. He made the lake "by diverting the waters of the Kara-ganga, or, as it is now called, the Ambanganga, by means of a dam twenty-four miles in length, ranging in height from 40 to 90 feet, and averaging 80 feet for many miles. This dam was repaired about the year A.D. 1153 by King Parakrama Bahu I., who thus formed a series of lagoons navigable by boats, which are supposed to have been the celebrated Seas of Parakrama."

As I looked across the lake I could see a solitary crocodile lying on the farther shore with his mouth wide open, quite indifferent to the cormorants and Indian darters and flights of terns that flew over his head.

When Major Forbes visited the lake in 1831, "on the plains were scattered herds of elephants, buffaloes and spotted deer; the rays of the level sun were shivering on the peacock's rustling plumes; the scarlet and pink of the flamingo were multiplied in the watery mirror; flocks of every variety of wild-ducks and water-fowl rested on its surface; and apart from the others, motionless yet watchful, the solitary pelican reposed its ungainly form upon the glowing waters. Kingfishers and flycatchers, of many different sizes and degrees of brilliancy, glanced along the margin of the lake, tipped its surface, or flitted along its narrow inlets; the alarm-plover swept past, or wheeled round; snipe rose in flocks, and the bright plumage of the jungle-cocks might be seen along the verge of the thickets."

If you love birds visit the bund of Minneriya Tank. They are all there, golden orioles, bee-eaters in plenty, king-fishers—river, giant, pied and stork-billed—the Blue Jay, hawks in all sizes, swallows, jungle crows, minnevets if you are lucky, and from the jungle below comes up the whistle of the battagoias.

As I walked under a tree I heard a satanic squark over my head and there was the bird of Hakluyt Voyages. I think it was Robert Fitch, the Elizabethan seaman, who wrote in his log, "There is in Ceylon a bird, about the bigness of a swan, having two heads, and excellent to eat." He was thinking of the Great Horn Bill, whose beak and horn give the suggestion of two heads.

A little hut below the bund was to be my shelter for the night but before I turned in I was to make the round of the night life of the lake. An old shikari, who did not much approve of bird sanctuaries, and his little son with limbs well rounded from the meat of many a fat Minneriya boar, appeared at dusk and we went out armed with lamps to walk round the lake to "a good place that he knew of not far away, perhaps a mile or over." We walked the Minneriya tracker's mile in an hour or so and came out of a jungle track on to open grass lands beside the lake where the beam of the lamp would pick up the glint of eyes that

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

see in the dark. Almost at once little green stars appeared shining for a moment and disappearing and appearing again. The old hunter would not deign so much as to look at them, they only showed that Nariya the Jackal was assembled with his pack to hound to death a mouse deer with relentless following, or better still to find a goodly piece of carrion or garbage to gorge upon before daylight came, and the long sleep in the bushes under the warm face of a rock.

We went on over the soft noiseless turf and preseently walked right on top of a magnificent hare who sat with black-tipped ears erect, staring fascinated at the light, until we could almost have touched him. We met many of his kind sitting on their haunches or lolloping out of the beam of the lamp when the ear of the hunted picked out the faint sound of foot-steps. With them we came close upon the Indian plover, the Did-you-do-it, disturbed in her roosting on the ground and staring with round suspicious black eyes which could hardly see where to hop out of the way when the shikari's boy beat at her with his ancient hat. Then suddenly the air was filled with the sound of a stampede of heavy feet tearing through mud and water, and the sound of grunts and snorting, and breathing angry and alarmed. The beam of the lamp came round towards the water and picked out a faint glint of branching horns and swinging tails. It was only a herd of village buffaloes which had been disturbed as it took its pleasure in the shallow water and cool succulent mud on the edge of the tank. If there was a wild bull amongst them, come in the darkness to make love to the young heifers, he was fortunately, not showing off his courage that night, for the whole company moved off deeper into the tank, and we went on our way.

Soon afterwards the lamp picked out far away towards the water the pale green half moon of an eye that answered the beam with a dull faint glow. We moved towards it cautiously peering into the darkness to discover in whose head it shone. When we came within thirty yards or so the eye light went out, and there was a slight rippling of water where the beam of the torch touched the edge of the tank. The tracker declared that the eye belonged to "kimbula," the crocodile, who was waiting patiently upon the shore dozing away the night, and hoping that his nose might bring him some good news to wake him up before daylight sent him back into the tank to look for frogs.

I asked the tracker if he ever hunted his wild boar with the lamp, and he told me, what I believe is true, that almost alone among creatures that wander in darkness, the pig's eye, like man's, does not reflect light.

It was at this point for the first time in our night round that he began to show some interest in what was passing. He made a set with his head thrust forward and one hand raised, like a

pointer that has winded a covey of partridges in the stubble. I could see nothing at all, but I followed his long cautious advance while he held the beam of light steadily fixed before him and placed his feet on the ground where they should make no noise. And then I saw what he had seen a hundred yards back. Little lights were going nervously in and out between us and the jungle edge. They might have been a couple of hundred yards away. As we drew nearer they became more numerous and more nervous and sometimes the faint outline of an animal's body appeared for a moment and moved anxiously out of the limelight. It was a herd of spotted deer that we had found and it was clear that they knew the game well, and that the most unsporting method of hunting, justified only to a villager with an empty larder, had been practised upon them before. Among the eyes flickering and disappearing in the darkness was one pair that remained constant and faced the light without a tremor. We advanced cautiously towards it a hundred yards, and then another hundred. The steely blue points of lights still remained fixed and constant. We came near to the jungle edge. The deer had disappeared but still the diamond eyes never winked. Presently the light began to pick out a brown body that surrounded the blue lights. In a few more yards we were standing face to face with a little owl that was sitting on the ground staring unwinkingly with an indignant expression at those

"Who wandering near his sacred bower
Disturbed his ancient solitary reign."

A villager of Ceylon, or elsewhere, is too solidly made to let on when he has been overtaken by a mistake. My tracker smiled as if he had played a good joke upon us, but the little boy unwisely gave a snigger, and was at once rebuked by his father for unhunterlike behaviour. However we started back on our return journey at that point.

We were to have one more lucky dip into the night before we shared a night cap in the hut below the bund. As the light went fitfully searching and exploring over the grass land and in the undergrowth it suddenly rested upon a living creature that stood motionless between two small tree trunks not ten yards from where we stood. It was hard to make the animal out at first, but soon the pointed ears and shaggy whiskers and black muzzle with a suggestion of keen white teeth below it, showed us a fish-cat, one of the rarest of Ceylon mammals, a kind of miniature leopard which took to hunting in the water as his larger brother hunts on land. He is a lucky man who sees a Ceylon fish-cat in these days and I thank my tracker for his keen eyes that picked one out for me where otherwise I should have seen nothing at all.

* * * *

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

In the grey morning I drove back along the main road a couple of miles, and then struck into the jungle on the North-west side of the lake. I walked along the jungle edge above the water to see what the night had left behind. As I went along the sun came up over the hills and the glory of the morning filled the jungle. The trees broke up the slanting sunlight into long beams of light and shadow and picked out every tint of green and gold and blue. The waters of the lake turned into white fire, and the world was filled with delight.

Everything was quite mad that morning. There is always a joyful madness in the early morning at Minneriya, but this morning everything was gone completely out of reason. First of all I met a herd of spotted deer browsing on the green lake-side, in the open daylight, as if they were in a gentleman's park in Gloucestershire. I walked openly towards them. They heard a sound and stampeded for fifty yards, and then stopped, and turned round their innocent eyes upon me for all the world as if bows and arrows were still in fashion, and the rifle had never been invented. They made two more rushes and two more halts before they filed off into the jungle.

Then, a little further on, I saw a hare and a tortoise, racing upon the same ground. The bob-tailed scut leaped off in alarm and the tortoise shell was being carried with slow solemn dignity upon its private business, without regard for the rest of the world The omens were good for the day. I walked on a mile or two to a headland covered with scrub running out into the lake. Here I disturbed a party of Jackals sleeping under a grey rock. They bolted off into the jungle with squeaks of terror, and I sat down in their lodging to watch the teal which were being disturbed by a solitary man who was rounding up his cattle on the other side of an arm of the lake. I lay still hidden behind the rock and looked up into the circle of blue sky. The air was filled with the whistle of Ceylon wild duck. First the cotton teal went over in line like machine-gun bullets and were gone in a flash of green and white and brown. They kept low, hugging the water, and turned like lightning whenever I made a movement. The red-brown whistling teal came flapping by unsuspecting, wings beating in time, and eager necks stretched out, whistling to each other that the night was passed, man was about, and it was time to move. Soon the air was full of clouds of them, circling and whistling. One flight went over my head in a perfect arrow-head formation like an air-force squadron in a display, and the regular beat of their wings came down out of the sky.

I left my hiding place and walked on past the cattle, and round another headland, and yet another, each shutting in its little secluded bay. Then I took a short cut through the jungle and came out suddenly upon the water again. The moment I came

in sight a wild buffalo bull leaped out of the water right in front of me. He stood for one instant, a magnificent black-haired beast strong and menacing, poised on sinewy legs under great taut shoulders and haunches, his head held forwards and upwards, his angry startled eyes gazing at the intruder, and his black muzzle searching the air to find what it was that had disturbed his morning bath. The power of the human eye which is said to be effective with lions and leopards is no good with buffalo, and I began to take a deep interest in the surrounding trees. However I was not kept waiting, because the young bull was as startled as I was, and made off for the jungle at full gallop, with the water still running down his black hairy flanks, and his horns laid well back on his hairy shoulders.

I had intended to walk all the way round the tank, but it is said to be twenty miles in circumference, and I had covered less than half that distance, and so I decided to return the way I had come and see what was prepared for eleven o'clock breakfast.

* * * *

I got on to the road again that leads towards Polonnaruwa and followed it for about a mile until I crossed a bridge over the channel that carries the water from Minneriya Tank to the paddy fields. Here I turned to the left down a road that runs beside the clear green water of the channel under its arch of trees. I was going to look at the Minneriya Agricultural Scheme. I passed a couple of comfortable looking houses and presently halted at the gate of the Government Fruit Farm. There was nobody about, and I climbed over the gate and examined the plantations. Large ripe grape fruit weighed down the branches of the trees on one side of the road, and great numbers of nearly ripe oranges covered the trees on the other. The fruit looked plentiful and good. Minneriya seemed to suit it. I was wondering whether it would not be well to try a couple when I came upon two watchers. They looked at me, I thought, very suspiciously, not as if I were a fruit-lifter, but as if I were an official. Perhaps they felt a little guilty that the "Inspector" had walked all round the place before he came to the particular part that they had been watching. I could get nothing out of them except the fact that the plantations were intended to show the colonists how well such fruit would grow in the neighbourhood.

The road continued and at last I came out into wide fields of green waving paddy such as would have rejoiced the heart of King Mahasena who had furnished water for such fields sixteen hundred years ago. The fields stretch for five miles along the road-side to a width of about a quarter of a mile on either side. Here and there are cadjan huts, rather mean and ill-built, in which the colonists live. Large pumpkins were growing on the roofs of some of them.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

I came to a row of these huts by the road-side and stopped at a boutique, outside which a number of men were seated gossiping and chewing betel. They showed the unfailing politeness of the Ceylon villager towards strangers, and gave me advice as to what to get for a road-side lunch; and offered me a seat out of the sunlight. I asked them how things were going with the Minneriya Scheme. An old man with a grey moustache and black shining eyes considered for a moment and being a farmer gave the farmer's answer. "He had known worse times," he said. He himself was doing quite well at Minneriya, but some suffered from cuts that would not heal, and some got the headache which occasionally made them quite mad. But he himself had kept quite well.

They all looked fit and sturdy to me and if they appeared to have no work on hand that was nothing new, and anyhow the wide green fields all around us testified that work had been done. I asked them if they got much help from Government.

The old man was well versed in democracy and knew how to criticise the Government as well as any Colombo clubman.

The Minister was all right, he said, but he did not think much of officials. They did not understand farming. They were no good. The Government should get fifty good men, men like himself for instance, and they would carry out the whole thing properly, and make a job of it.

I asked him where he came from.

He said that he came from Ratnapura. He preferred Ratnapura to Minneriya. He had more land there, but he was quite contented on the whole.

I offered him my tobacco pouch. He took a handful of tobacco very graciously, and added it to the betel in his cheek. I am afraid it must have tasted very insipid after what had gone before, but he gave it a chew with fair satisfaction and handed the pouch on round the circle.

I asked him if he saw much of the world outside Minneriya. Yes, he said, he sometimes paid a visit to Ratnapura and other places, and he had the papers. He always read the papers.

I asked him what specially interested him.

Well, he said, he had been reading about the Royal-Thomian match. He was very interested in cricket.

I finished my lunch and paid the boutique-keeper. He absolutely refused the modest tip that I offered him. They were very ordinary men, these colonists, a little more enterprising and independent than their fellows, but quite commonplace. The men who conquered the prairies of America and brought them

under the plough must have been quite ordinary, though it is more romantic to be scalped by a Red Indian than to die fighting mad with malaria. I hope one day, when the rice fields stretch in an unbroken line from Minneriya to Kanthalai and the rice bags come down in the train to Colombo instead of in bullock carts from the wharf, that some Ceylon Ballantyne will write stories about these gallant pioneers of civilization who live and die unknown, while we, cleverer men, ride in motor-cars and make speeches in Colombo.

I left Minneriya and took the road to Polonnaruwa, passing on the way the lovely little tank of Giritala, with its stone-paved bund, and attendant rice fields, lying under the jungle hillocks.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

CHAPTER V.

Polonnaruwa

The little car ran up the hill to the Resthouse of Polonnaruwa that stands at the end of the bund of the tank under the shade of mighty trees. No Resthouse in Ceylon has a lovelier situation. Out in front of the verandah stretched the Topawewa, a sheet of white water set in a circle of green jungle and lying without a ripple under the white clouds. As I looked out over the tank I saw two pelicans floating on the water, bill on breast, buried, it seemed, in deep thought. Suddenly, as I looked, one of them stretched out seven feet of wings, and flapped her way along the surface until she got herself into full flight with chin drawn back and black webbed feet tucked up behind. She flew with steady beat of wings along the surface of the water until she came to rest again in a new fishing ground. Then down went her head into the water. Out it came again, and was pointed up towards the sky. There was a ripple in her bald and scaly throat, and she floated upon the water again, bill on breast, buried in deep thought.

She had scarcely finished her fishing when the snake-like head of an Indian Darter appeared for a moment beside her, and at once vanished again into the depths. On a stump of wood close by a black comorant was solemnly perched with his wings hung out to dry in the sun. Away in the distance over on the far side of the tank a cloud of whistling teal were circling round and

round before they came down to feed among the water weeds or flew off over the jungle to find another and more secluded hunting ground.

The Topawewa is always lovely, and it is seldom that there is not something of interest going forward upon its shining waters.

The Pujavaliya says that the Topawewa was made by King Upatissa, C. 350 A.D., but it seems that the whole irrigation scheme of Polonnaruwa neighbourhood was greatly developed by King Parakrama Bahu the Great whom the Mahavamsa represents as saying: "Truly in such a country, not even a little water that comes from rain must flow into the ocean without being made useful to man." Parakrama Bahu is said to have restored fifty-three tanks in order that the supply of rice in his country might be increased.

* * * *

I left the Resthouse and set out to visit the buildings in Polonnaruwa that I like best.

I went to a lovely clearing where the jungle trees keep watch all round and leave a little space of green turf in the middle of which stands what is called the Siva Dewale Number Two.

I found a small and beautiful little building of grey stone, with a stone figure of the sacred bull seated before the dark entrance to the holy place. Inside there were two dark mysterious chambers, and in the inner chamber was the stone pillar, symbol of fertility, on which oil was poured. The oil was received into a basin and a cunningly devised drain carried off the waste oil into a little tank outside the wall.

I visited the temple first because it is perhaps the oldest surviving building of Polonnaruwa.

The conquest of Ceylon by the Cholas from South India took place about 1017 and it was not until about 1066 that the Sinhalese under the fifteen-year-old Prince Kitti, afterwards King Vijayabahu I. were strong enought to attempt to capture the Cholas' city of Polonnaruwa. So the capital was a Chola stronghold for nearly fifty years. A civil war raging in the Chola kingdom enabled Vijayabahu I. to capture the city in 1070. It was while the Cholas were in Polonnaruwa that the Siva Dewale Number Two was, in all probability built. The Chola workmen from the east coast of India, where Trichinopoly now stands, made this beautiful little building with its carved pillars and mouldings and rounded dome. It stood in the first city of Polonnaruwa (Pulathinagara) which was surrounded by walls and towers and bastions over which Vijayabahu's warriors poured, and began the story of Buddhist architecture in the city.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Vijayabahu I. was crowned according to ancient custom in Anuradhapura, with its long tradition of royal coronations, but he ruled in Polonnaruwa.

But when his strong hand was removed his brother Jayabahu I. and his three nephews covered the land with civil war. "In their insatiability and money lust they squeezed out the whole people as sugar-cane in a sugar mill, by levying excessive taxes." Their officers "by setting fire to many flourishing villages and market towns, by piercing tanks filled with water, by destroying everywhere the weirs on all the canals and by hewing down useful trees like the coconut palm and others, they in fighting each other, so devastated the kingdom that it was impossible to trace even the sites of the old villages."

Amidst all this disorder the monk who wrote the Culavamsa records with loving care the birth of his hero Prince Parakrama Bahu who was to set up so many of those buildings in Polonnaruwa which travellers see today.

I left the little temple alone in its jungle solitude and walked southwards along the great road which leads to the King's Palace. The smooth turf deadened the sound of my feet, and the trees of the park-land in which the ruins stand kept away the sun.

A gorgeous crested hoopoe was pecking away vigorously at some choice morsel that he was digging out of the ground. In the middle of this garden of solitude and peace rose the grim red brick walls of the King's Palace, ten feet thick at the base, and enclosing a multitude of small rooms. It seems likely that this is the very palace which Parakrama Bahu built. Perhaps he stood on the spot where I was standing and looked upon his handiwork. How did it look then? The Culavamsa says that it was a "palace seven storeys high, furnished with a thousand chambers and adorned with many hundred pillars painted in divers hues. It was richly supplied with many hundreds of alcoves which were radiant with manifold ornaments of climbing plants and flowers. It had doors and windows of gold, large and small, well divided walls and stairs and offered convenience for every season."

I walked through the silent halls and little grass grown cells of rooms. A brick staircase went up on my right-hand out of the main passage and ended in space. There are neither floors nor roof left today. I tried to picture those giant walls rising once again covered with plaster and rich paintings. The wooden floors were built again and bore up their couches and beds and thrones. Men of great power and lovely women walked once more in the palace, and loved, and hated, and intrigued, and thought. Out of the window I seemed to see the King's

garden: "Its trees were twined about with Jasim creepers and it was filled with the murmur of the bees drunk with the enjoyment of the juice of the manifold blooms."

The peacocks strutted among the flowers and little ponds filled with "red and blue lotus flowers," and tame hungry fish.

I walked eastwards through the garden past a little sunken well of baked corrugated clay which has survived eight hundred years; down the terraces to the steps that led to the bathing pool. Upon one of the steps I saw a drawing of a peacock roughly cut with a pointed instrument in the stone. The bathing pool had recently been restored and was half filled with rain water which gave a home to small fish, and frogs, and crabs. A wanderoo monkey was sitting upon the edge of the pool and staring indignantly at the intruder in his private domain. As I approached, up went his tail and he lolloped away on all fours to the jungle edge, and joined his companions in a steady nervous gaze and in jabbering protests, until they all took fright together and disappeared with a swishing of branches. I pictured the clear water bubbling once again along the stone conduit through the dragon-mouthed spout into the bath. There were the golden-skinned bathers taking their pleasure in the water, or sitting in the stone chamber on the far side of the bath. In the middle of the pool was the great stone lotus with its rampant lions facing the four quarters. The race that made this work of art in stone understood and loved beautiful things.

Between the palace and the bath a little to the northward is a building called the Council Chamber. I walked over the moonstone with its circle of elephants and horses, and up four steps to another moonstone in which lions, elephants, and horses followed their eternal procession around the central lotus flower. Nine more steps decorated with the sacred geese led up between the guardian lions over the threshold stone, where the feet touch an inscription in ancient letters, into the brick-floored chamber, with its double row of pillars running along each side. I was in the presence of the king. I pictured him sitting upon the throne at the end of the hall surrounded by his chiefs and counsellors. He was in the centre of his great city, and as he looked along the hall he faced the holy city of the priesthood to the northward. Perhaps it was in this chamber that Parakrama Bahu planned the conquest of the Southern Kingdom of Ceylon, and sent out his navy against far off Burma, and organised the expeditions where the Sinhalese army won victories against the Cholas of South India, and set the Pandyan Prince upon the throne of his father.

I walked round the outside of the building to examine the three terraces with their carvings of dwarfs and lions and lifelike elephants. A sleepy tallagoya lizard was disturbed in his

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

nap upon the warm stones. He puffed out his cheeks in a little burst of defiance,—thought better of it, and bolted round the corner under the trunk of a rampaging stone elephant.

These buildings were the sign and symbol of the establishment of Parakrama Bahu's power over Ceylon. He had to fight many battles before he established his power.

I thought of two glad processions that entered Polonnaruwa in the days of Parakrama Bahu. The first passed under "triumphant arches with coloured pictures on them decked with different stuffs, with branches of all kinds of flowers, with fluttering cloths and banners with lamps and incense." In the middle of the procession the King bore the holy Tooth Relic upon his head. The Tooth Relic and the Bowl Relic had been captured at last after a long war in the Ruhuna, the southern province of Ceylon. With their capture the king felt secure upon his throne.

"The second procession" accompanied by the dwellers in Pulatthinagara "who played music, shouted with joy, clapped their hands in applause, waved cloths a thousand fold again and again, and let their cries of victory resound," greeted the army returning in triumph after the final subjugation of Ruhuna. Parakrama Bahu's power was finally established.

I came to the temple of Siva, which stands to the south of the priestly city, and serves to remind us how great and valuable was the influence of South India upon the architecture of Ceylon. As I looked at the grey stone temple I remembered how it stood for centuries in the grip of the jungle, so that trees grew from its very walls, and wild elephants browsed upon the mound of debris under which it was half-buried. When Major Forbes saw it in 1828 he told how "bears in numbers find shelter amongst these ruins, and this sanctuary had only been vacated by some of them hearing the noise of our approach. The guides, although armed with axes, as they advanced to the entrance often looked uneasily around, and requested that our guns might be kept in readiness. Before entering the building, the guide, standing on one side of the doorway, put forward his head and gave a loud call; after a sufficient pause to admit of any brother bruin who might be within, answering the summons, or appearing in person, we were permitted to enter."

As I passed into the building I was met by nothing more formidable than a flight of bats who make the ruins their noon-day sleeping chamber and fill every dark corner with their acrid smell.

Out of the burning sun, where trees and grass seem to stand in motionless endurance of the noon-day heat, I passed over the wide door-step into the rounded shadow of the Thuparama

Vihare, a great cave of brick and plaster. Within the dim inner chamber, where four windows high up in the walls give a faint and solemn light, there is a pedestal in the form of a lotus made of brick, but the image which stood upon it has disappeared. There are, however, images which stand in the chamber as symbols of eternal peace, and escape from the worldly desires.

I climbed up the dark staircase which leads to the roof of the temple, and counted fifteen bats that whizzed past my head into the dazzling sunshine. Upon the rounded barrel of the roof with my back against the tower of the building I could look down upon what to me is the most beautiful thing in the ancient city. The Wata Dage temple lay below me in its circle of red wall, upon its grey stone platform. From the four doors the Buddha looks out upon the four quarters of the world. He is seated in the position in which he found enlightenment under the holy tree, and the peace upon his face tells of the new found freedom from earthly cares.

Within the chamber stands a double row of decorated pillars which once perhaps upheld the roof, and outside run circles of flowers and lions and dwarfs. At each point of the compass is a gate of stone work with the moonstone door-step, and sculptured guard stones on either side. "Further," says the Culavamsa, "Parakrama Bahu built a beautiful round temple wholly of stone for the Tooth Relic, adorned with glorious pillars, staircases and outerwalls," and perhaps this is the very temple, embellished by kings who came after Parakrama, and perhaps the sacred Tooth once found shelter within these walls. I pictured the temple with its gaily painted roof covering the darkened interior; the gorgeous jewelled shrine of the relic; the flower offerings and the incense; the rows of yellow-robed priests, the lamps and bells, the crowd outside, the pipes and tom-toms, the sounding conches and chanting and singing; the bowing, of proud kings and nobles, the gifts of the mighty, and the cries and offerings of the people. This temple which now stands alone in its majesty must have been once the holiest spot in the great city as it is still the loveliest.

The Northern gateway of the Watadage leads into the Hatadage where on the right of the doorway are some dancers beautifully modelled in stucco. I left this and the other buildings near it to look at the great stone slab that lies between the Hatadage and the seven storeyed Sat-Mahal-Pasada.

This slab, called the Galpota, or book of stone, is 27 feet long and 4 ft. 7 ins. wide, and it is covered with a long inscription in ancient characters. I suppose that everyone who looks upon that stone longs to draw the secret from those strange hyroglyphics.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

As I looked down upon the book of stone and the exquisite art of the carved lettering upon it, I felt like a villager of ancient Ceylon who had come to the city to pay respect to the holy places. As in mediaeval Europe he found his temples filled with pictures and carvings that he might see in them the history of his country and his faith, but the deeper knowledge was hidden from him because he could not read, and he found himself shut out from many treasures of learning because they were locked up in mysterious letters to which the priesthood alone, or almost alone, had the key.

In my ignorance, Major Forbes in his book "Eleven Years in Ceylon" became my interpreter.

The inscription belongs to Nissanka Malla who reigned the year after Parakrama Bahu's death (1187) and I give a summary of it to show what busied the mind of the king in Polonnaruwa at that time.

"Weera Nissankha Malla, the perfectly conversant with the sublime religion, the lamp which illumineth the whole world, the protector of the earth, and the fountain of renown, was conceived in the womb of the Queen Paarwati Maha Devi unto the King Sree Jaya Jopa, the glory of the dynasty which reigned in the city of Singhapura, in the kingdom of Kaalinga (South India); and having grown up amidst regal splendour, was invited by the king, who was his senior kinsman, to come and reign over his hereditary kingdom of Lakdiwa (Ceylon). Having been accomplished in the art of war, as well as in all the other branches of knowledge which form the circle of the arts and sciences, he in due order of regal succession received the sacred unction, and, being then crowned, was installed king. At the festival of his coronation he was invested with a glory which filled the firmament, and overpowered all beholders; and with such daring courage that, when he was taking diversion in a forest, a furious she-bear having rushed towards him, he laid her and her whelps dead at his feet.

"Thus glorified, his majesty the great king Sirisangabo Kaalinga Proakramabahoo Weeravaya Nissanka Malla Apprati Malla dispersed his enemies as the sun over the summit of Udaagala dispelleth darkness. And, being moved with benevolence towards the people, he confirmed to them the privileges appropriate to the different families, and relinquished the revenues of five years. He reduced the rate of taxes on arable lands imposed in former reigns. He relinquished the tax on the dry grain produced on chenas, the cultivation of which is attended with distress; and ordained that such taxes should cease for evermore. He quenched the fire of indigence with showers of riches. He appointed ministers and others, whom he provided with lands, slaves, cattle, houses and various other

riches in abundance: he reconstructed the embankments of great lakes which had remained neglected for many years. He appointed judges in many provinces to remove injustice; and considering that robbers committed robberies through hunger for wealth, he gave them whatever riches they desired, and thus relieved the country from the dread of thieves. According to the sacred injunctions of the doctrine of Buddha, he also expelled the unrighteous from the religious communities. He provided the four requisites (raiment, victuals, lodging and physic) for the comfortable maintenance of the holy priesthood; and every year caused priests to be ordained and, as in former times, assigned extensive estates and lands of lesser extent to the Vihares. He greatly promoted the interests of the doctrine as well as the sciences, by bestowing suitable gifts on professors of the religion and on professors of the sciences. His majesty, wearing the crown, and being decorated with the Royal ornaments, caused himself as well as the chief queens, his son, and his daughter to be weighed in a balance every year: and by bestowing five times their weight of goods on the priests and Brahmins, the blind, the lame, the dwarfish and the deformed, and other destitute and friendless people, made them happy, and caused a constant supply of rain.

"Having gladdened the people with showers of riches when he visited the villages, towns and cities, and explored the fastnesses, and the strongholds, and secure places on mountains and in forests, at the time he made the tour of this island, he built Vihares in every part of the country.

"Having thus restored to its ancient condition the island of Lakdiwa (Ceylon), the receptacle of the efficacious doctrines of Buddha, to Damadiwa (South India) he proceeded, attended by a complete organised army, composed of squadrons of horses, elephants, chariots, and foot-soldiers, and consistently with his cognomen of the Dauntless and Irresistible Warrior, he proclaimed his royal prowess, and appointed champions to go and challenge battle

"Enemies to the doctrines of Buddha ought not to be installed in Lakdiwa which is appropriate to the Kaalinga dynasty, for that would be like substituting a poison tree for a Calpa Wurksha (a tree which grants wishes), but if Princes of the Kaalinga Wangsa, to whom Lakdiwa has been peculiarly appropriate since the reign of Wijeya Raja, be sought for and brought hither they will prove worthy rulers, and preserve the religion and the country. Aspire to attain the felicities of both worlds, reflecting that virtue doth conquer the universe. Future sovereigns are thus affectionately exhorted by Kaalinga Nissanka, King of Ceylon. This engraved stone is the one which the chief minister Unawoomandanawan caused the strong men of Nissanka

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

to bring from the mountaia Saegirriya (Mihintale) at Anuradhapura in the time of Lord Siri Kaalinga Chakkrawarti."

I walked down the steps beside the Sat-Mahal Pasada on to the great road where the stone jar still stands at which the people washed their feet as they entered the holy city.

Across the threshold was the shallow stone trough that carried away the waste water. I thought about the common people of the great city whom Nissanka "gladdened with showers of riches." The Culavamsa is almost silent about them. Once it mentions how, being besieged in Polonnaruwa, they were so short of fuel that they were forced to burn the straw from the roofs of their houses to cook their food. The uncertainty of life, and their religion, did not give them many material hopes in this world. Kings had earned their exalted rank by virtue of merit won in former existences: they were god-like and aspiring to god-head, and it was man's duty to serve his chief and his king in building of temples and tanks, and in paying taxes, and in war.

"The discerning king, who had faith in the Buddha, amassed a great quantity of meritorious works as a bridge for the crossing of the ocean of the circle of rebirths and as a ladder with which to reach the highest heaven," and by following the king, man could share in the merit. But the King's life and throne were far from secure. It is easy to see the undercurrent of anxiety for his prestige and his family dynasty that appears behind the proud words of Nissanka's inscription. Civil and foreign wars were almost constantly going on and soldiering was a regular profession as in mediaeval Europe: and as peaceful men in Europe at this time went into monasteries to live the holy life and to study, so did the people of Ceylon find refuge in the Vihares. For both, life was uncertain, and men were forced to think of what would happen to them after death, and to prepare themselves to meet it.

So we may picture a town where chiefs and their soldiers waited upon the king, and men of peace studied and meditated in the cloister. The great city required the constant supply of daily necessaries which the merchants supplied in their shops often mentioned in the Culavamsa. And the food supply came in waggons to the city from the country villages round about. The villages amid all the changes and chances of history, must have altered least of anything in the country, so that they are today in all essentials much the same as they were in the days of Nissanka Malla.

* * * *

I went out to the far north of the ancient city, and visited the Damala Maha Seya. There is a wonderful aloofness about the ruins of Polonnaruwa in their jungle setting that is quite absent from Anuradhapura where men of today are busy making a living and the stream of pilgrims is almost constant. As I walked towards the Maha Seya a giant hornbill sailed over my head out of a great tree and uttered his squark of warning as he saw me. Then I remembered that in all my wanderings through the ruins I had not yet met a living soul, and here, in this remote corner, it was the black and white hornbill, who flees from the haunts of men, who was at home, and I was the stranger and interloper.

I went up to the entrance of the Maha Seya whose red brick walls towered high over my head.

Upon the outside of the building I found the little plaster dwarfs in which some artist of eight hundred years ago expressed his humour. How he loved the grotesque, and delighted in leer and scowl. There were his pot-bellied company, some talking to their neighbours, some facing backwards, some holding up the wall, and some twisting their portly little bodies into weird and clumsy contortions.

But it was especially to see the paintings that I had come to visit the Demala Maha Seya. I passed beween the great towering pillars at the entrance into the peace of the sanctuary, where the fallen roof now lets in the daylight and shows the superb dignity of the huge brick statue of the Buddha. Upon the walls on either hand were the paintings of the Jataka stories telling of the former existences of Gautama before he attained Buddhahood. Among them I looked for pictures of men and things as they used to be in Polonnaruwa about 1200 A.D. On the left hand wall I found a chariot drawn by a horse and painted in yellow and red. The driver perhaps was an ordinary citizen of the ancient town. He was clad in simple waist cloth, beardless, with bracelets upon his arms above the elbows; the lobes of his ears were drawn down to his shoulders according to the ancient custom; his hair seemed to be worn short and his feet were bare. Near him was an archer who had just let fly an arrow. His appearance was just the same as the other.

There were many men in the pictures and they all, as far as I could see followed the same fashion in dress and appearance. There were many horses in the pictures with collars of bells, but no bulls that I could find. But for their regular and life-like appearance with the other faithful beasts of burden upon the moonstones, one might doubt if they were in common use in the ancient city.

I followed the path southwards until it turned aside into the jungle and came to a stop beside the Lotus Pond. The love of the holy flower is turned into an everlasting work of art in this little pond. It is perfect grace rendered in stone. Under the eight turned petals of the rim, four steps repeat the shape of

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

the flower, from the brink to the bottom of the pool, each one growing smaller in the descent. I felt as if this lovely thing held some secret hidden, some unfathomable mystery of beauty, just as the jungle once held this pool concealed and men passed by and knew not what lay so close to their feet. It is not a thing to be described, but a reward of those who venture out to see.

It was growing towards evening as I went down the path to the southward and presently came out before the Kalu Gal Vihare. Everyone who visits this place feels the awe that Lieutenant Fagan felt in 1820 when he rediscovered this temple buried deep in the jungle, and came face to face with the enormous figure of the recumbent Buddha carved in the living rock. Here is peace wrought in eternal stone, and here is the picture of the freedom and loneliness of Nirvana achieved. The pillow of rock yields to the head that has escaped from this world of human desire. Parakrama Bahu made this temple, and some say that he offered the three figures of Buddha, sitting, standing, and lying: others have held that the standing figure is Ananda, the faithful disciple of the Master, mourning beside the lord who has passed beyond his reach.

I always hope that the standing figure is Ananda, the simple-hearted loving disciple.

"A long time, Ananda, you have followed and served me, with acts of love, with words of love, with thoughts of love, kind, blessed, unvarying, immeasurable," so spoke the Buddha before he died.

Ananda was the faithful, lovable, blundering follower, very like St. Peter, and the Buddha loved him as Christ loved Peter. Both Christ and the Buddha loved unselfish kindness.

"I was sick and ye visited me.........Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," said Christ (Matthew XXVI 36 and 40).

"Whosoever would wait upon me, let him wait upon the sick," said the Buddha (Cop. Buddhism).

How often the two great teachers of men meet in spirit on the mount, or in the wilderness, or in the crowded city, where their poor disciples find it so difficult to follow them.

In the little cave in the centre of the rock are wonderful details of carving in the sitting figure of the Buddha, and in the inscription which told the monks how they should live.

But details were as nothing to the awful grandeur of the whole group of figures as I looked on them in the evening light. Once the temple was roofed over, and attended by a multitude of priests, and lit up with brilliant paintings and lamps and offerings of flowers. Now it was alone in the jungle with not a

soul, save myself to look upon its majesty, and not a lamp before it save one tiny wick burning in coconut oil which some pilgrim had left in the shadow of the rock before he went on his way.

As I stood in the holy place, I found the birds preparing to go to bed. The swifts were crossing and re-crossing before the stone images; red-backed woodpeckers were chirruping to each other in the jungle, and a hoopoe flew across the open path; out of a tree over my head a flight of batagoias bolted in a panic and returned to the very same branch that they had left. The birds are wonderfully tame at Polonnaruwa. It almost seems as if the Sage still stretches out his saving hand from his eternal refuge to give them his protection, for no one would take a life in this his holy place.

I came next to the Buddha—sinha—prasada in whose pillared gallery and twelve little rooms set upon a square platform young boys were taught to become priests. Near it was the mighty Lanka-tilake temple with its grand statue of the Buddha rising high above the steps of the entrance. I thought of the time when this building looked like a jungle hill, the interior filled almost to the tops of the walls with rubbish which had fallen, and vegetation which had sprung from it, and I paid my thanks to the Archaeological Department that has turned this and so many other buildings in the city from meaningless heaps into living restorations of what they were in old times.

I passed by the Kiri Dagoba and continued my way to the southward. They were repairing the Rancot Dagoba, but as it was late in the evening nobody was about. I climbed up the rickety wooden ladder and stood on the topmost rung at the summit of the dome, below the square base which supports the spire, once golden, but now stripped of its glory. The sun was just touching the jungle edge to the westward beyond the Topawewa tank; and villagers hurrying home on the other side of the lake must have seen the great dagaba lighted up by its rays, as they lit up the Kiri Dagaba for me away to the Northward. I thought of the flash that would have come back from its milk white dome in ancient Polonnaruwa when it was coated all over with sparkling chunam. The thought of it brought up the vision, the city as it used to be. At the foot of the Kiri Dagaba I pictured the twinkling lights of the Monasteries and distant figures moving to and fro. Beyond lay the great suburb which stretched far round to the east and south where countless lights from wicks burning in coconut oil were appearing under a cloud of smoke as the people were preparing their evening meal. I could see men walking along the streets many of them Tamils, merchants and soldiers. There were a few Chinese, and some Moorish traders whose fellow-countrymen were fighting in Palestine against the Crusaders sent from Europe.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

In the Palace gardens to the Southward, the dancing girls were performing before the lords and ladies of the court. Nearer still the priestly city was filled with lamps and I could hear the faint sound of the chanting of the priests. Some of them, in that age of faith, were buried so deep in meditation that they were freed from this world and seemed to fly and visit the high heavens of which they had read in the ancient books. Men studied deeply and loved beauty, and expressed their love in beautiful things. They studied the history of their own country. Treasured away somewhere in that city were the old leaves that told the story of the great Dynasty, the Mahavamsa.

I climbed down again to the ground in the twilight and walked back to the road. The sun had sunk across the still waters of the lake and left the world in darkness, preparing for the coming of a new day.

* * * *

Next morning I followed the path to the right from the Rest-house along the bund of the tank. The track is covered with splendid jungle trees from which the monkeys hooted and growled as I passed them by. After walking a mile or so the path forked to the left and led me to the lonely Potgul Vihare. I came round the back of a great rock and found myself face to face with the stone figure of a man looking down upon an ola book that he held in his hands. His tall bearded person was the perfection of dignity and scholarly grace. The whole place has an air of learning about it, and this silent presiding genius, like some university don lecturing to the spirits of long departed students, fits into the atmosphere perfectly; or perhaps he creates it.

This stone figure gets more photographed than a film star, and whatever else in Polonnaruwa is forgotten or muddled up, the silent bearded figure on the rock, whose eyes have been fixed for centuries upon his book of stone, is remembered, so that his picture is seen all over the world. He is of peculiar interest because he seems to be a sculptured portrait, and so people have been tempted to see in him a picture of Parakrama Bahu himself. I wish that they were right. But those who know best consider that he is an Indian Brahmin, a guru or religious teacher, holding the book of Veda in his hands.

I found no disciples sitting at his feet, but only a solitary night jar. She sat on the ground with her beak turned up towards the stone statue and her dim night eyes staring at him like an obsequious undergraduate at a lecture. She is the bird whose bright eyes light up the road at night, but who cannot face the daylight, and she looked to me like the spirit of ignorance sitting at the feet of wisdom.

CHAPTER VI.

Kantalai and Trincomalee

As I came into Kantalai Village I found two men by the roadside skinning a fresh killed leopard.

"Gentleman shooting at water hole, last night," they said. He was a magnificent beast, with speckled coat to hide him in the shadows, keen of sight and hearing, with a nose good enough to find high carrion, and the lean supple body of one who lives by hunting, and must keep body and brain in perfect harmony or he will starve. He hung on his hole dead and stiff, overcome by thirst and a charge of buck shot, and two men were ripping off his spotted hide, perhaps to serve the whims of the painted ladies of Paris and Hollywood.

I went on to the Rest-house. In the Rest-house garden I met a boy, and asked him if many people were shooting round Kantalai just then.

"Many come," he said; "very good shooting. Last week gentleman coming and going with boat on tank and killing hundred and sixty-four teal."

A hunderd and sixty-four teal. Think of that!

"How did you know he was a gentleman?" I asked.

The boy looked disconcerted for a moment, then he said "He wearing trousers."

It is not always the hunted who are brought into Kantalai upon a pole.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

In 1900 there was brought to the rest-house on a stretcher, Storey, one of Ceylon's greatest sportsmen. The story of his adventure with a leopard is so vivid that I cannot resist giving it, in summary, from his book, 'Hunting and Shooting in Ceylon.' He writes:—

I was sitting on a small ant-hill a little way out in the open in an angle of the park with jungle on either hand and behind me, and I presently saw a small animal walking through the grass, about 50 yards ahead, across my front from left to right. I saw it was a feline of some sort, but could only see its head and the top of its back above the grass, which was here about 18 inches high. It struck me at once that it might be that seldom-seen animal **Felis viverrina**, the fishing cat, so I cocked my rifle, a single-barrelled breech-loading .303 be it noted, and fired at it when it was just opposite me. I missed, the bullet striking the ground just under its nose, and the little animal turned and bounded back to the jungle, whereupon the old Kapurala came up to me and asked what I had shot at. I said I thought it was one of the big wild cats, but he said it looked suspiciously like a leopard cub.

We walked towards the jungle into which it had disappeared, and I halted about 15 yards from it whilst the old man began to look for "sign." I was standing at my ease with my rifle, uncocked, thrown across my left arm, thinking of nothing in particular, when suddenly the old man without a word turned and ran like a madman past me towards the open park, his eyes bulging out with terror. I gazed at him, uncomprehending, in surprise, when glancing towards the forest I saw a full-grown but small and thickest leopard emerge from the jungle like a flash. It passed me at about 5 yards, perfectly silent, going not in leaps and bounds, but belly to the ground like a grey-hound, and catching up to the old man, sprang on to his back, the impetus knocking the man down, so that they both rolled head over heels.

The leopard landed fair on the man's back and shoulders, its forepaws catching him round the neck, and its head, with its murderous jaws wide open, actually lay on top of the man's head like a hideous cap. The shock knocked the old man down, and he rolled head over heels, the leopard, being shot off him by the fall, also rolling head over heels beyond him. By this time, of course, I had my rifle ready as I expected the brute on rising would go for the old man and thus give me a chance of a shot. However it did nothing of the sort. It recovered its feet in an instant and launched itself at me, all in one movement, so to speak, without any pause, and with such fearful rapidity that prepared as I was, I had only just time to throw my rifle to my shoulder and pull trigger without seeing a sight or anything—a regular snapshot.

If I never saw "battle, murder, and sudden death" before, I saw it coming towards me then, in awful silence, mouth wide open showing some very unpleasantly powerful teeth, ears laid back, and eyes fixed on me with a baneful glare; but at my shot the flying figure collapsed and came rolling over and over to my very feet. As quick as thought I dropped my rifle, and pulling out my hunting-knife, a big heavy one with a double-edged blade, plunged it into the brute behind the shoulder.

Well and good if I had stabbed and withdrawn the knife very quickly; but I did not. Like an ass I wrenched it about in the wound a bit, with the result of galvanising the leopard into comparatively active life, for it turned suddenly over, knocked the knife flying out of my hand, grabbed me by the left leg with its forepaws, and pulled me down on top of it. I rolled over to one side at once, desperately pulled at its paws with my right hand and kicked as desperately at it with my right foot, whilst my left hand was occupied fending its horrible head away from my face, as we lay side by side, for it was struggling hard to get its teeth into me. Trying to get it by the throat, my left hand unfortunately got into its mouth, and it promptly took hold hot and strong, so I had to leave it at that, but thrust its head away to the full stretch of my arm and then got to work pulling its claws out of me.

This I succeeded in doing after a while, and by a desperate wrench getting my left hand free, rolled rapidly over; but I was not quick enough, for out came a paw, got me by the thigh, and hauled me back again. More kicking and struggling and again I got free, but again that awful paw hauled me back like a bundle of old clothes. Another desperate effort and I managed to roll out of reach, got up, staggered to my rifle, reloaded and shot the brute dead; and then, as the whole universe seemed to be going round and round in a variety of colours, I dropped to the ground to consider matters a bit, feeling deathly sick. However it was getting late, so I soon arose and began to inspect damages. I perceived my left trousers leg to be dyed brilliant scarlet, as was my shoe, and, on pulling up the trousers, two of the various tears and holes in my leg spouted blood out about a foot, which sight fairly startled me. I yelled to the old man to get me a stick, but he seemed too dazed, so I twisted my handkerchief round my leg as tight as I could without the help of a stick, and then got up to have a look at the man. He was torn a bit down the back, round the neck, and one claw had penetrated very close to the throat. I wrapped one of his cloths round his neck to stop the streaming blood, and we turned towards camp, a terrible two miles away. My wounds got very painful and stiff, and my left hand was about useless; but we struggled on, getting to camp whilst there was still light enough to see our way.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Next day I sent off our only other tracker to his village 10 miles away for bearers, and they, arriving in the afternoon, made a sort of stretcher for me out of jungle sticks, on which the next day they carried me 15 miles to Kantalay Rest House.

I had about a month in bed, but eventually recovered all right with no ill effects, and I am glad to be able to say the old man also recovered, and has often been out with me since.

I walked back along the bund of Kantalai Tank. You could lay a vast wide road along the top of it where the narrow white strip of the Habarana-Trincomalee road now runs. On one side I looked down on to the tops of jungle trees, for the bund is fifty-four feet high: on the other lay the tank which covers about three-thousand, seven hundred acres at full level. On a rock was a small crocodile asleep with his mouth wide open: far out in the water the pelicans were floating solemnly about with chins tucked in, the picture of dignified repose: above the skyline a few teal were circling and dippind out of sight against the background of jungle trees.

I know very little about King Agbo II, or Aggabodhi II: he gets four pages in Mahavamsa translation which tells, among other things, of how he repaired the Thuparama Dagoba at Anuradhapura after a piece of masonry got loosened and feel in front of the Thera Jotipala while he was performing his devotions; but to Agbo II is ascribed the building of Kantalai Tank with its mighty bund over a mile in length.

I drove into Trincomalee town when the heat of the day was giving place to cool evening, and a breeze was coming in from the sea. Trincomalee is hot, and it seems to me to be very Dutch in the manner of its architecture, and wherever you go in the town north, south, east or west, the sea has a disconcerting way of turning up on both sides of you: for the sea embraces every part of the place, and Trincomalee town exists only that it may keep watch over the wide ocean out of its blue-eyed harbour. The town seems to be all ribs, and hollow eyes, the mere ghost of a place that was once rich, and important, and populous.

I asked a man in a tobacco stall what ailed the place. He was a fat man with a sleepy looking body that looked as if it must have grown up in the little stall and was now become too big ever to get out of it again: but his eyes were wide awake and looked out upon the world from two little caverns of fatness with an intelligent twinkle. He was ready enough to gossip with a customer.

He seemed rather surprised at my question, like a good citizen who was not aware that there was anything wrong with his native town.

Then he said that the place had shrunk since the war. It used to be full of sailors and workmen and business was good. "There was a naval yard here when I was a boy and then you could make a little money in Trincomalee. But it was closed, and many people went away: my parents went away, but I stayed," and he turned his head away politely to send out a squirt of red betel juice on to the pavement.

I asked him whether the old days were not better than the present.

He shrugged his shoulders slightly and refused to face the question. Perhaps they were, perhaps they weren't. He was a good fatalist, and took things as they came and made what he could of them without reasoning why.

I managed to get him to give a grudging consent to my suggestion that things were a little better for business now that the Naval works were begun again about the harbour:

"But," he said, "if it brings more business it brings more traders and so there is little gain for anybody."

So it seems that the prosperity of Trincomalee is a kind of barometer of wars and rumours of wars. And so it has been for three centuries.

For the history of Trincomalee is an index to the strength and security of the powers in the far east. For centuries it was the headquarters of a Vanniyarship: then in 1615, after the Portuguese had been in Ceylon for nearly a hundred years a Dutchman named Marcellus de Borchouwar tried to get a corner in the trade of Ceylon for Holland. He went to Amsterdam to try and get help, but he quarrelled with the Dutch East India Company and went to Denmark. He led an expedition to Ceylon in 1620, but died on the voyage out. The Danes came to an agreement with the king of Kandy and were the first, it seems, to lay the foundations of a fort at Trincomalee. They were expelled by the Portuguese before the fort was finished.

In 1624, de Sa, the Portuguese general, completed a fort at Trincomalee. Ribeiro writes "Trequimale was a triangular fortress with three bastions carrying ten iron cannon built on a hill at a point of land adjoining the sea close to the bay Dos Acros. A captain was in charge of it with fifty soldiers and there were also a gunner, sixteen inhabitants, a chaplain, a church and a magazine of stores and ammunition." This fort gradually fell into decay, and when it was attacked by the Dutch in 1639, it was soon forced to capitulate. In 1656, the Portuguese power in Ceylon came to an end, but Trincomalee was still to be a battle-ground of the European nations.

The French took possession of the fort for a time, and were expelled by the Dutch in 1672. Early in January, 1782, Trinco-

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

malee was captured by the English Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, but on August 25th the French Admiral de Suffren forced the English garrison to surrender.

At the peace of Paris in 1784, Trincomalee was restored to the Dutch East India Company.

In 1795, the forts at Trincomalee capitulated to Colonel Steuart after bombardment on August 28th and 31st.

It is a matter of interest that Colonel Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, who commanded the British at the Battle of Waterloo, walked through Trincomalee and took up his quarters in the Fort. He was in command of 5,000 troops intended for the reduction of Batavia, the Dutch capital of Java: but the attempt was never carried out, and the troops proceeded to Egypt under Sir David Baird. (Tennent Vol. II P.81 Note).

1795 was the last time that Trincomalee heard the sound of battle guns. In about 1833, the road came to Trincomalee from Matale, and about 1925, the railway arrived through the jungle

I left my friend close packed in his stall, and made my way to the fort that covers a small headland running out due East into the sea. It is a good solid structure made to defy foes by land and sea, and still stands practically untouched by old enemy Time himself. The great thickness of the ramparts is pierced by a solitary gateway of fine workmanship bearing the date 1679, the year that Samuel Pepys drove round in his coach to see the devastation of the fire of London: or, if you will, twelve years after the Dutch sailed up the Medway as far as Chatham and destroyed or captured sixteen British ships: a time when the power of Holland was at its height in the Eastern seas.

Inside the fort I found a sleepy desolation of Dutch officers' quarters, and barracks, and stables and magazines, which looked as though the Hollanders had marched out a hundred and fifty years ago and the place had stood deserted ever since just as they had left it. There were the round pillars before the cool houses of governors and generals and the shady little gardens behind: there was the church solemn and undecorated with its carved tomb-stones upon the floor: and there were soldiers' quarters and sheds whose roofs had tumbled in leaving a wilderness of tiles and broken bricks. The guns that used to guard the walls and cliffs of the Fort are buried, muzzle downwards, in the ground, an ignominious row of iron pillars along the edge of the grass-grown roads: and the grass grows up into neat little piles of rusty cannon balls that have had their day and now have the disconsolate apologetic air of museum specimens.

I climbed over some disused gun emplacements, until I came out on top of the magnificent cliff which hangs over the deep green waters at the mouth of Trincomalee Bay. This is the Swamy Rock where once stood a Sivite Temple that drew thousands of worshippers until de Sa's Portuguese soldiers razed it to the ground and left only the few scattered heaps of bricks and rubbish which now cover the top of the cliff under the thorn trees. Pilgrims still visit the holy spot where they practise the picturesque and dangerous custom of placing lamps as far out upon the ledges of the rock as each enthusiast dares.

I walked to the edge and looked down over the black rounded rocks where a few small trees clung to the last crevices before the cliff fell sheer into deep water far below. The sea is the loveliest green colour at the foot of the cliff. Rocking up and down upon the water was a boat in which were two men who were engaged in what seems the gentlest form of toil: they were sitting over half a dozen fishing lines that went down into the green depths, while their jaws worked slowly across and across upon the mastication of betel.

I climbed up to the solitary pillar that stands upon a rock on top of the cliff. It is said to have been placed there by the Dutch in memory of a true lover. If so, it must have been carved for them by the last of the Ceylonese sculptors for it has all the grace of the sculptured pillars of the ruined cities. The old man at the gate of the Fort told me it was one of the pillars taken from the ruins of the ancient Hindu Temple that stood upon the headland, and that many more like it were built into the ramparts or lay scattered about in various places in Trincomalee. Every visitor hears the story of the pillar, how it commemorates a young Dutch girl who saw her faithless lover sailing away in his ship, and how, in her despair, she flung herself from the top of the Swamy rock.

As I was walking back through the jungle of thorn trees that covers the headland I almost stepped upon a deer that was sitting down in the shade where her spotted hide fitted perfectly into the background of dappled shadow. I had disturbed the slumbers of the herd of deer that lives unmolested, as a rule, within the Fort: the deer scattered in all directions in a passing panic. The stags turned after a few yards, and stood blinking at me with comfortable well-fed, indignation, while the does moved further off. Then they all sat down again to continue their ruminations, while I went on my way to the Old Rest House of Trincomalee.

After supper I walked through the town to the bathing-place below the Fort. Ceylon was made for bathing, and Trincomalee has some of her choicest beaches. After the dust and heat of the road, the water cool and transparent to the perfection of

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

delight, demands that you strip and tumble lazily in: then the cold embrace acts like a fillip, making you stretch out your limbs to swim, until you have left all weariness and laziness behind you in the tumbling water.

But you must choose the right place to bathe, and bear in mind Sir Samuel Baker's story how a number of soldiers were bathing in a sheltered nook below the Fort. "One after the other took a run, and then a 'header' off the rocks into the deep blue water beneath. In the long line of bathers was a fine lad of fifteen, the son of one of the sergeants of the regiment; with the emulation of his age he ranked himself among the men, and on arriving at the edge he plunged head foremost into the water and disappeared. A crowd of men were on the margin watching the bathing; the boy rose to the surface within a few feet of them, but as he shook the water from his hair, a cloudy shadow seemed to rise from the deep beneath him, and in another moment the distinct outline of a large shark was visible as his white belly flashed below. At the same instant there was a scream of despair; the water was crimsoned, and a bloody foam rose to the surface; the boy was gone! Before the first shock of horror was felt by those around, a gallant fellow of the same regiment shot head first into the bloody spot, and presently reappeared from his devoted plunge, bearing in his arms one half of the poor boy. The body was bitten off at the waist, and the lower portion was the prize of the ground shark.

"For several days the soldiers were busily employed in fishing for this monster in the hope of recovering some trace of the boy. This, however, was not to be; the shark was never seen again." (Eight years in Ceylon, p. 368).

CHAPTER VII.

The "Great" North Road, Jaffna, The Islands Nachchikkuda

It was evening on the "great" north road and I was driving along northward in the dusk on a night run to Elephant Pass on my way to Jaffna. The sun was setting in blood and gold over Mahagalkadawala Tank. The lamps were lighted in the boutiques at Medawachchiya as I passed. Near the hundredth milestone I swerved on to the grass to let the last 'bus from Jaffna go crashing by, and after that I had the road to myself. The head-lights made a long bright tunnel into the darkness of the jungle road and picked out the eyes of rats and night-jars that shone like little sparks of white fire. An owl flew along the road in front of the car and looked back every now and then at the blinding lights behind him turning his round eyes into shining white diamond disks.

I passed through Vavuniya in the darkness. I was in the heart of the Wanni, the land that has no history, only stories of its portly Gamaralas and Gamamahages facing complicated domestic situations in the rich Folk Tales of Ceylon.

It was in this wild country that the princes of the Wanni flourishes and fought and died. "These chiefs," writes Codrington, "in later days, (after the time of Parakrama Bahu II.) occupied the frontier country between Jaffna and the Sinhalese Kingdom, and were subjects of one or other of these States, or

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

affected complete idependence according to the strength of their neighbours." The holy city of Anuradhapura was in their care, and some of them ruled at Trincomalee and Batticaloa, so that they appear for a moment now and then in the History of Ceylon, but for the most part their story seems to be lost and to lie waiting for the patient seeker.

I passed through the silent village of Puliyankulam where all seemed buried in sleep. The eyes of a couple of spotted deer lit and relit in the jungle by the way-side and a mouse deer with huddled neck and haunches ran along the road fifty yards ahead and turned into the darkness. Hares feeding on the grass verge bobbed and scuttled in all directions. Every few miles the headlights would pick out pale green eyes in the middle of the road, and soon the radiator of the car would be nosing at a herd of cattle camped on the highway, with the calves in the middle to keep them safe from the chill air and from wandering leopards. A lot of horn blowing and a bunt or two from the bumper of the car were needed to make them shift: and then, stiff and sleepy, and disgruntled at being turned out of bed, they lumbured to one side, closed in again behind the car as soon as it was passed, and went to sleep again.

At about 11-0 p.m. I passed Mankulam where there are many bears, and used once to be many more.

Twenty miles beyond Mankulam it is possible, even in the dark, to notice how the pale line of sky overhead becomes wider and wider as the jungle grows more stunted towards the dry region of the North. By daylight the traveller can see trees disappearing on either hand, and giving place to scrub and bushes; and, if he is lucky, he may see the nimble round painted partridges that run at speed across the road; the whistling teal and cotton teal on the jungle tanks seem also to disappear and their place is taken by flights of migrant ducks which are common to almost all parts of the world.

At midnight I hammered loud and long on the door of Elephant Pass Resthouse. At last I could hear muffled foot-steps within. The door opened.

"No food having,' 'said a sleepy voice in a rather injured tone.

"No food wanting," I answered, "but have you a bed?"

"Bed having," said the voice. Is is one of the unfortunate duties of innkeepers and doctors, of which nobody should take advantage, that they may be dragged out of bed at any hour of the night by the sudden arrival of strangers.

The last sound that I heard before I fell asleep was the gentle wash of waves upon a sandy shore.

When I looked out in the morning, the wide lagoon of Elephant Pass lay almost without a ripple before the tiny Dutch Fort which has been converted into a Resthouse. The still water reflected a long line of flamingoes flying northward to look for a breakfast on the mud flats on the East of Jaffna: their flight, with the regular beat of wings and perfect "covering," was even more military than that of pin-tailed ducks in arrow formation. I was glad to see them because they showed that I was in the heart of wild Ceylon: one must make a long country pilgrimage to see a flamingo nowadays.

I associate Elephant Pass Resthouse with one of Ceylon's few novels. The heroine of the "Chandala Woman" stood upon the Resthouse verandah and watched the train carrying away her lover. With her attendant chaperon she "migrated to the resthouse at Elephant Pass. The anglers had gone home, and the old Dutch Fort at water's edge, with its massive walls and quaint rooms, was empty of visitors. It was a house in the wilderness with scrub and marsh and lagoon all round. On the narrow neck of land, just wide enough to hold the railway and the cart road, which joined the peninsula of Jaffna to the rest of Ceylon, there passed two trains daily each way, and some-times a motor car. But the vehicles flickered across the field of vision in the distance, and the dwellers in the old fort looked at them as if they belonged to another world. There was a little station at which the train stopped a few seconds for the mail." There is little to do at Elephant Pass Resthouse. The place was made to read oneself into dreaming. I read the Chandala Woman. Some people censure this novel, and say that the writer is fouling his own nest in his criticism of caste in Ceylon. Perhaps such criticism is one reason why there are so few prophets in Ceylon today. Yet it is not difficult to forgive the exuberance and lack of restraint in a story which paints with so much candour and pathos a picture of the inner-most soul of young Ceylon meeting and tasting to the full the strange life and civilization of the West. "The Village in the Jungle" and "Grass for My Feet" give the tragic and the comic sides of Ceylon country life, and next to them comes the "Chandala Woman" with its portraits, pleasant and sad, of the wealthy young aristocrats of Colombo. And if anyone wants anything sadder about these last, anything nearer the tragedy of the simple lives of the folk who struggle with the cruelty of life in the "Village in the Jungle," they must look in the Ceylon version of "Jude the Obscure," and they will find sadness verging on the neurotic in the life story of a young lady of Kandy in the last century called "The Tragedy of a Mystery." But this story is only for those who know how to laugh, for only those who can, will wade through the sea of tears to the last page.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

What a pity it is that these fountains have all dried up and left the land barren like the black sandhills of Elephant Pass. Ceylon owes something to the writers of these books who have left green patches of fruitfulness in the unexplored lanscape of her literature.

I drove across the causeway at Elephant Pass which carries the road and the railway on to the island of Jaffna. In old days a traffic of small boats carried the trade of the north through the straits, where the road now crosses, in the seasons when the waterway was clear from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal: and at other seasons lines of newly-tamed elephants forded across the narrow passage on their way to Kayts where they were taken on board ship and carried away to India to walk in the processions of great temples and great kings. But "the name Elephant Pass is said to be derived from the procession of wild elephants that crosses from the mainland to Jaffna when the palmyra fruits—a delicacy much beloved of elephants—are ripe." The grateful "Tamils say that the tree 'lives a lac of years after planting and lasts a lac of years when felled' ": their sturdy old retainer deserves a proverb, for he built the house and lit the fire and helped to furnish the meals and supplied countless household necessities without complaint and without wages for these many hundreds of years. He works hard for a scanty living sucked from sandy soil, and looks dry and wrinkled as a faithful old servant should do.

After Elephant Pass palmyra palms begin to line the horizon on every hand. The palmyras of Jaffna look rather tired and overworked, like city clerks on Friday afternoon. The road soon begins to look like a European suburb, because every yard of its frontage is lined with cadjan fences making each man's home into his castle. These cadjan fences are famous. It is said that the people of Jaffna spend much of their time waiting for their neighbour to go out, so that they may shift the dividing fence a few inches on to his land. This of course leads to a law suit if somebody is careless enough to be caught, but as the practice is said to be practically universal the only result would seem to be a perpetual oscillation of the fences, and a sense of satisfaction on each side of them.

The Tamils are the Scotsmen of Ceylon, and they do the same service for the island of Ceylon that Scotland does for England: that is to say, they supply many of the leaders in the Civil Service, and in business, and in the professions,—and all the jokes about close-fistedness. The joke about the stinginess of the North in both England and Ceylon perhaps springs from the same cause. It was the subjects of James VI of Scotland and I of England coming down with lofty titles and empty purses from the barren hills of Scotland, that started the old joke in England: and perhaps it was the poor relations of the brides of the Kings of Kandy, who came down from the dry parts of South India to live in Malabar Street among the fruitful hills of Kandy who started it in Ceylon. The Malabars may have outdone even the housewives of Kandy, of whom Knox records: "They are very thrifty, and it is a disgrace to them to be prodigal, and their Pride and Glory to be accounted near and saving."

As I passed along the road through Pallai and Chavakachcheri meditating upon these matters, I became aware that the car's wheels were in water, and I passed through a large puddle lying across the road. I had heard a good deal of the dryness of Jaffna and of the well sweeps on which men walk up and down, and down and up, to raise the water for the thirsty fields. But it was evidently not always dry in Jaffna. I went a little further and there was a flood ankle deep and fifty yards wide. So much for travellers' tales. Round the next bend a week's stay in Chavakachcheri Resthouse seemed inevitable, there was a great flood across the way two hundred yards wide and reflect-the sky like a mirror. There was nobody about with whom to take counsel about the state of the road and the possibility of the waters falling. The only living creature in sight was a black and white goat which was standing on a small island nibbling at the leaves of a bush and looking at me across the water in a very unsympathetic manner. I should not have wondered if Noah's Ark had hove in sight suddenly and taken him aboard.

And then I heard a roar and a scream down the road. A local 'bus was approaching. Now I should find out the chances of getting across before night. I waited for the 'bus to come alongside. It came hurtling up without the least slackening of speed, and rushed headlong into the water, and went through the pool like a dreadnought, flinging out great white wings of spray on either side. "How can man die better?" I thought to myself, and after a little hesitation the small car crept gingerly after the amphibian, uttering gurgling protests from its submerged exhaust pipe, until it stood dripping but triumphant on the further shore.

I always like to think of Jaffna from the sea. The Fort looks out squat and forbidding upon the white pointed sails of the boats in the bay. An endless stream or rice bags from India flows out of the dhonies drawn up beside the long stone quay and passes into the warehouses to feed the hungry hardworking people of Jaffna.

I know that if I go northwards I can see the neat little square fields, light green, dark green, and yellow, laid out like a chess board on either side of the road. They bring to my mind the pungent smell that pervades railway trains, middle-aged men of small income, and the streets of Colombo; for the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

dark green squares are the nurseries of the Jaffna cheroot. I know that there are hoopoes to be seen at Kopay and that there are old Portuguese churches at Chenganai, and the remains of a Portugues Church and monastery on the road to Kayts, and I have seen the waves breaking on the northernmost point of Ceylon close to Point Pedro just as they break at Dondra Head. But it is the harbour of Jaffna that I remember best, where the sunlight falls on coloured sails, and business is taken seriously. The whole place breathes with life and activity and industry. It must be nearly impossible to lie down in a shady corner of the quay in Jaffna and go to sleep as men do in Colombo.

Nagadipa was a place of ships in the most ancient times, and her sons were traders and sailors long before the first Arab seamen established themselves in Ceylon. Many armies passed through the island from South India on their way to Anuradhapura or Polonnaruwa to mix themselves up in the complicated royal politics of Ceylon. In 1244 a Javanese army with blow pipes and poisoned arrows coming possibly from Sumatra passed, and left no trace behind except for the name Chavakachcheri. Two hundred years later when the Sinhalese dynasty was declining, and had retreated to the marshes near Colombo, the Jaffna kingdom was for a time paramount in Ceylon and held a great part of the north of the Island. In 1560 Don Constantino de Braganza drove out the King of Jaffna who had massacred Christian converts at Mannar. Then in 1591 the Portuguese ships appeared in Jaffna harbour and the Portuguese captured a relic which they were told was Buddha's tooth which Vidiye Bandara had brought thither in his flight.

1619 saw the Portuguese in Jaffna once more, and the regent Sangili was deposed, and the Fort of Our Lady of Miracles was built.

The Dutch captured Jaffna in 1658, June 24, after a siege of 3 months. Jaffna surrendered to the British, September 28th, 1795 without resistance.

My glimpse of Jaffna town was fleeting. I saw a democratic hostel for travellers quite unlike any other in Ceylon; clouds of kites overhead where I looked for crows; and dust at my feet where grass should grow. I saw sunlight on innumerable sails and I carried my luggage over railway lines down to a stone jetty where everybody seemed busy and cheerful and confident. In Jaffna too I had the best meal of rice and curry that I met with in all my journey.

Next morning at 6 o'clock I was gliding westward along the Jaffna Bay in a fishing dhonie, under a broad red four-cornered sail. The Bay was filled with light, and the passing boats with bellying sails, white and red, and brown, made it seem a place

of life and adventure. Our own vessel was built from end to end without a nail, without a single piece of metal, I believe, so that she might have belonged to the fleet of Sena and Gottika "powerful in their cavalry and navy" who sailed across to Ceylon from South India in 237 B.C. The varnish and screws of my chair and camp bed looked quite out of place in the cosy little cabin formed by the rounded cadjan awning behind the mast. But our crew looked as eternal and unchanging as their ship.

The land-locked sea of Jaffna narrowed down to the passage of Kayts. On one side lay the green shores of the island of Karaitivu which is joined to the mainland by a causeway and in former times the elephants after a long and weary march from the Kraals of Kurunegala and the South "were embarked at Karaitivu" by means of a "bridge," and transported to Coromandel and Bengal. On the other side rose the palm trees of Kayts. Between the two islands a solitary rock rises out of the shining water, and carries an old Portuguese fortress. "This boat was built at Kayts fifteen years ago" said her captain, looking at her with pride. "There's a dry dock round that side of the harbour, and boats are built there every year, three or four of them."

I looked at the bright lines of blue and yellow and green made by the sea, and sand, and trees, on the shores of Kayts. The little harbour is one of the oldest and most interesting places in the whole of Ceylon. From time immemorial boats have been built upon its sandy beach and sailors have gone out in them to trade along the coasts of India and Ceylon. And many strange ships have sailed in from distant places and filled the anchorage with the sound of foreign tongues. It is said that there was once a Chinese settlement at Chinan Kovil on the Island of Kayts, where the laden junks took in water on their way to India.

In 1288 three travellers of European blood, but talking the language of the Tartars as freely as if they had been born in far off China, landed at Kayts to stretch their legs after a long sea voyage. They were engaged in the delicate mission of conveying a bride from the court of the great Kublai Khan to a Mogul-Tartar prince named Arglum, who ruled in Persia. Their heavy garments were patched and threadbare with long travel, but they showed no desire to change them for lighter wear, even in the tropical heat of Kayts. They had good reason to take care of those worn robes, for sewn in the seams, and hidden beneath the patches, was such a vast treasure of rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, diamonds and emeralds, as would convince their relatives in Venice beyond a doubt that they were the same three travellers who set forth seventeen years before to trade in the Far East. The youngest of the three is Marco Polo.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

The vast Tartar empire created an order and unity in Asia which made possible those wanderings of Marco Polo through Armenia, Babylon, Persia, Tibet and Cathay, which he has recorded in the most wonderful travel book of all time.

When the three travellers reached Persia they learned that their great patron was dead, and with his death they knew that the doors of Asia were closed to travellers from Europe for long centuries to come.

Nobody believed Marco Polo's story when he wrote down his adventures and published them in a book. People mocked at the monstrous tale of vast wealth and grandeur and power, and nick-named the teller of it "Old Millions," because he seemed to exaggerate beyond belief. Only the friends and relations bidden to the first banquet given by the returned travellers had good cause to believe the wonderful story was true. For as the feast went on they saw their hosts change three times into three sets of gorgeous eastern apparel, and at each changing the discarded garments were handed to the guests as presents: and after dinner the old and soiled garments in which the travellers landed were brought in, and when seams and patches were slit open with a knife, there fell upon the tables a glittering shower of precious stones which lay in sparkling heaps of many colours upon the polished board, bright enough, and valuable enough, to convince the most sceptical of the most improbable traveller's tale.

Of Ceylon Marco Polo writes:—

"It is governed by a King whose name is Sendeznaz. The people worship idols, and are independent of every other state. Both men and women go nearly in a state of nudity, (the writer had cause to envy this climatic adaptation), only wrapping a cloth round the middle part of their bodies. They have no grain besides rice and sesame, of which latter they make oil. Their food is milk, rice and flesh, and they drink wine drawn from trees. The island produces more beautiful and valuable rubies than are found in any other part of the world, and likewise sapphires, topazes, amethysts, garnets, and many other precious and costly stones. The King is reported to possess the grandest ruby that ever was seen, being a span in length, and the thickness of a man's arm, brilliant beyond description, and without a single flaw. It has the appearance of a glowing fire, and is so valuable that no estimation can be made of its worth in money. The grand Khan Kublai, sent ambassadors to this monarch, with a request that he would yield to him the possession of this ruby, in return for which he should receive the value of a city. The answer was to this effect: that he would not sell it for all the treasures in the universe; nor would he on any terms suffer it to go out of his dominions, being a jewel handed down to him by his predecessors on the throne. The Grand Khan failed therefore to acquire it."

Indian, Chinese, and Moorish merchants thronged the little port of Kayts for centuries, and then the Portuguese appeared upon the scene and built a fort to protect the entrance to the harbour. A Dutch historian writes of Kayts: "This island has been subject to great floods. Of this we saw an instance in the year 1658, when a most furious tempest, accompanied by a hurricane raised the water beyond the shore to such a height, that it broke into the Water-Gate of the Castle, throwing down everything that stood in its way............After the fury of the tempest was somewhat allay'd, several fishes were taken in the church-porch."

As I left Kayts I promised myself that I would one day visit that fair island again and get to know it better. Few places in Ceylon tempt the traveller more.

As soon as the boat passes out of Kayts she begins to dip to the swell of the open sea, and the passenger is in a position to judge whether a sea-faring life suits him or not. His inside may be as sensitive as a spirit level, or it may adjust itself like a hammock. The test lasted until the boat came to anchor under the lee of Eluvaitivu.

I went ashore in the gloaming and walked along the lonely sands feeling a little lost in the mysterious gloom like Robinson Crusoe on his first evening on the desert isle. Upon the sands I found some of the gruesome and cruel consequences of turtle fishing. If the wild creatures are ever allowed to sit in judgment upon man the turtles will rise up against Ceylon fishermen and condemn them.

I waded back through the shallows, and saw the grey ghost of the ship against the evening sky and the cosy circle of light coming from the cabin where the lamp swung gently from its hook in the roof, and heard a welcome sound of voices and the rattle of cooking pots in the galley at the stern. No wonder sailors get to love their ships and make models of them with wood and cotton when they grow too old to sail in them: into whatever strange and distant corner of the world they may wander they carry their little self-contained home about with them, and can step straight from the unknown and unexplored into a familiar retreat with old associations filling every corner of it.

I sat in my chair in the cabin and pulled out two books which tell the story of the Islands of the north of Ceylon. One was Mr. R. H. Bassett's "Romantic Ceylon;" and the other was a musty old volume, that took up a lot of room, and looked as if it had wandered by a mistake from some learned university

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

library and found itself stranded in this wild spot of grey water, grey sky, and black motionless palm trees. This old book was called "A Description of ye East India Coasts of Malabar and Cormandel with their adjacent Kingdoms and Provinces, and of the Empire of Ceylon," by Philip Baldaeus, Minister of the Dutch Church. Anybody who wishes to read about the Islands in this book must look up Volume III Chapter 46 of the section upon Ceylon, page 808.

The island of Eluvaitivu which lay in the black shadow of night on the port side of the boat was called Ilha Deserta, the Desert Isle, by the Portuguese, and, says Baldaeus, it "abounds in serpents, and furnishes our ships with fuel." Mr. Bassett records that cotton was once grown here and that a few surviving plants may still be seen upon it. To the south of Eluvaitivu lies Analaitivu "which produces a vast plenty of oysters" and south of that again in Nayinativu, which "has got its name from the great numbers of Jakals that are found there." West of that lies the large Island of Punkudutivu. I visited all three that night in the pages of those two books, where anyone may follow without the labour of a journey, and he could hardly make a pleasanter excursion.

At nine o'clock on a Saturday morning the dhonie scraped alongside the little wooden Jetty of the island of Delft. A crowd of children lined the end of the landing place and behind them stood their elders, all staring at the newcomer as only those can stare to whom a stranger is a rare occurrence. Above their heads stood the shaggy coconut palms, and at their feet the untidy sandy shore. The children gazed with their brown eyes, seeking for some strange sight. They found it in a camera which was pointed at them with its evil little black orb staring back at them without a wink. This was too much for them. The boldest giggled and retreated behind their elders, and the more fearful cried out, and bolted for safety. Perhaps they were self conscious at meeting more blue-eye hunters from foreign parts. For there is a tale that Lieutenant Nolan, who was a kind of government official upon the island, found such favour with the ladies of Delft, that when he retired in 1824, he left behind him a legacy of Irish blue eyes among the islanders which may be traced among them to this day.

Upon the Jetty I met the Odiyar, a small young man with a round head and shaggy hair like the leaves of his native palm trees, but having an air of gentle dignity about him that seemed to mark him as man of rank. He regretted that the Maniyagar was away in Jaffna, but offered with great kindness to give me shelter in a house not far from his own.

We started to walk along a sandy road that led inland among the coconut gardens. On either side, I noticed, were the rough stone walls which, it is said, Lieutenant Nolan taught the people to build according to the fashion of his native Ireland.

"Is Nolan still remembered in Delft?" I asked the Odiyar. "Some of the oldest people here remember about him," he answered. "He grew flax on the island to make sails and cordage for the ships which came here in those days. The Portuguese had ponies on this island, you can still see some of them and Nolan kept the Government stables and bred horses and ponies which were shipped over to the mainland for riding and drawing carriages. There are many old people in Delft who remember. They live a long time here. It is a very healthy place, and some say that the toddy is very health-giving and makes people live many years. I will bring you some to try."

I glanced up at the trees over my head and noticed that a fair proportion of them were without nuts.

As we went on along the road I asked the Odiyar to show me one of the sheep with which the island is well stocked. "There is a sheep," said he, pointing over a wall of loose coral stones into a small field of grass.

I looked over the wall and saw a gaunt yellow goat with long coarse hair, down on its horny knees cropping busily at the grass.

"How do you tell the sheep from the goats?" I asked the Odiyar. He looked at the scraggy beast in the field as if he thought the solution of the question was self-evident though not so easy to define.

"Well" he said at last, "it's quite easy to tell. But if there is any doubt you can see that the goat holds his tail up and the sheep holds his tail down, and then there's always the smell to go by. You can always smell a goat."

We turned off the road across a field and entered a fine old Dutch house with white pillars and a broad verandah. "This used to be the Residency in old times" said the Odiyar.

Among the tumbled down outhouses of the building was a large Dutch Pigeon cot with accommodation, or at least front doors, for sixty-four pigeons. It must be haunted by the spirits of Dutch pigeons of other days, for the Odiyar assured me the modern pigeons refuse to live there in spite of supplies of paddy and straw and every other encouragement that he had provided for them.

I took up my quarters under the cool shade of the long sweep of tiles that formed the roof of the building and sat down to enjoy the peace and retirement of Delft, where there are no motor cars, nor telephones, no roads to speak of; no daily papers, no rush of business: only flocks of goats and sheep, and green palm trees, and a few cattle, and tumbled down

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

walls, and little cottages full of long lived men and women and sturdy children. Life here seems to go back a hundred years to the good old times when men understood leisure, and simplicity, and peace, and knew how to supply all their needs for themselves from their own lands without being urged from every hoarding and newspaper and notice board to buy some luxury or other that they do not need, and can well do without.

It would be almost impossible to be in a hurry upon the island and no man need be the slave of a clock. If there is a clock in Delft I feel sure that nobody ever troubles to wind it up. The sun is a sufficient time piece, and the sun in the tropics always says "take it easy."

In the evening I walked along the road that runs westward across the Island. As soon as it had cleared the coconut gardens, it came out beside the old two-storied Portuguese port that stands on a sand bank close to the sea above an open common where the boys were playing thattu on the grass. The fort is more like a castle than most forts in Ceylon, and it has, so far as I know, no history attached to it. There are four ruined walls half buried in the sand hills, and hollow eyes of windows look out from under the battlements. Goats and small cattle find shade and pasture together inside the main gate.

Close to the fort I saw four large and ancient wells where a number of buxom looking village ladies were pouring kerosene tins of water over their plump persons, and discussing their affairs in loud voices, quite unabashed by the presence of a stranger so close to their bath room.

A little further along the road I came upon a large tank upon the left side, lying white and still in its circle of palm trees and low bushes. I left the road and turned to the right across a wilderness of scrubby pasture covered with coral stones that cut like knives. Even this desert was divided by long rickety walls of loose stones which marked somebody's claim to every foot of land. Startled goats bolted out of unsuspected hollows as I passed and stood looking with wild shaggy wonder at the intruder, before they galloped off with cocking tails. Five partridges shot out of a small tree and sailed off with cries of alarm, and a flight of golden plover went whistling overhead. I looked all round the horizon for any sign of the wild duck of Delft of which I had heard so much, but, although half the island was flooded, during the whole of my stay not one duck did I see.

The road came out at last into coconut gardens on the west side of Delft, and ran down to the sea close to the other, and still more ruined fort of the island.

My impression of Delft was one of rich palm trees and scanty pasture and long stretches of intractable stony fields where flood

water lay in every hollow. But it was far from being an unattractive spot: it had the desolation and the beauty of land that lies close to the sea, and the air was full of the rigour and freshness of the sea breeze. You feel you must be up and doing on the island of Delft, and there is always a strong desire to see what is hidden beyond the next ridge.

"It's a bracing place," said the Odiyar when I got back to the house and found him waiting there with two large bottles of white toddy.

"It's a bracing place, and that helps people to live to a great age here."

We drank each other's health and long life in the country's wine, and my kindly host went home with the empty bottles.

I stretched myself out on the old Dutch Residency verandah in a long chair and pulled out Baldaeus from my travelling case.

"Nunduntiva" he says, that is to say Delft, "or the Long Isle, is called Ilha das Vacas, i.e., the Cow Island,by the Portuguese, because abundance of cattle are transported thither from Tonday, which makes cattle so cheap there that you may buy a good cow for four Dutch shillings; but their oxen and cows are not near so big as those of the Continent of Jaffnapatam. Often times a mortality happens among the cattle, because the ground being hot and dry, porduces divers venomous herbs, which they feed upon. The inhabitants are very poor, and live upon miserable diet: I remember that being once eight days in this isle, I and my company could scarce get provisions for our sustenance. The isle is of difficult access, because the shore is rocky, and has no bays, but only a few narrow creeks, where there is no coming in except in very calm weather; otherwise the sea beats with such force against the rocks, that there is no coming near them, though there be sometimes five or six fathoms of water. For which reason there is no coming at it except in the calm seasons, which happen twice a year at the change of the monsoons: for the South-wind forces you upon the rocks, and with the North-wind the shore is too shallow to approach it. The Portuguese had formerly a fort here, the ruins whereof are to be seen to this day. They also brought some horses into this isle, which multiplying in time, produced a certain kind of horses that are very small, but hardly and very fit to travel on stony and rocky grounds: they live in the wilderness, and are taken by forcing them into the bank of a river or pond, where they catch them in snares or ropes." So the longevity of the people of Delft is not only due to toddy, I thought to myself, but it comes of the hardiness of a race that has battled with nature for centuries and won the fight. Flood, and drought, and

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

stormy seas, and the long toil to win food from the unwilling soil, have made of the islanders of Delft the kind of people that do live long.

I went to sleep that night to the music of the wind in the trees, and waves on the coral shore, and the regular champ, champ, of the Maniyagar's horse cropping the grass in the field outside the house.

Next morning I went along the road that runs south across the island. It passed through fields of palmyra palms well stocked with doves, and all partially flooded. A flock of goats and sheep with long ears and active bodies came tripping along the road under the care of a tiny bright eyed girl about three feet high, who stared solemnly at the stranger. After a little paddling upon the half flooded road, I came out upon wide grass lands almost entirely covered with water. But where there was a little grass showing through the flood, there I saw five or six of those shaggy half wild ponies for which Delft is famous, "very small, but hardy, and very fit for travel on stony ground." Some of them were beautiful little animals, lithe and shapely; but most were bent in the back, and protruding in the stomach, and looked as if they had never galloped half a furlong in their lives.

Upon the northern shore of Delft there lie a few scattered fragments of bricks and cement which are all that is left of the Government Stud Stables where Lieutenant Nolan ruled like an island king. We get used to motor cars and admit the importance of vast reeking factories that turn green fields into a wilderness of chimneys in order to supply us with motor cars, and yet barely thirty years ago, Governors, bishops, planters, merchants, hunters, all in fact who today use a car, travelled behind or upon horses: and then Delft was a very important place, and far more beautiful then, as now, than any motor works. When the first train ran round Sensation Rock on the way to Kandy the fate of the mail coach was sealed: and when the early motor cars of 1905 raised the red dust in the streets of Colombo the days of riding horses were numbered. The motor turned the horse from a necessity into a luxury, and Delft ceased to be important. Perhaps when the world's petrol supplies run out the hoofs of yearling colts in training will thunder once more on the Horse Plains. Meanwhile there is only a handful of uncouth bent-backed ponies.

"Nobody ever catches them now," said a shabby old man who came wading over the plain holding up a dirty rag of a cloth, as he raised his thin bandy legs out of the water one at a time and washed the mud from between his toes; "they just walk and eat."

"Are they wild," I asked him, "or does somebody own them." He considered for some time, as if he expected that there might be some catch in the question. Perhaps he thought that I had secret designs of carrying away a couple of hairy ponies with pendent stomaches to make a surprise entry for the Governor's Cup.

"Yes," he said firmly, looking at me very straight, "they all belong to somebody, and no one may come and catch them. They just walk and eat."

He waded off "slip, slop," towards the village, and I went forward paddling through the shallow water that was as warm as a hot bath, and filled with vicious stones that came out and bit at my toes and shins however carefully I put my feet down into the slippery mud.

The road passed a small tank on the left and a larger one on the right. I could only tell when I was getting near a tank by looking at the map which I carried in my hand, and by the rising of the water from my knees to my waist. A few stunted trees and bushes, and the groups of grazing ponies, were the only other indications of where the dry land lay when it was in season. The whole place was covered with birds that love the water, sand pipers, green shanks and flocks of golden plover: they were having a happy time with plenty of succulent mud to explore: and no doubt the fish were making the most of the opportunity to make excursions far inland to feeding grounds that generally belonged to the birds alone.

After a mile or two the water sank to my ankles, and I came out at last upon dry land at the fishing camp on the southern coast of the island, where long shallows dotted with coral rocks lead out to the open sea. There were a few low huts built upon the grassy sandbank, with nets laid out to dry before them and children running in and out and women working inside.

A young man was sitting on a wooden stump doing something to a net. I asked him how business was getting on.

"Not well," he answered with a cheerful smile.

"How is it that there are so many carcasses of cattle lying about upon the plains?" I asked him.

"Have they had a disease, or is it the floods that kill them?"

"It's the drought" he said "We've had a long drought this year and many cattle died of starvation," and his strong white teeth showed in a broader smile than ever.

"We've had a little flood this year," he said looking with great indifference at the square mile of water inland. "There's generally water about at this time of year after the rains, but it's been a bad drought. The worst there's been for years. A lot

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

of the cattle have been taken away, and a lot have died, and there's not many left now. They've all died."

I asked him if all these troubles made life on the island hard and if the people found it difficult to get food.

He was very guarded, as every good Ceylon villager is, in answering a question, but he seemed to think life was not so bad; it might be worse; there was not so much food, but they got along fairly well on what they could get; they certainly lived as well as the people on the other islands, perhaps better.

He himself looked sturdy and well fed, and I told him so.

He smiled and agreed that he was pretty well.

"It's a healthy place," he said. "I don't trouble the dispensary much over there, nor do my children."

He was anxious to do the honours of his house and to bring out the three legged stool for me to sit upon, but I had a long paddle before me and could not stay. We exchanged salaams and parted.

I had had my short glimpse of the Island of Delft and its hardy inhabitants. I shall never hear its name mentioned again without thinking of friendly people, goats and long eared sheep, grassy plains where untidy ponies crop from morning to night, scrub full of coral stones where the partridges spring into the air with a whirr and a scream; palmyra palms and coconut trees behind loosely built walls, and vigorous bracing air that sends you walking a mile through water a foot deep in the hot sun without so much as thinking about being tired.

In the darkening evening I got back to the village and saw the warm glow of the lamp calling me in to the house from between the shadowy pillars of the old Residency. At the back of the building I found a well, and had a bath in which the Maniyagar's horse took a deep and kindly interest; and when I sat down to supper his sleepy head appeared over the wall behind my chair to enquire if everything was to my satisfaction, and if, by chance, there were any unwanted scraps to spare for himself.

The next morning but one, in the pale dawn, the boat was passing between the two islands of Iranaitivu. I was woken up by the song of the Tamil seamen who were busy manipulating the sails, and getting breakfast. During the night they had hooked a large fish on a line trailed behind the boat, and the savoury smell of cooking came along under the cadjan awning.

We were so close to the southern island that I could easily hear the partridges calling to one another upon the shore. Their cry is like a rusty iron wheel a long way off going continually round and round, and producing a shrill strident noise, which is

monotonous but not altogether unmusical. A little further along a number of pelicans were sitting solemn and motionless, pelican and shadow, upon the smooth water of a little bay.

As I looked at the northern island I saw the figure of a man walking along the top of a sand bank. Soon afterwards the sound of a shot came across the water, and in a moment the sky was filled with long lines of wild duck circling and circling and then making off at speed towards the north. I had missed the duck at Delft, but there was no doubt about them here. There must have been many hundreds of them in the air before my eyes. It was a grand sight to see a great arrow-head flight of them go sailing by, high over-head, so that their merry whistle hardly came down to the sea even in the still air of morning. They are, I am afraid, sadly persecuted, and not one flight came within a quarter of a mile of the boat, so that it was impossible to tell what varieties were among them.

As the duck were going off, the pelicans had risen from the sea and climbed with sweeping corkscrew flight high up into the misty sky, until they looked like tiny birds moving slowly round and round in vague and meaningless circles. They were so high up that they moved out of sight before it was possible to tell which way they took their flight.

I felt more like Robinson Crusoe than ever when I landed on the desert island of Iranaitivu South and began to walk across it with a gun in my hand and a bag slung over my shoulder. I passed through patches of low jungle with open grass glades between. There was no sign or track of man, only large storks and egrets that started suddenly out of the tree tops with deep croaking cries and flew off over the jungle. There was a good deal of water lying about and long creeks of brackish mud ran far inland so that I had to wade from time to time. Then suddenly I came out upon a large open space, and there was a tall solitary coconut palm tree rising high above the other vegetation, and at its foot was a small well with a circular coping of plastered mud. There was no path leading to it from the jungle and no signs of footprints near it. Nobody had been there for many a long day. The well looked up at the coconut tree, and the coconut tree looked down at the well, and no doubt they kept each other company, for they had no other.

I went forward on my way through the jungle until I came out upon wide grass plains that stretched for a mile right across the island. The grass was tall and rich and grew, in places, over the top of my head. As I advanced into the open, I heard the sound of galloping hoofs and the splashing of water. I looked round half expecting to find a herd of wild goats, but instead I saw a long line of small black cattle galloping away through wide pools of water over the grass into the jungle. They were

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

so wild from seldom seeing men that at the sight of a stranger they made off like a herd of frightened deer.

As I advanced through the long grass, coveys of partridges flushed under my feet and went skimming off over the open ground into the scrub along the sea shore. I was making for a very large tree that grew upon a mound beside the sea. Its broad shade was stretched out far in every direction and it looked a good place to rest and examine the surrounding country. When I came to it I was surprised to find a small building underneath it. It was a dilapidated building with great cracks in the walls and no door, but at one end there was a little cross upon the roof which showed me that it was a church. It seemed like some chapel of the wilderness out of the Morte d'Arthur and I should not have been surprised to see a hermit of a hundred winters come out of the open door, or to hear voices chanting where there were no people, to the music of an organ where there were no pipes. The place was entirely deserted and the dust lay thick upon the floor quite undisturbed by human feet. Inside there was a little shrine without an image but decorated with a little paint and a few bits of coloured paper hanging in shreds about it. Yet there was a feeling of awe and mystery about this lonely sanctuary that almost forced me upon my knees before the little altar, as if I had come suddenly, unbidden, into the Presence which exists alone and self sufficing without the necessity of men to pray, and praise, and minister: and finds its fellowship in the lonely heart of nature where birds and beasts, and trees and plants, and sea and sky, give praise and prayer and service. I felt the perfect joy of solitude within that deserted chapel. And yet I was not the only visitor, for on the altar there were laid a few shrivelled flowers set in a row before the shrine as the offering of someone who had come perhaps months before and begged a blessing on his knees within this lonely place. I do not know who set up this little building, or how long it has stood upon the island, but I do know that it is the most romantic church in Ceylon.

It was when I came across to the other side of the island that I had another surprise. I had just left the low jungle and come out on to a sandy beach when I saw Man Friday walking briskly along leaving footprints on the sand at every step. He was as black as a Negro, and perfectly naked but for a dirty slip of a loin-cloth, and his tousled hair hung down over his eyes, so that he looked a perfect savage, wild, supple limbed, and shy. I fully expected that he would run at the sight of a stranger as the cattle had done. However he walked quietly on and disappeared round a small headland covered with bushes. When I had come round the headland, I saw a little hovel with a boat

drawn up on the shore close to it, and Man Friday standing beside the entrance and holding in his hands a curiously shaped fish.

He grinned cheerfully, when I came up and examined his catch. I asked who had made the well in the centre of the island and planted the coconut tree.

The well he said was made by men who came to the island to fish for turtles in the season. He did not know who planted the solitary tree, but he said that there used to be two trees, and one had fallen down and rotted away.

I asked him if he got his water at the well.

"No" he said he did not; but when I asked him where he did get it from he would only grin.

"Who built the little church" I asked, "and who goes there now and puts flowers upon the altar."

He did not know who built it, but the fishermen went there sometimes.

"Do you ever go there?" I asked.

He grinned again but would not answer. The inquisitive stranger was not going to get anything out of him.

Man Friday had a wife, who appeared from inside the hut. Good looks were not her strong point, but I have no doubt she was a good wife in other ways. The pair belonged to the low caste folk who live upon this coast, and it seemed that they lived alone upon this isolated spot for the greater part of the year to keep an eye upon the cattle that grazed upon the island. They existed almost entirely by fishing. They were rather pathetic, and almost heroic, in their unconscious endurance of the hardships and loneliness of a life that very few people could endure for six months without going mad.

I returned to the boat and crossed over to the North Island of Iranaitivu. We anchored out in shallow water three hundred yards from the shore and waded through the clear water to the beach. Upon the beach stood a solid tower of brick work which was set up by the Survey Department when the islands were mapped. There was a white church upon a bank above the sands, and a large school and a dwelling house. I made my way to the house to beg shelter for the night. In it I found a Roman Catholic Father, a Frenchman, with a thick brown beard, and long white cassock.

"You want to stay here tonight?" he said. "You shall. I will move my things."

It was in vain that I begged him not to move but to let me sleep anywhere where he could find room for me.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

"It is nothing" he said with his rich French accent.

"In a minute I will have all ready for you. Why, only last night I had people staying here. You will be comfortable in this room, and you can have your meals at this table."

He led me into a large whitewashed room with religious pictures hung upon the walls and an ecclesiastical table that looked as if it should have been in a monastery, and a number of chairs. There were a large number of medicine bottles upon a shelf on the wall. "Yes" he said seeing me looking at these, "they come to me for medicine, and the worse it tastes and the more oily it is, the more they like it, and the more they come." He also said that they had a craving for anything in the nature of ointment.

He busied himself about the house getting a place ready for my luggage and sleeping quarters, while I looked out of the door and saw the whole juvenile population of the island village drawn up along the barbed wire fence before the house, with their noses pressed against the wire looking hard at the new arrival, and giggling with delight at the unusual sight. They seemed a well-fed merry lot of children. Each new package as it arrived from the boat caused a fresh burst of comments and renewed laughter, as though mosquito nets, and gun cases, and camp beds, and cooking pots, and tins of milk and beef, were the best jokes that had ever appeared among them.

When his preparations were completed, the good Father took me out to see the village. It was a collection of low miserable huts without any windows and with tiny doors through which their owners had to creep on all fours. There were few stunted coconut trees growing round the hovels, and a number of pariah dogs lying about, and some half finished nets hanging up, and a few strands of newly twisted rope. "They live mostly by tending the cattle on the island," said the Father. "They are all low caste people, but they make a little money sometimes with their cattle and their fish, and live fairly contented lives though not quite such as I could wish for them."

As he spoke, I wondered what St. Francis Xavier would have said if he had come ashore that day and visited these descendants of his converts. For he and his fellows had loved and tended these humble folk four hundred years before, even as the good Father at my side was doing now. Their lot seems scarcely to have changed in all that time, for what men do or say in Colombo matters not at all in far away Iranaitivu, so long as the calves arrive in season and the fish fall duly into the net.

As a companion to accompany me across the island I found a large dog belonging to one of the well-to-do inhabitants. He was a noble animal, tall and sleek coated, and his delight was to hunt the wily partridges. He went bouncing up and down in the low scrub behind the village and the moment his nose caught the scent of the birds he went crashing through the thorny bushes regardless of tears and scratches, and never rested until he had got his birds fairly on the wing. After that he broke all the rules of the best sporting dogs by going off after them at full gallop yelling at the top of his voice. In ten minutes he came back with his red tongue hanging out of his smiling mouth, and looking very well pleased with himself.

Together we explored the stretch of low jungle that lay close to the village, and visited the grass lands beyond them where large herds of cattle were grazing in all directions. Nearly a quarter of the island was covered by a broad tank so shallow that a man can walk right across it and yet keep dry cartridges in his trouser pocket. A few small flocks of wild duck were feeding about in the shallows, and some of the cattle had wandered far out into the water. I walked round a high sand bank which rings the tank round on one side and is washed by the sea on the other. It was a wonderful place for sea birds of all kinds. I walked almost on top of a large pochard, or sea duck, which sat looking at me out of a cunning suspicious eye, and not liking much what he saw, jumped on to the wing, and flew silently away over the breaking waves.

We sat over our supper in the cheerful light of the Priest's room. There were a few books on a little table and one or two photographs on the walls, but almost everything else in the house was for the service of his parishioners.

"They are simple ignorant people," he said in his kindly way, "and I have to look after most of their affairs."

I asked him if he knew anything of the history of Iranaitivu.

"There is little history here" he answered. "I believe there has been a priest upon this island to minister to the fisher folk for hundreds of years, ever since the Portuguese were in Ceylon. Some priests managed to pay visits to the people in secret even when the Dutch were here and tried to prevent the Fathers from coming. These people who are here now bring over the cattle when the pasture is good and take them back to the mainland when it fails. They go to Jaffna to sell their animals and come back with a little money. Some of them have lived all their lives upon the island and have never left it."

Through the open door I could see the lights of the village under the shadowy palm trees, and hear the faint sound of chattering voices and the occasional barking of dogs.

"It is a good work that you do for these poor people" I said "but you must find it rather lonely at times."

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

"It is nothing," he answered with quiet dignity, and becoming a shade more French in his accent: "It is a healthy place, and I visit the mainland often, to go to my church at Nachchikkuda. I am happy here, and it is my calling."

As I lay in bed at night I could hear the wind go sighing through tree tops and the waves breaking with monotonous rhythm upon the lonely shore. Iranaitivu is very near the world's end. It belongs to the kingdom of the wind and the sea and man is out of place there, an unwilling and unwanted visitor in a sunlit desolation of water and sand hills. Yet it is the kind of place that one leaves with regret and longs to visit again because there is vigour there, and peace, and freedom in plenty.

We were just four miles from the islands and four miles from the mainland. Iranaitivu was a pale blue smudge against the white cloud bank on the horizon, and only the solitary beacon of Single Tree island stood out distinct against the sky. Suddenly the boat heeled to one side, a scrunch of grating pebbles came up from the keel, and we stopped with a jerk. We seemed to be aground in the middle of a wide, wide sea. Noah must have felt something like I did at that moment, when he touched the top of Ararat, and looked out upon nothing but water. I had visions of a long and weary stay in the Indian Ocean.

One of the crew however jumped into the water and started to walk very cooly round to our stern. It seemed absurd, somehow, that he should be standing in the midst of eight miles of sea with the water just up to his knees. As I looked at him I thought of the ancient tale in the Rajavaliya; how King Tissa ruled in Kelaniya and "had a younger brother who lived in criminal intercourse with h's queen." Tissa discovered the fact and the younger brother fled, but sent a letter to the queen by the hand of a messenger disguised as a Buddhist priest. The king found the letter and read it.

Now a certain venerable Buddhist elder had taught the younger brother to write, and he had imitated his teacher's hand. "The King Kelanitissa, ... not knowing his brother's writing, and not being aware of the fact that the prince wrote in imitation of his teacher's handwriting, foolishly put the elder into the cauldron of oil and kept it boiling for seven days .... (and) he was burnt up and turned to ashes.

"Be it known that at that time the sea was about seven gaw from Kelaniya. The guardian deities of Lanka having become indignant, the sea began to encroach.

"In the Dvapara age of the world, on account of the wickedness of Ravana, his fortress, 25 palaces, and 400,000 streets, situated between Mannar and Tuttukudiya, were submerged by the sea. At this time, on account of the wickedness of Kelanitissa, 100,000 seaport towns, 970 fishers' villages, and 470 of pearl-fishers, making altogether eleven-twelfths of Lanka, were submerged by the great sea. Mannar escaped the destruction; of sea-port towns, Katupiti Madampe escaped."

There are many tales which seem to show that Ceylon was once much larger than it is today, as well as the tale that it was once joined to the mainland of India. The site of Sri-lankapoora where Ravana made his last stand against Rama would seem to be somewhere under the sea off the west coast of Ceylon. It has been suggested that if all these shallows were not once above the sea, they may have formed a long series of islands which gave Ceylon its ancient name of Lanka or Lakadiva "the ten thousand islands."

As the sailor stood in the water I wondered if his feet were standing upon the ruins of some ancient hill fortress on the frontiers of Ravana's kingdom. But the bed of the sea showed only golden gravel, clean and bright, through the glass clear water, and little silver scaled fish darting about under the boat in bursts of curiosity and panic.

Three more of the crew jumped into the shallow water and there followed a heaving of backs against our stern and a straining of thin muscular legs, and the boat slid over the shoals and floated clear on the other side. The sailors then pulled down the sail and took to their poles. It was a merry progress for they sang a cheerful song as they pressed on the poles walking as nimbly as cats along the edge of the boat. One man sang a kind of verse and the rest answered him in chorus. I asked the Captain what the words meant. He answered, tactfully, that the song had no meaning, it was just sounds. But there seemed to be references in it to the great care the crew had taken of their passenger, (chorus) and their extraordinary friendship for him (chorus) and the generosity of his looks (chorus) which promised that he would be liberal at the journey's end (chorus).

After two hours' poling we came into deeper water, and the sail went up again as we drew near to the low fringe of palms on the shore of Nachchikkuda.

Late in the evening I took up my quarters in an untenanted house in the fishing camp close to the sea, disturbing a small Talagoya which was planning a nursery in one of the empty rooms. I picked her up gently by the tail and put her outside. Talagoyas in a house are "an omen of ill fortune, sickness, or death," says the Natural History of Ceylon, page 275. I could do nothing about this but take a little quinine before I went to

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

sleep under the stars in the living silence of the surrounding jungle.

Just before dawn my guide arrived. He was a wiry alert little man with firm set muscles about the calves of his legs telling of long journeys on foot through the winding paths of the jungle. He was to take me to a neighbouring tank to try and get a long distance photograph of a herd of deer. I carried the camera and he held my rifle ready for emergencies, and together we tramped for an hour along a damp water course running through the forest. In the grey light of morning a spotted deer started in the undergrowth and vanished into the gloom, and a startled jungle cock bolted along the path in front of us with a protesting scream. As it grew lighter the tracks of leopard and deer became visible in the shingly sand, and now and then the great round pads of an elephant crossed the track. The wild pig had been grubbing about in all directions during the night and had left their pointed slots in every piece of mud. It was as wild and silent and beautiful a place as any man could wish to be in at half past five in the morning.

The first tank we visited was so completely flooded that the water came right up into the surrounding jungle. We left it, and made another silent tramp of half an hour before we came out again upon the edge of another little lake with a long bund holding back the water above some deserted paddy fields.

Almost at once my wiry guide made a set like a pointer nosing a covey of partridges. I always feel blind and humble in the presence of the telescopic jungle eyes of the villager.

Was it a deer? I asked him.

He made a sign with his hand near the ground to show the size of the game, and set off immediately along the side of the tank. He was a real huntsman. The quarry was before him, and he was going to stalk it without any sympathy for my weakness of eye and tongue. I doubted up, and followed him.

He must have had the most astonishing power of vision, for we seemed to creep on for a quarter of a mile through the tangled bushes that lined the side of the tank. At last I could hear a strange rustling sound like a thousand paper flags stirring in the wind. It was a weird and meaningless sound such as I had never heard before.

The rustling grew louder every moment.

At last my guide stopped behind a small bush fifty yards from the edge of the water, and his hand went up beckoning me to come to his side.

I wriggled up, leaving a track like a large tortoise in the wet sand.

When I came up to him and cautiously peeped over the bushes I saw a fine sight.

Before me was a wide mud flat running out like a spit into the tank, and on it was a great flock of wild duck, preening, pecking, gobbling in the mud, quacking and quarrelling, or standing on one leg in round contentment, with bill on breast or neatly tucked under one wing. The picture was like one of Thorburn's magical close-ups in a perfect setting, and come to life before my eyes. I could count a hundred and fifty birds from where I lay and there must have been at least twice as many.

It was at this point that I felt the muzzle of a rifle placed suggestively against my ribs. I looked up hastily expecting to see a deer somewhere beyond the mud flat for the idea of shooting at the ducks had not even entered my head. But when I looked down at the guide it was quite clear that his mind was running upon curried duck, and that he had ideas of skewering half a dozen with a rifle bullet. I took the gun from him and pressing his head firmly down in the sand with the other hand, turned to look at the ducks again.

After watching them for some time I decided to see how long they would take to see me, and I rose very slowly on to my knees and showed my head and shoulders above the bushes.

There was an instant silence over the whole mud flat. Heads shot out from under wings and alert little black eyes looked round suspiciously. They knew the murderous habits of man too well. One or two birds close to me jumped into the air, and at once the whole cloud was on the wing and the sky was filled with ducks separating into their various flocks, circling and making away. In about two minutes there was not a single duck to be seen on the tank, or on the whole wide horizon.

I got up from the ground, and so did my guide. He was rather cold and distant. It was not the sand on his nose that was troubling him, but he said:

"I showing ducks. Master not shooting. What to do?"

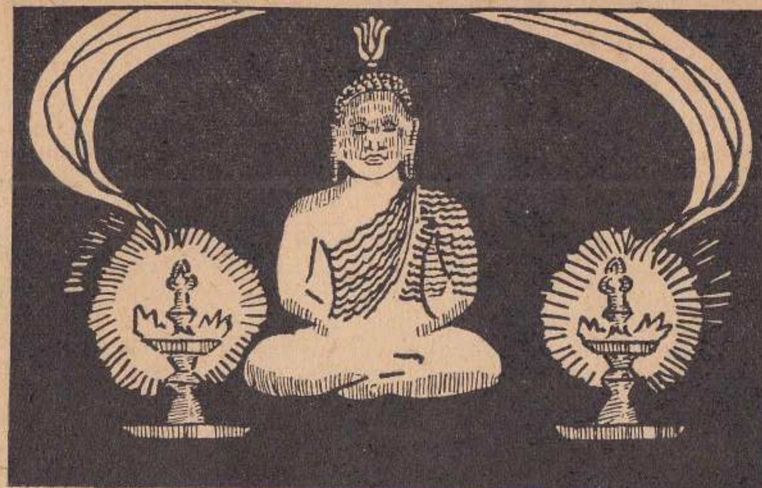
What to do indeed. I had forgotton all about the camera, and we trudged back to the sea shore in the growing heat of the sun, with nothing whatever to show for a ten mile tramp.

About three o'clock in the heat of the afternoon, as I sat in the verandah of the house, watching a jackal trotting nervously along the sand banks looking for chance scraps, I heard tom-toms approaching. The fishing camp inhabitants were putting up a little dance for my benefit, and they hoped, their own. Eight or ten men with a stick in each of their hands were dan-

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

cing in a circle, leaping in the air, and after each jump beating their sticks upon those of their neighbours. Each dancer sang a verse in his turn, and everyone took up the chorus after him. In the middle of the circle walked a grave old man guiding a little girl, who bore upon her head a basket covered with a white cloth in which were two snow white eggs. The dancers kept up their fantastic rhythm until they came close to the house, when the dance became fast and furious, like a mock battle. They leaped and squatted and struck their sticks together with ever increasing speed until the sweat streamed over their eyelashes. The old man remained sedate and unmoved in the middle of the circle, while the child looked with solemn wondering eyes, and patiently supported the little basket upon her head. The great charm of the performance was the delight which the dancers took in it. I positively believe that the santosum was a secondary consideration. When it was over they stood round smiling and streaming to listen to the congratulations of the onlookers.

My visitors went away. Night came down and hushed the jungle world to watchful stillness: only the waves of the shallow sea tumbling lazily on the sand kept up their endless whispering grumble. Hungry mosquitoes with suspiciously vertical tails buzzed about and planted firm feet where they were least wanted. Bats flew into their accustomed shelter with a click of bony wings, and hung upside down staring suspiciously at the intruder before they went off again with an angry squeak. A distant dog howled from love or indigestion, and then sleep descended and took possession of everything.



CHAPTER VIII.

Mannar, Dambulla and Kurunegala

I was standing upon the causeway that joins the island of Mannar to the mainland. Close at hand on either side there were mud flats covered with sea-birds.

Only far away on the island side of the causeway did the sea lap quietly against the banks immediately below the road. To the south-west across the blue water of the strait I could see the smoke of a train that was carrying passengers to Talaimannar where Adam's Bridge begins, and where the ferry boat crosses to India.

Adam's Bridge, as everybody knows, was made by an army of bears and monkeys who laid the stones for passage of Rama and his army when they came over to Ceylon to rescue Sita from the demon Ravana. The squirrels helped in the work by rolling in the dust at either end of the bridge and shaking out their coats upon the stone causeway until every cranny was filled up and made smooth. The monkeys tormented the squirrels to such an extent that they went in a body and complained to Rama. Rama gently stroked them with his hand and left upon their soft backs the stripes made by his fingers which squirrels carry to this day.

Rama's invasion is described in the Ramayana, the Sanskrit epic poem, which is the Iliad of India. In it, Ceylon is assigned the part of Troy; she steals the lady, furnishes numerous heroes

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

as foils to Rama's warriors, fights indecisive battles, and at last has her capital sacked at the end of five hundred and thirty cantos.

I crossed to the end of the causeway, and came to the iron bridge that lets the tide pass through, and there I could see the little Dutch Fort lying squat and defensive on the island of Mannar.

I came to the great gate of the Fort and passed under a wide archway into the courtyard of the Fort. The ramparts are so thick that they leave little room inside the Fort for buildings of any kind. On the right-hand I could see a lock-up across the grass court, and on the left a little Dutch church. I entered the church through a door in the thick wall, and was at once in the cool and peace which are always found in the churches of the Hollanders in Ceylon. The building was plain and a little dull, but reverent and serviceable. Upon the floor were a number of flat carved tombstones of Dutch times, and at the western end of the church there was a curious handled cover for a tomb bearing an inscription to the wife a Portuguese gentleman who died at Mannar.

As I stood in the Fort I thought of a little Sinhalese girl who must often have walked across the cobble stones of its square courtyard, in the days when the Portuguese held Mannar. She was the Princess Dona Catherina of Kandy. She had known sorrow already in her childhood, and a long and stormy life awaited her in the troubled history of her country. As a very small child she must have heard of the fight between the Portuguese and Prince Mayadunne of Sitawaka, and his terrible son Raja Sinha, around the walls of Kotte and Colombo. Then one day in 1582, news came that Raja Sinha was marching upon her father's kingdom of Kandy. Her father was forced to take his child and fly to the Portuguese for protection. They came to Trincomalee where the king died of small-pox. Dona Catherina became an orphan and the heir to the throne of Kandy. The Portuguese sent the Princess for safe-keeping to Mannar, their politicians knowing full well that a valuable prize had come into their hands, of which they meant to make full use in due time. In 1594 Pedro Lopes de Souza planned to carry an expedition to Kandy to set Dona Catherina on the throne, and perhaps it was part of his scheme to make her his wife and sit beside her on the throne. The Princess who was still a mere girl, was carried in a ship to Colombo, and taken in state with the invading army of the Portuguese and Sinhalese to Kandy. Her people rejoiced to see the return of their legitimate sovereign, but they soon found that she was little better than a prisoner of the Portuguese, and they were not allowed access to her. There followed a tangle of plots and counter-plots until at last the wretched queen found herself a fugitive from Kandy once more, fleeing to the Low Country with the Portuguese army. Almost alone she fled from the massacre that destroyed her escort at Gannoruwa near Peradeniya. She was captured by Wimaladharma, King of Kandy, who made her his chief queen, treating her, according to the Portuguese historian, a very prejudiced witness, with frightful brutality. In 1604 Catherina's husband died, leaving her a young widow with one son and two daughters. For a while she attempted to rule in Kandy, but those were not times when a woman could rule that turbulent kingdom, and many princes conspired to win her hand that they might sit upon her throne. She fell a prize to Senerat, the brother of Wimaladharma, her former husband.

The Portuguese were furious at the failure of their plot. Twice they threatened Kandy, and at last in 1611 Don Jeromimo de Azevedo, the most blood-thirsty general the Portuguese ever had in Ceylon, captured the city, and Queen Catherina was a fugitive once more from the flames that burnt her home. Senerat made peace with the Portuguese and rebuilt his new capital over the ashes of his old one.

The queen then became the mother of Deva Raja Sinha, who was to become Raja Sinha II., who imprisoned Robert Knox, and was one of the greatest kings of Ceylon. Senerat, jealous of the queen's son by Wimaladharma, sent the boy to the Maha Veli Ganga for aquatic sports and caused him to be drowned by his attendants. The queen, maddened with rage and sorrow, but uncertain whether it was her husband who had committed this foul crime, tried to escape into the Portuguese territories, but was brought back to Kandy, where, broken-hearted she fell sick and died. Her story is typical of the wild adventures of the Portuguese times in which she lived.

The Port of Mannar was quiet enough as I stood upon the ramparts, and it was hard to imagine that in 1658, the year that Cromwell died in England, its walls threw back the thunder of the Dutch broadsides as they bombarded the Portuguese trenches dug along the shore. The defenders fought with their accustomed bravery, but they lost the battle, and had to surrender the fortress to the Dutch, who built most of what appears in it today.

Mannar is said to have given to the world the mariners' tale of mermaids, which seems to spring from the resemblance of the female Dugong to the human form. Baldeaus writes: "They have a peculiar fish (probably a sea calf) of an amphibious nature; the females have breasts and give suck, and the flesh, when well boiled, tastes not unlike our sturgeon, and might easily be mistaken for veal."

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

On the island grow the mysterious Baobab trees, natives of Africa, and brought to Ceylon no one knows how or when.

But it was to pearls that Mannar owed its chief importance, and perhaps it is the artificial pearls of today that have left it a mere village. There were formerly pearls in the gulf of Mannar to the north, and the Fort of Mannar protected the wide pearl bank to the south of Arripu, where Governor North's "gothic" stood above a wilderness of wind-blown sand banks. Every few years this desert turned into a busy town of many thousands of people, when the pearl fishery came round.

I looked from the ramparts of the fort across the sandy playing field to the sleepy little village of Mannar that has slipped quietly out of history. It seemed a perfect example of the small out-of-the-way corner of Ceylon, little frequented, and little known, which is nevertheless hung about with history and legend like an old decayed jungle tree made beautiful with decorating creepers.

I left Mannar in the evening and took the road across the narrow causeway, and passed through a thin sandy jungle waste until I came in sight of the bund of the Giant's Tank rising high above the road. I stopped the car and climbed to the top of the bund. The evening sun was behind me, and it lit up the wide expanse of weedy flooded lake stretching far across the flat country. Cranes and cormorants were flying across and across making for their roosting places, and four pelicans were circling high overhead in a sweeping bed-time dance. The slanting sunlight shone upon the white feathers of a large crane that was sailing over the water with slow and dignified beat of wings. The tank has been made a sanctuary, and its broad white mirror is streaked with long patches of water plants, giving cover to thousands of birds.

There is something very flat about Giant's Tank and its surroundings, which deprives it of the beauty and grandeur which most Ceylon tanks possess to such perfection, and it is so much overgrown with weed that it lacks any great stretch of open water to compensate for the flatness of its surroundings. Perhaps its rather forlorn look is due to the fact that for many years it was held to be a splendid failure. That magnificent bund three hundred feet broad at its base, can be traced for fifteen miles, and yet no one knows who built it, and no chronicle claims it for any king of Ceylon. The reason for this silence was thought to be that the great channel that was to have piled the waters of the Malwatu Oya against this mighty bund was found by the makers to be at the wrong level so that the diverted water never reached the tank, but turned back into the river.

I thought of the different men who had from time to time explored this ancient work.

First I thought of a tall Dutchman clad in doublet and hose with ribbons at his knees and shoe-ties, and a broad-brimmed black hat over his long flowing curls. He was Governor Van Imhoff who visited the Giant's Tank about 1739. He looked out from the thorny jungle, that covered the bund, upon a great dry grassy plain with patches of forest here and there upon it, and four or five villages half hidden amongst them. He had heard tales of the ancient fertility of this sterile region, and he pictured to himself the life-giving water bubbling along the old stone channel and filling the sandy bed of the tank that lay before him. He thought of miles of green rice fields covering the wilderness below the bund. At one time he even started the work of restoration, but it proved too difficult and he was forced to abandon it.

In 1807 a red-coated officer, Lieutenant Schneider, rode along the bund carrying out his survey of the ancient works. To his report belongs the impression that the original levels taken for the making and feeding of the tank were wrong. It was thought that the work had been started in a late age when the art of tank-making had declined among the Sinhalese, and that they had been forced to abandon it owing to these errors in the levels.

In 1848 Tennent brought to bear upon the Giant's Tank that insatiable curiosity of his, which has been so valuable to Ceylon. He gives an account of the tank in the last chapter of his work, and he perpetuates the idea of the incorrect levels of the original builders.

In 1882 the District Surveyor, Mr. H. P. Lovering, carried out twenty-six miles of levels, and his survey triumphantly vindicated the first makers of the tank and seemed to prove that their levels were perfectly correct, but that for some reason unknown, they had abandoned their work before it was completed.

In 1897 the Public Works Department repaired the breaches in the bund and restored the ancient channel so that the water began at last to percolate the dry sand and spread itself over the wide plain. The sheet of water that grew, as the channel poured in its unending stream, is now the fourth largest artificial lake in the world. It was just 158 years since Van Imhoff had seen his vision of green paddy fields below the Giant's Tank.

The sun went down behind me in a blaze of scarlet and primrose light. The last belated cormorants went by over my head, without fear. A pale glimmer came from the sky and was reflected in the water. A great silence fell upon the land so that

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

I could hear the barking of dogs in a distant village, and the cries of men watching in the rice fields far away. I climbed down the steep bank into the deep shadow of the road and went on my way.

It was dark when I left the Giant's Tank behind me, and turned down the road to the lonely little Rest-house of Murukan. I had a night drive before me and I taxed the worthy Resthouse-keeper's resources to the utmost to provide a supper worthy of the coming journey. As generally happens with Resthouses, this one was equal to the occasion.

It was late when I took the road, and I glided along through the silent jungle, disturbing the hare that were enjoying a gambol on the grass by the roadside, and blinding the eyes of prowling mongooses looking for a meal. I crossed the railway and passed Madhu Road which is worn by the feet of thousands of Catholic pilgrims in the season. At about half past eleven I had just crossed a small bridge over a deep sunken jungle stream when I heard a resounding trumpet on the left close to the road. It was too dark to see into the jungle and the lights of the car picked out nothing ahead. I ran on for what I considered a safe distance and then got out of the car to see if I could see anything. The jungle was as silent as the grave: the deep mysterious shadows were large enough and black enough to hide anything five yards away. Then suddenly there was another trumpet close at hand, and another, and the crack of a branch. A herd of elephants was browsing and wallowing in a small watery patch of jungle between the road and the railway. I thought of the days when elephants were common along these roads and men had to pass at night optimistically waving a smouldering palm branch, and I got back into the car very thankful to the inventor of internal combustion and electric lights.

I followed a long trail in the darkness through villages whose names speak of the stories of the Mahavamsa and which seem to change significantly from one language to another as the road goes further south. There they were

Paraiyanalankulam
Cheddikulam
Ohikkulam
Mankulam
Udumbalagala
Medawachchiya
Mahagal Kadawala Tank
Rambewa
Mihintale
Nachchaduwa Tank
Maradankadawala
Kekirawa
Dambulla

It always seems to me as if the very history of the meeting of the ancient Tamil invasions and the limits of the Sinhalese kingdom are written in these lovely country names.

Dambulla is a kind of frontier post between civilisation and the jungle. Gardens and coconut plantations stretch southward and westward from Dambulla rock to the mountains and the sea. But at Dambulla they are fenced round with barbed wire and stakes to keep out the wild hogs and deer and you could walk under the shade of the jungle trees from the Dambulla fences to Trincomalee or Elephant Pass.

I turned up a stony pathway that leads off the main road at the foot of Dambulla Rock and was immediately set upon by some very unpleasant looking loafers, who offered their services as guides. I was not troubled with dismissing them, because they stayed behind at the foot of the hill to quarrel with each other as to which should take possession of the stranger, and so I was able to proceed alone. The path led on up the face of the mighty rock which lay black and shimmering in the heat so that the shady bo-tree on the white terrace before the caves looked like a friend. A young priest stood ready waiting at the great studded doors of the temple, for Dambulla is a place where visitors are expected. The key went into the lock and the door swung back showing a slit of blackness through which I passed into the cool darkness of the cavern temple. There could hardly be a more romantic setting than these caves with the dim light falling upon rows of motionless images and picking out the painted figures which crowd the roof and walls back to the remotest niches and corners: while in the deep silence of the vaulted sepulchre the water drips drop by drop from the ceiling into the great stone cistern on the floor of the cave.

The priest lit a torch and I saw more clearly the great array of figures for which the temple is renowned; images new and old, of the past, the present and the future. All down the ages holy men have lived apart in grand mysterious places out of the world, and there have tried to turn the mysticism of their souls into forms of wood and stone, of words and paintings, so that common people might understand at least something of the splendid vision, and use it to guide their lives in the hot restless world outside. There is mystery and awe in the deep caves of Dambulla: they were made to cover the hermit who could find no satisfaction in feeding the earthly desires that bound him to the wheel of rebirths, and who sought to escape from an illogical quarrelsome world into the peace of a great liberation, which he could find no words to express, except to call it a no-thingness, a cessation of desire.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Perhaps it was a wandering stone age man with his mind newly dawned to reason who first felt the mystery of these caves; and the veddah following him, looking for honey on the beetling crags, must have known them well.

"This temple was built by Vatta Gamani," said the young priest at my side, "but most of the images are quite recent and the paintings were renewed not many years ago." I wondered what Vatta Gamani found in these great caves before he set his labourers to work. If all the paintings were stripped off layer by layer what secrets of old-time art they would reveal! And under the last layer of paint perhaps there are the drawings of veddhas of two thousand years ago and beneath them the first childish figures of beasts and birds made when man first tried tc be an artist.

No one knows who first made the caves into a temple: one inscription claims the work for King Tissa: tradition gives it to King Valagam Bahu who lived in the first century B.C. About 1190 Nissankamalla re-built "the Jambukola-vihara resplendent with walls and pillars shimmering in gold and silver, where the floor was of red lead and the bricks of the roof were of gold, ... and placed therein seventy-three golden statues of the Master": so says the Culavamsa. Nissankamalla's inscription upon the rock of Dambulla says, in translation, that he caused seventy-two statues of Buddha in three postures recumbent, sitting, and standing to be placed within these rock temples.

"These images were glided, and seven lacs of rupees were expended on a magnificent festival to celebrate the event."

In the first cave I found the wooden image of Vishnu which was held so sacred that litigants took the oath before it in old days. The recumbent image of Buddha in this cave is 47 feet long. As I was going out of the cave I was greeted by a smiling temple servant who held a book in one hand and waved a pen with the other. I made my contribution to the vihara funds and passed on.

In the second cave there are forty-eight images of Buddha and statues of Vishnu, Natha, and Saman, and Patine, the goddess of small-pox. My guide showed me a wooden statue of Nissankamala, saying that the king in life "looked exactly like that." Then he showed me the strange picture of the landing of Vijaya and of the duel Between Duthu Gamini and Elara. Those pictures with their lack of proportion and innocence of perspective, though drawn probably in the time of Kirti Sri may be the restored and retouched originals of Ceylon art of nine hundred years ago.

We passed on to the third cave and as we went there was another smiling temple servant with book and pen ready at the door. I settled with him, and moved on to examine the fifty-four images in the third cave. There was in the cave a reclining image of Buddha which is thirty feet long and my guide showed me another wooden image which he said was of Nissankamalla. I was ready at the door this time, and sure enough there was the third smiling attendant with his book. The young priest who was my guide tried to drive the man away but only succeeded in turning his smile into a scowl. I left the man and looked into the fourth and fifth caves, and when I had said goodbye to my guide, and shaken off a book-holder, I climbed on to the top of the rock where a handful of bricks is all that remains of the three great dagobas that once stood there. I stood on the summit beside the pool, which is said never to dry up even in the severest drought, and looked across the country. Away to the northward lay stretched the endless jungle beneath which so much of the history of the Sinhalese and Tamil people lies buried. To the south the Matale hills lined the sky, and from the jungle to the north west I could see the rock of Sigiriya rising from the white patch of tank at its foot. My road ran out towards the south from the little village of Dambulla that lay peacefully sleeping in its mantle of green paddy fields beneath the ancient temple.

I drove into Kurunegala in the morning, before the heat of the day had descended upon the busy little town .... and Kurunegala knows how to be hot. I stopped the car under the clock tower. There was a man standing at the side of the road.

"What is the name of this town?" I asked him. He looked a little surprised at the question. It was certainly a tactless thing to ask a citizen of the ancient capital of Lanka in the very centre of his native city.

"Kurunegala" he answered with polite reserve.

I love to hear the name pronounced in Sinhalese upon the spot. If Kurunegala was famous for nothing else it must be famous for the third syllable of its name. Everybody in Ceylon tries it, and everybody thinks that they can pronounce it successfully, but nobody except a genuine citizen born and bred in the town can really master the third syllable. An outsider might just as well hope to say "Jaffna" like a local inhabitant.

"I beg your pardon" I said.

"Kurunaigala."

"Kurunegala?"

"That's right" he said. They are polite in Kuru........., in Hastissailapura, and overlook the weakness of the foreigner's tongue.

Kurunegala is a very ancient place, and its huge rocks have been sacred as far back as man's memory goes. The town was

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

a fortified stronghold with watch-towers, ramparts, and gates as far back as the thirteenth century.

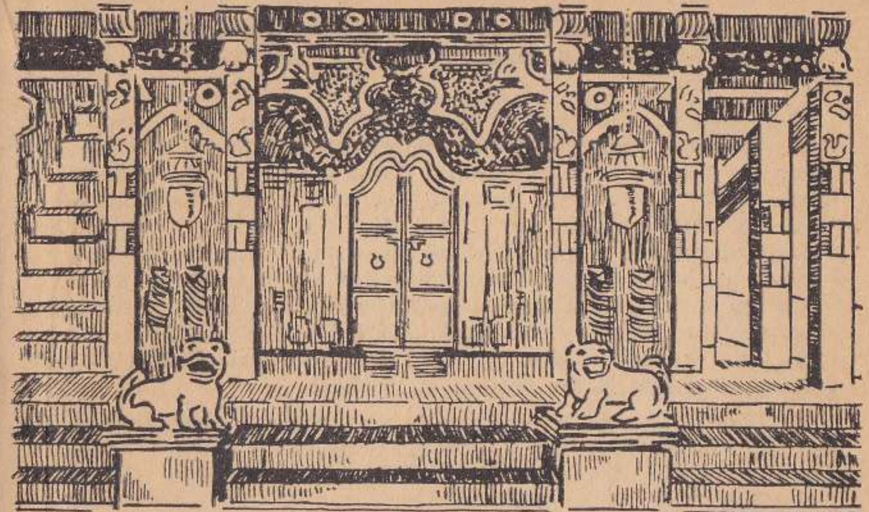
Bhuvanaika Bahu II brought the Tooth Relic to Kurunegala about 1291 and the city became, for a short time a royal capital. His son, Parakrama Bahu IV came to the throne in 1325. "In the royal courtyard he erected in careful fashion a temple for the Tooth Relic, fair with its walls and pillars, painted with bright lined pictures, provided with golden spires, with gates and posts of gold, splendid, three storeys high. There he set up a canopy of coloured stuffs, strips of cloth and the like. This he decorated with garlands of gold, silver and pearl which hung down on all sides and he attached to it a wall of silken curtains adorned therewith. Here (in the tent) he spread a seat, radiant with coloured draperies, and decorated it on every side with rows of golden and silver vases, and with rows of candelabra of silver, gold and precious stones. On this seat he then with full reverence, placed the casket with the Tooth Relic and the casket with the Bowl Relic." (Culavamsa 90,66-72).

Pilgrims still climb the stone steps that run up the steep sides of the Aetagala to visit the remains of this ancient temple, and the replica of the foot print of Adam's Peak; and the tumbled fragments of a king's palace are still pointed out in Kurunegala.

Parakrama Bahu IV appointed to the office of royal teacher "a grand thera from the Cola country, a self controlled man, versed in various tongues and intimate with philosophic works. Ever and again he heard from him continuously all the Jatakas, learned them (by heart) and retained their contents. Then he rendered by degrees these five hundred and fifty beautiful Jatakas from the Pali tongue into the Sinhala speech. He recited them in the midst of the grand theras who were intimate with the three Pitakas, and after correcting them, he had them written down and distributed throughout Lanka. (Culavamsa 90,80-84).

The Jataka stories of the lives of the Buddha in his former births, are the subjects of almost all the painting in the Buddhist temples of Ceylon, and the commonest of all village tales.

Two kings followed in Kurunegala and then for some reason, apparently war, the capital was shifted to Gampola about 1346. The little town continued to be a centre for the surrounding country: in 1617 an avenging Portuguese army passed through it, but it was so much in the jungle in 1847 that an Elephant Kraal was held within fifteen miles of Aetagala.



CHAPTER IX.

Kandy

The first mention of Kandy in the Mahavamsa runs thus:—

"Now Viravikkama a mighty man sprung from the line of Sirisamghabodhi, became king in the year two thousand and eighty four after the final Nirvana of the Enlightened One. (1484 A.D.). Dwelling in the town of Senkhandasela-Sirivaddhana, beautified by the course of the Mahavalakaganga, he gladdened his subjects by the four heart-winning qualities and undertook in his faith meritorious works." (Shulavansa 92 6-9).

From which it is inferred that the hill capital was shifted from Gampola to Sankadagala, or Kandy, about the year 1480, though it was the head of but a small principality, tributary, according to the Rajavaliya, to Kotte.

In 1582 Raja Sinha I. made himself master of the Udarata, or Hill Country, and Kandy became for a time part of the kingdom of Sitawaka. Its deposed king fled with his family to Trincomalee and the Portuguese, and his heir came to be lodged as a political prisoner in Mannar. This started the devil's game of battledore between the Hill Kingdom and the Portuguese, in which the over-lordship of Ceylon was the prize and the people of Ceylon the shuttle-cock.

Rajasinha went from Kandy and besieged the Portuguese in Colombo in 1587.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

The Portuguese took the appointed heir of the deposed King of Kandy, and sent him back to the Hill Country and set him on the throne.

Don Juan of Austria, a Sinhalese prince, who had defeated Rajasinha in battle, and helped the Portuguese to set the heir upon the throne, revolted against the Portuguese, drove them from Kandy, seized the kingship for himself and became to the Portuguese, "the great Apostate." Rajasinha retreated toward Sitawaka. On the way he ran a splinter of bamboo into his foot and sat disconsolate and angry in the royal barge floating down the Kelani River towards Ruanwella. He refused to allow anyone to dress the wound, and before he reached Ruanwella, the greatest soldier the Sinhalese had had since Dutugemunu, lay dead in the bottom of the boat.

In 1594 "The great Apostate" now King Wimaladharma fled from Kandy and Perdo Lopes de Souza set upon the throne Dona Catherina, daughter of the King who fled to the Portuguese from the hill capital.

In a few months de Souza and the Portuguese were slain almost to a man at Gannoruwa, and Wimaladharma was once more on the throne with Dona Catherina for his queen, while the remaining Portuguese in Ceylon were soon bottled up in Colombo and Galle.

In 1597 the King of Kotte died and bequeathed the throne of Ceylon to Philip I. of Portugal and II. of Spain, and Azevedo the Portuguese Captain General, at the second attempt, drove Wimaladharma's successor, Senerat, out of Kandy in 1611, "sacked the city, devastated the neighbouring lands, razed the temples" and retreated before the Kandyans could attack him.

The King of Kandy hit back by having further dealing with the Dutch, the inveterate enemies of Portugal.

The Portuguese had a revival under Don Constantine de Sa who much strengthened their position in Ceylon, until de Sa invaded the Kandyan Kingdom and perished with almost all his forces near Wellawaya in 1630.

In the same year Senarat had the Portuguese shut in Colombo once again.

In 1638 Digo de Mello, the Portuguese Commander, was in Kandy with his army watching the flames rising from the palace of Raja Sinha II. King of Kandy, which de Mello had set on fire.

A few days later de Mello and his forces were all stretched out dead on the field of Gannoruwa, now the Experimental Station of Peradeniya, and in 1656 Rajasinha was in the low country when Colombo was captured by the Dutch.

The cruel match had ended at last, and neither side had won, although the Portuguese had lost. The people of Ceylon paid the expense in blood and sorrow; but at the same time they had taken a great shock which had jolted them out of the steady decline of many years, and linked them up once more with the progress of the world.

Rajasinha II. sat upon the throne of Kandy. In 1660 he heard of a ship that had come into Kottiyar for water and provisions, and ordered that the crew should be detained. In so doing he detained a boy of eighteen who was to tell the world more about the King and his Kingdom than any other writer has done. Robert Knox was a prisoner in the Kandyan Kingdom for twenty years, and when he escaped and got into a ship bound for England he wrote down on his way home his adventures in Ceylon. Of Kandy town he writes :—

"This is the chief or Metropolitical city of the whole Island. It is placed in the midst of the Island in Tattanour, bravely situate for all conveniences, excellently well-watered. The King's Palace stands on the East corner of the City, as is customary in this land for the King's Palaces to stand. The city is three-square like a triangle; but no artificial strength about it, unless, on the south side, which is the easiest and openest way to it they have long since cast up a Bank of Earth across the Valley from one Hill to the other; which nevertheless is not so steep but that a man may easily go over it anywhere. It may be some twenty feet in height. In every way to come to this city, about two or three miles off from it are thorn gates and watches to examine all that go and come. It is environed round with hills. The great river coming down from Adam's Peak runs within less than a mile of it on the west side. It has often-times been burnt by the Portuguese in their former invasions of this Island, together with the King's Palace and the Temples. Insomuch that the King has been fain to pay them a tribute of three elephants per annum. The King left this city about twenty years ago, and never since has come at it. So that it is now quite gone to decay."

When the King left Kandy, after a rebellion of his subjects, he went eventually to Hanguranketa, and thither I determined to follow him.

I drove out of Kandy eastwards, and ran down beside the Mahaweliganga, which was carrying its toll of red mud from the hills down to the sea. Presently the road turned southwards, and after eight miles of winding through green patna hills, brought me to the village of Hanguranketa. Across the village green was the vihare of the place with its covered gateway of yellow stone; and close by it I saw a little homestead with ivied walls and wooden barns, and a house where roses hid the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

front door, looking altogether very like some English country farm, that had been dropped by accident among the hills of Kandy. Opposite to it, across the road was the devale, and behind the devale lay the remains of Rajasinha's palace which I had come to explore.

I walked down the hill to the left through the coconut gardens, until I came to the old road that had been cut through two broad protecting banks of earth that guarded the palace.

Here I met two grave old fathers of the village who were engaged in tethering a black cow to an iron stake driven into the ground.

"Where is the palace?" I asked them.

One of them pointed to a square tank with a stone paved bund on three sides which lay in the valley below.

They led the way down on to the bund, where we stood over the sluice gate beside the remains of an old disused road that ran away to the westward. The tank was empty and the rich soil of its bed was planted with neat rows of flourishing tomato plants. Above the tank the ruined tumbled walls of the King's palace rose tier by tier to the top of the valley. Every terrace had long since been converted into paddy fields by the thrifty villagers, and only a few retaining walls remained intact and a few lines of stones which gave some faint idea of the outline of the original buildings.

"Who made the palace?" I asked one of the grave elders.

"It was built by Rajasinha" he answered.

"Was there any king living here before Rajasinha?"

"Perhaps there was. Who knows? But Rajasinha lived here and made the palace and the tank."

You cannot surprise the Kandyan villager into admitting that he does not know. He will make a circle as cunningly as any hare and bring you back where you began.

They were two fine old gentlemen, these villagers, good examples of the sturdy Kandyan, a breed of whom it is recorded that any one of its men taken from the plough and washed is fit to sit upon the throne.

The ruined walls before us were shut in on all sides by the guardian hills, and the whole place looked like some ancient robber-stronghold that shunned the eyes of men and wished to hide itself in the lonely mountains where only those should come who knew the secret of the forest paths. I tried to see the place as it used to be. First there was a lonely jungle valley seventeen miles from the hill capital of Kandy. One day in 1664 a king with a handful of followers at his back hastened down the valley upon his elephant, and climbed the open patna hill behind, and sought the shelter of the wild jungles over the crest of the ridge. Rajasinha II.'s chiefs had rebelled and had set his little son upon the throne, and the king was fleeing for safety to the hills of Hanguranketa.

But there was mistrust and fear among the rebels, and when the queen took her son from his new unstable throne and fled with him, there was panic in the city and many chiefs declared for the old king again. So Rajasinha came down from his mountain retreat and was established on the throne again, more securely than before.

But he feared to live in the city where his life had been threatened and he chose for the site of his new palace the remote valley of Hanguranketa near to the wild jungles that had given him shelter in his need.

I thought of Robert Knox who came and waited long at this palace gate when he was a prisoner in Kandy. He has left a picture of the palace as it used to be about the year 1680.

"The king," he writes, "keeps his court at Digligy Neur, whither he fled in a rebellion against him. The palace is walled about with a clay wall, and is thatched, to prevent the clay's being melted by the rains, which are great and violent: Within this wall it is all full of houses; most of which are low and thatched; but some are two storeys high, and styled very handsomely with open galleries for air, railed about with turned banisters, one ebony, and one painted, but not so much prospect, standing between two hills, (a more uneven and unhandsome spot of ground, he could not well have found in all his kingdom). And indeed the king lives here not so much for pleasure as security. The palace itself hath many large and stately gates of two leaves; these gates, with their posts excellently carved; the iron work thereunto belonging, as bolts and locks, all rarely carven. The windows inlay'd with silver plates and ebony. On the top of the houses of his palace and treasury, stand earthen pots at each corner; which are for ornament: or which is a newer fashion, something made of earth resembling flowers and branches. The contrivance of his palace is, as I may say, like Woodstock Bower, with many turnings and windings, and doors, he himself having ordered and contrived all these buildings, and the manner of them. At all the doors and passages stand watches: and they who thus give attendance are not to pass without order from one place to another, but are to remain in that place or that gate, where the king hath appointed them. By means of these contrivances it is not easy to know in what part of the palace his person is, neither doth he care they should.

"His great endeavour is to secure himself from plots and conspiracies of his people, who are sorely weary of his tyrannical

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

government over them, and do often plot to make away with him; but by his subtlety and good fortune together, he prevents them."

Knox gives a description of the making of the tank at Hanguranketa. The king "approves not that his people should be idle; but always finds one thing or another to be done." These works were digging down hills and carrying the earth to fill up valleys; thus the king had the terraces built upon which his palace stood, and made channels for the water to run into the tank, "and elsewhere for the use of his palace, where he hath it running through into many places into little ponds made with lime and stone and full of fish."

Rajasinha loved animals, and had a regular zoo at his palace, and he used to feed his fish with his own hand. The same instinct seems to have prompted him to make his collection of Portuguese and Dutch and English prisoners whom he treated with special favour but would never allow to return to their own countries.

"To bring this water to his palace," Knox continues, "was no small deal of labour. For not having a more convenient way, they were forced to split a great mountain in twain to bring the water thro, and after that to make a bank across a valley far above a cable's length, and in height above four fathoms, with thickness proportionate to maintain it, for the water to run over the top. Which at first being only earth, the water would break down; but now both bottom and sides are paved and wrought up with stones. After all this, yet it was at least four or five miles to bring this water in a ditch; and the ground all hills and valleys, so that they were forced to turn, and wind, as the water would run. Also when they met with rocks which they could not move, as this ground is very full of them, they made great fires with wood upon it, until it was soundly hot; and thereby it became so soft, that they could easily break it with mawls."

I pictured the tank filled again with water, and the overflow bubbling through the sluice gate under my feet. There were the lights of the palace reflected across the ruffled water, and dark figures were moving to and fro along the railed verandhas. As the night deepened the lights grew fewer and fewer and the shadows blacker under the pale stars. Then suddenly a great din of trumpets and drums burst from the dark walls, and startled the elk browsing high up on the hill sides, and made the elephants in the courtyard trumpet, and woke up the Dutch Ambassador who had come to negotiate for the gathering of cinnamon in the king's dominions and who was in the middle of a pleasant dream of his red tiled floors and white pillars and stout glass windows in the safety and peace of the

fort at Colombo. This was the noise made at the end of every watch of the night by the king's order, "to keep his people walking, and for the honour of His Majesty."

Then there came a day when it was rumoured in the palace that the king was sick. Men wondered and feared for Rajasinha had become an institution and had been upon the throne for more than half a century. Soon it was known that the end had come. The fierce old heart had ceased to beat, and the cunning brain had ended its schemes and plots. The great king of Ceylon was dead and a new era began in Kandy.

I said good-bye to my revernd guides, and left the palace of Hanguranketa behind in the ruinous state into which it fell a few years after Rajasinha's death. It seems a pity that this most interesting monument of Ceylon History is not better preserved and cared for, so that future generations may be able to see something of a spot where a part of their ancient heritage lies buried among their native hills.

* * * *

The next king of Kandy was Wimaladharma Suriya II. 1687-1707, "a gentle young man, bred in the privacy of a temple." In his reign the power of the Kandyan chiefs grew steadily so that their names became as prominent in history as the names of kings.

Of this king the Mahavamsa says:

"In honour of the Tooth of The Prince of the wise he erected a fair, three-storeyed passada, resplendent with all kinds of (artistic work), and for the sum of five and twenty thousand silver pieces he had a reliquary made which he covered with gold and ornamented with the nine precious stones. In this great reliquary that resembled a cetiza of precious stones, he laid the Tooth of the Victor."

There had been other Dalada Maligawas in Kandy before this one, but they had all been destroyed by the Portuguese. Much of the temple that stands today would seem to be the work of Wimaladharma Suriya.

To this temple therefore I next took my way.

I crossed the stone bridge over the moat which is filled with tortoises, and climbed the steps down which the temple elephant walks at the annual Peraheras of Kandy. The way led under a dark stone arch into a paved covered court-yard. Several men were standing about under the carved stone pillars; some pilgrims were bowing before the door of the temple shrine; priests walked to and fro: sparrows were busy with family matters in the roof, and crows were flying in and out with greedy irreverent hunger. I turned to the right and made my way to the door

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

of the temple library. After a little delay I was conducted into the octagon tower whose walls are lined with book-shelves. There are piles and piles of ola-leaf books, ancient and modern, and in one shelf is a rare collection of English publications upon Ceylon.

The priest in charge of the Library, and a boy, his pupil, showed me the collection, and we discussed the last days of King Sri Wickrama Raja Sinha and looked up some of the authorities in the books on the shelves. The whole place was redolent with learning and kindly hospitality. My host showed me the ancient art of writing upon ola leaves. He fitted the stylus into a nick cut in his thumb nail, and his subtle fingers worked the pen so that the neat beautiful writing appeared like magic upon the leaf. The ink was smeared over the leaf and then rubbed away so that it reminded only in the writing made by the stylus.

I stood before the holy place of the temple where the golden dagoba, behind its guarding screen of glass and steel, covered the holy relic. Bareheaded and barefooted the pilgrims bowed to the ground before it and hushed their voices to a whisper. Chains of gold, and ornaments of precious stones hung upon the dagoba, and around it lay the costly gifts of old time and of far countries: and within it to the eye of faith is a part of the body of the Compassionate One himself.

I thought of the story of the first coming of the Tooth Relic in the Mahavamsa. "In the ninth year of this King (Sirimeghavanna) (A.D. 362-391) a Brahman woman brought hither (to Anuradhapura) from the Kalinga country the Tooth Relic of the great Sage. (Buddha). In the manner set forth in the Chronicle of the Tooth Relic the Ruler received it with reverence, paid it the highest honours, laid it in an urn of pure crystal, and brought it to the building called Dhammacakka built by Devanampiyatissa on the royal territory. Henceforth this building was the Temple of the Tooth Relic. The King, his heart swelling with joy, spent 900,000 (Kahapanas) and arranged therewith a great festival for the Tooth Relic.................After performing innumerably many meritorious works such as offerings for the Bodhi Tree and the like, he went in the 28th year (of his reign) thither whither his merit took him."

* * * *

Wimaladharma Suriya II. though a keen Buddhist himself, seems to have been tolerant toward the Christians, and it is said that he allowed a Catholic Church to be built in Kandy.

There is no trace of that Church left now, but many of the Catholic heroes of those days are commmemorated in the Ampitiya Seminary of Kandy, and thither I took my way.

I climbed the hill at the end of the lake and turned to the left up a winding drive, past a small building where a crowd of boys

were sitting in the unnatural silence of a school, until I came to the red sand-stone-coloured walls of the Kandy Seminary. There was not a soul to be seen in the peaceful garden before the building and the long line of windows looked down with quiet detachment upon the intruder from the outer world. I walked up to the great door which had neither bell nor knocker, but seemed to speak a grave welcome to all comers. I tried the handle and found the door unlocked and in a moment I passed out of the present day into a long white mediaeval cloister, spotlessly clean, and hung with a magnificent collection of prints drawn from almost every country upon earth. There was no porter at the gate, no bustle or activity within the walls, no sound of footsteps: but the whole place seemed spacious, strong, masculine, and a little remote. Far away down the long passage, meek silent students in white cassocks were pacing up and down reading books or seeming buried in meditation. There was an air of continual work without haste and without stopping, **semper agens, semper quietus,** like time and nature going hand in hand.

"You wish to see the Father Rector?" said a voice beside me in a rich Flemish accent. I turned, and found myself looking at a father with a long white beard falling down to the belt of his cassock, and happy-child-like eyes which smiled upon the stranger as their owner offered his guidance.

We walked down the long cloisterr, passing students and servants; who glanced at us, and went on their silent way without a word.

It turned out that the Father Rector was not at home, but the old priest offered to show me round the building.

"I will show the inside" he said. "There is time for that. You can find the way outside, to the farm, for yourself."

We climbed a flight of steps and passed into the hushed reverence of the Seminary Church, where boys and men knelt in prayer and adoration too deep to be disturbed by the footsteps of strangers who came to look at the treasures of the building.

On tip toe we walked to the back of the church and looked down the aisle at the high altar over which stood the figure of St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies, looking with strong gentle eyes upon the worshippers in his church.

I thought of the boy, Francis, born of rich and noble parents in the Basque country of Spain, who became the friend of Ignatius Loyola, leader of the Counter Reformation in Europe. In 1536 the two friends left the University of Paris for Italy where Xavier devoted nine weeks to the hospital for incurables at Venice, before they came to Rome. Here Xavier became secretary to the Society of Jesus until 1541. In that year he was sent on a mission which John III. of Portugal was dispatching to his

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Indian dominions. On the voyage St. Francis lived among the common sailors, ministering to their religious, and temporal needs, especially during an outbreak of scurvy, until the ship reached Goa in 1542. He began to preach to the fishers along the coast and his work there led him to send a disciple to Mannar in about 1544. In the following year he went to Malacca where he met Yajivo, a Japanese exile, who fired him with zeal for the conversion of Japan. In 1549 he reached Kagoshima and remained in Japan for just over two years. On his return to Goa he planned a missionary journey to China, and after many delays and disappointments, he reached Chang-Cheu-Shan off the coast of Kwang-tung in 1552. But he was never destined to set foot upon the mainland. His brave and adventurous life ended off the coast of China, in the last months of 1552.

Against the cruelty and avarice of the Portuguese in the Far East, must be set the burning faith and love of such men as St. Francis Xavier. Those who criticise his methods must take into account his intense faith in the saving power of baptism and the church. Those who denied them, he verily believed, were destined to everlasting punishment, and, at whatever cost to himself or them, he strove to save their souls alive.

Did this daring spirit, who ventured into the remotest unknown corners of the world of his day, ever walk in the streets of Kandy? At least one of his biographers says that he did.

I asked my kindly guide what the truth was.

"Who knows if he came here?" whispered the father with a shrug and smile. "Nobody knows. Perhaps he did. There is no historical evidence. But I believe that he really did set foot in Mannar. There is evidence that he visited Mannar."

We left the church and stopped for a moment in the cloister under the portrait of Jose Vaz.

"That was a very brave man," said my guide pointing to the picture "you have heard of him?"

I had heard of him. He was a Konkani Brahamin of Goa, and a Catholic priest. He is described as "a man of singular decision, energy, and resource." The Dutch had forbidden Catholic priests to enter Ceylon, and had declared severe penalties against any who should harbour them. But there were many Catholics in Ceylon and in spite of the strict watch of the Dutch, priests found their way into the island to minister to the people. Joseph Vaz succeeded in getting into Jaffna in disguise in 1689. "But on Christmas night, 1690, while he was getting ready to say Mass in a private house, the Dutch commander made a raid, dispersed the crowd and arrested, scourged, and imprisoned eight of the prominent Catholics."

After being driven out of Jaffna, Father Joseph Vaz determined to go into the territory of the King of Kandy. The Buddhists had always treated foreign religions with great tolerance and Catholic priests had been allowed to enter the Kandyan Kingdom and to minister to their own people. Vaz succeeded in crossing the border, but was arrested as a spy and carried as a prisoner to Kandy. Here his strong personality won the respect and favour of the king. He reorganised a missionary campaign in the kingdom, and a church was built at Bogambara and a few priests collected there to help him. From this centre Vaz visited Chilaw, Negombo, Colombo, Kalutara, Ratnapura, Sitawaka, and other places, and gave the Dutch so much trouble that they made many attempts to seize him, but in vain. The work of Vaz and his fellow priests was so successful that it began to alarm the king's ministers and at length orders were issued for the destruction of their churches, though it does not appear that the orders were strictly carried out.

In considering the attitude of the Dutch towards Vaz, it must be remembered that, in their eyes, the Catholics represented a religion which they earnestly believed to be wrong, and also the power of Spain and Portugal against which they had recently been fighting for their very existence in Europe; even as the Catholic Portuguese were fighting the Dutch for their existence in the East.

We passed up a flight of steps into the great Library of the Seminary where the shelves of books climbed up to the gallery, and from the gallery to the ceiling. A father with a raven black beard was reading a book upstairs, and did not so much look round as we entered. A small boy with a muscular pair of legs who was varnishing a window-frame from the top of a pair of steps, took not the least notice of the visitors, as if he too were detached from the world, and dedicated only to the business in hand. The good father showed me some of the treasures of the library. Among them were the Conquest of Ceylon, Valentyn, Baldaeus, first editions in Portuguese and Dutch, with their English translations. On the walls hung portraits of Church dignitaries, in gorgeous vestments, and in a small side room was a collection of magazines, and reviews in many languages and sent from many countries. There was such a venerable air about this library with its rows of ancient tattered volumes, leading up, through old leather-bound books, and cloth backs, to smart new books fresh from the publishers, that I found it hard to believe my companion when he told me that the Seminary was only forty-seven years old.

We left the library and climbed the stairs to the top landing of the building where doors, with labels above each, opened into silent rooms, and lecture halls, and little libraries, and dormi-

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

tories. On our left, far below, lay the busy world in the Dumbara Valley, hidden under a shoulder of the hills; and right opposite the peak of Hunasgiriya pointed like a broad finger-post up to heaven.

"You have a very beautiful place to live in" I said.

"It is a beautiful place to live" he answered. "And a beautiful place for a man to come to when he is old" he added with a smile.

I thanked my kind conductor, and we parted at the door at the foot of the stairs which led out into the garden.

A flight of steps ran up a bank on to the woodland path that runs round the hill. Some way along this path I came to a lonely seat where I could sit and look at one of the most celebrated views in Ceylon. The far hills drew their soft line across the sky, and shut in a wide valley covered with little gardens in a chequered pattern of green fruitfulness. From the southward came the broad white sheet of the Mahaweliganga, which vanished for a while under the hill at my feet, until it appeared again to the right, and went on its way to the north-east down the valley where the hills stretched out their long arms and hid it again from sight.

It all seemed far away as if it were in some other world. "He went up into a mountain apart to pray." The hill seemed like a holy mountain: both the Seminary and this solitary path in the woodland have a wonderful atmosphere about them. I know of no other place in Ceylon which has such an atmosphere, except Adam's Peak; and in each case it seems to be the same atmosphere, a spirit of great faith born of great love for all living creatures. The Christ and the Buddha seem to meet on the green hill and under the holy tree in their great longing to show the path of salvation to a world that had lost its way. They meet in spirit here. Perhaps if they had met in the flesh they would have shown their followers something that their followers have still to learn.

I left the path upon the hill, and went down to look at the Seminary Farm. Down in the valley there were rows of neat vegetable plots and from the hen-house close to them came up the clucking of hungry fowls. A lay brother dressed in khaki was busily engaged in doing some carpentry work about the cow sheds. He did not look up from his work as I passed him and entered the long byre, where the rich smell of milk floated in the air over a line of broad backs and swishing tails. Further on I came to a stall where half a dozen magnificent bulls were slowly champing at their rations of green grass. The last of them was a grand old stud bull solemnly chewing away a little apart from the rest, with all the dignity and repose of the father and grand-father of the herd.

Another lay brother with a golden brown beard hurried by with the pig buckets slung over his shoulders. I followed him to the piggeries. In the first sty was a lordly old boar stretched out at full length upon his bed of paddy straw enjoying the complete content which only a pig really understands. There were a number of half-grown piglets much interested in the sound of footsteps, and squealing with delight at the distant clatter of the buckets. Two immense sows were presiding proudly over the mid-day meal of nine little pigs apiece. They seemed to me somehow delightfully earthly and carnal, and rather incongruous upon the hill that rises so high above the earth.

As I walked down the road that leads back to the busy world of Kandy, I thought to myself that the authorities of the Seminary are right in putting pigs and prayer side by side. Francis Xavier understood both to perfection, and he is the patron saint of the hill.

* * * *

There followed King Sri Narendra Sinha 1706—1739, in whose time Kandy was so completely shut off from the outer world by the Dutch that the chroniclers seem hardly to have had any idea of the forces that were working around them in the world outside. Narendra Sinha was the last of the royal line of Sinhalese Kings. (1739-1747).

He appointed as his successor his Nayakkar Queen's brother, who became King Sri Vijaya Rajasinha (1739-1747).

The next King was Kirtisri Rajasinha (1747-1780). He sent a mission to Siam which brought back a number of Siamese monks. The monks brought a manuscript of the Mahavamsa with them and Kirtisri ordered the Chronicle to be brought up to date.

In Kirtisri's reign negotiations began with the British East India Company to which we owe a description of Kandy in 1764 given by Mr. John Pybus the Agent of the Company. He wrote :—

"The town of Candia is built in a kind of valley, formed of hills, which in a manner surround it. The two principal streets run north and south, in one of which (probably Trincomalee Street) I was lodged, and of this I can, with much certainty, speak. It is near a mile long, but the houses are not so well or uniformly built at the extreme ends as those towards the centre, which are most of them tiled. There are some cross streets running east and west, but of no great length, which the distance between the hills will not admit of. The palace stands in a manner detached from the rest of the houses at the south end of this valley, and is a large, lofty, spacious building, containing a number of apartments, and seemingly well constructed. But as I was

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

never admitted there till night, I cannot be very circumstantial in my description of it. There is a large garden enclosed with a high wall in the north front of it, and close on the other side of it, to the south, are hills and thick woods. Most of the houses are built near the foot of the declivity of the hills which surround the town, and in six or seven feet from the streets, which are spacious and clean, from whence you get up to them by a long flight of brick or stone steps. They were constructed after the manner of buildings in this country (that is, Madras), but not so well finished. An excellent custom is established here for preventing disorders in the streets at night, by the ringing of a bell through every street at about eight o'clock, or as soon as business is over in the Palace, to give warning that whoever shall be found in the streets after the ringing of that bell, without a large light in their hand, shall be severely punished. The town is tolerably well-inhabited, and they have plenty of good wells in it."

The Dutch were not at all pleased at the coming of foreign embassies to Kandy, and in 1765 Kirtisri had to fly from his capital, while the forces of the Hollanders marched into it and the town was once more sacked by troops sent from Colombo.

But disease and difficulty of communication befriended the Kandyans as is had so often done before, and the Dutch were forced to retreat, and to fight they way back to the low country with heavy losses, and nothing gained.

The next King of Kandy was Rajadi Rajasinha, 1780-1798. In his last years came news that the English had taken Trincomalee and Batticaloa, that the garrisons of Jaffna and Mannar had capitulated, that Negombo was occupied, and finally that Colombo itself had surrendered. Meanwhile the Kandyan chiefs had been becoming more and more powerful, and the sinister name of Pilima Talauwe began to dominate the politics of the kingdom. In 1798 Pilima Talauwe deposed the king, and being unable to seize the throne for himself, he set up Sri Wickrama Rajasinha, as king, a weak young man who he hoped would act according to his own directions. And so the last king of Ceylon came to the throne in 1798.

I went to the King's Palace which covered the ground round the temple of the Tooth, for the next scene in the history of Kandy is laid there.

In 1803 a young Scotsman, named Major Davie, was sitting within the palace of Sri Wickrama Rajasinha. In a large building across a paddy field close by 120 of his men lay sick in the stifling and fetid atmosphere of the garrison hospital.

Major Davie had come up to Kandy with General MacDowall some weeks before, and the king had fled before the invading

English troops. Pilima Talauwe had promised to support the invaders, but when he found that Prince Muttusamy who had been nominated king by Rajadi was set upon the throne by the English, he remained sullenly aloof watching for his opportunity to further his own designs or to be revenged upon those who had defeated them.

General MacDowall had returned to Colombo some days before, prostrated with fever, and now the communications with the coast were cut, and Major Davie was left alone surrounded on all sides by hosts of Kandyans. Davie himself was worn out and exhausted with fever and the position of his little force seemed to be hopeless.

It was true that his men had beaten off the first assault upon the spiked bamboo fence that surrounded his small fortress, but it was impossible that they should survive many more attacks. He had to make up his mind whether he should try to hold out, or whether he should surrender on the best terms he could get. The first he knew as impossible with the greater part of his force disabled with sickness, and for the second, he was still in friendly communication with the Adigar, Pilima Talauwe, and there seemed some hope of preserving the lives of the garrison with his aid.

Meanwhile, on the hills behind the palace, the Kandyan chiefs were preparing their men for a final attack which had been ordered by King Sri Wickrama Rajasinha, who was close at hand. The new king was proving less easy to manage than the King-maker had anticipated. The chiefs could see that the enemy were delivered into their hands, and it was only a matter of time before they would avenge the taking of their capital. They crept down the hill, hidden by the mists of the early morning which still clung about the forest trees, and presently the first rattle of musketry burst against the stockade of the fortress.

Slowly, foot by foot, they advanced their small cannon against the palace, and kept up a persistent galling fire upon the besieged garrison. For ten hours the gallant little band in the fort held out, and then a white turban-cloth was displayed upon a bamboo pole at the palace gate. Almost immediately the firing ceased, and a party of Kandyans advanced with their firelocks swathed in white cloth as a sign of truce. At their head walked the First Adigar, Pilima Talauwe himself. Major Davie, accompanied by Nouradeen, the Captain of the Malay regiment, as interpreter, came out of the stockade to meet the Adigar. The terms of surrender were arranged. Davie and those of his men who could march were to be permitted to go on their way to Trincomalee with their arms but without amunition. The stores were to be left behind, and Pilima Talauwe undertook to protect the sick men who were left in hospital. Muttusamy whom the English

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

had placed on the throne of Kandy was to accompany the retreating column, and boats were to be supplied to cross the Mahaveli Ganga.

An hour later a weary dispirited band marched through the town in heavy rain and followed the road for two miles down to the Watapolawa Ferry.

I took the same road after them to see what manner of place they came to on the river bank. I followed the Matale road towards Katugastota, and turned to the right a little before the bridge, and followed the track down to the river. It was pouring with rain as I found my way along the bank, and trudged along the slushy grass-grown road past two stones which marked the site of two ferries long ago put out of commission when the Katugastota bridge was opened with a solemn fete and ball held upon the new roadway that runs across it. I saw the river as Major Davie and his men saw it, through pouring rain. The tawny waters surged in flood between the dripping lines of foliage upon its banks. There was no chance of getting across it without boats.

When Major Davie arrived at the river there was no sign of the promised boats, and he ordered his soldiers to bivouac upon the bank under the trees. He and his officers took shelter under a great bo-tree that grew upon a little hillock above the river, and there they spent a miserable night in the rain under blankets and cloaks. It was impossible to light a fire where everything was sodden with the rain, and the slow dark hours dragged on helplessly towards morning.

As the weary men began to move about at dawn and strove to dry their drenched clothes and blankets, they saw two figures coming down the river bank towards them. One was walking upright but staggering at every step, and the other crawled along on his hand and knees. They were two privates of the 19th who had been left behind in hospital. The men crowded round them to hear their story. It was soon told. A short time after the garrison had left, a number of Caffirs had entered the hospital, and with sticks and stones had beaten out the brains of every man they found there. The two privates, Fletcher and Hales, had hidden themselves under the beds in one corner, and had made their escape in the darkness.

At this frightful news officers and men set to work to build a raft to cross the river, but they could get nothing that would float. One gallant fellow swam across the flooded river with the end of a rope tied round his waist, and fixed it to a tree on the further bank. But when he returned hand over hand along the rope, a figure appeared on the other side and cut the rope, and it fell useless into the water.

In his helplessness, and upon promise of boats in which to cross the river, Major Davie surrendered Muttusamy to the Kandyans. But this weak action did not save him. His little army passed another weary night upon the river bank, and in the morning the sound of tom-toms was heard coming from the direction of Kandy. The woods around the river began to fill with men, and presently another deputation came towards the bo-tree on the little hill. The messenger announced that Sri Wickrama Rajasinha commanded the English force to lay down their arms or be immediately destroyed. If they laid down their arms and agreed to return towards Kandy to confer with the King and his ministers they were promised their lives, and permission to depart either to Trincomalee or Colombo.

Major Davie decided in favour of surrender.

The officers were separated from their men, and the common soldiers were ordered to advance two at a time into a deep defile, where, as soon as they were out of sight of their comrades, they were knocked on the head and stabbed by two Caffirs who stood one on each side of the path, and their bodies were thrown into a great pit.

Corporal Barnsley, of the 19th Regiment, was led out among the rest, and knocked down with the butt-end of a musket, and desperately wounded by a sword cut across the neck. He was left for dead upon the ground, but recovered, and crept into a thicket where he lay hidden until it was dark, when the gallant fellow swam across the river, and found his way to Fort MacDowall near Matale, early next day. He reported the massacre to Captain Madge who was in charge of the fort, and the garrison at once retreated to Trincomalee.

In the midst of the confusion of the massacre, Captain Humphreys, who was the man who had carried the rope across the river, laid hold of the arm of a sub-assistant surgeon of the Malay regiment, a native of Colombo, and managed to roll down with him from height into the hollow where the dead bodies were thrown. The two of them contrived to hide themselves for several days, during which time it is said that they were kindly treated by the Kandyan villagers who risked their lives to help these fallen enemies of theirs. Humphreys was later retaken and with Major Davie died a prisoner in Kandy. But the surgeon escaped to Colombo. He and Corporal Barnsley were the only survivors who escaped to tell the wretched tale of treachery and mismanagement.

On the greasy road along the river bank I found a small stone pillar set up at the foot of a little hill. The difficulty of holding up an umbrella with one hand and writing with the other prevented me from taking down the inscription, but it told how on Sunday,

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

the 26th of June, 1803, near that spot Major Davie's troops were massacred by the Kandyans.

I climbed to the top of the hillock. The old bo-tree was gone. It had lived exactly a hundred years after sheltering the British officers in 1803. In its place was a new and flourishing young bo-tree, and beneath it a stone bearing the words:

"Davie's Tree
Rediviva".

* * * *

King Sri Wickrama Rajasinha built the Pattirippuwa or Octagon, of the Maligawa, and built the dam across the valley which still holds up the water of the Kandy lake, but he was more busily engaged in striving to counteract the plots of his chiefs. Then came the day when the terrible Ehelepola tragedy was enacted in Kandy. It was a sign of the times and it added to the unpopularity of the king, and helped to lead the Kandyan Chiefs to give their support to another English invasion of their capital.

On February 14th, 1815, a British army was once more in possession of Kandy, supported this time by the principal chiefs.

In a shelter near the Medamahanuwara Gap, a man was sitting on a stone and listening eagerly for the sound of footsteps. He was a tall man, corpulent and muscular, with a handsome face set in a round black beard. His eyes and mouth showed the pride of one accustomed from childhood to command, and yet there was a certain weakness about them with a strong touch of good humour. With him were two women, his wives, and a few followers who remained by him even now when all was lost. He was Sri Wickrama Rajasinha the last king of Kandy, a tragic figure sitting there deserted in the house; but a man whose record is blackened with many crimes, and whose hands were stained with blood. And yet he was not wholly answerable for his sins for few men have been so sorely tried as he. At a time when the power of the chiefs of Kandy was at its height, he was chosen to fill the throne because he was supposed to be a contemptible person, "weak in intellect," and it was the definite purpose of Pilima Talauwe, who set him up to remove him when it suited his purpose. He found himself with great power in his hands thrust into the midst of a dark maze of intrigue, where a man who took a false step or failed to strike at the right time might find the cold steel in his back at any moment. He inherited a tradition of absolute rule and a perpetual terror of assassination. And so he became tyrannous and often cruel until at last he was left almost alone in the house near the Medamahanuwara Gap.

As he listened he felt a thrill of fear pass through his limbs. People were moving about the valley below. For days he had

been wandering about eluding parties of Kandyan and British troops who were searching for him. Now he could hear his pursuers coming closer and closer to his hiding place. His followers set up a wooden partition in the shelter, behind which the fugitive king lay hidden. Night came down and the place was filled with darkness, and the figures within it and around the entrance crouched down to listen and wait. Presently the king heard voices close at hand, and the light of torches appeared through an opening in the partition behind which he lay. The sounds grew louder, and he could hear that the men who were approaching were Kandyan Sinhalese, his own subjects. Then, it is said, there was the crack of a musket shot, and another, and another, and he could smell acrid powder smoke that crept in little wisps through the holes in the wall. The house was filled with the shouts of fighting men and the groans of the wounded, and the smell of blood. A grim silence followed, broken only by the moaning of one of his last faithful followers who lay dying on the floor of the house. The king crouched down in a last faint hope of escape, and felt a new thrill of fear as a hand tore at the partition that hid him from sight. The partition was thrown down and the light of the torches shone upon the face of the king. He was a prisoner at last, and before him stood the followers of Ehelepola whose wife and children he had murdered.

Sri Wickrama Rajasinha asked protection for his wives from the followers of the man whose wife he had killed.

Ehelepola's followers and a crowd of villagers who had come with them, cursed the king, and insulted him, and spat upon him, and plundered his clothes and belongings, but his life was spared. He was bound with jungle ropes and dragged away to the nearest village. It would seem that Sri Wickrama showed no lack of courage in his hour of danger.

The next day Mr. D'Oyly visited the king and found him sitting silent and downcast surrounded by his wives and his old mother and other members of his family. They were all in terror lest they should receive the same treatment that the king had given to the families of his foes. When the king was assured that both they and he himself were safe, Sri Wickrama "was deeply stirred." Taking the hands of his mother and his wives in turn he presented them to Mr. D'Oyly and commended them solemnly to his care. The monarch spoke bitterly of the treatment that had been meted out to him by his subjects, and, pointing to the bruises on his arms caused by the ropes, asked "if that was considered fit treatment for a king."

"The Royal prisoner was entrusted to the care of Major Hook. and was taken with his wives to a large house in the Fort, which had been prepared for him and arranged for his comfort."

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

"The house, which was spacious, had been fitted up very handsomely for the occasion, and in the middle of the largest apartment was an ottoman, covered with scarlet cloth, upon which His Majesty, immediately on his entrance, sprang with great agility, and, seating himself with his legs drawn under him, looked around the room, which he surveyed with great complacency. He was evidently both pleased and surprised at the apparent comfort of his new place of abode."

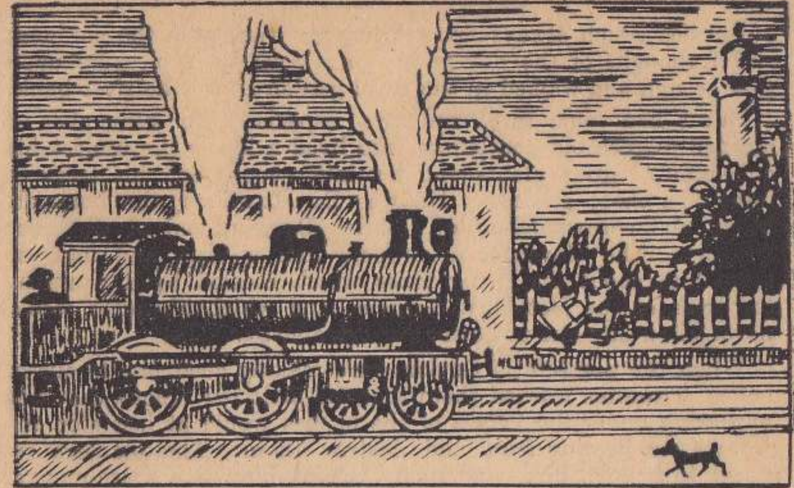
Those who had the care of Sri Wickrama in his captivity found him witty and good humoured when it suited him, but the calm and quiet way in which he related some of his murderous anecdotes, was as surprising as it was revolting. He is said to have defended them on the ground that they were according to the Kandyan law.

The king showed such patience under his captivity that it seemed hard to believe that his hasty temper had hurried him into his cruel actions, "until an occasion arrived when it was seen that when he was in a fury he was not responsible for his actions.

"He had applied for the attendance of four of the female prisoners who were originally the servants of the queens."

"His request was granted, and on the same night one of these poor creatures gave birth to a child in the house in which the king was residing. The instant he heard of the event he insisted on the woman's removal. She was useless, and he would not allow her to remain. Colonel Kerr was sent to remonstrate on the cruelty of such a step in her present condition, and declined to comply with the king's wishes. The king flew from one apartment to another and declared that he would neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, till he was satisfied: reviled the sentries, and behaved in so frantic a manner at this first opposition to his will, that Colonel Kerr, apprehensive of his murdering the woman, ordered her, even at the hazard of her life, to be removed to a place of safety."

"On the 24th January, 1816, the king of Kandy, with his family embarked on board the H.M. "Cornwallis", under command of Captain O'Brien, for Madras. Here he "lived for seventeen years in confinement, and died of dropsy on the 30th January, 1832, aged fifty-two years."



CHAPTER X.

Peradeniya, Kandy Road and Railway

I walked in the Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya.

Their beauty lies, as the beauty of a true eastern garden should lie, in the perfection of the trees. It was such a garden as this that the eastern writer of the Book of Genesis had in mind when he described the Garden of Eden. "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.......... And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it." The Mohamedan Arabs located the site of Eden in Ceylon, and so we have the names Adam's Bridge and Adam's Peak. When Adam was driven from the Garden of Eden he stood in penance on one foot for a hundred years upon the top of Adam's Peak, and so left his footprint there.

The Peradeniya Gardens have a wonderful collection of orchids, and the names of the plants upon the little black boards carry you back and forth across the world with bewildering suddenness: but the deep cool shade and the endless variety of trees growing where there is room for each to grow in its natural shape, these are the glory of the gardens. I lay upon the ground above the swirling water of the Mahaweli Ganga and watched the squirrels go bouncing over the grass, and the birds squabbling over strange foreign blossoms and fruits, and the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

butterflies which always flourish in great variety in the gardens: and I thought of the day when kings took their pleasure upon this ground and walked in the royal garden above the river bank.

But I had come to Peradeniya especially to remember a strange morose old gentleman who lived a lonely life amidst his collection of dried plants and his microscopes and his trays of insects in these gardens. He was Dr. Thwaites, the botanist, friend and correspondent of Charles Darwin, and of Governor Gregory. The Governor often paid him a visit, and used to tease him about the flying foxes which roosted by day among the trees of the Botanical Gardens, and which Thwaites would never allow any one to destroy or drive away.

When the planters of Ceylon were making good profits out of coffee, Thwaites warned them that the little red fungus that was appearing under the leaves of the bushes would at last stop the trees from bearing fruit and destroy them. The planters refused to believe him, and many reviled him as a scare-monger and a pessimist.

Thwaites begged the Governor not to put any trust in coffee. Sir William Gregory writes in his Autobiography: "I much wish I had attended to his wise admonitions as to the instability of coffee. Year after year he foretold its downfall, and he was subjected to obloquy and ridicule for his disloyalty to the great King Coffee.........He knew no remedy, and laughed to scorn the various nostrums which were to have exterminated the disease. He implored of me not to lend any money on mortgage upon coffee estates, telling me how he had called in all his own investments and had transferred them to land and houses in Colombo. I should have been a much richer and less worried man had I harkened to his advice. I well remember going through the thriving Coffee Districts in the spring of 1877. The blossom was out and they were as white as table-cloths. I saw Mr. Thwaites on my return, and rather mocked him as a prophet of evil, since, although there had been disease for several years, coffee had still a vigorous appearance.

"Never mind," said he, "what you saw. Coffee must go, and that before long."

And go it did. But Thwaites was more than a prophet of evil, even though a true one. He saw that coffee must go, and he used the Botanical Gardens to serve Ceylon in the manner in which they have always served her. He experimented with the various plants that could be grown in the Island, and with the best way of growing them, so that when it became clear that coffee was doomed, he had other crops to offer to the planters, especially young cinchona trees, which helped to tide over the evil days, until tea came to replace coffee over the hills of Ceylon.

* * * *

I got into the train at Peradeniya Station in order that I might run down the first railway line to be made in Ceylon. As we moved out of the station and passed the branch line that turns north to Gampola and Nanuoya, I began to read the story of the Ceylon Railway.

In 1825 Governor Barnes' road to Kandy was completed, and in 1831 the mail coach began to run upon the road. It was not long after this before lines of crawling bullock-carts came down the same road laden with bags of coffee, and the song of the carters echoed among the hills. Coffee estates were springing up in all directions, and the dust of the road was disturbed more and more, and rose in clouds from the shuffling feet of the draught bulls. About 1855 the tolls on ox-carts on the Kandy Road varied from £18,000 to £21,000 at 12s. per cart, up and down. As many as 30,000 carts passed in a year.

As I was reading these facts, the train drew up at Kadugannawa Station, and eight coolie women clad in their bright red garments, and carrying a selection of household utensils, filed past the carriage window and got into the train further down. They seemed to be in a cheerful holiday mood, and talked and laughed with each other. The whistle blew. The last red drapery disappeared: a door slammed, and we moved on again.

In 1830 railway speculation began to be a craze in England after the success of the Liverpool Manchester line, and railway talk was in the air in India and Ceylon. After a good deal of talk, a "Company was formed in October 1845 and was provisionally registered in England under the name and title: 'The Ceylon Railway Company.' It provided for a Capital of £1,000,000 in 20,000 shares of £50 each, to build, in the first instance, a line of railway from Colombo to Kandy at an estimated expenditure of £6,000 per mile."

At this point we roared through several tunnels and came out below the fort of Balane. When the jungle was still in possession of the pass of Balane many an army had marched across the land where the railway now runs, following the narrow mountain path that led over the hills to Kandy.

A whole chapter of the history of Ceylon is written in the footsteps on that ancient path across the railway at Balane of which every trace is now buried under green gardens and patches of jungle and wiry patna grass.

The path wound through the forest, and was only wide enough to allow men to march in single file. It was the main road to Kandy, one of the few threads that bound the hill Kingdom to the outside world. Along it, before the road and the railway took its place, there passed a long record of traffic, Sinhalese messengers and embassies and armies; long caravans of Moorish

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

merchants and pedlars; companies of swaggering Portuguese soldiers with blood pouring from the leech bites on their legs; Dutch ambassadors one of whom was bringing up an old lion as a present to Raja Sinha, the Lion King (the lion died before the king would condescend to see it); and parties of red-coated British soldiers dragging iron guns on heavy wooden carriages. Balane is an interesting place. I promised myself a closer view of it when I came that way by road.

On the left of the railway I could see the famous Kadugannawa view of Bible Rock, and Utuwankanda, and the ridge of Kegalle. Then the bank fell away on the left and the line ran along the edge of the tremendous precipice below Sensation Rock, where I could look down almost vertically out of the carriage window, and see the tiny dots of people working in the paddy fields far below the railway line. Away across the valley I could see the grey thread of the Kandy road as it began to draw in to meet the railway in the narrow pass of Kadugannawa. We passed over the Dekanda Bank which "is the largest piece of earth work on the line, 90 feet in height and 540 feet long, and containing over 220,000 cubic feet of earth and rock." I crossed over to the right hand window and saw the magnificent cliff of Alagalla towering up above the line. Tradition says that the kings of old used to hurl their political prisoners from the top of this rock when they had to be executed. A few minutes more, and we came to a halt in Alagalla Station.

In 1846 men were peering through theodolites, making surveys around Alagalla, preparing alternative traces for the projected railway from Colombo to Kandy. The scheme was afoot, but there were still plenty of objections raised against it. People said that thousands of men would be put out of work by the building of a railway, especially the carters and carriers who followed the road. Those who had shares in the coaching company were not at all pleased to see a powerful rival springing up which was sure to take away their hard-earned profits. It was feared that the value of property near the railway would fall, and that "the seclusion of gentlemen's estates would be destroyed." Men said that the breed of horses would decline, and that the Railway Company "would be a tyrant in its own little world, and sacrifice the interests of the public to those of its shareholders." Nevertheless the surveys went on and alternative routes were suggested and discussed.

We passed the little station of Kadigomuwa, where the workmen who first dug out the track along the hill side discovered a treasure of gold buried in the earth, and presently stopped at Rambukkana. A boy came along the platform shouting "Tambilee, tambilee" and holding up a bunch of golden king coconuts.

He looked at me doubtfully, thought better of it, and passed on down the train. I turned again to the story of the railway.

In spite of all opposition, and after long battles over the question of the best route, and over expenditure, the first sod of the new railway was turned by Governor Ward on the 3rd August, 1858. Men in black frock coats and top hats crowded the railway grounds at Colombo, and the Governor held a silver and ebony-handled mammotie, ready to cut the sod and place it in a "beautiful wheelbarrow of polished satin-wood and ebony. As it was the early days of photography the newspapers had urged the public to remain perfectly still for a few seconds at the critical moment, so that a picture might be taken. The photographer disappeared under his black shroud. His hand appeared and removed the cap over the lens, and put it back again. He reappeared smiling. His effort however, turned out a complete failure. The most prominent feature in the foreground was found to be the back view of a lady with a most portentious breadth of crinoline culminating in a bonnet of delightful minuteness. Another picture was taken when only ladies who could be kept in order were permitted to be present."

We steamed into Polgahawela Station, and I found myself looking into the kitchen window of some minor railway official. Three little girls with clean faces and dirty clothes were lined up along the window-sill staring at the train. I gave them a gentle wave: whereupon number one waved back with great energy, number two turned bashful and disappeared vertically into the kitchen. Number three said something outrageous which I could not understand, but it was enough to set herself and number one giggling until their invisible support gave way and they disappeared to join number two on the kitchen floor.

It was soon found that the Ceylon Railway Company was going to be expensive to the country. The original estimate of £856,554 had sprung up to £2,214,000. Then it was found that the gradients on the line were very steep and the Company's engineers suggested that the railway waggons should be hauled up the line with a cable and a stationary engine. It is interesting to read that Robert Stevenson, only son of George Stevenson, the inventor of the first workable locomotive, was appointed referee between the Ceylon Government and the Company. After much debate the contract with the Company was dissolved by mutual consent, and the Government took over the work, and gave the contract to Mr. W. F. Faviell, retaining Mr. G. L. Molesworth to control and supervise the work of the contract. In less than a year after Faviell set to work "the Duke of Brabant, heir to the Belgian throne, drove to Veyangoda and returned by train driven by Mr. Molesworth."

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

I looked out of the carriage window. We had left the hills behind and were passing through a wide region of coconut gardens. Masses of trees rushed past the window, formed into line, dissolved, and lined up again. Men working in the gardens glanced up at the train and turned to their work again. Goats frisked up the bank and turned to stare, while the cows grazed on without lifting their heads. Soon we crossed the bridge over the Maha Oya, where some coolies who made the original line, and who had before worked in the mines in Australia, washed the gravel in the river bed and found minute particles of gold. Then we came to a standstill in Ambepussa Station.

The railway from Colombo to Ambepussa was open for passenger traffic in 1865. I thought of the villagers of that time staring at the new monstrosity that had invaded their territory, but I have been told that they showed no signs of excitement at their first sight of a train. They looked at it with stolid unconcern, and turned away to the business in hand without showing any particular interest. There was not one to call the engine "the water-drinking, coal-eating, jungle-going devil that says 'hoo.'" Only the children squealed with delight and ran to look, and to shout at the train, just as they now look up and shout at an aeroplane.

With the coming of the railway. Ambepussa became an important place, and its Resthouse was famous. Travellers got out of the train and waited there for the Royal Mail Coach which carried them on to Kandy.

On the 30th of April, 1867, the first train made a complete journey from Colombo to Kandy, and before the end of the year the Colombo-Kandy Line was opened for passenger traffic. It was a wonderful achievement and like the Colombo-Kandy Road which ran to the south of it, it had cost many human lives from accidents which happened while it was being constructed, and from the fever-stricken jungles through which it passed.

"It was only the heroic example of Faviell's presence on the spot, ready himself to do anything to encourage the men, or to remove grumbling, that kept the pace. Faviell had not only suffered physically, but had also sustained much financial loss on the contract. The Government with the unanimous approval of its advisers, made him a present of the handsome sum of £58,302, over and above the contract figure."

The train had left Mirigama behind, and Veyangoda and Ragama, and presently it passed by the immense cuttings which supplied the earth to fill up the swamps and paddy fields to the north of Colombo so that the railway might pass over them. It was here that the worst accident in the construction of the line took place. An engine was backing a number of trucks laden

with earth and carrying a number of workmen. As it was going along the foremost truck came off the rails and pitched over the bank into the mud and water of the swamp. Other trucks followed. The workmen on them were hurled headlong into the mud as the trucks were flung off the line. As each one went over, the engineer in charge who was on the train leaped from truck to truck shouting to the engine driver to stop, but it was some seconds before the train could be pulled up, and a number of workmen were pinned under the fallen trucks and drowned.

The railway had its first infant struggles here in the swampy land near Colombo. It grew to be a giant, employing thousands of men, and giving a net return on capital as high as 8.47 per cent. in 1915-1916. As a child it was brought somewhat roughly into the world by the political midwives, and in its hale old age it has come back to the care of the same nurses. The politicians set it on its feet at last, when it was young, and doubtless they will doctor it up and rejuvenate it now that it is old.

We passed Maradana, and the train ran into the Fort Station, where people move a little faster and stare a little less than at other stations along the line. The eight red-clothed coolie women trailed along the platform with a shade less confidence than they had showed at Kadugannawa. Porters laid siege to the carriage doors and captured the luggage. The Tourist Agents and Hotel porters stood with questions on their faces. A boy bellowed "Tyms, Tyms, Obsairvair." A voice at my ear squeaked "Taxie, taxie, taxie." I seized my bag from a porter, and gave him a small recognition of the hardness of the times.

"Where master going?" he asked.

"I'm going to Kandy," I said.

"But master—" he began.

"I'm going to Kandy" I said firmly.

He scratched his head and gave it up, glancing at the coin in his hand. There was sanity there at any rate, and that was enough for him.

Outside the station I met the car by appointment and set out to explore the Kandy Road.

* * * *

I passed over Victoria Bridge where the Kelani Ganga was in one of its pleasantest moods and ran in gentle tawny eddys under the piers. Strangely enough neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch had a bridge over this river. But the former had a ferry service which was a source of much gain and many quarrels to its owners. In early British days (1825) the lumbering bullock carts and private carriages rattled over a bridge of boats; and over this bridge on its way to Kandy passed the first royal mail coach used in Asia.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Lewis, in "Sixty-four years in Ceylon," writes:

"The 'Royal Mail Coach' used to take its departure on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 6 a.m. and arrive in Colombo between 4 and 5 p.m. In those days (1860) we paid £2.10.0 for the journey."

The Kandy road was largely a military road and it was made by military officers: General Frazer traced the greater part of it, and Major Skinner supervised the building of it.

I turned to the right from the road and went to visit the ancient temple of Kelani. There is the white dagoba which is the oldest part of the Vihare and there is the new temple, a building in yellow stone, richly carved, one of the happiest examples of restoration in Ceylon. I was shown a number of silver and brass images, and a large collection of ola books, and an ancient inscription on a stone at the foot of the bell tower.

There is a story that the Buddha left his footprint in the river at Kelani, and that the water forms an eddy over the sacred spot where he set his foot.

I left the temple to look for the eddy.

In a boutique close to the river bank I found a sturdy shop keeper. His face was clean shaven, his head covered with a white cloth, and his stout limbs were all exposed save for a speckled cloth about his waist. Mr. Parker, in a foot note to his Folk Tales of Ceylon, says that "hair from the throat to the navel is considered an adornment in a man of the village." The boutique keeper was very handsome in that respect as well as being a fine figure of a man.

"Can you tell me if there is an eddy in the river here which is said to cover the footprint of Buddha?" I asked.

He looked a little startled for a moment, as if he were taken unawares, and then regaining his confidence he said with much nonchalence.

"There may be."

"Where is it?' I asked him.

For answer he led the way down to the river bank.

The Kelani Ganga was crawling by, green and soupy, between its lines of palm trees and swaying giant bamboos. Women were bathing and bearing clothes on worn stones by the river side and a party of children were splashing and shouting in the water.

"Where is the eddy?" I asked.

"There is no eddy," said my companion. "Sometimes when the river is in flood it may make a swirl as it comes round the bend there, but there is no constant eddy."

Nobody else that I met in the village could tell me anything about the famous eddy of Kelani which every writer about the place in bygone years mentions as a thing he had seen or heard of.

I wished the boutique-keeper good trade, and returned to the Kandy Road.

Soon the suburbs and outlying hamlets of Colombo began to give place to the mottled shade of coconut gardens. Pairs of trousers became more and more rare upon the road. Broad stretches of bright green paddy filled every piece of low-lying ground. I had passed Mahara on the right and now I passed Gampaha on the left.

A few miles further on I stopped the car on the left of the road and found myself looking over a fence into the face of a sleepy lioness. She took no notice of me whatever for she was practising "the art of being bored, so well understood by lions and tigers." There were wild boar beside the road too, and elk, and spotted deer; an elephant stood planted on his four flat feet and swayed gently from side to side while he threw dust over his back from time to time with his trunk. I had reached Veyangoda.

Another fifteen miles and I passed the road that turns off to Ambepussa and Mirigama on the left. These places have little history attached to them, so far as I know, but how they speak of rich low-country hospitality. There is hardly a turning that does not bring back some piece of kindness in the past, some timely shelter or pleasant visit. The hospitality was generous and lavish. Ceylon is the land of splendid hospitality. How freely had I, the vagrant, partaken of it on my journey, at Chilaw and Puttalam, at Jaffna and Delft, at Kurunegala and Matale, in Kandy and Colombo, and now I was drawing near to the hill country where every valley, and every tiny bungalow up a mile or two of twisted road, speaks of welcome and generous kindness and good company.

As I came past the 47th mile, the Lion Rock stood out clear against the sky. Its Sinhalese name, Naugal Kanda, means ship rock. I thought that perhaps it looked like a ship before it grew a mane of trees upon its head.

I asked a boy on the road-side what he thought about it.

"It looks like a ship," he said.

I tried to point out the mane, and nose, and throat of the lion. He could not see them.

"Perhaps it's a little like a dog," he said, "but you see the back part of a ship, don't you?" and he drew the outline in the air with his forefinger.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

We parted mutually unconvinced, and I made my way to the foot of the hill from which the rock juts out.

I climbed up through the rubber and tea, and disturbed a party of monkeys in the scrub jungle under the rock. The path came out under the lion's chin (or the stern, if you will) where a small cave is formed above the precipice. A solitary priest lives here sometimes far above and away from the world. There were his cooking pot and fire-place, and in the crack of the rock was built a tiny shrine for his lamp and his offerings. His light can be seen across the valley as he meditates in this, his lonely mountain cell, with one step into eternity always beside him.

I climbed from this cave to the top of the lion's nose where I could look down from a dizzy height upon the tops of the trees far below. The Kandy road ran eastwards to Utuwankanda a grey streak amidst the green foliage; and westward it wound along through the wooded foot-hills of Ambepussa.

I left the hill and followed the Kandy Road to the centre of Kegalla town. Kegalla was the capital of the Four Korales, and few districts of Ceylon are so rich in history and legend. They are kind and friendly folk in Kegalla and many went out of their way to tell me what I wished to find out, and to help me on my journey (my thanks to them); but most of all I feel grateful to Mr. Bell who made the Archaeological Report on the Kegalla District which opens up the past of this beautiful stretch of country and shows how what men thought and did there in past years affects what they think and do today.

* * * *

I was sitting five miles east of Kagalla on the top of Utuwankanda rock, which is associated with the famous outlaw, Sardiel.

Two little boys had set out with great confidence to guide me to that high perch. We had walked through a line of huts buried deep under the shade of fruit trees: There were many coffee trees among them covered with green and scarlet berries. As we went forward the two little boys became less and less confident. We ended up with a precipice before us and a wall of rock beside us and nothing else to do but to go back the way we had come. Then there came a "hoo cry" from the valley. Then another. Presently two men came toiling up the hill. They came to the foot of the rock where we were waiting for them. One was short and smiling. The other was tall, sedate, and solemn.

We told them that we had failed to find the way up the rock.

"Cher, cher," said the smiling man to the boys, in a reproving manner.

The boys explained to me in an undertone that they would certainly have found the way up if the men had not come interfering, nevertheless they went away back to the huts among the fruit trees and left us to climb up alone.

We started to climb up a steep and little-used path where the grass grew over the top of our heads. Merry-eyes found a good deal of amusement in the slitherings of the booted stranger on the steep path, but both he and Solemn-face offered their sympathetic help at difficult places.

With the help of a couple of logs that had been placed there by former climbers, we scaled the huge boulder that lies upon the summit, and sat at last on the narrow ledge at the top. A yellow road was running away to the southward from Mawanella village, and the slate-grey strip of the Kandy-Colombo road appeared and disappeared in and out among the green stretch of trees and paddy fields. Sardiel could have had an hour's notice of the coming of a coach upon the road from either direction from this high watch tower.

"Do you often guide people up here?" I asked my solemn guide.

"They come here sometimes," he said. "A few people come. The boys from the Kandy schools come up from time to time."

Wherever I went in the Kegalle District those boys from Kandy seemed to have been there first. I took off my hat to them.

As we sat looking at the view, we could hear a man far down below singing as he scattered the paddy seed on his field:

"One for Rabbit, and one or Crow,
One to die, and one to grow."

The song stopped suddenly, and the sower looked up. He shouted something, that made Merry-eyes grow more merry, and Solemn-face become more solemn.

"What is he shouting?" I asked.

He is saying "Rillau gallate avit inuwah," said Merry-eyes.

That is the best I can do to romanise it, and I take it that it means.

"Little brown monkeys to the rock having come are staying." Solemn-face remained on his dignity, but Merry-eyes returned the compliment with very fair interest, and exchanged half a dozen ear-splitting "hoo cries" with his new friend down in the valley.

"Sardiel's cave is that side," said Solemn-face pointing to the Southward.

We climbed down from the summit and went along the steep grass-covered slope that runs round the foot of the rock, until we came to the mouth of a large cave hidden away behind a screen of

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

trees and long grass. At some remote time a huge mass of stone has fallen away from the lower face of the rock and formed the cave of Utuwankanda. The fallen rock lies before the mouth of the cave and helps to conceal the entrance from anyone coming up the hill towards it. To this hidden stronghold, buried at that time in thick jungle, Sardiel and his gang retreated in time of danger.

We walked in single file over the fallen stones into the cool shade of the cave.

"Sardiel and his band of robbers lived here," said the solemn guide, waving his hand round the cave.

The cave was large enough to hold about twenty men, and its walls were blackened with smoke. The floor was covered with earth newly dug out of a narrow tunnel running into the hill-side.

"A man dug here looking for Sardiel's treasure," said the solemn man pointing to the tunnel.

"He dug every night for months," said the merry guide with a grin.

"And did he find anything?" I asked.

"No, he did not find anything except some cobras," said the merry guide and both of them smiled.

"But do you think there is any treasure hidden in there?" I asked them.

At once both became solemn.

"There may be," said the solemn guide in a tone of voice that showed that he fully believed that there was.

"A big cobra guards it" said the merry guide "and so no one can find it or take it away."

"There is some brickwork under this fallen piece of rock," said the solemn guide changing the subject. "The cave used to be the dwelling place of a Buddhist priest before the roof fell in and made a new cave."

We examined the rock carefully, but could find no sign of the ancient bricks, although the guide firmly declared that they were to be found under the fallen mass of stone.

But I had come to this cave to visit Sardiel and I tried to picture his band of outlaws sheltering in it round a fire of sticks upon which their rice was boiling in a chatty. There were about half a dozen of them all desperate men, wanted by the police for various crimes, and bound together only by common dread of those who would drag them away to imprisonment or the gallows. Round them on the rocks lay their curious collection of fire-arms, old muzzle loading guns of all sizes and a number of pistols. There was very little treasure in the cave for desperately good as

these bandits were at getting, there was not one of them but was better at spending and gambling. Sardiel was decidedly the leader of this gang, and his inseparable companion and lieutenant was a man called Maricar or Mamalay. Mamalay looked every bit the villanous murderer that he was, but Sardiel was a small, almost puny figure, short, wiry, and miserable looking, with prominent eyes and cheek-bones. It was impossible to guess from the outward appearance of the leader of the band what a fiery, daring spirit burned within him.

I thought of the history of this man up to the time that he took shelter in this lonely cave. He was born at Utuwankanda in 1835, the eldest of the five children of Dikiri Kaga Adasi Apu, Carter, and Piche Hami his wife. The boy went to learn reading and writing at Elutgodda Vihare, but he quarrelled with his fellow students and beat them, and had to be sent away. He then became a servant to an officer in the barracks at Colombo, but the disappeared one day with his master's silver spoons. In July, 1862 he was accused of stabbing a man at Polwatte near Negombo, and found himself in prison at Hultsdorp. In November he made his escape from custody, and returned to his home in Kegalla District: he then began a career of robbery which made him a wanted man in every police station in the neighbourhood. He was captured in December 1862 by Abdul Cader, the brother-in-law of Baba Sara, the village constable of Utuwankanda. As he was being taken down to Colombo in a bullock cart, in the company of Haramanis, his step-father, he escaped into the jungle, and the village constable Baba Sara was dismissed from his post. In September 1863 Sardiel raided a house in the Kegalla District, but finding that things were getting too hot for him, he made a safe and secret hiding place for himself upon the rock of Utuwankanda, where he collected a band of desperadoes like himself.

From this wild rock he went out to tie ropes across the Kandy road to hold up the ascending coaches and relieve the passengers of their valuables, and the guard of the mails. The coachman began to carry arms to protect the coaches, but, it is said that these arms often found their way into the cave on Utuwankanda, so that coaches could only travel with a guard of rifle-men. The name of Sardiel soon became a terror in the whole neighbourhood. And yet he is said to have had a grim sense of humour. There is a story that Sardiel wished to go to an entertainment in Kandy, and fearing that he might be recognised, he dressed himself up as a woman, in conspicuous clothes, and walked through the town to his place of amusement. On the way he took care to make eyes at any constables that he met with on the road. Next morning the lady's conspicuous dress was delivered in a parcel at the police station with Sardiel's best wishes.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

And everyone knows the story of how Sardeil went out to gamble at a kaday along the road, and on the way he met an old villager whom he held up. At the dreaded name of Sardiel the old man confessed that he was carrying five hundred coins, but he said that the money was the hard-saved dowry that he was taking to his daughter's wedding at a distant village. Sardiel took the money and went on his way promising the old man that he should hear from him later on. On the following day the old villager received back his five hundred coins and, with them, another five hundred which Sardiel had won at gambling and which he sent as his contribution to the wedding feast.

So it is no wonder that the ladies loved him. My guide told me some goodly village stories of Sardiel's love affairs, which would hardly bear repetition here, but which I feel sure he would willingly repeat to anyone who chanced to stop at the turning that leads off the Kandy road to Utuwankanda Hill.

Legend has made the hardened bandit, Sardiel into a friend of the poor and the helper of women and children. Perhaps he really was, or perhaps Robin Hood himself in real life was a black hearted scoundrel whose few good deeds happened to make more impression than his many foul ones. I asked my guides what they thought of the question. Both agreed that they had never heard any stories of his kindness.

"He was a great rogue" said Merry-eyes, "always gambling and drinking, drinking arrack at the kaday," and up went his right elbow in illustration of Sardiel's favourite occupation.

Several times the police made gallant attacks upon Utwankanda, when it was known that the bandits were hidden there. The story is told that one constable was reprimanded for lack of zeal in hunting down the outlaws. Soon afterwards he joined a party of police in an attack upon the hill. As they advanced they were joined by a crowd of villagers among whom was the father of the constable. The leaders of the attack crept cautiously up to the hill and came in sight of the defences upon the rock where the robbers could be seen moving among the boulders. The constable left the rest of the party and rushed stumbling up the hill with reckless daring towards the rocky fortress. As soon as he came within range, there was a puff of white smoke among the rocks and the crack of a shot echoed up the hill. The constable rolled over dead, upon the grassy slope. The moment the father saw his son fall, he too rushed forward out of the crowd of villagers crying, "You have killed my son. Kill me also."

Another shot was fired from the rocks, and the father fell dead beside the body of his son. Sardiel had two more lives to answer for, and the time was at hand when his account must be rendered.

I left the rock of Utuwankanda and returned to the Kandy road to a spot just before the bridge over the Maha Oya at Mawanella. Here, on the right hand I came upon a grey stone set up by the road-side. Upon it are inscribed these words:

"Near this spot in March, 1864 P.C. Sabhan of the Ceylon Police lost his life in an act of gallantry which was immediately responsible for the arrest by Mr. F. R. Saunders, Assistant Government Agent, Kegalla, of Sardiel and a member of his gang of robbers. Five days previously George Van Haght and Christian Apu were killed and four others wounded in an attempt to effect Sardiel's capture."

Either through love or fear Sardiel's adherents seem to have been faithful to him for a long time, but the pursuit became so hot that he was forced to hide about in the neighbourhood of Kegalla like a hunted fox, and his gang were captured or dispersed one by one. Then on the 17th of March, 1864, information was laid at the police station at Utuwankanda that Sardiel and Mamalay were at Sardiel's mother's house in the village close by. Sergeant Sheik Packeer took three constables, Amat, Barkin and Abdin, and went to the house of Baba Sara, the ex-village constable to get help, and with George Van Haght and Sergeant Muttusamy and others, he found his way to the house where the robber chief was said to be hiding. It seems to have been late evening when they set out. The party proceeded along the road and turned into a small garden in which stood a house with a verandah in front of it. It seems that the Sergeant left most of his men behind, and advanced with a few followers, unarmed, towards the front of the building. Inside the house they found Sardiel and Mamalay and an old man and old woman. These last were Haramanis, Sardiel's step-father, and Pitche his mother. Sardiel and Mamalay were armed with double barrelled guns and had purchased a supply of powder and shot in the morning of that day. As the police party appeared at the door, the bandits seized their firearms and in the confusion which followed one of them shot Van Haght through the body, and he fell to the ground dead. The rest of the party retreated out of the line of fire. The shots, and the noise of the attack attracted a number of people to the garden some of whom brought guns with them, and there was soon a considerable crowd assembled. It seems that the Sergeant got his men posted round the house out of range of the bandits' guns, and began to throw stones at the door.

He shouted out, "All you people round the house look out and shoot the fellow as he comes out."

Then he challenged Sardiel to show himself.

Sardiel shouted back, "I am a Sinhalese, and you are only a Malay. Just you wait till I come out."

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

No one appeared however and the house remained silent and ominously still in the middle of the circle of watchers. As he could not get the bandits to come out, the Sergeant went off to get further help, and to inform the A.G.A., at Kegalla of what was taking place.

When he was gone Sardeil, it is said, persuaded some women to lure the watching constables to a certain spot near the house. Presently a bright gun barrel appeared through an opening in the wall, and five shots were fired in quick succession by the practised hand of Sardiel and three of the constables were severely wounded. In the confusion which followed the shooting a figure was seen to slip out of the house and run down the road for a few yards, and then turn into the jungle and disappear in the darkness. It was Mamalay who had taken the chance of his leader's shots to make his escape from the house.

The watching villagers, who had helped to tend the wounded men, now saw a wild looking man running towards the house waving a gun and crying out in a distracted manner. They recognised him a Christian Appoo, the father of the murdered Van Haght, who,, maddened by the news of his son's death, had taken liquor and seized a gun, and rushed out to avenge his son. This wretched man cried out that it was no use his living after his son was killed, and he ran straight towards the door of the house.

As he drew near the door Sardiel fired.

The old man staggered, and cried, "Take the gun, I am hit," and then fell dead to the ground close to where his son's body lay.

It was soon after this that Mr. Saundrs, the A.G.A., arrived from Kegalla. When he reconnoitred the house with the police, it was found to be empty. Sardiel had somehow made his escape unnoticed in the darkness Mr. Saunders had the house pulled down to the ground, so that it might not again be used as a refuge by the robbers.

On the following day, the 18th March, over three thousand men were out searching the jungle for the murderers. They found nothing: but news came that two Moor men who had been prowling about in the jungle had been shot by Sardiel, who had evidently mistaken them for spies.

On march 20th one of the seekers, an old associate of Sardiel, named Sirimalle, who perhaps knew better than other people where to look for his former leader, met Sardiel and Mamalay wandering in the jungle near the Maha Oya. He went up to the two outlaws and spoke to them. He told them that all the Four Korales were to be ordered out on March 21st and that no one could hide even in a tree, and he advised them to go and conceal themselves in the house of one Abdul Cader.

Sardiel did not appear to be in any way upset or remorseful, but Mamalay asked how many of those who had been shot at on the 17th were dead. Sirimalle told him that two were dead.

Mamalay said, "What could we do? We were obliged to shoot whoever came forward."

It seems that Sirimalle turned informer and finally betrayed the hiding place of the bandits. Early on Monday morning, March 21st, he was seen with Sergeant Mahat and P.C. Sabhan, who apparently belonged to a party of police sent down from Kandy, going to examine a two storeyed house near the Mawanella bridge, where there were said to be loop holes cut in the walls. The police were accompanied by a number of men to assist them and the whole party proceeded silently towards the house. When they reached it Sergeant Mahat and P.C. Sabhan advanced alone with Sirimalle to guide them and entered the lower rooms of the house which were found to be deserted. Sirimalle climbed up the steps to the trap door that led to the upper storey. A moment later he shouted, "Here they are," and jumping down from the steps, ran out of the house. Sardiel and Mamalay had been surprised in the middle of a game of cards. Sardiel seized a gun and rushed to the head of the steps, whereupon Sergeant Mahat at once fired his revolver, and hit Sardiel in the leg, so that he fell over on the floor. P.C. Sabhan seized the revolver from the Sergeant's hand and calling out, "He is over," started to climb up the steps. He had got about half way up when Mamalay appeared in the opening above his head and shot him dead. Mamalay pulled the trigger a second time upon the Sergeant, but luckily the cap misfired and the gun did not go off. The Sergeant took up the fallen revolver, and remained crouching behind the stairs out of the line of fire from the opening above his head, and so remained on guard, while some of those who had remained outside the house went for help. The A.G.A. was informed of what had happened, and he hastened to the place with further police and riflemen.

Ensign Quarry of the Ceylon Rifles begged to be allowed to storm the house with four picked volunteers, but Mr. Saunders was determined that there should if possible be no further loss of life, and he would not allow an attack to be made. The Sergeant came out of the house where he had done his duty bravely in preventing the escape of the murderers, and the place was surrounded on all sides.

The coach coming down from Kandy was stopped, and as the bandits' stronghold faced the main Colombo-Kandy road the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

passengers were not unwilling to get out and remain on the far side of the Mawanella bridge well out of gun shot.

The A.G.A. ordered his men to fire six shots at a plank in the front of the house, in the hope of smashing an opening and exposing the bandits' position, but the balls pierced through the wood without splitting it. At the sound of the shots the crowd of villagers who had collected began to fire guns into the air and to show signs of panic. Mr. Saunders, fearing that the courdon round the house might be broken, sent the coach back to Kandy for reinforcements. When these arrived, the police and riflemen set fire to the house, and the building was soon in a blaze, and it looked as if the two bandits must perish in the flames.

Someone in the crowd called to Sardiel to come out unarmed and surrender.

There was a pause while every man gazed at the burning house. Then there was a parley between the besieged robbers and the police. Sardiel and his confederate were in great dread of the riflemen and they refused to come out until they were promised protection from them. This was granted on condition that the bandits would first throw out their firearms. One by one the guns and pistols were thrown from the upper window of the house, and presently Sardiel limped out through the smoke followed by Mamalay.

Mr. Saunders went forward and arrested them, and they were bound with cords. Sardiel showed anger when he saw Sirimalle among the crowd. He is said to have called out to him,

"You made us commit murder by being a spy. I wish I had shot you instead of the others."

The prisoners were put into a cart, and carried up to Kandy where crowds gathered along the road to see the man who had so long been a terror to the countryside. They were surprised to see such a small and apparently insignificant figure. One witness described Sardiel as a man who could easily have been mastered by a boy of fifteen.

On April 4th, Sardiel and Mamalay were tried and condemned to death by Mr. Justice Thompson. On April 7th great crowds of every nationality and class poured in to Kandy from the earliest hours of the morning to see the end.

"A few minutes before 9 a.m. Sardiel and Mamalay left the gaol accompanied by the fiscal's officers, the executioner, and others, and the military guard was nearly three times as strong as that which usually attends criminals to the gallows."

While in prison Sardiel had been baptized, and he was accompanied by the Rev. Father F. F. Duffo, while a Mohamedan Priest attended Mamalay.

"Both men showed evidence of fear and of complete breakdown, the Moorman in particular being deeply affected.

"Sardiel walked somewhat steadily, however, reading from a book that he held in his hands, but the Moorman rarely lifted his head."

"Upon reaching the grounds, Sardiel addressed the crowd from the gallows, and begged them to take warning from his fate. The Moorman spoke a few words which were inaudible. Kneeling before the Priest for a final blessing Sardiel took his place, and when the drop fell his last words were the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer."

He had paid a heavy debt for a desperate gamble. The charm that was said to guard his life was cracked at last, but by a gentle compensation his few acts of kindness to a few poor people have left a halo of romantic generosity round the name of a man whose hands were frightfully stained with the blood of brave men. He had taken nearly a score of human lives in eighteen months.

* * * *

I turned to the right at Mawanella and passed down the road bedside the Maha Oya until I came to Attapitiya where the old route from Colombo to Kandy crossed the river by a ford. It is a beautiful road where green banks run down to the stream, and the deep shade of jungle trees falls upon the running water. I came to the old ford at Attapitiya where, in 1818, a British Agent of Government was established. I saw the grassy hillock covered with coconut trees where stood his bungalow, and the court house, and the barracks for the troops. Close to it were the remains of the ramparts of Fort King which guarded the ford. Many an army had crossed the ford before the British set a guard upon it. At this very spot Raja Sinha I, son of Mayadunne, won one of his earliest victories against Widaya Raja, King of Kandy, who had come down against Sitawaka with his Kandyan troops.

Peace gradually settled down over the Four Korales after 1818, and in 1833 the military officer at Attapitiya was replaced by a civil officer and the last garrison, six men and an officer, were withdrawn.

But I had come down to Attapitiya to climb Battalegalla, or the Bible Rock. I turned back a little way along the road and turned to the left up an estate road until I came to the foot of the Rock. Here I found a guide, an old man with grey hair and grey moustache, who wore a white shirt and a brightly coloured cloth. He was old, but I have never seen anyone more nimble on two small supple barefeet. I toiled up the hill through the rubber trees until we came to the edge of the jungle.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Here I scrambled mostly on all fours through a long tunnel under the scrub by which the cattle find their way to the summit of the rock. My guide flitted up in front without the least effort as if he were the guardian spirit of the hill. I arrived at the top wet through and looking like a murderer, being covered with blood from leech bites, but my imperturbable guide, grey headed, gentle eyed and sympathetic stood on the crest cool and dry and unbitten, shading the sun from his head with a large black umbrella.

He told me that there were no remains of ancient buildings upon the hill; but two caves which he pointed out upon the north side, had acquired the reputation of having sheltered Walagam Bahu when he fled from the northern invaders.

I sat down under a small tree and looked out over the wide green map through which the Colombo-Kandy road wound its invisible way. I had looked at the Bible Rock so often from that road that it seemed strange that I could scarcely see a trace of the road from the Rock. There was Ora Kanda to the west, and the little bump of Kegalle beyond it. To the north were the Three Sisters and Alagala. Utuwankanda was a flat smudge at my feet. Away to the east I could see the railway and the road converging between Balane and Belungala, the watch towers of the Kadugannawa Pass. Far off behind them, the hills of Kandy showed against the eastern sky.

The top of the rock forms a long narrow hog's back with a puddle of water in the middle of it which serves the cattle that feed upon the coarse grass growing among the boulders. At each end of the rock, north and south, are the grand precipices that make it look like a book to travellers coming down the Kadugannawa Pass.

My guide showed me a cairn upon the highest point of the rock which had been used as a trig station. Away to the south he pointed out the Maha Oya tumbling over the Ahupiniella falls, "the mist that comes out of the sky."

"In 1931" he said, "I was upon this rock in the night. There was a great bonfire here, and lamps were lit all around. There was a Bana Preaching. More than a thousand people were gathered on the hill. We stayed till one in the morning and then we went away."

Together we sat out a chew of betel for him, and a pipe for me. Then I used the stem of the pipe to remove eight or nine leeches from my legs, and we climbed down again to the foot of the rock.

* * * *

I went on along the road towards Kandy, and turned aside at the 59th mile stone, and presently found myself standing on the verandah of an old house surrounded by ancient trees and groves of coconut palms, and looking out on to a broad sweep of paddy fields with a muddy stream winding through the middle of them. The house was the Walauwa of the ancient family of Milligoda. Here lived Molligoda Disawa who became Second Adigar to King Sri Wickreme Rajasinha in 1812, when Pilama Talauwa was executed. It was a precarious honour that he had received from the king for he became a leader among the Kandyan people at a time when the monarchy was tottering to its fall, and the court was a hot-bed of hatred and conspiracy.

I looked out on to the wide open space before the Walauwa and tried to picture what it must have looked like when the Adigar Molligoda paid a visit to his country house. I thought of the bustle and excitement among the retainers at the back of the house, bringing in their contributions and preparing the feast for the Adigar and his company: there was the crowd of tenants and suitors pressing round the head of the stone steps that lead down to the path across the paddy fields. In a sheltered house specially built for the occasion sat the Buddhist priests apart, waiting patiently to greet the Adigar. The path to the house was decorated with coconut leaves, and fruit, and flowers, and the dhobi was hurrying about anxiously wondering if he had supplied sufficient white cloth to please his lord. Then the cracking of whips was heard and everybody looked along the path over the fields until the Adigar's elephants came in sight with his whip crackers before them, and there was the Adigar himself upon his state elephant. The procession came solemnly across the green paddy fields, and up the steps and passed out of sight within the walled court of the Walauwa.

Now the whole house is quiet and peaceful in its secluded garden and the world goes rushing by upon the Colombo-Kandy road two miles to the northward but it was not so in the days of the Kandyan Kings. Molligoda Walauwa was then upon the main road from the low country to Kandy. The old route crossed the Maha Oya at the Attapitiya ford, passed the ancient temple at Alutnuwara, and going right past Molligoda Walauwa crossed the present Colombo-Kandy road and climbed up to the fort of Balane, which guarded the pass into the hill country. Many times the dwellers in this house must have fled before advancing armies of Sinhalese, Portuguese, and British soldiers; and many times they must have welcomed and joined Kandyan armies marching down in high hope towards Colombo and the coast.

The Four Korales in which Molligoda Walauwa stands was one of the most prolific parts of the Kandyan Kingdom, rich in people and cattle and corn, and fruit. There were no less than eighteen Walauwas in the district.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

There came a day when Molligoda Adigar was sent down into these parts to quell the rebellion of Ehelepola.

Some miles away across the valley there stands near the village of Ussapitiya, another Walauwa. This too, by the kindness and hospitality of the House, I was allowed to look round where I would. The house stands in the middle of its garden of fruit trees, and the lines of the old court yard can still be traced under the grass. I was told that the present building is something over a hundred years old. The walls are massive and thick, and the wood-work of the doors and windows is in the Dutch style. Under the house are two solid doorways built in the Kandyan manner which lead into a mysterious dark room which is called the dungeon where thieves are said to have been imprisoned in old days. I never saw a better place for the ghosts of old time to walk. Perhaps they do. There is an aristocratic peace and an atmosphere of forgotten history about this grand old house that should suit them well.

If there be ghosts here, one of them should be the shade of Keppitipola the lord of this Walauwa, and another the spectre of Ehelapola his brother-in-law who rebelled against Sri Wickrema Rajasinha.

Molligoda succeeded in crushing the rebels and he sent a number of prisoners to Kandy where they were executed. Ehelapola fled to Colombo to ask help of the British. On February 8th, after the terrible murder of Ehelapola's family in Kandy by Sri Wickrema Rajasinha, Molligoda went over to the British himself, and marched into their camp with his elephants, and the sun, moon and stars banner of the Four Korales, and the records of his Disawani.

He remained faithful to the decision he took that day, and when the Uva Rebellion broke out in 1815, he remained loyal to the British and refused to join his old enemy Ehelapola and Ehelapola's brother-in-law Keppitipola who became the leader of the Uva Rebellion. As a reward for their loyalty the rate of taxation on paddy lands in the Four Korales was reduced from the general rate of one-tenth to one-fourteenth part of the annual produce.

Molligoda showed his care for his own people by erecting small works and watch towers to protect them while they were cultivating their lands.

I walked round the verandah of the old house with its magnificent jak-wood beams, and old rough cut floor boards. It seemed a little incongruous at first to see cricketing groups hung up in the place where Molligoda had plotted and planned, and yet they are the symbols of a peace for which the whole land cried out in Molligoda's days, and for which it did not cry in vain.

Not far away from Molligoda Walauwa is the site of the Walauwa of Lewke Disawa. He was a famous warrior and his name appears as the builder or restorer of many viharas in the Four Korales. Yet all his courage and piety did not save him from the frenzied wrath of Sri Wickrema Rajasinha, who had him executed after the defeat of the king's forces at Hanwella in 1803, and his headless trunk was left unburied at the spot where he was put to death.

The Walauwa's massive doors and clumsy rafters rough hewn from single trunks, recall the days when saw and plane were unknown. A single beam, 30 ft. long, which formed part of the wood-worker of the house, served as a useful **edanda** to span a neighbouring streamlet when Mr. Bell, who wrote the Archaeological Survey of the Kegalla District, visited the place before 1892.

* * * *

Back on the Kandy road, I toiled on up the pass. The rocky banks beside the road gave back the roaring of the engine: the day was hot and the road was steep. I came to a place where streams of water ran across the road. A harassed father of a family was standing in a cloud of shimmering vapour pouring cold mountain water into an over-heated radiator: mother, indifferent to the vagaries of machinery was giving baby something to eat out of a newspaper package: a number of poor relations or retainers sat stolid and wedged in the back row: I counted seven children all talking and wriggling, and delighted with the adventure. Altogether it seemed that the old car had not done so badly, and deserved a cold drink half way up the pass.

I stopped at the crest of this hill opposite to the police station at Kadugannawa. The long toil of the pass was left behind and the car sent up a wisp of steam from its radiator as a prayer of thankfulness.

On the right hand side of the road a tall white monument rises a hundred feet above the heads of travellers to commemorate the man who built the road up the Kadugannawa Pass. I climbed up the bank and on to the wall that runs round the foot of the the monument. Facing the road is a large tablet which says:

> Captain W. F. Dawson, during the government of General Sir E. Barnes, G.C.B., Commanding Royal Engineer, Ceylon, whose science and skill planned and executed this road and other works of public utility, died at Colombo, 28th March, 1829.
>
> By a subscription among his friends and admirers in Ceylon this monument was raised to his memory 1832.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Major Skinner writes: "On the 28th of March, 1829, I lost a very dear friend, and the service of a most invaluable officer, in Captain W. Dawson, commanding Royal Engineers. The poor fellow died in my arms. The whole island mourned him. Wherever he was known he was dearly loved. Sir Edward Barnes had notwithstanding Dawson's junior rank, selected him for the position of C.R.E. which was a colonel's command, for Sir Ewdard knew, from his Peninsular experience of him, the great merit Dawson possessed as an officer. A singular coincidence occurred in reference to the monument erected to his memory on the rock of the Kadugannawa Pass, which was one of the triumphs of his skill. The foundation of this column was laid at the same time as that to the memory of His Royal Highness the Duke of York, late Commander-in-Chief, at the entrance of the Park at the end of Waterloo Place (London). The dimensions of these two monuments are identical, the only difference in them being that Dawson's monument is built of brick, whereas that erected......to the Commander-in-Chief is of granite. Dawson's remains were interred in a vault in Saint Peter's Church, Colombo."

I went round to the back of the monument and found a narrow doorway in the wall. Wooden steps wound upwards into the vertical brick tunnel where all was dark and oppressive as a tomb. I came down again to look for a light. Somebody was singing a shrill song in a house close by. I went to ask the singer for a lantern. In the house I found a cheerful school-boy teaching a caged mynah to sing. Whether the song was coming from the boy or the bird, I don't know, because it stopped abruptly when the stranger appeared.

"Can you," I said, "get me a light to go up the monument."

"I will get you one, and show you the way up" said the boy.

He went into the house and soon reappeared with a hurricane lamp in his hand.

"Your bird sings very nicely," I said.

"Yes" answered the boy, looking with pride at his bird, "he can sing, and he can say things. He can say "Paliang Yakko," and he smiled cheerfully at me as if to imply that I was not to take it personally if the bird should say the words at that moment. The bird sat on its perch with its impudent head on one side showing off its yellow mottling, and looking as if it could say far worse things than "paliang yakko" if it chose. However it only gave one shrill whistle, and we left it behind, and I went up into the darkness guided by the burning wick of the lantern.

I was disappointed with the view from the top of the monument. There was really no view at all. To the west the hillsides shut in the narrow gap of the pass and gave only a glimpse out across the foothills; and to the east the village of Kadugannawa was carrying on its busy life at our feet: the other two sides were shut in close by the neighbouring hills. The monument was not intended to be a view point, it commemorates a gallant gentleman who made history in Ceylon by bringing the first paved road into the hills.

I thought of that road and of all that it meant to the Island. The great Roman roads ran across Europe and were both a symbol and a reality of Roman rule. In exchange for a wild independence, the Roman roads let in law and order, knowledge of the outside world, new culture, science, and art, everything that the world had to offer which could make men's lives richer and nobler: they were a necessary prelude to building up of new nations and new civilizations. It was inevitable that sooner or later a road should climb the hills to Kandy. I suppose that no one who loves liberty can see the loss of independence, of which that road was the symbol, without some feelings of regret.

But the coming of the road was not an isolated event. Everywhere the world was growing smaller. In every direction roads were creeping into unknown corners. Men were being knit together and made dependent upon each other, by trade, by growing knowledge, by the press, by the telegraph, and especially by their own hungry searching spirits.

So the road climbed to Kandy. It had cost many human lives from fever and disease, from exposure and from wild beasts and snakes: and among the rest, among young officers fresh from England, and foremen and simple coolies and hardened old soldiers who died in the service, was Captain Dawson whose name appears on the monument, which every traveller sees as he comes to the top of the Kadugannawa Pass.

We toiled down the dark steps, round and round, until we came out into the dazzling sunlight once more.

I thanked my guide for his assistance.

"Paliang Yakko" said a shrill voice.

The boy smiled triumphantly at the brilliance of his pupil.

"Paliang Yakko, YAKKO."

I went down the path into the road and passed on my way towards Kandy.

* * * *

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

I turned to the left over the railway line just before Kadugannawa station, and running along the hillside for some distance, turned again to the left down a grass-grown road, which I followed till it began to dip into the gorge that runs down the hill I pulled up by the roadside, and climbed up the hill to the left through a carefully tended garden.

In the garden was a round contented looking man who was serveying his vegetable plots with great satisfaction.

"Will you," I said, "show me the way to the Balane Fort?"

He turned a large cheerful face to me, and I thought that he was as fine a specimen of a yeoman proprietor as I had seen.

"It's close here," he answered. "I often go there and you can see it from here. I will show you the way."

I asked him if he knew anything of the history of the fort.

"It was Raja Sinha's fort," he said. "He kept a guard there to watch against enemies coming up from Low Country, and there were always soldiers there in the old days. The name Balane means a look out, you know."

It had begun to rain, and we plodded up the hill together collecting clods of red mud on our feet as we climbed.

At the foot of a small hill covered with long patna grass, we came to a stone gateway slotted for a door, and behind it a tumbled down square of wall.

"This is the gateway of the old Fort," said my guide, "and if you go to the top of the hill you will find some old bricks and tiles lying about. I had this part cleared myself so that visitors could see how the fort lay. The school boys come up here sometimes from Kandy to see the place."

We climbed along the top of the loose stones that formed the wall and followed a narrow path to the top of the hill. The summit had been flattened at some time or other, and on the level platform were the remains of old buildings long since fallen to decay, so that only a few fragments remained.

This little fortress has held a very prominent place in the History of Ceylon. Through the broken stone archway at its entrance lay the old road to Kandy from the Low Country. This road stared from Sitawaka near Avissawella, and passed on through Gurugalla, and Hakurugalla to Ruanwella where there is still a fine old fortress; then on to Pindeniya and Arandura where stood the Dutch Fort towards which the captive Knox looked with longing eyes; then to Iddamalpana, Hettimulla, Diwella, Wakirigalla, Asmadala, and Galatava; it crossed the Maha Oya at Ussapitiya beside Attapitiya, and passed the great temple at Alutnuwara; it came through Ganetenne, crossed the present Kandy road and climbed up to Balane, whence it passed on by Gannoruwa and over the river to Kandy.

Perhaps the name road is too dignified a term for the old jungle path that followed this line: "Their roads," says Ribeiro, "are only broad enough to admit of one person going at a time, and therefore our armies could not march except in single file:" and yet this fifty odd miles of narrow winding path was so important that its course was marked by forts and garrisons for three centuries. Balane was perhaps the most important stronghold upon the route because it was the key to Kandy. The place used to be called Ukkotu-tenna. A Kadawata, or gate of thorns, was made here which sections of the villagers of Balane guarded for spells of one year, and reported all strangers to the Second Adigar. While they were engaged on this service they were exempted from taxes. (Report on the Kegalla District, Bell). Many a time the pass below the fort has resounded to the rattle of muskets and the roar of cannon as armies have fought for possession of the defences at the top of the hill.

In 1505 the Portuguese ships first appeared off Colombo and for some years Kotte and Sitawaka were the centre of war. In 1579 the fortunes of the Portuguese had sunk so low that Raja Sinha I. had them shut up in the city of Colombo. Karalliyadde Bandara, King of Kandy, had received help from the Portuguese, and in 1582 the watcher on the rock at Balane saw Raja Sinha's army climbing the hill along the road towards Kandy. The battle which set Raja Sinha upon the throne of Kandy was fought at Balane.

The next to pass the gate of Balane was a Sinhalese prince who had been baptized at Goa under the name of Don Philip. In his army was an an ambitious and able young man called Konappu Bandara, or, by the Portuguese, Don Juan, who was to see Don Philip placed upon the throne of Kandy with Portuguese help, and a fort built at Gannoruwa behind Balane, and was then to defeat the great Raja Sinha, turn against the Portuguese, overcome them, and make himself King of Kandy under the name of Wimaladharma I.

With the death of Raja Sinha I. the fortunes of Portugal began to rise and Balane saw in 1594 a force of Portuguese under de Souza escorting a Sinhalese princess, Dona Catherina, along the road to Kandy with a host of lascarines from

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Colombo. That Portuguese force never returned. The bones of its soldiers lie buried at Gannoruwa. Instead the Kandyan soldiers of Wimaladharma poured through the gate to stir up rebellion in the Low Country. Once again the Portuguese had to retreat to Colombo.

In 1611 the hill of Balane was once more held by the Portuguese forces under de Azevedo. He had been there twice before, but this time he won his way through the gate, sacked Kandy, and by retreating at once, returned in safety.

Bocarro records that in 1616 Balane was "put into better order; a large tank was constructed for the storage of water; and the dense forest which surrounded the fort was cleared to the distance of a musket shot, and a drawbridge constructed over the moat."

The fatal expedition of de Sa in 1630 does not seem to have passed by Balane, but after its defeat the Kandyan forces poured through the gate and the Portuguese were again besieged in Colombo.

Balane saw one more Portuguese army pass through the Kadawata, or gate of thorns, that guarded the entrance to the fort. In 1638 Diogo de Mello made his way up the pass, and like Souza, he never returned, but added his bones to those buried beneath the coconut palms at Gannoruwa.

After his defeat the thorn gate remained closed for over fifty years. Raja Sinha II. died in 1687. When the Dutch attacked the hill country in 1765 they feared to use the perilous Balane Pass and marched into Kandy from the north.

The Ceylon A. A. Book gives the latest note when it records for inquisitive travellers that "the fatal heights of Balane were finally stormed against the Kandyans by Lt. Col. O'Connel in February, 1815."

I looked out over the wide valley of Kegalla where the characteristic Kadugannawa view lay stretched out under the eye of the ancient watch tower. It looked wonderfully peaceful, a happy valley, green and fruitful. Thorn gates and jungle were all swept away, and the cannon balls were burried deep under the patna grass. Beside me stood the self-appointed guardian of the tumbled wall, the broken gateway, and a few odds and ends of bricks and tiles, who had cleared a part of the ruins so that visitors might see how the fort lay.

"I'm afraid there is not much left to see" he said looking down the glen towards the railway line.

"Do you ever dig up cannon balls, or anything else in your garden?" I asked.

He looked surprised at the question.

"No," he answered, "I have never found anything down there. There's nothing left except this fort."

And so all the desperate valour of the Portuguese and all the cunning strategy of the Kandyans had cancelled each other, and have left nothing behind but a heap of stones. The red earth of the garden at our feet looked like a wound in the hillside that was rapidly healing up as the green plants grew and flourished in the warm sunlight.

"It's a good work of yours to keep the court-yard of the Fort cleared, and I thank you for it on behalf of those who are interested in old Ceylon" I said.

My guide smiled and made no answer, and we returned together down the hill with the rain pattering like musket shots upon our umbrellas and the red mud clinging to our feet.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

CHAPTER XI.

Kandy—Nuwara Eliya Road, Gampola and Ramboda

I drove along to Gampola, where the sun plays out of the bluest skies upon the thin bright green strip of paddy fields and gardens betwwen the Mahaweli-Ganga and the road. Villagers clad in bright coloured sarongs walked continually along the road making for Kandy. In 1350 A.D. they would have turned their steps the other way towards Gampola, for it was then the Royal Capital, called Ganga-Siripura. For centuries Gampola, must have been a little hill village with its huts, and sweep of green fields, and perhaps the house of some petty chief commanding the whole. Then, when the Kings felt the need of the protecting hills, it suddenly stepped into history for a while. Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveller, visited King Bhuvaneka Bahu IV here in 1347 A.D. His was a peaceful mission, and it suited the quiet fertile valley of Gampola.

In 1615 a Portuguese army under Manuel Mascarenhas Homen passed through Gampola on a raid into the Kandyan territory.

As I stood upon the bridge overlooking the Mahaweli-Ganga I looked up at the blue mountains that rose southwards. When Raja Sinha II. sat upon the throne of Kandy, elephants beat flat their narrow paths through the thick jungle that covered those wild hills, and the villagers did not dare to return

late from their fields for fear of wild beasts. These same villagers in 1815, on March 2nd, the day after Napoleon escaped from Elba, heard a rumour that their King was deposed and that a proclamation had been read in Kandy. Ten years later some of these same villagers may have helped to fell the jungle upon a small piece of land near Gampola, where Mr. George Bird was laying out the first coffee estate in Ceylon.

Tennent, who had passed along this road in 1846, says that "the mountains exhibited a scene of wonderful activity and interest; the woodman's axe resounded in all directions, and the white smoke ascended in clouds from the slopes where the felled trees, after being withered and dried by the scorching sun, were fired to get rid of the fallen timber and clear the ground for the reception of the young coffee plants." In a very few years after that small start in Gampola the mighty breakfast thirst of the world had driven elephants and leopards up to the heights, and swept away miles of jungle; it dotted those blue hills with tiny bungalows and coffee stores; it sent thin white roads winding along every valley and over every rushing stream; it brought the railway at last up the steep pass to Kandy, and over the ridge to Gampola; it turned the open roadstead of Colombo into one of the finest harbours in the East.

The long invading lines of coffee trees captured hill after hill, until the wide empire of coffee covered over 176,000 acres of land in Ceylon.

It seems difficult to associate a black gowned preacher standing upon a tub in England, and a mob of drunken negroes in Jamaica, with the extraordinary growth of the coffee trade in Ceylon. Yet it is said that John Wesley, and his associate Whitfield, the bar-tender of Gloucester, who held spell-bound by the magic of their tongues thousands of ignorant miners and factory hands in the cities of England helped by their preaching against drunkenness to make coffee a popular drink. And as the demand grew, the sudden setting free of the slaves in Jamaica and their refusal to work on the West Indian coffee estates shut off one source of the coffee supply, and opened up a wide market to Ceylon.

As I looked again at the hills a party of coolies from some estate trudged wearily past me across the bridge, walking in single file, as if they were used to narrow pathways. They carried all their possessions upon their heads, and the leader of the party, an old white-haired man, bent and gnarled with a long life of toil, mumbled a chant to himself as he walked along. I could not help thinking that it was the patient labour of such men as these, and the enterprise and strength of

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

character of the planters that won the hills of Gampola from the jungle and transformed Ceylon into a wealthy and prosperous land.

Those pioneer coffee planters felt the height of successful achievement; but they also had to face the depth of despair.

Once I went into a tiny chemist's shop in a quaint old cathedral city in England. Behind the counter was an old white-haired man who beamed at me over his silver spectacles. We got talking, and I mentioned that I had been in Ceylon. He looked interested, and began to toy absently with a bottle of pills.

"Would you believe," he said, "that I once drove through Colombo in my own carriage and pair?" I looked at his baggy trousers and ancient and chemical stained coat. It did not seem probable. "Yes" he continued, "I had a coffee estate in Ceylon at Passara. That's near Badulla. I expect you know it. Well the slump came, and disease killed some of my trees, and I lost every penny I posessed." He smiled at me.

There was no regret in his voice. He had laid down his stakes and lost, and he took his loss like a man. "I would give a bit to see those parts again" he said. The spirit in him that had taken him to a far country and set him down alone in a fever-stricken jungle to win it for the use of man, or to die in the attempt was as strong as ever. He would give a bit to go to those parts again.

It was Sir Edward Barnes' roads as well as his personal enterprise that made possible the spread of coffee over the hills around Gampola, and his agent who cut the road up to Nuwara Eliya was Major Skinner. The latter has left an account of the making of the road which shows what a rough and dangerous task it was. "In tracing the Nuwara Eliya road, near to Poocellawa" he writes "we were at work the clearing party in advance opening the jungle, when a cry was heard that a pioneer had been bitten by a tic polonga.........I was at my instrument in the rear when the man was brought to me. What was I to do to him? In half an hour at the most we all supposed he would succumb to the poison; but listlessly to resign ourselves to inaction seemed too hard-hearted. My powder flask contained the whole extent of my field materia medica. How was it to be applied? I laid the man down, and with my pen-knife deeply scored the bitten arm. I then emptied a charge of gun powder over the wound and applied a match to it. I repeated this several times—it may have been five or six times, and sent the man away to the camp, never expecting to see him alive again. After our day's work was over I returned to my wigwam, and on going to look up the invalid, to my surprise and immense delight I found him alive and moving about. In two days he was as effective as any of my party.

"It was curious that the day this man returned to work another fellow was bitten by a splendid specimen of the same description of snake, which was killed and brought to me with the disabled man. This seemed intended to be a confirmation of the previous experiment, which I followed out exactly but with greater confidence. Neither of the men suffered pain from the surgical treatment, the parts operated upon having been numbed by the poison of the snakes. In this second case the man left me for the camp in better spirits than the first-named, and he was at work with the rest of the men the following morning." (Fifty Years in Ceylon, p. 89).

As I passed through Ramboda village I thought of Messrs. Worms, who planted a small patch of China tea near there soon after 1842. (J. Ferguson: Ceylon p. 73). The mountains rose steeply on either hand with many a rocky precipice under which the road wound with endless contortions. Those mountains would have interested Messrs. Worms. The lines of tea bushes crossed them with endless persistence, marching down on one side of the valley, clinging precarious upon the edge of every precipice, and forming up again at its foot; toiling up the other side over chasm and stream, until the ascent was too much even for them, and the jungle was left in possession of the crests of the ridges far above my head. Those unwavering lines conquering all opposition, as they drove their way across the country, seemed to me to be a memorial to the brave and enterprising men, planters and coolies who first opened up those wild and rugged hills and brought them into subjection to the simmering teapot.

Many good things began in China, such as printing, "black stones that burn," the magnetic compass, gunpowder and roast pork. Some years ago I heard the following story told in the course of a lecture delivered by a learned historian at Oxford. There was once a Chinese householder who sat at his meal of rice and chicken's giblets, while his wife waited dutifully upon him. "My dear," he said, "this water from our well is getting really too bad. It never used to taste like this. I wonder what has happened to it." "I told you, you had made the pig sties too near the well," said his wife. "Well, well, my dear, will you take some of those bitter leaves from the bushes behind the house, some of the dry ones and let them stand in the bucket before we drink it, and see if they will take away the bad taste. Perhaps a little boiling will help. Will you try boiling the water as well?" So at his next meal, all unconsciously, the Chinese householder became the first man on earth to drink a cup of tea, to taste the healing comfort creep-

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

ing almost unfelt over his tired nerves, as soft, delicate and unassuming as the touch of a woman's hand.

The old couple who received a present of tea from their son in the East, and who threw away the tea and ate the leaves, tasted China tea leaves. It must have been China tea that Dr. Johnson drank down in great bowlfuls with so much satisfaction. The tea that a party of young Americans, disguised as Mohawks, threw into the Boston harbour, was sent by the East India Company, and came from the hills of Assam. It must have been some of this East Indian tea that inspired Cowper to write the famous lines:—

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutter fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round;
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

Before the coming of tea the greater part of the Ramboda Pass was covered with jungle. "On the occasion of my first ascent" writes Tennent "the pass was rendered dangerous by the presence of a rogue elephant which infested it. He concealed himself by day in the dense forests on either side of the road, making his way during the darkness to the river below; and we saw, as we passed, marks on the trunks of the trees where he had rubbed off the mud after returning from his midnight bath. On the morning when I crossed the mountain a caffre, one of the Pioneer Corps, proceeding to his labour, came suddenly upon this savage at a turning in the road. The elephant, alarmed at the intrusion, lifted him with its trunk and beat out his brains against the bank."

The sun sank in a rainy golden blaze on my right, and on the left the moon came up over a rumpled blanket of cloud and lit up the hills with a ghostly green light. At the top of the pass, when the traveller has long since given up hope that the turns and twists of the road can ever end, the jungle suddenly closes in upon him. It is a weird fairy tale jungle, flat topped and twisted, with wild moss-bearded trees whose gnarled trunks and knotted waving arms tell stories of storms and howling winds. Every tree looked like an old and crippled man with twisted limbs and evil heart.

The car came over the crest and began to slide down hill again, in a silence which was a relief after the long climb. I could see the jungle covered slopes of Pedru on my left hand, and presently the curtain of the hills parted and the long valley of Nuwara Eliya opened up below me, pale and ghostly under the moon, but all twinkling with a hundred lights that spoke of fires, and supper, and good company, hot baths and beer, and everything else that is needed to comfort a traveller, and to begin a holiday in the hills.

* * * *

I looked out of my window in the morning and saw the trailed mist creeping over the head and shoulders of Pidurutalagala. The lake, white, and cold and beautiful was staring up at the sky out of its frame of dark green pointed cypress trees. A thousand frogs were croaking a song in praise of last night's shower of rain. Heavy sluggish trout were rising from time to time and making wide rings in the faintly rippling water, while gaping goggle-eyed carp stared at the line of motionless fishermen seated on the shore.

Some people hate Nuwara Eliya. It makes them sneeze and buy bottles of salts. Alas for them! But what a climate. Fretful children from the low country begin to eat and fight in an astonishing manner; and for jaded livers, work and play and feeding become as easy as the promises of health tonics advertised in newspapers.

I made my way to the park. Everybody in Nuwara Eliya is "dressed up" and on holiday. We walk about vigorously, but not as if we intended to get anywhere. We open our lungs and breathe in the mountain air, and throw out our chests. We have thrown off ten years in the night, and the flowers are brighter, the women more beautiful, and all the world grown young again. On the grass the ayahs are carrying on the age old race with over-clothed children who strive to fall into the ponds among the pink lotuses and bright yellow water lilies. There is a splash and a scream. Master George has heaved a brick into the pond to terrify nanny. He has achieved some success. Nanny has screamed. But the splash from the pond has covered his pale blue overcoat with green and slimy water. This is the cause of nanny's scream. She is long since hardened to resounding splashes. Master George is born off kicking to change his clothes.

I go to the foot of Pedru, and begin to climb up to the top of Ceylon's highest mountain. It has no history as men count history, and nobody but Tennent knows the meaning of its name. The path winds up through shaggy moss-grown jungle where yellow-eared bulbuls call to one another as they drive through the tree tops in little parties beating up insects. I pass a seat where two nuns with rosy apple cheeks are looking out over the broad valley of Nuwara Eliya, and discussing the view in animated French. The path is easy and well shaded so that it makes a suitable walk for holiday-makers like myself. I pass the 7,500 foot stone, and then the 8,000 foot stone. Two hundred and ninety-two feet to go. The trees become lower

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

and lower as the wind has clipped them down nearer and nearer to the hill side, and flattened out their tops as a gardner levels off the top of a hedge. Then the jungle suddenly opens out along an edge of pale green patna and in a few steps I stand at the foot of the little cairn that marks the summit of the mountain.

This is certainly one of the grandest and most mysterious of mountain-tops. Other mountains owe their grandeur to naked rocks and the barrenness of eternal snows, but Pedru is clothed almost to the summit in a mantle of green jungle untouched and unfrequented since the world began. If you leave the single man-made track that leads up the hill, there are no roads but the elephant roads a thousand years old, and no paths but game paths where the elk were picking their dainty way when Vijaya landed in Ceylon. A man can be alone on top of Pidurutalagala, and feel his smallness and his greatness.

I stood alone on the peak feeling the chill wind blowing up from the valley. It seemed impossible that only sixty-four miles away men were hurrying past the clock tower and taking off their coats in the offices of Colombo: and yet there was Colombo marked on the toposcope only 64 miles away, as the crow flies. I followed the circle of pointing arrows on the plan. To the South-West is Adam's Peak which has been showing glimpses of its lonely splendour all the way up the path. There Dondra Head is marked where a tiny flash may be seen on a clear night coming up from the lighthouse. To the South the long line of the Horton Plains crowned by Kirigalpotta blocks out the low country: but you can see the white dots of the buildings of Diyatalawa, and Bandarawela below them. Eastward of them in a grey mist of distance lies Hambantota and the dry stream beds of Yala where the deer come down to drink at the puddles: and then the wide country of Bintenne. It seems hard to believe that bears and wild buffaloes are wandering about down there under the mist, and veddhas are scaling rocks to gather honeycombs. To the Eastward Namunukula stands guard over Badulla town, and beyond it to the North-East the Horabora Wewa can be seen glistening in the sunlight at the foot of the hills of Teldeniya: the elephants are waiting for the sun to go down to bathe in that sheet of water. Beyond the tank, out towards Batticaloa and the mouths of the Mahaweli Ganga in the Bay of Trincomalee, stretch those wide hunting grounds where Rogers, and Baker, and Sullivan, and Storey had their wild adventures which so many have shared in comfortable arm chairs, without the fever and the sweat and the danger, but with some of the glorious excitement that moved those mighty hunters.

The man who made the toposcope could see gunner's quoin, but his view to the North was shut in close by the hills above Kandy, until he sighted the elephant rock at Kurunegala, and saw the sea sparkle beyond Negombo.

As I stood beside the toposcope a party of scouts came toiling up the path and climbed on to the cairn, each trying to be the highest person in Ceylon. One small boy came towards me and stood looking down at the living map of the whole Island stretched out beneath his feet.

"Can you see your home?" I asked him with the fatal patronage of a grown up.

"No," he answered politely.

"I will show it to you" I said: "where do you live?"

"I live in Singapore" he answered without a shade of mockery in his voice.

"Yes, but when you are in Ceylon, where do you live?"

"I live in Jaffna" he said.

Jaffna was about the one place not mentioned in the plan on the toposcope. He was a pleasant little boy, much too unsophisticated to know that he was making a fool of an unwary "uncle"; he even: looked with great eagerness to try and see a veddah in Bintenne and an elephant beside the Horabora Wewa.

I had a gossip upon the hill top with the scouts and afterwards, with pointed sticks they collected all the pieces of waste paper that lay about the cairn, and burned them in a fire. There was a mighty blaze. Hats off to that troop, and boots on to the litter makers.

I went round behind the buildings of the Nuwara Eliya Golf Club to a little walled in enclosure, and lifting the gate off its hinges to get round a heavy padlock on the other side I entered the Old Cemetery. The tombs were moss-grown and battered with age and long neglect, and among them stood an old horse that reminded me very much of Tom Pearce's grey mare. She looked up from cropping the grass on the graves and stared at me with ghostly eyes.

In one corner of the cemetery was the tomb I had come to look for. Upon the stone I could just make out the letters

MAJOR ROGERS

I suppose that Major Rogers suggests to most people the great hunter who killed over 1,400 elephants and was struck by lightning in a house beside the Haputale-Badulla road "because he killed the sacred elephant," and whose tomb was struck by lightning even after his death to mark the anger of the god. I

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

could see before me a great crack right across the stone which has been mended with cement long ago. But Rogers was far more than a hunter. He was a pioneer administrator in Badulla and his tremendous personality made such an impression on those who were virtually his subjects that he became a kind of legendary hero.

Under the stone at my feet lay the dust of that strong heart that knew how to rule and yet understood how to win men's reverence and love: it beat no faster as eye and hand held the sights steadily upon the forehead of many a charging elephant. Rogers was a true type of those old time civil servants to whom Ceylon owes so much, and who are seldom now remembered.

Outside the cemetery I met a man whose clear eye and ruddy complexion showed that he was a local inhabitant.

"Yes" he said, "Rogers" tomb is in there. It's a pity they don't look after the place better."

He was a healthy looking man, a good advertisement for Nuwara Eliya, and one who took a pride in the town and felt that "they," meaning no doubt "the government authority" were leaving their job half done. Even the severest dose of democracy will not remove the blame for all ills from a mysterious and extraneous power called "they."

"There is one interesting thing about the cemetery that you may have noticed," said my friend. "Did you see a kind of depression or ditch all round the outer wall?"

I said that I had noticed it.

"Well, that is an old elephant moat, all filled in and covered over now, but once wide and deep enough to stop an elephant crossing. When this golf course was covered with patna and jungle nearly a century ago, the moat was made round the place to keep the elephants from getting in and damaging the graves."

I thanked my friend, and we parted, agreeing that it was about lunch time. That is one of the great features about Nuwara Eliya, to be so very conscious that it is about lunch time.

Dr. Davy is the first traveller who has left a written account of Nuwara Eliya. In 1819 he came over the hills from Uva and rediscovered the lonely valley hidden under the jungle-covered slopes which came down to grassy patnas and a winding swampy stream which is now under the lake. He and his bearers walked along the edge of the swamps startling the snipe from the open pools, and disturbing clouds of mosquitoes which filled the marshy ground. Dr. Davy found Nuwara Eliya entirely uninhabited. He and his line of men passed through the valley, and left it once more buried in the silence of the hill jungles.

What its history was before, no one knows. There are remains of irrigation works close by upon the hill sides, and traces left by wandering parties looking for gems and iron ore. In the Kachcheri at Nuwara Eliya there is an inscribed stone which was found not far from the present town. The letters on the stone give it a date between 900 and 1000 A.D. and the inscription is part of the dedication of a Buddhist vihara.

The name Nuwara seems to show that at some time the valley was the home of some royal personage. Tennent says that Nuwara Eliya "had been the retreat of one of the Kandyan Kings, who fled thither from the Portuguese about the year 1610." Some say that Dona Catherina was a fugitive here at one time. The best authorities connect the two names Nuwara Eliya, and Sita Eliya at the foot of Hakgala, with the legend of Rama and Sita. Many a battle has been fought over the "Royal plains", and the "City of Light" has been demolished and rebuilt again and again: but the secret of the meaning of the name Nuwara Eliya is yet undiscovered.

After Davy's party retired in 1819, the elephants were left in peace to brave a night temperature of 36°, and to wander along their ancient mountain roads undisturbed. The leopard passed like a ghost along the edge of the swamp and over the patnas of the race course, and made the elk stamp and bark to each other in the garden of the Grand Hotel.

In 1826 the plain of Nuwara Eliya was discovered once more by some officers who were out elephant hunting, and the report of its situation and climate came to the ears of the indefatigable Governor Barnes. In 1829 the road topped the ridge above the Ramboda Pass and wound its way down through the forest to the plain. Soon the grassy banks above the mountain swamp were dotted with little white cottages and barracks thatched with paddy straw, whose red brick chimneys sent their wisps of blue wood smoke up into the sunlight. The gardens around these houses, where the children of convalescent soldiers played, were soon filled with lilies, scarlet geraniums, roses, poppies and carnations, and behind the houses were neat potato patches and beds of peas and cabbages, carrots, turnips and beans. Today in those same garden patches after long importation of seed from Europe you can see the familiar English weeds growing, groundsel, chickweed, dandelions, and buttercups, and the dainty little temperate grasses. On the patnas around the new cottages and gardens the dark green rhododendron patched with bright red blossoms held its ancient sway, all gnarled and twisted with the long battle of life as the oldest inhabitant should be.

* * * *

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

"Baker's Farm, Mahagastotte" said the notice by the road side. I turned in at the gate and ran the car up the drive to pay a visit to the Ceylon home of Sir Samuel Baker. Presently I found myself standing in the middle of a cabbage patch with a number of broken bricks and tiles before me and a solitary ivy-covered ruin of a chimney behind. Samuel Baker had conceived the idea of making an English village upon the hills of Nuwara Eliya, and he had explored all the surrounding country and chosen the land round Mahagastotte for his venture.

"I stuck my walking stick into the ground," he writes "where the gentle, undulations of the country would allow the use of the plough. Here then the settlement was to be." I was standing on the spot, now a vegetable garden, where Baker set down his stick,. As he stood there a specially chartered ship was sailing steadily towards Ceylon bearing the following cargo:—a bailiff with his wife and daughter, and nine other emigrants including a blacksmith; farming implements, seeds of all kinds, and saw mills; a half-bred bull (Durham & Hereford); a well-bred Durham cow; three rams (a Southdown, Leicester, and Cotswold), a thoroughbred entire horse by 'Charles XII', a small pack of fox hounds; and a favourite grey hound ('Bran').

Out of the cargo Baker was constructing in his mind a model farm and village amongst the deserted jungles of Nuwara Eliya. With unflagging energy he turned his dream into a reality. By the courtesy of his family I held in my hand drawings made by Mrs. Baker of his homestead and a plan of his farm when it was completed. An elephant drew a cultivator with a harrow behind it and cut through the stubborn patnas until the Moon Plains waved under broad fields of tender wheat, and oats, and barley. The elk and hogs got their own back on Sir Samuel for many a wild chase and fierce death struggle against the jaws of his hounds and his long hunting knife, by making night raids upon his fields and devouring the whole of his first grain crops. But he persevered, and though the wheat went all to straw, the oats gave a fair yield, and the barley supplied the Brewery behind the house. There on the plan were the Malt Store and Office, the Bottling House and Cooperage, the Brewing House, the Fermenting House and Beer Store, and behind them the Tool House formerly the Elephant Stable, and behind it the Slaughter House.

It must have been very pleasant to pay a visit to Squire Baker in those spacious days, and to see his farm and his village and his house filled with magnificent hunting trophies, and to try a glass of his home brewed ale.

Sir Samuel Baker is said to have shot eleven elephants before breakfast one morning: he and three friends certainly accounted for 104 in three days. It is hardly necessary to say that he was a benefactor and not a murderer. He is no more to be blamed than the man who nets rabbits in Australia or an English Farmer shooting young rooks in spring. He was very different from some of our modern murderers of teal, snipe and deer. Either the elephant or the villagers' rice crop must go. The jungle was fighting its ancient battle against the hand of man. The babies had to go hungry on one side or the other, and the hunter felled the great jungle mother and steeled his heart against the bleating calf that called in vain to the warm carcass that lay bleeding on the ground.

Baker and other hunters hunted for sport, but they frequently went to the help of harassed villagers—not always voluntarily. In his book "The Bungalow and the Tent", Sullivan tells how a village tracker undertook to lead him and his two companions to a "herd of elephants". He conducted them to a thick jungle where dwelt a dangerous rogue that had been annoying the people around for months past. When the rogue was roused the wily villager disappeared and left the hunters to carry on. Which incidentally they did. Two or three heavy bullets from their smooth bore guns were buried in the skull of the charging rogue, and he turned and vanished into the jungle and was never seen again.

Sir Samuel Baker spent eight years in Ceylon, the story of which he has left in his two fascinating books. He afterwards used the perseverance and forest craft that he had learned in this country when he led an expedition up the Nile and discovered, and named, Lake Albert Nyanza. Subsequently he became Governor of the Sudan, immediately before General Gordon, and the story of his work there is told in his biography.

Baker's Farm, and his house, and his brewery are all gone now.

"We have nothing of his but an old iron harrow" said the gentleman who showed me round: "Some of his trophies are in Dublin Museum and some in Exeter Museum. There are none left here."

What does it matter? Baker's bold experiments had their value in their day, and the time may come when they will be valuable again. Meanwhile, Ceylon may claim to have given the best part of his education to man who made history in his day.

It was almost dark as I found my way back to Nuwara Eliya. The Lake was already asleep under a white blanket of mist in its bed among the hills. There was perfect peace around.

The line of fishermen was still there, but since the morning there were two more motionless figures staring at two more unmoving floats. Between them sat a strange object. I went a little closer to see it more clearly. It was a tabby cat,

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

perched upon a stone in a delicate posture of repose, and dreaming no doubt Freudian symbols of fish between long blanks of pure slumber. I hope that some goggle eyed carp answered the mute appeal.

The shadow of the hills fell deeper upon the lake and the last rays of daylight shone on the bosom of the clouds. A blackbird piped his evening tune from the topmost branch of a cypress tree, and the frog's diabolical evensong grew sleepier and sleepier until it died away altogether. The distant chirruping of insects came from the black wall of trees above the water, and the call of a snipe came down from overhead and was answered by another call far up the lake. Darkness came and chill wind crept up the valley. I walked back with silent footsteps to look for the blazing wood fire and a bed with blankets.

CHAPTER XII.

Hakgala, Ella, Bandarawela, Diyatalawa, Badulla, Bibile and Batticaloa Road

The car glided past the Nuwara Eliya lake lying in ghostly moonlight in the expectant stillness that comes before dawn. A hare skipped along in front of the head lights and bounced up the bank into the shelter of the tea bushes. An Indian darter sailed over the pool below the lake, and a fat trout sucked down his early breakfast in the centre of wide rippling rings. The jungle of the pass was still in shadow as I passed down the hill but the rising sun had just lit up the rock of Hakgala on the other side of Sita Eliya.

I swung up the drive to the right and was soon walking through the dim shadow where the jungle has been tamed into the gardens of Hakgala. As I passed through that deep green shade under the tree ferns I thought of a tall gentleman dressed in black, with a heavy falling chin under his wide mouth and hooked eagle nose, and a pair of strong humorous eyes which could see into the future. He was Dr. G. H. K. Thwaites of Peradeniya. He was looking round the jungle in this spot just before 1860 to find a good place to grow his young Cinchona plants, because he had a dread that all the miles of coffee trees that grew upon the hills around would one day disappear, and that the island might need something to replace them with. Ceylon owes a great debt to those keen eyes of his.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

The jungle throws its great green arms right round the gardens of Hakgala and the wild elephants come so close to them that the gardens have to be fenced off from the wilds outside. The path to the peak leads up past a tiny summer-house where lizards feast on the crumbs left by picnic parties; through a plantation of Australian gum trees—this is their nursery in Ceylon whence they have spread far over the mountains—; up through aged bearded jungle, past a little pond where the monkeys hoot at the intruder, and on to a wide hill-side where the rush of the wind has kept the jungle down waist high.

As I crossed this open space I was surprised to hear on the opposite slope a loud hissing snort that echoed between the two Peaks. I searched the jungle for a waving branch that might indicate the presence of an elephant. But there was no elephant, only a man in a white shirt with naked brown legs walking slowly among the undergrowth. My mind was running upon elephants, and the more I looked at him the more furtive his movements seemed to be and the more I became convinced that he was stalking something. For some time I watched him, expecting every moment to hear a shot or the rush of an animal. Then suddenly there was another movement beside him, a faint brown movement of something that fitted the landscape so perfectly that it could only be seen when it moved. At the same instant my man resolved himself into the fine white scut on the hind quarters of a female elk. There were two of them, one with her back to me, and one sideways on. The sound I had heard was the stag calling his womenfolk up into the fastnesses of the peak away from the daylight intrusion of man. He, the cunning old devil, never showed so much as a hair of his body, though I searched the whole hillside for him.

The road leaves the Hakgala Gardens and turns down hill, winding in and out with every kind of twist and contortion, through the wooded gorge, among gardens full of fruit trees, round the edge of bare patnas, over and under green ladders of paddy fields laid against the open hill sides. The shoulders of the mountains fall away on either hand to open out the road in front as fast as they shut it in behind. Villages appear, where lazy unhappy looking dogs drag themselves reluctantly out of the roadway. Lines of boutiques selling curry stuffs, cloth, and arrack, slip by. The road begins to straighten and grow less steep. The air becomes warmer.

A line of houses appears on the left hand and I pass through the village of Welimada, and then at last I come out upon the wide downs, of Uva, miles of them, lying open and green to the sky. "The Province of Ouvah" says Knox, "is a country well watered, the Land not smooth, neither the Hills very high, wood very scarce, but what they plant about their houses. But great plenty of Cattle, their land void of wood being the more apt for grazing............ In the country grows the best Tobacco that is on this Land. Rice is more plenty here than most other things."

I stood upon the grass a couple of hundred yards from the road and watched the shadows of the clouds creep across the level downs and up the hill sides. The spot was wonderfully grand and peaceful. On the road an old white-haired man was going by on a bicycle pedalling vigorously up hill. The air of Uva is good and bracing. That old man's grandfather might perhaps remember that, as a boy, he saw smoke rising from the villages of Uva and trees cut down and water channels breached, and that he and his family fled into the jungle. The Uva rebellion of 1818, and the devastation that followed it, left this country like a wilderness, so that when Dr. Davy passed through it in 1819 he found most of the houses in ruins and the hill-sides almost destitute of inhabitants. There is no trace left now of that tragic affair except for the mouldering stones of the forgotten Fort MacDonald perched on the hill-side above the Nuwara Eliya—Badulla road, its walls almost completely buried under scrub.

I left Welimada, and entered the gorge of the Uma Oya. The gorge is quite unique, and is only another example of how Ceylon can surprise the traveller with a new and unexpected beauty round the corner. I had never seen that deep winding valley before, nor looked down on to the boulders washed bare by the stream in time of flood, and now twisting and turning the writhing water into labyrinths of white foam. The patnas fell steeply to the rocky bed of the stream, and bright green terraces of paddy climbed step by step up the slope to meet those little winding channels of life-giving water which the men of Uva make with such marvellous cunning.

After leaving the gorge the road climbs the hill and falls again to Hali Ela, where it is shaded under those trees which used to be planted along all the high roads of Ceylon, and which now are everywhere growing old and being cut down one by one as they hang more and more precariously over the heads of passers by.

At Hali Ela I turned southward in order to see what I could find along the road that leads to Bandarawela.

* * * *

If ever you come to travel on the road that runs between Passara and Bandarawela, do not fail to turn aside and look in upon the resthouse at Ella. I left a very ordinary mountain road and ran up the sandy track until it ended in a modest little roof built upon eight wooden pillars over the drive, as if one car at a time was the most that could be expected to halt in such a

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

remote corner of the hills. I had heard much of Ella, and I walked round to the front of the resthouse in silent expectation. From the little patch of green turf that lies at the foot of the garden I looked through the Ella Gap. What a reward for a long and toilsome journey. On one side the dark rutted cliff falls from the green patnas on its summit with a fearful dizzy leap out of sight into the gorges where the turbulent infant stream of the Kirindi Oya leaps and gambols among the rocks. On the other side the green hills dotted with trees fall more gently and bend their shaggy sides to the long windings of the valley. No promised land ever had a more perfect setting than the long sweep of country that ran out from the mountain gap over the foot hills, across the green jungle plain, by Kataragama Peak on the West, and Chimney Pot Hill on the East, into the hazy distance of the Yala Game Sanctuary, until it ended in the pale blue line of the sea on the far south-eastern horizon.

Long bars of sunlight and deep shadow crept across the green landscape sometimes touching a distant sheet of water into light and then darkening it again as the glory passed on to an emerald patch of paddy fields or hid behind the distant hills, and peeped out again upon a square mile of chequered jungle tree tops.

As I looked at this vision a great eagle was circling over the gap, and uttering his plaintive wail from the sky, like a spirit of the mountains that had lost his way and wandered into an enchanted world.

"Can you see the road that we came along down there?" asked a voice behind me.

I looked round and saw a small boy pointing out something in the valley to his sister who stood beside him on the resthouse steps.

It seemed all wrong to me that there should be a road made with stones, and tar, and a steam-roller anywhere in that wonderful valley, but there was the Wellawaya-Pottuvil road far down below us, and I had to make the most of it.

I went to speak to the new-comers. The boy was all impudence and activity, and his sister was a compound of soft eyes and smiles. They made a goodly pair. Their parents were inside the resthouse having forty winks in two long chairs.

"We are going to see Sita's cave," said the sister, "and then we are going to climb that hill over there."

"I am sure I can see an elk that side by that big rock" said the small boy, and his eyes came round towards the field-glasses in my hand, with which I had been examining the country round; "Do you see it? It's walking now, and I can see its horns on its head."

I buckled up the field-glasses firmly in their case. An elk on those wild headlands was just what was wanted to complete the picture, and I was not going to allow my field-glasses to turn it into a village cow.

"I think you're right", I said; "it looks like an elk. Perhaps you will see it go off at full gallop over the patna when you climb the hill."

"We will signal to you from the top if we see it" said soft eyes. Presently father and mother came out of the resthouse and the family party gathered themselves together and set out to climb the hill.

Two hours later I was making elaborate signals to four black dots, two stationary, and two in rapid motion, upon the very brink of the precipice.

I searched in vain for the history of Ella. It is one of the blessed countries that has none. All I could find was an old map of early British times, which marked the road passing up direct from Wellawaya to Ella, and a yellow faded notice hung up in the resthouse which announces that "The Buffalo coach will leave for Haputale at 8.45 in the morning."

* * * *

It was towards evening that the little car toiled up the last slope before Bandarawela town. A storm hung upon the mountain side in a dark threatening mass like the cyclops in Turner's picture: only its edges were pierced by long beams of sunlight that fell in circles of ghostly green on the paddy fields, and climbed slowly up the hill side as the sun sank.

Upon the crest I met a priest walking up from his little stone church to the vicarage upon the hill behind. His white beard swept his chest and he looked down upon me with his grave eyes from his six foot and odd inches, and made me feel rather like a choir-boy who has been out fishing on two consecutive Sundays.

We began to talk together.

"Do you know the names of the peaks over there?" he asked, sweeping his arm across the western horizon: "there are the Horton Plains with Kirigalpotta behind them. And there is Ohiya and the ridge of Pattipola. Beyond them you can see Mount Pedru on a fine day. To the right you see Hakgala Rock, which you passed on your way down from Nuwara Eliya."

The solemn reproving eyes came down from the horizon and rested on me again. My mind went rushing back to the catechism. Then he looked beyond me at the car, and a happy glint of humour came into his eye, as he looked at the angle of her off mudguard that had had an encounter with the hub of the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

wheel of a bullock cart on the Puttalam road, and heard the last gurglings of her radiator as she began to cool down after the climb.

"Has Bandarawela changed much, since you first knew it?" I asked.

"It was a quiet enough place five and twenty years ago" said my new friend, "but now it is becoming a resort and it has a 'season', and a hotel, and a cricket field, and a District Council, and crowds of visitors. We are becoming quite fashionable:" I thought I could detect a touch of resentment in the quiet tone at this intrusion by the outside world. But the reproving eyes were now full of pleasant humour, and I knew that I had found a character of the country side, a patriach of names, and places, and events, such as travellers love to meet.

He advised me by no means to miss Diyatalawa, and under his guidance I turned aside from my road, and was soon passing through the camp where sailors and soldiers come to take the air of the hills during their service in this tropical station.

I left the car by the road side and walked across the downs in the gloaming. The storm still hung upon the mountain crest, and long rolls of thunder could be heard coming from somewhere, very far away. On the grassy rolling patnas cut into endless gullies and ridges, the silence of evening was slowly settling down. Occasionally a rain quail bounced up at my feet with a great flurry of wings, to flop into the grass a few yards away; or a snipe crossed the sky with his own peculiar rattling sound; otherwise all was silent, buried in the peace of the lonely hills. I sat down upon a stone and lit a pipe, while my thoughts wandered where they would, drinking in the peace around and feeling the cool vigorous breeze upon my face.

I believe that I was just trying to compare Diyatalawa with the Eildon Hills of Scotland when I first heard the yell of a beagle, that went echoing round the valley, like the cry of some hungry spirit. It had hardly died away when a hare lolloped out of the bracken, and stood staring with gentle foolish wonder at me. I stared back with equal foolishness, and the hare sat down deliberately and scratched its ears. Then it must have caught some sound inaudible to me for the ears turned suddenly back, and a kind of tremor passed through its body. It cantered away, and soon disappeared in the gloom behind me.

The cry of hounds was not repeated, but presently I heard the cracking of twigs and the rapid breathing of hard run dogs. Suddenly a dappled beagle appeared out of the shadows and came down the line of the hare with tail and nose working and tongue lolling out at full stretch from his mouth.

Whatever anyone may think of hunting, he must share something of the joy of a dog on the scent. I had been ready to fraternise with the vacant faced hare a moment before, but the sight of this hound full of life and energy and relentless upon the trail, made me thirst for the hare's blood with a new and unholy glee.

"Grand evening to be out of doors" said a voice behind me.

"Stormy, isn't it," I said looking round. There was a gentleman with three dogs at his heels and a gun over his shoulder. He bore upon his person all the signs of city pallor under repair in the hills. I set him down as a lawyer on holiday.

"I suppose you know the hills well," I said.

"I know every yard of them within three miles or so. Often come here shooting."

"By the way" I said, "I should have told you the hare you were after has just passed me. It went along the ridge there."

"Did she," said my companion with singularly little interest for a sportsman, I thought. When I see a person shooting or fishing, I have an irresistible desire to say 'What luck?' or 'Caught anything?' or something equally tactless. This sportsman was not at all squeamish about his bag.

"I shan't get her now" he said. "As I have to go back to town tomorrow. I've only shot one since I've been here."

"I suppose you don't go out often" I said.

"Every night for the last three weeks."

I tried to look sympathetic.

"I'm getting to know all the hares round here by sight,' he went on. "Everybody hunts them, and they trot along the sky line a quarter of a mile in front from morning to night. And when they have given me and the dogs a good day's run, each side goes home and gets rested ready for tomorrw."

This was a sportsman after my own heart. We started off to walk back to the road together, discussing dogs and game and the lie of the hills and places of interest round about. He pointed out to me a great fox made upon the green hill-side with grey stones, and told me that it had been made by the sailors of H.M.S. Fox in 1913 when they were quartered in the camp.

"An unpardonable waste of time and energy" he said, "What is the average tax payer to think of such a thing?"

I feared that I heard the rasp of the law courts or even the State Council creeping over the voice of my mellow huntsman, and hastily turned the conversation back to the ideal breed of hill beagles; secretly reserving to myself the right to pass my verdict and vote in favour of the makers of the fox

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

When I left my new friend calling together his dogs on the road, and went forward on my lonely way, there was renard faintly glistening in the moonlight, now before, now behind me as the road turned, a symbol of quiet peace on the hill side, with only the hare and the quails to account for the everlasting pricking of his ears. I hoped that I was really the average tax-payer, and that my friend was wrong.

* * * *

Next morning I found myself at Hali Ela once more.

After leaving Hali Ela the road climbs again, and then begins to run down the richly wooded hillside towards Badulla town. A black thunder-cloud hung over Namunukula as it towered up on my right over the rain-cooled valley of Badulla. There was tea on one side of the road and rubber on the other. I tried to get a view of the town from the hillside, but the road was so completely shut in by the rich growth of trees that I could see no sign of the town until I was right in it.

I had hardly got to the Rest-house when the thunderstorm broke overhead and the rain came down like a grey sheet and shut out the clock-tower and the little green hill where the Kachcheri stands in the middle of the ramparts of the old fort. The rest of my stay in Badulla was cool but wet.

I went first to see the Mutiyangana Vihara. There I met in the pansala a priest with merry eyes. The rain was running down my nose, and my shoes made a squelching sound upon the paved floor, but his merriment was not caused by the sight of a bedraggled stranger, it was natural to him. He was one of Ceylon's real peasant priests, and the yellow robe hung over a fine chest and shoulders. His hairless crown and shaven eyebrows made his face rather characterless to look at, but his bearing to the stranger claimed the respect due his office. We stood in a whitewashed cloister with a red tiled roof over our heads, and looked across the wet grass-grown courtyard at the bell tower and the bo-trees and white dome of the dagoba, while he told me the history of his temple. The dagoba, he said, was first built by Devanampiyatissa, and the temple was one of the fourteen places visited by the Buddha when he was in Ceylon. It was restored by Jetta Tissa the Cruel about 333 A.D. He assured me that there was nothing ancient in the monastery except the very core of the dagoba which might well be over two thousand years old.

I asked him which part of the country he himself came from. His merriment positively overflowed at the question, as if it had been one of the best jokes, and he laughed aloud. Kandy, he said, was his home, but he had been at Badulla for some years now. We parted on the door step and I thought that fortune had sent me the right kind of companion for a rainy day.

I walked alone across the great court of the temple. Everywhere it was swept and neat; everything had an air of peace and seclusion and venerable age. Devanampiyatissa in his palace at Anuradhapura must have thought of Badulla on the other side of the mountains, perhaps he walked on this very ground, and here he built the original dagoba which marks Badulla as one of the most ancient places in Ceylon, for the tradition that the Buddha visited it gives it an age long before Tissa's time. It must have been a holy place before the first Sinhalese set foot in the island. As I stood drinking in the peace of the courtyard of the temple, it seemed hard to believe that its peace was once disturbed by the tramp of horses' feet and the cries of fighting men. Yet it is mentioned as the very place where de Sa's Portuguese soldiers swaggered up and down, and cooked the rice and meat plundered from the villagers around, and piled up the booty taken from the temples and the town of Badulla.

I returned to the town and stood at the road junction below the Kachcheri hill that once carried a royal palace and later a British fort. Under a dripping umbrella I read the notice at the foot of the inscribed pillar at the junction. King Udaya III, 934-937 A.D., had had inscribed upon it, "certain rules and regulations to be observed in respect of the market town of Hopitigama." What a lovely name for a village. Where is Hopitigama? I asked in Badulla but nobody seemed to know. How strange that Udaya from the Rajarata should leave an inscription here close to Badulla in Ruhuna. Behind the pillar I saw a hollowed out stone which I was told was part of an ancient culvert or aqueduct.

As I stood there in the rain in the centre of the town while the rickshaws and buses went splashing past me, I thought of another rainy season in Badulla, and of the Portuguese commander who must have stood somewhere near this spot and watched the smoke going up from the town, which his troops were setting on fire. He was Constantine de Sa, one of the most honest and upright commanders whom the Portuguese ever sent to Ceylon. He had won the respect of the lawless Portuguese soldiers and brought them to order after a long peace had reduced them to a disorganised rabble that made a living by plundering the people of the island, and those of their own people who could not protect their property. Sinhalese writings speak well of him, and there is a long Sinhalese poem written in his praise. Historians, who write after the event, say that he knew when he set out that his expedition could not succeed, and that he was forced to undertake it against his better judgment at the express com-

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

mand of the Viceroy of Goa. Whether that is true or not, it was in Badulla that he first realised, as so many invaders of the Kandyan kingdom realised before and after him, that though he looked like a conqueror burning the enemy's city, he was really cut off in a hostile country in the most deadly danger. An arachchi was brought to him who revealed to him that the four low-country Mudaliyars, who had accompanied him from Colombo in command of the Sinhalese lascarins, had plotted with Senerat, King of Kandy, to betray the Portuguese army.

Ribeiro, the Portuguese historian, says that de Sa "was warned of the treason which the four Mudaliyars had hatched and how they had also won over some of the chief people to join the plot; but it was too late to take precautions against the danger. That afternoon the enemy did nothing but shout at our men as was their custom, saying: "This is the last hour you have to live," and adding insulting words; and so night came on. When the general saw their disposition and recognised the careless confidence with which they opposed him, he had no longer any doubt as to the plot, and so he harangued our men so as to encourage them; after this all were prepared to lose their lives. He immediately ordered all the baggage to be collected in a heap and set on fire, reserving sufficient provisions to last for three days so as not to hamper the soldiers and to relieve them of their burden; for otherwise it would have gone to benefit the enemy. That night all confessed before the priests who were in the army, encouraging each other, the cheerfulness and resolution of the general animating all."

The Portuguese marched southward to destruction, and left the smoking ruins of the palace and temples of Badulla behind, and so there are practically no ancient buildings in the town today. Knox, who visited Badulla, when the Dutch held Colombo, writes: "The palace here is quite ruined; the Pagodas only being in good repair, for the Portugals in time of war burned the city down to the ground." It is said that the Portuguese prisoners taken at the battle in which de Sa was defeated were settled as land-tillers in Uva.

I stood in the little English Church of Badulla which sleeps in its green churchyard surrounded by magnificent trees. It is an unpretentious building hiding away behind a lych gate at the foot of the hill below the fort. Its walls are covered with memorial tablets, and among them, down at the west end, I found the one that I was looking for. It said:

> "This Church was erected to the honour of God in memory of Thomas William Rogers, Major, Ceylon Rifle Regiment, Assistant Government Agent and District Judge of Badulla, by all classes of his people, friends and admirers. He was killed by lightning at Haputale, June 7, 1845, age 41.
>
> In the midst of life we are in death."

A few days ago I was looking at Major Rogers' tomb in the old cemetery at Nuwara Eliya, and this quiet little church, set in the very heart of the country he loved, is his memorial. He is a good example of the young military officers who in the early days of British occupation were not called upon to fight, but gave a life of almost complete devotion to the Civil Service of Ceylon.

As a young man of twenty years old he landed at Trincomalee in 1824, and became a second lieutenant in the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. When stationed in Colombo he became the friend of Major Skinner who said of him, "a nobler fellow, a finer soldier, or a truer friend could hardly be imagined." In 1828 he was appointed Commandant of Alupota which, during the Uva Rebellion, had been a British stronghold guarding the foot hills to the east of Passara. In this wild roadless jungle station he was to spend six years. The whole district was over-run by herds of wild elephants which destroyed the villagers' crops, and were a constant terror to any who had to travel in the dusk or after dark. They took a fearful toll of human lives upon the lonely jungle tracks. For this reason Rogers like most young officers of his time took to elephant shooting, and from being a very indifferent shot, he became an experienced hunter and began to build up the enormous total of over fourteen hundred elephants shot by himself. The elephants in Ceylon at that time were like wolves in Europe at an earlier period. They were a constant peril to travellers and they destroyed in a night the work of many months. As civilization began to conquer the wilds they had to be overcome, and a price was set upon their heads. Rogers soon established a reputation as a mighty hunter and many legends grew up about his name. An old Malay man, who claimed to have been his personal attendant, relates that on one occasion he accompanied his master in search of a dangerous rogue elephant. As soon as they came in sight of the animal it charged upon them. Rogers, however, quite unconcernedly kept puffing away at a cigar, and when the elephant was within a short distance of him, he quietly took the cigar out of his mouth, placed it on the ground, and shot the elephant dead. He then resumed his cigar as if nothing unusual had happened.

The same Malay told how once he saw his master pursuing a frightened elephant through the town of Matale. The Major had seized hold of the animal's tail and so he kept up with it until he was able to shoot it.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

In all his long warfare with wild elephants Major Rogers only came to grief once: that was on the 29th of December, 1841, when he was exploring a new forest track near Hambantota. He had shot several elephants in the morning, and was following a herd of them through the jungle. He had twice fired at one animal in the herd, when it suddenly whirled round, and in a moment caught him in its trunk, and flourished him about over its head as if he had been a child. Rogers hung helpless in the air waiting for the end. He was carried towards a small stream that ran through the jungle close by. But the elephant dazed and bleeding from its wounds dropped him on the sloping ground, and again and again tried to crush him with its head, uttering all the time the most awful roars. Luckily the sloping ground favoured Rogers, and each time the mighty head came down upon him, he rolled from under it further down the hill, until, both he and the elephant reached the bed of the stream. Here the elephant tried to lift him up by his clothes, but they were very old and rotten and tore in every direction so that he was almost stripped. Then the great creature began to play a kind of devil's football with him, kicking him from its fore to its hind legs, and back again. Major Rogers had determined that if ever he found himself caught by an elephant he would pretend to be dead, and he had the courage to allow his body to remain limp and not to cry out.

Suddenly something startled the elephant. Its head became entangled in some creepers and it seemed to become suspicious that they were a kind of trap. Rogers remained perfectly still, and the great beast wrenched itself free and stepping over his body with almost deliberate care, it began to move away from him, flourishing his torn garments in its trunk and trumpeting hideously.

The elephant had not gone more than thirty yards, when a villager, who had come out with Rogers and who had seen the whole incident from behind a tree, fired his old single barrel gun at the elephant's head. Rogers was lying helpless with his left shoulder dislocated, and his left arm broken in two places, and two serious injuries on his right side, and he feared that this provocation would bring the elephant back to the attack. But it had had enough, and its great hind quarters disappeared amongst the heavy undergrowth of the jungle.

Major Rogers lay maimed and bleeding on the ground in a wild forest, fifty miles from home. His followers, however, soon came on the scene, and he was carried to Badulla where they arrived next morning in safety. Here his hurts were attended to, and he was soon none the worse for his adventures.

Rogers' hunting exploits made such a deep impression on the minds of the villagers that they declared that he bore a charmed life. "Nothing in the world can hurt that man," they said. "If he dies, it will be by lightning."

The modern map of Uva is largely of Rogers' planning. He opened up the district, and won the respect and love of the people under his care by going amongst them continually until he knew all their hopes and needs. Prosperity and contentment were everywhere advanced. "This splendid fellow, Rogers," says Major Skinner, "at the time of his death was performing most efficiently, and to the entire satisfaction of the Government and public, the offices of Government Agent of the district of Ouvah, District Judge, Commandant of the district, and was also my assistant in charge of the roads of that province—duties which, after his death, required four men to perform, with far less efficiency, promptitude and punctuality than when they were administered by him alone."

It was when he went up to Haputale to meet the Government Agent, C. R. Buller, that Major Rogers met his tragic death on the 7th of June, 1845. Mr. and Mrs. Buller had arrived in Haputale, and Rogers went up from Badulla to meet his chief. They had probably been doing some outdoor inspection work, when a sudden thunder-storm blackened the sky and the mountains and compelled them to take shelter in the Haputale Rest-house. The rain beat down upon the roof as they sat in the inner room of the Rest-house. After a time the pattering of the rain drops grew less violent, and Major Rogers stepped out on to the verandah to see if the storm had abated. He turned round and called out to Mrs. Buller, "It is all over now," when suddenly there was a blinding flash of lightning followed by a shattering thunder clap. Then central pole of the pandal before the house was split down the middle, the coolies and horses in the back verandah and out houses were all struck down, though not seriously injured; but Rogers fell forward with his face to the floor, dead. It was evident that the lightning had been attracted by his military spurs, for one heel was discoloured.

The legend arose that the ungrateful villagers declared that Rogers was killed by lightning from heaven because he had taken the lives of so many elephants. The truth seems to lie in a tale told by Fredric Lewis in his book, "Sixty-four years in Ceylon." Lewis found in a remote hamlet of Badulla a very old man, who did not know his age but suggested that it might be a hundred years. He had never been out of the village except once, when he was a boy, when he had to give evidence in the court of Badulla about a man who had fallen from a tree and killed himself. That was the last time he had been away from home.

"One other white man have I seen beside you," he said.

"He was a wonderful man and had no fear. He came here, when I was young, to shoot elephants, and he would walk up

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

behind the biggest elephant and pull its tail, or throw a stone at it, and when the elephant turned round, this gentleman would shoot it dead without fail. He went after an elephant that belonged to the gods of Kataragama, and he killed that beast also, so the gods were angry, and one day, when he went to Haputale, he went out to see if it was going to rain, and the gods sent a flash of lightning and killed him."

Lewis asked the old man whether the gentleman's name was Rogers.

"Yes, yes" said he excitedly, "that was his name, He stayed one day here and killed two elephants. He lived at Alupota."

Major Skinner writes: "The Kandyan population of the Ouvah district—all Buddhists—paid the highest compliment in their power to their late energetic chief by erecting to his memory the pretty little Church in the town of Badulla."

I was standing in that quiet little church. There was not a soul about to disturb its solitude, only the voices of boys running out of school came over the churchyard wall.

Outside Badulla Church I met a round cherubic school-boy of about fifteen years. I asked him the way to the old cemetery of the town, whither I wished to go. He told me the way and turned to go. As he was about to go on his way I asked if he had ever heard any stories about Major Rogers. His cherub face was quite blank at the question, but it brightened up at once when I wanted to know how the Cambridge Senior was getting on. I looked at the bundle of books that he was carrying and there, sure enough, was Warner and Marten's History of England, Part II.

"God gave all men all earth to love
But since our hearts are small
Ordained for each one spot should be
Beloved above all,' I said."

He looked rather mystified at meeting a verse out of school, but it seemed to make him change his course and he offered to guide me to the old cemetery.

We stood looking over the wall at a number of mouldering grave-stones that lay scarred and crooked, nodding at each other like old men in an alms-house.

"The grave in the bo-tree is over there," said the cherub. "Mind the leeches."

I walked round upon odd stones and bricks while the raindrops fell upon me continually from the branches of ancient trees. The boy wisely remained on the wet road. At last I found the tomb of brick and stone which has been completely encircled by the roots of a bo-tree and lifted a foot or two from the ground.

"They keep the roots cut back from the stone, you see, so that the inscription can be read," shouted the cherub from the road.

On the stone which looks out from its frame of clinging roots is written:

"Sacred to the memory of Sophia Wilson, only daughter of the late Edmund Battersbee Esqr., of Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, wife of Sylvester Douglas Wilson Esqr., Assistant Resident and Agent of the British Government in the Province of Ouva.

She departed this life at Badulla, after a few days illness, on the morning of the 24th May, 1817. Aged 24 years." ....

As I wrote down the inscription, I thought that no lady could ask for a more beautiful memorial than thus to be lifted up in the arms of the holy tree, and held for a hundred years in its gentle strong embrace.

When I got back to the road I asked the cherub if he knew anything of Sylvester Wilson: but it appeared that he was not mentioned in Warner and Marten's History. Yet a little further along the road was the memorial to the husband of the lady of the bo-tree, for he has a place in the history of Ceylon. I said goodbye to my cherubic guide and went on my way to look for that memorial.

The storm had spent itself when I got on to the Passara road that winds in and out right round the valley of Badulla. The valley lay green and clear, new washed by the rain, and streaked with long trailers of white mist over the green paddy fields and dark green clumps of Jak-trees and arecanut palms. It is as lovely a place as ever I looked upon.

As the road turned eastward towards Passara I could see Namunukula lifting its nine wooded peaks to the sky over my head, while a stream of tawny brown water came tearing madly down its shaggy side.

Passara was left behind and from the rocky hill-side I could see the hills opening and shutting as I passed, giving glimpses of the low country to the south-east. There was the grey tower and the long roof of Westminister Abbey, and closer still the green cone of Moneragalla, and between them lay the long blue haze of the southern jungles from Pottuvil to Yala and Kataragama.

At Lunugala I asked where Wilson's memorial stone stood.

"No gentleman of the name of Wilson here," said the man at the Rest-house, and I went on.

At a boutique about the thirtieth mile-stone they knew of a white stone by the roadway further on. At the thirty-fourth

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

mile, a man with a bright green handkerchief tied round his head knew the stone, and knew that Wilson's name was on it. He clung to the side of the car for half a mile to show me where it stood.

There was no danger of missing it when we got there. It stands by the road side, a white square monument coming to a point at the top. Close by a stream swollen over its banks by the recent thunder-storm, was rushing angrily under the road like a child in a rage who will soon be smiling again.

In 1817, Wilson, the Assistant Government Agent at Badulla received information that a stranger accompanied by a number of Buddhist priests was collecting people together in the jungles of Wellassa. The stranger was an ex-priest, who had assumed the title of King, taking the name Dorai-samy, and it was said that he was actively engaged in exciting insurrection and rebellion. Mr. Wilson, on hearing these proceedings, set out in person to find out what were the real circumstances. It seems that on his return after an unsuccessful conference with the insurgents he went down to the stream with his lascarins to wash himself. While he was at the stream, an armed party of Kandyans appeared on the far side and demanded another conference. Mr. Wilson advanced to meet them, but, when he was within a few yards of the armed party, several arrows were discharged. He fell, with an arrow which had penetrated his brain.

So began the tragic affair of the Uva Rebellion of 1817-1818.

Two hours before I had been looking at the grave of Wilson's wife who died "on the morning of the 24th May, 1817, aged 24 years." On the 16th September, 1817 her husband died in this most peaceful spot with an arrow in his brain.

* * * *

"Jungle all round here," said the man in the Rest-house at Bibile. He was a waiter of the old school, round the optimistic, with a tortoise-shell comb on his head, and his hair gathered in a bun behind. He understood the art of handling hashed chicken as if it were lamb cutlets, and he went over the list of his tinned meats as if the choice were a matter of real importance.

"Is there much malaria here?" I asked.

"Yes, plenty of malaria," he answered cheerfully, as if it was one of the local attractions, "Bibile is a malarial place."

I asked him if he had had the fever.

"Oh yes" he said, "I get it sometimes, but very little.

I am used to malarial districts. I was thirteen years at Moneragala. There are more estates there now, and since they have been opened up there is less malaria. But at Bibile, there are only two estates this side. There is malaria all the year round."

I thought that the time would surely come when this wilderness would be conquered by man. It must have been won and lost more than once in its long history, judging by the ancient village tanks that lie buried everywhere in the jungles. Meanwhile here was a stout-hearted gentleman gallantly and contentedly holding an out-post in the enemy's country waiting for the advance to be made. I swallowed two small white pills, and I pulled out a shoe-lace to tie up a hole in my mosquito net and went early to bed.

The map was almost a blank for miles to the north and east of Bibile, but what places were marked were all inviting. To the north-west runs the road to Uraniya and from there a cart-track goes on to the Mahaweliganga and Alutnuwara; northwards lay my road to Ekiriyankumbura and the village of Gallodai beside Kokagala, where their is a dispensary. To the north-east is the hill of St. Paul's, a brown blob on the map without road or track leading to it; and to the east was the mysterious label Veddah Country, stretching across a great blank space.

A friend of mine in Badulla had declared that the easiest way to see a veddah was to go to the District Court, where there were sure to be one or two brought in accused of growing ganja in secluded corners of the jungle; but my friend is, no doubt, a cynic.

"Are there any veddahs round Bibile now?" I asked the man at the Rest--house.

"Sixteen miles along the road you must go," he answered, and I felt that his answer had become a kind of formula with him, kept ready for a question that he was in the regular habit of answering.

"You must walk, you can't go by car," he added apologetically.

Sixteen miles to see veddahs, "that aboriginal people," as Doctor Spittel says, "who had time and again attracted the scholars of Europe, and in whose veins flowed the oldest blood of the inhabitants of Ceylon.

They were here when Vijaya came from India in 543 B.C. and founded the Sinhalese dynasty; long earlier, when the Buddha came who preached to his followers at Mahiyangana after having put to flight the Yakkhas (Veddahs?); to an even older beginning their ancestry went, to a time in the stone age when man vied for existence with prehistoric forms."

In about 400 A.D. Fa Hian, the Chinese traveller, wrote:

"This country was not originally inhabited by human beings, but only by devils (Veddahs?) and dragons (Nagas?), with whom the merchants of the neighbouring countries traded by

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

barter. At the time of the barter the devils did not appear, but set out their valuables with the prices attached. The merchants then gave goods according to the prices marked and took away the goods they wanted. And from the merchants going backwards and forwards and some stopping there, the attractions of the place became widely known, and people went thither in great numbers, so that it became a great nation."

It is just possible that some of the ivory that decorated Solomon's temple in Jerusalem in about 900 B.C. came from the wild elephants of Ceylon by barter from the Veddahs, together with apes and peacocks. Even if Tarshish is somewhere in Spain, as appears from Jonah going that way towards it, or in Asia Minor as some say, the ivory, apes and peacocks together must have come originally either from some part of India or from Ceylon. And Solomon's temple was built four centuries before the first Sinhalese set foot in Ceylon.

"Today," says Dr. Spittel in Wild Ceylon; "hardly a Veddah true to the old tradition survives; not one that uses beaten bark for apparel, or depends for sustenance solely on the jungle. The inroads of civilisation and the effects of miscegenation with the neighbouring Sinhalese or Tamils are tending surely towards the extinction of the race."

How easy it would be, with the help of Seligman and Dr. Spittel, to meet a veddah on the road today. I felt that I knew him well, and could make him dance, and pay his offerings to the spirits, and mark his hunting boundaries with a tiny carved bow and arrow upon a tree. But then, I am determined to be honest as far as possible in this Journey and to put down only what really happened, and no veddahs slunk off the path into the jungle as I wandered about in Bibile.

I went to look for the hot springs of Bibile which used to interest travellers of old. The man at the rest-house had no great opinion of them. He said they were just ordinary wells, now cemented round, and that their heat was scarcely perceptible. I do not know now whether I examined the genuine springs, or whether it was the village wells that were shown to me, to keep the inquisitive foreigner quiet.

* * * *

I took the road from Bibile while it was still early morning, and disturbed an old and mangy jackal who was lying on the warm tar of the road to keep his stiff joints out of the dripping of the jungle trees. He got up and hobbled away into the undergrowth when the car was almost on his tail. As I went on down the hill, the way passed through open park country where the grass grew over a man's head, but there was no sign of wild life even at that early hour. Peaked cones of hills, wooded to their summits, stood out on either side of the road, but neither man nor beast moved upon them.

I passed through the village of Ekiriyankumbura. There was scarcely anything except a name on the map to show that it was a village, and yet it has a little corner in the history of Ceylon. In 1804 Captain Johnston with a little army of three hundred men camped here for two days to rest his forces. The massacre of Major Davie's troops had happened the year before, and Captain Johnston had been ordered to march from Batticaloa and unite his forces with Colonel Maddison from Hambantota, and to proceed to Kandy. A concerted attack was to be made from six different points. Captain Johnston failed to meet with the troops he expected, and he advanced alone, fought his way to Kandy, occupied the city for three days, and then discovered that he was alone, that the orders under which he had advanced had been countermanded, and the counter orders had not reached him. With the fate of Major Davie in his mind and in the minds of his men, he began to retreat, and he had to pass over the very ground where Davie's soldiers had been knocked on the head two by two twelve months before. Yet against all odds he fought his way through to Trincomalee, where his exhausted little force arrived on the 20th October, 1804. One of the Kandyan chiefs who harassed Captain Johnston in his retreat declared, "that the commander of the party must have been in alliance with supernatural powers, as his personal escape whilst passing through a continued ambush, and his superior judgment and energy were unaccountable, unless this explanation were admitted."

In 1818 the jungle road was disturbed again by the passage of troops, when a Brigade of Sepoys from Madras, with coolies, bullocks and baggage, marching to Kandy by Badulla and Hakgala passed this way through the forest.

I left the park country behind and the jungle closed in upon the road on either hand. Before the village of Gallodai, I caught glimpses of the grey crags of Kokagala lit up by the morning sun, where the rock stands 2,200 feet above sea level. Then the road turned from north to north east. I thought of the long centuries when a beaten track had passed this way upon which tavalams of laden bullocks carried up salt, cloth, rice and fish from the port of Batticaloa to Alutnuwara and the Hill Kingdom when great kings ruled in Kandy. When Tennent passed this way in 1848, he met straggling parties of veddahs upon the way, and found game and wild animals abundant in these favourite and undisturbed retreats.

In 1873 Miss Gordon Cumming came along this same road in the company of the white bearded Bishop Jermyn. She says that "until recently, all this district abounded in game of all

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

sorts, which, however, has been so ruthlessly slaughtered, that it is now said to be, practically speaking exterminated. There are still large herds of spotted deer and a good many of the sambur deer, but very few compared with even ten years ago."

She goes on: "Day by day, riding and driving we moved from point to point. One pretty drive lay through most charming jungle, literally swarming with butterflies. We had to cross the Maha-Oya just at its junction with the Dambara-Oya. A fine wide river bed overshadowed by large trees suggested what this stream must be when swollen by heavy rains in the mountains, but now all was drought, and there was not even a trickle of water. We walked across the sandy channel, while the horses dragged the empty carriage, and a well-trained elephant, who was assisting in building a bridge for the use of future travellers, lent his great strength to shove the baggage-carts while the patient bullocks pulled them across."

I crossed the Maha Oya bridge over the angry swirling, river, and came into an English autumn. Dead leaves strewed the ground on either side and fell from half naked trees on to the road, where the car wheels went crunching over their brown dry bones. I had come into the teak plantations that stretch for many miles along each side of the road. The trees seemed strangely out of place growing amidst the eternal greenness of the Ceylon jungle. They looked exotic and unhappy, like polar-bears in the zoo in summer.

It was through the teak trees that I caught a glimpse of the hill of Nuwaragala, where there is a mysterious stone-paved road of ancient days running along the side of a cliff into a great deserted cave where bears go to look for honey.

At the eightieth mile, just before the village of Tumpalan-cholai, I turned to the right and followed a gravel road for four and a half miles until it came out on the bund of Kruichchai Tank. A few gaunt dead trees still hold up their withered heads out of the great many-armed lake. Standing on the spill I could see shoals of fish imprisoned below in pools among the rocks, and all around were kites, fifty or sixty of them, sitting upon the boulders or circling round uttering their cat-like cry. Two large white headed eagles flew out of a tree close by. There were one or two hawks of different kinds and a number of crows among the kites, all waiting, it seemed, for the water to dry up and leave the fish stranded.

The bund is a magnificent work stretching in a half moon high above the waste of jungle below. The channel curved off to the left carrying the water from the sluice to the distant paddy fields. Not a living creature could be seen over the wide sweep of water; only the sun beat down upon the broad white sheet

and its wreath of green jungle foliage. An old man by the Irrigation bungalow said that crocodiles were to be seen on the far side, and that elephants came down to bathe there most evenings in the week.

I returned along the gravel road and turning along the main road for a couple of miles, went down a road on the left to Rukam Tank. I walked through the Irrigation bungalow premises and came out on to the spill, built by the Pioneers in 1892 (I think it was).

Rukam has a wonderful setting. All round was a circle of low wooded hills which appeared close to the shores of the lake, and far away behind them the blue mountains of Kandy climbed up into the clouds.

I met a young man from the watcher's bungalow.

The water of the tank, he said, did not agree with him. It made him shiver and brought on fever. Fever stands guardian over the whole of th's promised land, keeping man's rude hands off its perfect beauty.

'They still catch crocodiles in the tank on baited hooks,' said my friend. 'The hook is tied to a large number of small strings which get between the crocodile's teeth so that he cannot bite through them.'

I asked him if he had seen elephants lately in the tank.

He said that one of his relations had come home last week and told that there were five elephants bathing all day from six in the morning to four in the afternoon quite close to the village.

We sat down on a rock to look at the tank. The water was lying cool and white under the midday sun, the picture of quiet peace; waders and cormorants were fishing, or sitting upon stakes in the water sunning their wings. In the spill below the tank the fish were busy sailing about in shoals grateful no doubt for being cold-blooded under the penetrating sun.

A little shaven-headed moor boy came by, brisk and self confident. He had been out to his father's tobacco chena below the tank.

Were there any elephants about?

Oh yes. He had seen one that morning. It was still lying in the water by the small bund where the water came through. It had lain there since morning. If he went close to it, it would get up and run away. It was about two miles away.

Two miles and the mid-day sun were as good as a lock to his bathroom door. I did not see that elephant.

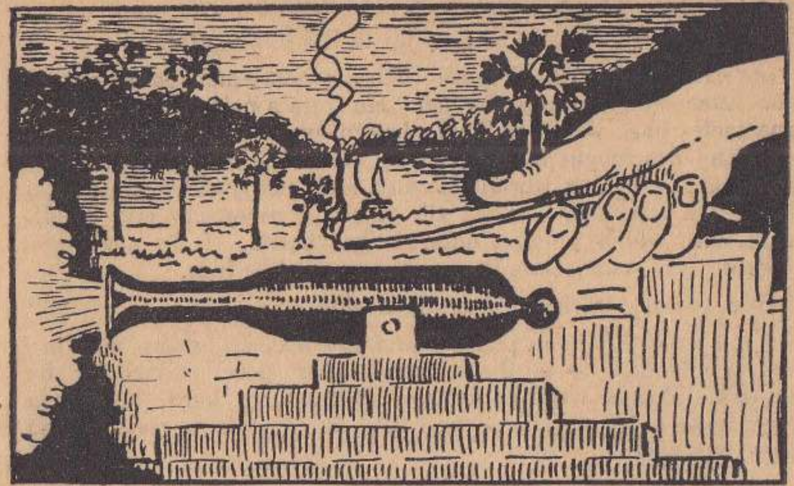
Carved on a flat stone at the end of the spill of Rukam tank was an interesting story of flood levels in the Eastern Province

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

during the last fifty years. High above all was the flood mark of 16/1/13 standing level with the 21 foot mark on the measure that stood in the water close by: then folowed in order of height, 27/1/04, 28/12/21, 9/2/84, 15/12/36, 6/1/92 10/1/23, 10/1/21.

I left Rukam and turned along the road towards Batticaloa. At noonday, in a patch of jungle close to a village, what should I see but a she elk feeding placidly beside the road. This was more like old days when deer could be seen on the road at mid-day. I ran the car towards her as quietly as possible to get a closer view. Up came her head, and twisted itself round upon her supple neck to turn her eyes and searching nostrils towards the car. Then she started a very undignified waddle along the road and turned into the fenced yard of a house close by. Her over-fat haunches and a long stick tied to her neck showed that she had not grown up wild in the jungle. She must have been picked up, a newly orphaned fawn, on some village hunting expedition, and kept as a pet.

I passed a long line of carts standing deserted by the roadside as if their owners had given up the task of dragging any further the huge fifteen foot logs of satinwood that each one carried. Soon foot passengers became more frequent, the jungle began to thin out and paddy fields appeared, and then the long fringe of coconut trees showed over the lagoon. The road turned south and kadjan fences appeared on either side before the houses under groves of palmyra palms. I might have been coming into Jaffna, but I came into Batticaloa.



CHAPTER XIII.

Batticaloa, The East Coast Road, Arugam Bay, Wellawaya and Diyaluma Falls

I passed through streets lined with cadjan fences that mark the boundary of each man's property, and keep prying eyes out of the houses. The town itself is very typical of Ceylon's outstations, filled with neat little houses built in the Dutch style and closely packed together, with little gardens of green turf and shrubs, each surrounded by its yellow-washed wall.

I went to the fort which stands upon the island of Batticaloa surrounded by the water of the Lake. It is the most peaceful looking fort in Ceylon. Inside the Dutch barracks government clerks were busy writing and gossiping at Jakwood desks covered with papers and files: motor cars were drawn up in shady corners of the parade ground, and weeds and grasses flourished in the embrasures where the guns used to look out over the moat. There was nothing to show that this little fortress had once been the ground where the fate of Ceylon was fought out in fierce battle.

As I stood on the ramparts looking over the blue waters of the lake where men go to listen on still evenings to the "singing fish" of Batticaloa, I could see the boats moving slowly up and down under their broad red sails. Such boats have brought cargoes of goods to this little port for centuries, and the trade of the Kings of Kandy passed through the town and followed

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

the beaten track through the jungle to Maha Oya, and on to Badulla or Alutnuwara, and so up to the hill capital.

As I was thinking of these things a gentleman came out of the Kachcheri and spoke to me. He wore a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles over a pair of kindly brown eyes, and he looked like one who has fought his battle with the world for fifty years and come out with fair worldly wealth and plenty of worldly wisdom, but who has not lost the spirit of generosity and kindliness with which he first entered that battle. I do not know who he was, but it was impossible not to like him.

We talked together about Batticaloa.

"It's an industrious place," said my friend, "where men are not rich enough to be discontented, nor poor enough to be hungry. People work hard here. They work hard, but when they have made a little money they like to take a rest, and so they never grow rich.

"Except the Moors," he added, "they work. Nobody works so hard as they do."

He was proud of Batticaloa, and evidently proud of the life of hard work that he had put in there.

We walked round the grass-grown battlements until we came to a little toy brass cannon under an iron roof.

"That," said the gentleman in gold spectacles, "is the evening gun. It is fired every day at four fifteen."

"And the men in the offices go home to their wives and children?"

"That's it," he said, with a smile.

He knew much about the history of Batticaloa and we discussed the old days and the marks that they had left behind upon the town and upon the character of its people.

On May 31st, 1602, two Dutch ships appeared off Batticaloa, under the command of Joris van Spilbergen. Baldaeus, the Dutch writer, says: "About this time the Dutch General Joris Spilbergen came with two ships on the coast of Ceylon, went to Candy on purpose to salute the Emperor in the Name of the States of the United Provinces, and His Excellency Prince Maurice of Nassau; and was favourably received by Don John (Vimala Dharma Suriya); and dismissed with considerable Presents. Having left Erasmus Martens and Mr. Hans Panpel, two very good Musicians, there, he returned highly satisfy'd 3 September, 1603, by the way of Matecola."

Spilbergen was followed by Admiral Sebald de Weert who paid a visit to Vimala Dharma Suriya, in Kandy.

Baldaeus writes: "Sebald de Weert and Vibraads van Warwick came soon after into Ceylon, where they entered into agreement with the Emperor. Afterwards they sailed to Achen to assemble more Forces, and landing at Matecola with 7 Ships, 26 April, 1603. De Weert gave notice thereof to the Emperor." The Kandyan Ambassador who had gone with de Weert to Achen roused Vimala Dharma's suspicions by reporting that the Dutch appeared to be friends of Vimala Dharma's enemies, the Portuguese. His suspicions were still further roused when de Weert tried to persuade him to come on board the Dutch ships on a visit. As a test of the purposes of the Dutch, Vimala Dharma proposed that they should attack the Portuguese fort at Galle. De Weert replied with a further invitation that the King should visit him upon the sea shore.

"The Emperor not only refused also this offer, but his suspicion was increased, the before-mentioned Ambassador whispering him in the Ear, "Are you now sensible, my most gracious Lord, that I was in the right, and that they intend to catch you in a Snare?" And the Dutch Vice-Admiral De Weert being not a little disturbed at so flat a Denial, told him frankly, that since His Majesty did not think fit to come either aboard him, or at least to the Shore, he was resolved not to fight for him against the Portuguese. Don John (Vimala Dharma), tho' not a little exasperated at so bold a Reply, yet dissembled his anger telling him only, that he should pursuant of his promise, sail to Galle with his Fleet, whilst he would take a turn to Candy to visit the Empress, who was alone there...... Sebald de Weert being somewhat heated with strong Liquor, reply'd undiscreetly, That certainly the Empress could not be in distress for a Man, and that he was resolved not to sail to Galle, or to fight against the Portuguese, before the Emperor had done him the honour of viewing his Ships. Don John, who was naturally a cholerick Person, was so incensed at this Answer, that he left the Room, and in going out said, "Bind the Dog;" whereupon four of his gentlemen advanced to lay hold of him, but he endeavouring to draw his sword, and making a noise to call his Attendants to his Assistance......they laid hold of him from behind, and one of them splitting his Head with a Scymeter laid him dead upon the ground."

It was after this unfortunate incident that Vimala Dharma sent his famous message to the Dutch:

"Que bebem vinho, noa he bon. Does jes justitia; se quisieres pax, pax; sequires guerra, guerra." "Who drinks wine is not good; God shows his justice; if you desire peace, you shall have peace; if war, war."

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

The Portuguese were naturally jealous of these visits of the Dutch to the court of Kandy and in 1628 they built a fort on a point of land which 'protected a bay capable of receiving ocean-going ships. It was a square structure with four bastions of ancient design armed with a dozen iron cannon, and its garrison consisted of a captain and fifty soldiers with a gunner, twenty inhabitants, a chaplain, a church and a magazine of stores and ammunition,' (Ribeiro p.130). This fort was built by de Sa, under orders from Goa.

Some time before in 1626 de Sa had received orders from Portugal to expel the Muslims from Portuguese territory in Ceylon. He attempted to do so. Many of the refugees fled to the kingdom of Kandy where the king settled them in various parts of his dominion, and, amongst other places, four thousand came to live in Batticaloa.

The Batticaloa fort of course cut off the King's trade with India and left him highly dissatisfied. In the war which followed de Sa found himself in Badulla, with treachery in his camp, and the enemy all round him. On May 10th, 1638 the inhabitants of Batticaloa heard the thunder of cannon before the Portuguese Fort. The Dutch Admiral Westerwold had come to the harbour with a small fleet, 'having on board 840 men, officers, soldiers and marines. The following day having landed his men, with six great pieces for battery, the same were mounted immediately, in order to facilitate the passage of their forces into the isle upon which the fort was built.

This being executed accordingly the 18th and 500 men brought over under favour of the cannon, which played incessantly for four hours upon the Portuguese, they put out the white flag immediately, and sent two deputies to capitulate with the Dutch Admiral' (Baldaeus Vo. III p. 713).

So Batticaloa fort came into the hands of the Hollanders. They called it a "vile, stinking, place," as no doubt it was after a seige.

They kept a precarious hold upon it until 1643 when it was handed over to the Sinhalese and Raja Sinha had it demolished. In 1665 the Dutch occupied Batticaloa in order to defend the King of Kandy from foreign enemies.

The King had promised to supply the Dutch soldiers in Batticaloa with food but the garrison "was kept wretchedly provided with provisions by the King, whose contribution was often limited to a dozen buffaloes a week, animals frequently in such a loathsome condition of disease that even the hungry Hollanders could not eat their flesh." (Ceylon Portuguese Era II. p. 310).

In 1772 the French Admiral de Suffren lay with his battle-torn fleet off Batticaloa for a fortnight while he hastily repaired the ravages of a drawn sea fight which he had fought with the British Admiral Hughes. A few months later de Suffren captured Trincomalee.

On September 18th Batticaloa was quietly surrendered by the Dutch to Major Fraser who had been sent down from Trincomalee. Trincomalee had been captured by Colonel Stuart eighteen days before.

In 1848 Tennent visited Batticaloa. He describes the old Dutch fort as a grim little quadrangular stronghold, with a battery at each angle connected by a loop-holed wall, and surrounded by a ditch swarming with crocodiles. The interior of the square is surrounded by soldiers' quarters, and encloses a house for the commandant, a bomb-proof magazine, and, the invariable accompaniment of every Dutch fortification, a church of the most Calvanistic simplicity.' (Ceylon Vol. II. p. 465).

Batticaloa has long since forgotten all these fierce battles that were fought around her walls. The town looked very peaceful in the afternoon sun as I looked down upon it from the fort. There are no crocodiles now in the moat and hardly enough water to hold one.

"It's a quiet peaceful place, Batticaloa" said my friend in gold spectacles.

He had hardly spoken when there was a loud report of a cannon behind him. I started involuntarily. But he only smiled, and pulled out his watch.

"Two minutes fast," he said, "but I must be going. Goodbye."

"Goodbye and thank you" I said, and he joined the stream of white clad men who were pouring out of the fort.

I crossed the green esplanade where prisoners were levelling the football ground, and looked at the old cemetery with its graves of moss-grown bricks and stone. On one of them is the delightful:

> Not gone from memory,
> Not gone from love,
> But gone to shining hosts above;
> Mid cherubim there he waits his wife.
> Who will fly to him from the woes of this life.

Then I went down to Kalladi to see one of the oldest industries of Batticaloa. There was a long opensided shed with nine pits dug in the ground, and before each pit was a loom. There were half a dozen weavers at work who looked at the stranger with the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

gentle staring eyes that all weavers have from looking continually at their threads. The wet shuttles were thrown across and across the web. Each woof was driven home, and the long cloth grew and grew upon the rollers.

'We used to get the cotton from Hambantot side' said the manager of the manufactory, 'but now it comes from India.'

'And your dyes?' I asked.

'They come from India too, now?'

He was a shrewd little man, naked to the waist, and clad below it in a cloth not of his own manufacture.

'The Sinhalese ladies buy these cloths,' he said, pointing to a number of woven articles hanging on a line.

It was good serviceable stuff that he turned out. In its newly dyed and newly woven state it would stand up by itself. The Sinhalese ladies evidently liked bright colours and good stout quality.

The little manager, and his nine weavers working at forty cents a day, were heroically fighting their lost cause against thousands of rattling power looms turning out millions of yards of cloth every hour of the day. He seemed quite satisfied with his side of the battle, and the weavers had an aloof sort of dignity about them, even at forty cents a day. I bought five yards of deep magenta cloth with two yellow stripes down each side of it. The manager wrestled with it and managed to bend it into a parcel.

There were no Sinhalese ladies in Batticaloa that I could see, but still, it might come in useful somewhere.

Cordiner visited Batticaloa in 1800. He writes (Ceylon Vol. I. 260).

"The inhabitants of this place are uncommonly obliging, and are always ready to accompany a stranger, and afford him information, when he expresses a wish to see any curiosity which the little island produces. Tranquillity, plenty, and contentment reign among them; and they feel no desire to leave the spot where they were born. It produces everything necessary to their comfort; and all the ground is the property of private individuals."

Times do not change much here. That is Batticaloa.

* * * *

As I went down the road that leads southward from Batticaloa I passed through acres of small green trees. They were Kadju nut trees. This district used to be the home of Kadju nuts, and here grew the rich little kernel that goes so well with salt

before dinner. I believe that hotel keepers add the salt to promote thirst in their guests; so next time I meet any I will drink to the kindly folk of Batticaloa.

I ran down through Cheddipalaiyam to Kalmunai, which is a little straggling road-side town.

I went into a large shop in Kalmunai and found a friend there.

We sat gossiping and drinking tea under a large blue and white notice which announced that the house was licensed to sell arrack.

"Business is not so good," said my friend. "Small traders are increasing, and now vans carry goods right to people's doors. Seven vans come to Kalmunai from outside. They will sell dozens or half-dozens to boutiques, and that quite kills the wholesale trade."

He smiled and sipped at his tea.

Things are not what they used to be when we were the only shop, years ago.'

He smiled again and looked round his shop with a mixture of regret and satisfaction. It was stuffed to the ceiling with all manner of goods, and the stock ran along the roof beams and disappeared through the door into the back premises. It all looked very prosperous, but the past wears a halo even in Kalmunai.

I said goodbye to my friend, and passed on down the road. Soon I began to meet carts laden with paddy straw. They became more and more numerous, until I came out into the paddy fields. I had heard a lot about these paddy fields. John Ferguson said that he travelled fourteen miles across them (Ceylon in 1893 p. 330). Governor Sir William Gregory (in 1879) "never before saw such an unbroken sheet of grain; save where some isolated trees, part of a recent forest, broke the view, the eye wandered over some 20,000 acres of green paddy." (ibid 331).

And there I looked upon the same fields, newly reaped and covered with stubble, stretching away to the horizon, up to the foot of the little hills that look down upon Amparai Tank and Irakkamam Tank. Sir Henry Ward (1885-1860) was responsible for the repair of these tanks and their ancient irrigation channels, and those wide fields are, in part, his memorial.

Dusky Corydon and Thyrsis were leading the laden carts across the fields towards the high roads, and cursing their patient bulls slithering in the dust ploughed up by many wheels. Phyllis, buxom and well nourished, was gossiping to a friend by the roadside, and smiled with her dark handsome eyes at the stranger who waved to her in passing.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

They were a fine sturdy lot of people that I saw, with sunburnt hair and strong well rounded limbs, telling a tale of a hardworking open air life, good food, and contentment. One quarter of Ceylon's rice supply, I'm told, is produced from her own rich mud and water. It's little enough. But the good folk of the East Coast have done more than their share towards it.

The road went on, southward by the sea dipping into causeway and out again, through a Tamil village, through a Moor village, across more paddy fields, over the two mouths of the Gal Oya, through Addalaichchenai, along the edge of the lagoon, through another Moor village and another Tamil village, into Tirukkovil.

Here there was an ancient and famous Hindu shrine which the Portuguese under de Azevedo destroyed. Many travellers in the past saw it, or the remains of it. Pilgrims still visit the place, there is little enough to see there now.

I left Tirukkovil and passed along towards Komariya where the country begins to get wilder. Thomas Anthony Reeder Esq., Inspector of Hospitals in Ceylon, passed this same way in 1801. He writes:

'All the road is dismally wild, and the country full of elephants. About two miles from Jockoweil (Tirukkovil) a plain was covered with marks of a large herd, which must have been there the preceding night, But of all the animals with which the country is molested, the buffaloes appear the most daring. They have often approached very near to my palanquin, apparently with an inclination to attack. I always got out, and stood with the guard (of sepoys) ready to fire, if they should attempt to charge. They came running until they got within eight or ten yards of us, and then made a full stop, looked at us for a short time, and then sneaked slowly away.' (Cordiner II. 148).

The village buffaloes side of the question would no doubt be a picture of a curious and rather alarming red-coated party with a strong human scent, passing through their quiet feeding grounds and giving them the only piece of excitement they had had since the last leopard attack.

As I came to Komariya it was getting dark. Here in 1800 William Orr Esq., saw, "in the evening several herds of wild cattle, hogs, and deer, dispersed over the plain; nor was I a little apprehensive, from the solitude of the country, that we might be disturbed by the appearance of a tiger or wild elephant." (Cordiner II. 124).

I passed through Komariya as darkness fell. The road beyond was marked by tiny yellow lights in a zigzag line. As I came upon each little light, it turned into a night jar and fluttered

noiselessly into the air. In a stretch of paddy fields I counted fifteen of these birds replete with night insects resting on the warm road.

In 1800 this was a deep sandy road, surrounded with high jungle on both sides. (Cordiner II. 123). The jungle, which had been appearing in pitches, closed over the road as I passed, and the head-lights picked out the twinkling eyes of some spotted deer crossing it far ahead of the car.

Pottuvil was passed, and the low scrubby sea shore jungle, and I turned along the sandy track to where the lights of Arugam Bay Rest House look out at the traveller from the top of a sand bank, and the thunder of the swell breaking on the shore beyond comes muffled to his ear.

In the morning I walked along the wind-swept shore before the rest-house. There was the story of last night's doings written on the sand, the foot prints of the jackal whose yells had been heard last night as he hunted crabs along the beach, and the tracks of a jungle cock whose cry I could hear coming from the scrub jungle above the long sandbank. The sea was unbroken by waves and reflected the sun along the same line that it had reflected the green moon last night.

There is nothing at Arugam Bay but sea and sand, and sand and sea. Nothing to see, nothing to do. It is the most perfect place in the world for worn city folk to come to, and do nothing, and see nothing, except sand and sea, and that is the reason, I suppose, why so many people sign the rest-house book. Once there was a "wretched mud fort" in the place to go and see, where a solitary Dutch resident lived upon the lonely shore but now unless the visitor takes a boat across the lagoon and goes into the hunting country to the southward there is nothing to do. Arugam Bay is the place for a real holiday.

* * * *

I followed the road westward from Arugam Bay through some miles of park country where glades of long grass wound about among clumps of low jungle, a perfect place for deer, though neither deer nor deer tracks were to be seen.

Then the road went down into a causeway, and came up the other side, and I turned to the right down a newly edged and swept gravel road to Lahugala Tank. A giant king-fisher flew across as I came up to the tank bungalow and a red-backed wood-packer came dipping along behind him. A solemn-faced little Sinhalese boy followed me on to the bund and threw imaginary water over his head as he described how elephants came down every night to bathe in the tank.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

The blue water lay sparkling under the morning sun in a circle of grass and woodland.

Away across the tank the grey tower of Westminster Abbey was catching the eastern sun. "For the most part Westminster Abbey (Govindahella) forms a bold high, forest-crowned ridge terminating with the Tower which consists of a vast shaft of rock rising vertically above the plain below." The rock may be climbed with the help of ladders and on its summit may be seen a large stone cistern and the ruins of a palace. There are three caves in the side of the hill with Ensulu trees growing before them from whose leaves priests were wont to eat in ancient times. At the foot of the hill is a stone paved tank. For a time after, the brief glories of Parakrama Bahu in Polonnaruwa, this rock protected a fugitive prince driven out of his kingdom by the invading Kalinga King, Magha.

The Mahavansa says: "On the summit of the Govindamala hard to be reached by the rebels, the Adipada ruler, Bhuvanekabahu by name, whose courage was known to the world, had formed a town and by dwelling there, he protected the province of Rohana, the community of the bikkhus and the Order."

And that is all the history of the lonely hill of Westminster Abbey where bears and men still go to gather honey in the season.

I left the tank behind and followed the main road through a long stretch of fine jungle and deserted chena lands. Here and there I came upon lines of villagers tramping steadily along the road, and here and there a wood-cutting party. On the left there were occasional glimpses of the Kataragama mountains. Then the road passed out of the Eastern Province, and I was in Uva again. Soon after crossing a branch of the Heda Oya I could see the jungle-patched cliff of Maragala Kanda rising 3,600 feet above my head, with its long patna slopes running down into the plain. The next fifteen miles of road made a loop round this splendid mountain. At every opening in the trees by the road-side it changes its shape, giving first a glimpse of huge rain-washed boulders where trees cling on where they can; then a peep far up the green glen at a bare rocky precipice; then a view of the still higher jungle-covered peak that crowns the summit. Last of all comes in sight the huge western pillar of rock, the Moneragala, Peacock Rock, near the rest-house and the village of Moneragala. "The two peaks of Moneragala and Obbecotta," writes Fredrick Lewis, "have a strange tradition connected with them, which is, that when Ceylon's first Sinhalese invader, Vijaya, thrust out his Vedda wife and left her to the rage and tortures of her tribe, she said "Though I perish at the hands of my people, yet will I show my love for them in this wise, that while one of my breasts shall for ever be bountiful, the greater of the twain shall be dry, and nourish not, for all time." Below Moneragala is a small, but perennial spring of beautiful water, while Obbecotta is a parched rock, graceful in outline, but barren."

Around the foot of the mountain miles of rubber trees drawn up in long straight lines across the country have driven back the disorderly rabble of the jungle.

I passed the road that turns north to Bibile, and then crossed the Kumbukkan Oya and came to the little road that turns to the left to Buttala. Here I halted to look round for I had come back into ancient history. Duthu Gamani must have ridden over this ground many times: the ancient dagoba in the jungle at Buttala is attributed to him: and Parakrama Bahu must have known Buttala well, for the ancient road from Magama, near Tissamaharama, crossed the present road at this point on its way northward to Alutnuwara and Polonnaruwa. I listened to the footsteps of the barefoot soldiers marching northwards, clan by clan, to join Gamani in his attempt to recapture Anuradhapura. There is still a jungle path running up through the forest to Passara from Buttala. One day I will come back and explore it.

After Buttala the road passes over two branches of the Menik Ganga in which the Kataragama pilgrims bathe before the river passes on to wash the western side of the game sanctuary of Yala: then it goes over the Kirindi Oya that feeds the fat rice fields of Tissamaharama. And so at last I came to Wellawaya which lies at the foot of the mountains and looks out over the southern jungles.

I know nothing of Wellawaya except that petrol costs more there than at any other place in Ceylon. I had come to Wellawaya to meet again the Portuguese army that marched out of Badulla in 1630. I met a man in the village and asked him if he knew of a field near by which still commemorates the battle by its name. He was a stolid man with fierce eyes and an obstinate chin covered with a grey stubble of beard. Our conversation was like a murder story on the stage when the detective is trying to get information out of a witness closely related to the suspected murderer. He seemed to be more suspicious and to shut up tighter at every question. He had never heard that the Parangis had been to Wellawaya. He knew nothing of a battlefield anywhere near. The paddy fields were all far away. His expression became more and more like that of a man who has come to the door expecting a friend and meets the tax-collector. We were not getting along at all well. He would not look at my tobacco pouch which I have always found

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

to be a key to open all village hearts, and he refused to take fifty cents which I offered him to tell me the tales of the village. Then I said that I wanted some king coconuts and would buy them from him.

His jaw relaxed at last, and his teeth came through the stubble in a grin. The coconuts worked like magic in oiling his tongue. While they were being fetched by a very small boy who had been listening with mouth and eyes to the questioning, my new friend opened out on the history of Wellawaya. He told me that five miles up the road to the right was a place called Randeniya. He declared that Duthu Gamani and his brother Tissa had fought upon that ground. Now it was all a rubber garden with paddy fields close by. You could only go one mile in a car then you must walk. Two miles along the road was a great statue of Buddha. The Portuguese had never been to Randeniya as far as he knew.

I asked him if it was true that the old coach road went direct from Wellawaya to Ella, according to the story that I had heard. There had never been a road that way he said. The coach used to go round by Haputale, as the road goes now. He could not remember the coach. That was long ago.

We parted amicably at the cross roads, he with fifty cents and his bargain made, and I with my information and five king coconuts.

The track went northward along the banks of the Kirindi Oya until it came out upon the open paddy fields of Randeniya, and the rubber garden that my friend had mentioned. I found it difficult to realise that this very typical corner of peaceful Ceylon was the scene of the last fight of the gallant Portuguese Governor, de Sa, and of one of the greatest victories in Kandyan history.

Soon after the Portuguese had left Badulla, they found themselves surrounded by the King of Kandy's men. As soon as the fight began, one of the Colombo Mudaliyars, Wickrama Sinha, drove his sword through the body of a Portuguese soldier, and cutting off his head, fixed it upon a white draped lance. Holding up this sign of revolt he went over to the Kandyan side. The other Mudaliyars followed him, and their bewildered soldiers who knew nothing of the plot, wavered for a moment or two, and then most of them went after their leaders. Seven hundred Portuguese and a few lascarins were left alone in the mountain passes ringed round on every side by many thousand enemies and their own late allies.

And now for three days they had toiled down the mountain path in a desperate attempt to fight their way back to Colombo. There were sins on both sides in those terrible wars. The Portuguese were about to answer theirs.

Upon these paddy fields and on the hill where the rubber trees stand, the Portuguese spent their last miserable night. Their leader was de Sa, the bravest and most honest commander that Portugal ever sent to Ceylon. In the confusion of the night more lascarins deserted, and de Sa found an opportunity of sending a message to Colombo to warn the city of the desperate position he was in. In the darkness Luis Gomes Pinto came to the General. If the messenger could get away, he said, why should not de Sa make his escape too. The general's life was too precious to be lost, and he should take the chance that offered and preserve his life to serve Portugal for many years to come.

De Sa refused to desert his men, "for his generous soul and affection for his people would not allow him to leave his companions in their terrible affliction." He went round among them encouraging them, and looking to the wounded and to the burial of the dead. He changed his usual dress for a doublet and trousers, and armed himself with a sword and a small shield to be ready for the next day's work. The soldiers lay sleepless amidst the yells of the enemy on the surrounding hills, and were galled by the arrows and musket balls that came flying amongst them out of the darkness. "The night was now far advanced and the pressure of the enemy somewhat relaxed; our men were anxious to obtain some rest from the terrible exertions of the day to prepare for what awaited them on the next; but God in his wisdom was pleased to ordain that a great thunderstorm should come on and such a flood of rain as to deluge the plains and to render the powder and cord (the smouldering cord that fired the arquebuzes) useless; and the arquebuzes were the chief arms which we used against the enemy in the island. When all saw that this was the act of God they submitted themselves to His will, the priests urging and exhorting them to obtain the reward of glory. The few Chingalas who remaind faithful to us and who did not exceed one hundred and fifty in number, and the Portuguese, were greatly encouraged, and it was a source of much consolation to the general to see how all were resigned to the dispensation of Providence......In the morning they started on their march in the same fashion; but they did not advance many paces when all at once from every side they were attacked by this multitude, and when they tried to use their firearms they could not do so owing to the condition of the cord and the powder which were as we have described. At this the enemy pressed on them the more freely, but they would not come within the reach of our swords, the only weapons our men could use, but shot their muskets at them and showered their arrows in such numbers that they appeared like clouds."

The Sinhalese poem, the Parangi Hatane, gives a picture of the battle from the side of the Kandyans under King Senerat.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

The four Colombo Mudaliyars, "the powerful Maha Mantri of Siyane Korale, and the handsome Kaltota Mantri, with Amaracon Mantri, and the chief from Peliyagoda, renowned for his wealth and mighty in war, Wickramasinha," who had turned against the Portuguese, had advised the king not to let the enemy escape into the Low Country.

"Then our glorious King, lord of the Three Lankas, Crown of the Solar race, scattering the lightnings in ten thousand rays from his jewelled sword, pursued the retreating foe as with a herd of elephants fighting step by step he reached Nagawelaka."

"The next day he threw up ramparts round Randeniya Wela and despatched the two Princes to confront them.

"The gallant Attapattu host were posted near to oppose them; and like a crowd of fireflies before the rising sun the might of the Parangis was dimmed and their only thought was of flight.

"The roaring of the cannon was like the ceaseless thunder where the lightning plays; like heavy clouds the rolling smoke did veil the sky; the countless bullets came rattling like the rain drops; and the looker-on faint at heart, did ask himself if this were the ending of the world.........

"Quivering with fear the Portugal's host behold our men; with breathless speed they strip off their coats, creeping on their bellies in flight; as when the gurulu flock stand sternly round, the frightened Nagas cast their sloughs and slink rapidly away.

"All around are thrown their bended bows and guns, their swords and javelins and pointed spears, trumpets and fifes, drums and tambourines, with palanquins, unnumbered coats and hats; treasure chests in wild confusion lie; their only thought is how to save their skins, these wounded hogs.

"And our god-like King drew near the foe and raised his glorious white flag with its shimmering rows of pearls, and gave order to the wise Councillors who stood attentive near that none were to escape."

There follows a long list of warriors in the King's army, who fought with special distinction, most of them familiar names: Jayasundera, Wijesekera Appu Sami, Wickremesinha Mantri, Abeyacon Mantri's son, Kulatunga, Ilangancona's peerless son, Galagedera, Wijeycon, Molagoda, Ekenaike of Dunuvila's son, the men of Dumbara, Wiracon Arachchi, Ranawira, the high born Abeysinha,, Wirasekera Mantri's son, Appuhami, Samaratunga. These were the heroes of the day.

The poem goes on:

"With the hosts of Uva Tunkinde and Matale, right gallantly did the princely pair, like Rama and Laxmana with their yaksha host carry themselves through this red sea of blood.

"Parangi Padres, brave captains, the Thupassi host, and Kustantinu de Sa were there encircled and cut to pieces; thus was the battle fought; and the victorious host returned to their King."

The King had given orders that the Portuguese should, if possible, be taken alive, but his soldiers, trying to carry out this command, met with such heavy losses that the order had to be countermanded. And so in a short time, says the Portuguese historian, "almost all our men were dead and the few who remained were thrown into confusion by the conflict. When the Captain General (de Sa), who had been walking from point to point and encouraging his men, saw this, he took his sword which was a broad-sword and wielding it with one hand, for his right hand had been crippled, he threw himself among these barbarians and made among them a mountain of corpses......... But finally he was wounded by some bullets and arrows so that he yielded his soul to his Creator, leaving a name on the roll of fame no lower than the greatest heroes of the world; for he was beloved not only for his valour but also for all his other qualities. After this shameful disaster, until the last hour when we were driven out of the Island, his memory was kept alive among us; and while a Portuguese remains in the State, the life and courage and the wisdom of Constantino de Sa e Noronha will be bemoaned."

Knox, who probably heard the story of de Sa's death from the Kandyans amongst whom he was a prisoner, relates that the General, de Sa, seeing himself about to be taken, "called his Black Boy to give him water to drink, and snatching the knife that stuck by the Boy's side, stabbed himself with it."

It was somewhere upon the fields, where I stood, or upon the hills around them that the valiant and generous de Sa died, and the Kandyans triumphed. The bones of many brave soldiers, both Portuguese and Sinhalese, lie buried side by side somewhere under the green grass at Randeniya.

In a few weeks after their victory the Kandyans were once more before the walls of Colombo and the Portuguese were fighting for their very existence in the island. But the tide turned once more before the end came.

I returned down the long hot road to Wellawaya and went to bed in the little world's-end resthouse that stands under the mountains of Uva.

* * * *

In the morning I ran up the Ratnapura road for half a dozen miles through rubber estates and outlying patches of jungle. Just before the road enters the village of Koslanda, it brings the traveller suddenly upon one of the grandest sights in Ceylon. I

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

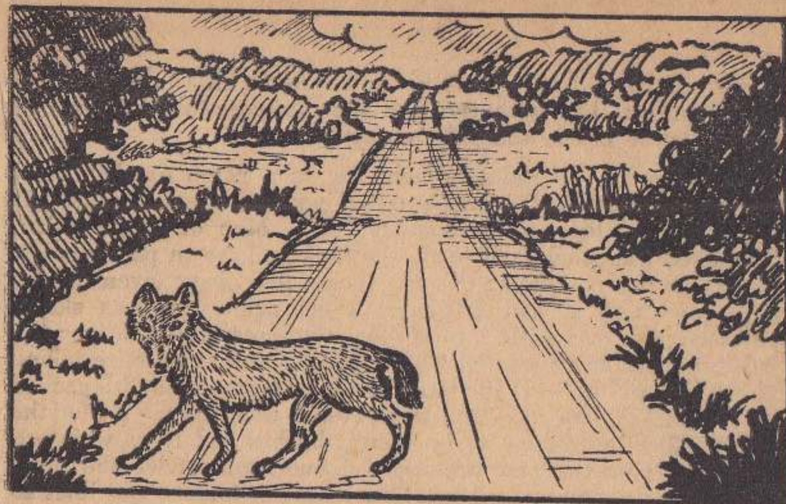
saw a great white streak of water coming down from the crest of a mighty cliff high over head, and falling in long bearded wreaths of spray into the depths of a rocky jungle glen. Bushes clung to the edge of the precipice where the water first made its mad leap into space out of a circle of blue sky. Trees sprang up from the roadside and strove to reach up to the top of the cliff but only succeeded in framing the jumbled mass of rocks where the stream came to earth again, and went boiling on its way down the hill. This same water would find its way into the Kirindi Oya and feed the green paddy fields below the Tissa Wewa, and wash the foot of the great dagoba at Tissamaharama.

Upon a stone close to the bridge where the road crosses the stream is inscribed :—'Diyaluma Falls. 570 feet drop. 628 feet above road'. It may be added that this is the seventh highest waterfall in the world.

The little corner of the hills where this fall lies hidden is a wonderful place for wild life, and was still better before some of the trees and undergrowth were cleared away to open up the view. I saw tiny White-eyes and tailor-birds creeping among the bushes, and butterflies of many kinds feeding upon the flowers. On the road the dung-beetles, a small and puny breed compared with genuine Low-country specimens, plied their busy trade; and in the stream the grey back cray-fish waited to nip up a meal as the water rushed over their heads.

The swallows crossed and re-crossed the glen, wetting their wings in the flying spray; and high overhead a great hawk circled round and round in long sweeping curves, and looked down on to the sparkling sunlit stream.

The glen of Diyaluma Falls is like a corner of the new world in the second week of creation. I spent a whole day there seeking out birds and butterflies and looking for curious flowers and plants, and pottering in the water after fish and insects. In the evening I went back to Wellawaya, making a resolve all the way that I would revisit Diyaluma Falls at the earliest opportunity that fate should offer.



CHAPTER XIV.

Tissamaharama, Hambantota, Mulkirigala, Dondra Head, Matara

I left Wellawaya an hour or more before sunrise and ran down the road towards Tissamaharama in the darkness. At about the forty-fifth mile-stone I saw a she elk standing on the edge of the jungle and blinking with foolish innocent eyes at the head-lights of the car. I stopped and got out to have a look at her. Whereupon she bolted with a crash, and I could hear the buck in the jungle barking out his danger signal: "Don't be a fool, my dear. You know what happened to your sister." The occasional crack of a stick told where he made his way deeper into the jungle with his lady following meekly behind him.

Further on I left the car by the roadside and turned down a narrow path to the left, and waded through the Kirindi Oya as the dawn broke. The path was scored with tracks of elk, spotted deer, pig and mousedeer—I never saw more. As I advanced I could feel the loneliness and peace of the jungle, where there is continual quiet, and yet the quietness of watching: where there are no false manners, but friend to friend, and foe to foe; and no law but quick eye and ready limb.

Then I heard the dull thud of a shot gun far away in front of me, and I cursed the ill luck that had sent somebody else out along this path earlier than myself. I went on, and saw a jungle cock fly along the path with a streak of red and green and gold.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

He had been feeding in the undergrowth in the face of all disturbances: but with the gun shot I knew that all hope of meeting deer beside the path was gone.

A trudge of two miles brought me to a patch of abandoned paddy fields below the tree-covered bund of a small tank. It was a typical little south country tank. Men of long ago had conquered the jungle and made the tank and grown paddy below it perhaps for centuries: but the jungle had never given up the fight, and now it had driven man out again and was slowly embracing its own with a voluptuous rankness of vegetation: the fields had become a swamp where a handful of snipe were taking an early morning feed: the bund had been trampled and breached by elephants years ago, and was covered with trees. As for the water, there was none to be seen: bushes and trees were advancing across the bed towards the bund and under the bund the water was covered with a thick carpet of lotuses and lilies so that the water-pheasants could walk from end to end of the tank without wetting their feet.

As I stood on the bund I heard a blood-curdling shriek over my head and a great black and white horn bill flew out of a tree and sailed over the tank bed. He was followed by no less than fourteen others of his kind who each gave a yell, and followed their leader out of the way of the intruder. The jungle in these parts is dotted in all directions with small abandoned village tanks which tell their story of an industrious shifting population of old time.

As I walked back along the path towards the road I came upon three wiry little men standing guiltily in the middle of the way with a fine dead spotted buck lying on the ground beside them. It was they who had fired the single shot that I had heard, and as I had come along the path behind them, they had remained out of sight with their prize until I had passed. Now on their way to the high road they were overtaken, carrying the buck slung by its legs to a rough cut pole. They had an ancient breech-loader single-barrel twelve bore shot gun, rusted all over outside, but fairly clean inside, considering its recent fouling. It was fearfully shaky about the breech from sheer old age, but there was the buck to show that it would still go off if the pin happened to hit the cap of the cartridge. The little men grinned nervously as they exhibited this ancient weapon and half a dozen shining new S.S.G. cartridges. They gave me in dumb show a picture of how they had crept upon the buck in the darkness and brought him down with a single shot. Each of those six remaining cartridges would probably fell one more member of Ceylon's thinning herds of deer. I asked if they had a licence. Oh yes, they had a licence, but it had got left at home that day by some oversight. And yet

these sturdy fellows with their rickety old blunderbuss and their rough woodcraft had more claim to the buck than the well fed, motorist who pumps lead over his headlights into a deer by the roadside and carts it home on the carrier, and still calls himself a sportsman.

I left the night hunters and waded back over the river, and returned to the road. The little car passed on southwards, putting up a bronze wing pigeon now and then, and disturbing brother mongoose in his hunting. Through the long jungle I came to Telulla, and Tanāmalwila, and on down through the southern forests until the car rattled over the bridge of the Kirindi Oya.

I turned to the left along the bund of the Tissa Wewa, where the wind sweeps fiercely over the road, and grips the front wheels as though it would turn the car down the bank. On the left the wewa was lying still and peaceful, a white mirror throwing back the picture of the jungle and the sky unruffled by the wind puffs on the bund. On the right I saw the great Dagoba grey and squat among the green paddy fields. I ran on under the trees at the end of the bund and pulled up at the resthouse.

It was somewhere about 220 B.C. that King Maha-Naga, the brother of Devanampiya Tissa, set men to work to build the Tissa Wewa at Tissamaharama. He constructed the bund, dammed up the Kirindi Oya and turned the water into the tank. For some mysterious reason the Kingdom of Magama or Tissamaharama declined not long after Duttu Gamani led his forces northwards to recapture Anuradhapura, and the tanks in the neighbourhood went back to the jungle. It was not until 1876 that the Tissa Wewa was restored and the jungle was beaten back. In 1890, 1,500 acres were planted with rice below the bund of the Tissa Tank. (Two Happy Years in Ceylon II 221 & 222).

I walked along the channel that leads through the paddy fields towards the great Dagoba. This is a holy and a beautiful place where man and nature are at peace with one another. The fish in the channel come swimming optimistically towards the pilgrim as he looks down into the clear water: two fat Kabaragoyas (iguanas) replete with insects, lay basking and blinking in the mud and took no more notice of me than to put out their forked tongues once or twice as I passed: in the bushes beside the stream a whole colony of waver birds were busy chattering and arguing over family matters around their pendent houses. Kindness to man and beast had been practised here for many long generations: the birds were without fear, and some reparation was made to the Iguana family for the cruelties practised upon it in other parts and other days in Ceylon. (See Tennent's Natural History p. 271).

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

It is best to look at the great dagoba of Tissamaharama from a distance, as it rises grandly out of the green paddy fields. It is the only one, I believe, of the three great dagobas of the ancient city that has been restored. The Mahavamsa says that Devanampiyatissa, (247 to 207 B.C.) made the Tissamahavihara (XX 25). Devanampiyatissa's second brother, Maha-Naga, fled from the poisoned mangoes of Tissa's queen to Rohuna, where "he founded the Nagamahavihara that bore his name (XXII 9)." Ila Naga (93-102 A.D.) "being won to faith in the Bodhisatta, restored the Nagamahavihara and gave it the extension of a hundred unbent bows in length, and he enlarged the thupa even to what it has been since then; moreover, he made (i.e. restored) the Tissa-tank (XXXV. 22.)" Mr. Codrington says that "Ila Naga (first century A.D.) built the great dagoba at Tissamaharama, then known as the Naga Maha Vihara (History of Ceylon p. 23).

Ila Naga had fled from Anuradhapura from the proud Lambakanna clan after he had ordered, 'in his wrath at an offence of theirs that they, even they themselves, should make a road to the Mahathupa, commanding to stamp it down firmly, where it ran beside the tank, and he set candalas to be their overseers' (XXXV 17 Mahavamsa). This is an interesting little peep at ancient road making. It is recorded that in early British days, before rollers were imported, the coolies used to go along in lines stamping down the gravel on the road to the regular beat of a chant of their own. The enraged Lambakannas drove out the King, Ila Naga, for a while, and paid dearly for doing so later.

When Vijaya came to Ceylon the Island was inhabited by Yakkhas and Nagas. Ila Naga is believed not to be a Sinhalese but a prince of Naga extraction, a member of that great race who lived in North-West Ceylon before the Sinhalese came from India, and built up a civilization here which has perished from history for want of a great gift which the coming of Buddhism gave to Ceylon, and that was an alphabet.

Mahagama, the ancient capital of Rohuna, lay near the spot where I was standing. Rohuna was the Kingdom of the South-East of Ceylon.

It was here that a princess in a golden vessel was washed ashore one day. On the vessel were the words "This Is A King's Daughter" (XXII 21). She became the mother of the boy who went to bed, "and drawing up his hands and feet he lay upon his bed. His mother came, and caressing him spoke thus:

"Why dost thou not lie easily upon thy bed with limbs stretched out, my son?"

"Over there beyond the Ganga are the Damilas, here on this side is the Gotha-ocean, how can I lie with outstretched limbs?" he answered." Mother and son were Vihara Devi and Gamani.

Here ten famous warriors came to serve the sixteen year old prince. When he became king he marched with these warriors from Mahagama through Tissamaharama (XXV 2) and on to the throne at Anuradhapura.

The greatness of Mahagama and Tissamaharama gradually waned and the ancient city decayed.

William Orr who visited it in 1800 describes it as a village of twenty inhabitants, with a rest-house, and "a field of paddee ground, containing thirty-five ammonams, watered by the Keerindeoye, when in cultivation, but having lain waste for these last seven years, in consequence of the desertion of the greater part of the inhabitants, whose motive for emigration is ascribed to fear of wild beasts, which infest this part of the country to an incredible degree and increase in number as that of the inhabitants diminishes" (Cordiner II 115).

In 1802 Governor North passed this way, and the report of his journey says that 'Mahagam is a considerable village, containing a good number of inhabitants, who cultivate paddee, but they complain that for seven years past they have had no corps, owing to the failure of the rains' (Cordiner II 141).

In 1834 Major Forbes says: 'From Hambantota I turned inland on my way to the village of Wirawella, situated fifteen miles from Hambantota, and within two miles of the ruins of Magam; but, never calculating on any interruption in the immediate neighbourhood of so large and populous a village, I started before daylight. However, I had only just got clear of the last houses, when I suddenly found myself in the midst of a herd of elephants that we could hear breaking and twisting off branches of trees in every direction around us. Having disengaged myself from the palanquin, I proceeded to the front with my large guns; and the whole party, in most compact order, with speed and silence passed through the herd without interruption: this was fortunate, for there was not sufficient light to have enabled me to take an accurate aim if any of the elephants had attempted to dispute our passage along the road." (Eleven Years in Ceylon p. 183).

Forbes found the bund of the Tissa tank burst, and its bed a noxious swamp, infested with crocodiles and frequented by immense herds of elephants. The Yatalatissa dagoba was a mass of brick about seventy feet high, split near the centre, and overgrown with trees and brushwood: the guide informed him that its great dilapidation was occasioned by the Portuguese, who had attempted to destroy it with gunpower. (Forbes II 188).

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Perhaps the guide was right, for Ribeiro tells a strange and terribly cold blooded story of how he was one of a company of one hundred and fifty Portuguese and two thousand Lascarins, under the command of Gaspar Figueira de Cerpe who was a man in high respect among them, a man of ability and well versed in the Sinhalese language. The party came to look for plunder and to see the salt pans upon this coast. He does not mention Mahagam, but he tells how they heard that four leagues inland there was a pagoda held in great reverence by the gentiles; here were preserved the offerings which had been made for many years, consisting of gold, jewels, and precious stones. It was the Kataragama temple that they had heard of. He goes on to say: 'When we came near the spot where they said the pagoda stood, we took a native residing close to the spot and our Commander inquired from him if he knew where the pagoda was. He replied that he did, and that it was close by; he acted as our guide, and led us through a hill covered with forest which was the only one in that district, and this we wandered round and re-crossed many times. It was certain that the pagoda was at the top of it, but I do not know what magic it possesed, for out of five guides whom we took, the first three were put to death because we thought that they were deceiving us, for they acted as if they were mad, and spoke all kinds of nonsense, each one in his turn, without knowing of the others. The last two deceived us and did exactly the same, and we were forced to turn back the way we had come without effecting anything, and without even seeing the pagoda which is called Catergao.' (Ribeiro p.175).

I walked on along the stream and under the wall of the court of the dagoba and through the iron gates on to the platform where the great mass of brickwork towered over my head. I walked round the building. Not a living soul was to be seen, only a few shattered and weather-beaten statues standing upon one side among some ancient pillars upright or tumbled down as if they belonged to a deserted and forgotten world.

The Dagoba stands like a good Buddhist, alone and motionless as if buried deep in contemplation, a silent and éternal comment on the vanity of human passion and desire, austere and beautiful, heedless alike of sunbred insects and tame unsuspecting birds that find a refuge in the nooks and crannies on its sides, and of the mantle of grey stucco with which the children of time have covered its ancient walls.

I walked away across the fields to where I could look at the dagoba far off and see the grandeur of its size. Here I met a shaggy headed little boy dressed all in white. He had come, he said, on pilgrimage to Tissamaharama all the way from Horana in the Western Province. He and his parents had been

offering pitchcha mal at the dagoba and paying their worship. "There were some big fish in the fountains to give rice to," said the boy. I asked him what he thought of the buildings round the dagoba.

"O those, those are modern ones," he said with a touch of scorn, "the whole place was repaired in about 1933 and then they put those up." He gave his opinion as gravely as a Judge, like one who is used to being heard with respect. Yet I doubt if he was three and a half feet high. He told me, "We worshipped first the Dagoba, then the Bo-Tree, and then the Buddha. They say that the leaves on the side of the Bo-Tree away from the dagoba are ordinary, but those on the side of the tree nearest to the dagoba are sweet."

I'm afraid I must have looked doubtful at this, for he added very earnestly:

"I tasted them myself, and it was so."

* * * *

I left Tissamaharama in the early morning and took the road that runs westward towards Galle.

Round a bend in the road I came suddenly upon a plump jackal. Some strange demon, that inhabits hares after dark and stray dogs, took possession of this jackal and made him gallop straight down the middle of the road in front of the car at the full stretch of his legs, although there were ten yards of grass on either side and the friendly jungle beyond. I ran the car almost up to his tail, but he would not swerve to one side. The speedometer went from 19 to 20 miles an hour, which is as much as a man can well do on his feet, and up to 21 and 22, so that nariya was covering the hundred in 9 3-10 seconds. He kept up the pace for a hundred yards or so and never showed so much as the tip of his red tongue. So I had to slow down and give him the road. He kept it still at full gallop, until he came, I suppose, to his regular path, and there he turned off and trotted into the jungle with his angry little eyes turned round upon the car, and a fine double row of white teeth showing between his black curled lips. He is said to be a coward and a scavenger but his race has managed to survive pretty well on cowardice and carrion: and judging from some of the specimens of dog that lie in the road up to the last second before destruction from on-coming car wheels overtakes them, the village lady dogs are by no means averse to his wild wooing on the jungle edge.

My Jackal's time was good: the Illustrated London News. of January, 1938, gives the speed of various animals. "Numerous dogs" tested by speedometer did 20 miles an hour. Other interesting times are given. For instance a charg-

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

ing elephant did 24.5 m.p.h.: (it is not specified how this time was arrived at): a greyhound did 36 m.p.h.; a jak rabbit (chased) did 45 m.p.h., and a cheetah 70 m.p.h. over a hundred yards.

Presently I came upon a large notice by the road-side:

"Bird Sanctuary.
No Shooting Allowed,"

and soon afterwards the road came out upon the bund which divides the Wirawila Wewa from the Yoda Kandiya Wewa. The tanks lay stretched out far on either side of the road, and gaunt dead trees stood out of the still water giving perching places to a great company of birds. As I stood looking at a water pheasant picking his dainty way over the lotus leaves, a flight of cotton teal passed over the road within forty yards of the car, just as if they had never been shot at in their lives. I took off my hat to them, and to the watcher of the tank, if such there be, and turned to look up the history of the Wirawila Tank. I found that it has still to be discovered. "Eminent historians have been constrained to record that 'Nothing is known of its history, the ancient name having been lost'." It can only tell its own story of a prosperous and growing kingdom of Mahagama which needed broader rice fields than the Tissa Wewa and the Yoda Wewa could water, and so the twin tanks of Wirawila and Yoda-Kandiya Wewa, the tank with the giant bund, came into being. Then, somewhere after the end of the twelfth century, something caused the population of Mahagama to decrease, and there were too few people to keep the irrigation works in repair. The dark ages came upon the ancient city and the jungle crept in with its attendant wild beasts, and diseases: and a few heaps of bricks and stones and a handful of malaria-ridden villagers living beside open grass lands that had once been the beds of great lakes, were all that were left of the kingdom of Kakavanna Tissa, the father of Duttu Gamani.

Elephants bathed almost undisturbed for centuries in the water holes of Wirawila and Yoda Kandiya Wewa. But now there are eight hundred acres of rice fields below the tank and a sturdy man may go for years without a bout of Malaria.

* * * *

I ran out along the bare headland of Hambantota, past the round martello tower which looks out in every direction from wicked little eyes set in its grey walls, until I came to the Rest-house. Hambantota Resthouse has one of the grandest views in Ceylon spread out in front of its verandah. At the foot of the Resthouse lies the semi-circle of the bay with a small deserted jetty stretching out forlornly into the sheltered water. The Lewayas sparkle with piles of white sea salt along the coast, and the Kataragama hills rise up behind them. Boats sometimes lie in the bay to take in a cargo of salt, but for the most part Hambantota dreams above blue water and forgets the world outside. It was here that the veterans of the Malay regiment in the service of the British Government were retired, and you can still see upon the roads of Hambantota men with the bodies of Greek Gods and lovely-eyed girls who speak of the far eastern islands.

As I had come along the road I had passed on my left hand those broad Lewayas to which for centuries past long tavalams of bullocks came down from the Kandyan Kingdom to collect the salt for the king's people. The sea beats into these shallow lagoons in rough weather, and evaporating leaves a layer of salt from half an inch to ten inches thick. More than one battle was fought for the possession of the Lewayas of Hambantota. The Dutch tried to control the salt supply of the island so that they might withhold it if the King of Kandy refused to give them the precious cinnamon which was the chief source of their wealth in Ceylon. The importance of salt to the Kandyans may be judged from Knox's account of their salt supply. He says: "There is a Port in the country of Portaloon (Puttalam) lying on the West side of the Island, whence part of the King's Country is supplied with Salt and Fish: where they have some small trade with the Dutch, who have a Fort upon the Point to prevent Boats from coming: But the Western (Eastern in the book, by a mistake I suppose) Parts being too far, and hilly, to Drive Cattel thither for salt, God's Providence hath provided them a place on the East side nearer them, which in their Language they call Leawava. Where the Eastwardly winds blowing, the sea beats in, and in the Westwardly Winds, (being fair weather there), it becomes salt, and that in such abundance, that they have as much as they please to fetch. This Place of Leawawa is so contrived by the Providence of the Almighty Creator, that neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch in all the times of their Wars could ever prevent this people from having the benefit of this Salt, which is the principal thing that they esteem in time of Trouble or War; and most of them do keep by them a store of salt against such times. It is, as I have heard, environed by Hills on the Land side, and by sea not convenient for Ships to ride; and very sickly, which they do impute to the power of a great God, who dwelleth near by in a Town they call Cotteragon, standing in the Road, to whom all that go to fetch Salt both small and great must give an Offering."

In 1800 William Orr met a Party of hillmen gathering salt in the Lewayas. The Kandyans, "with hands and feet sorely blistered by the salt, were breaking off solid lumps in a hard, solid, pure body, perfectly free from all extraneous, earthy, or

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

other matter, and separated from the black mud on the bed of the pan by a small quantity of water." They loaded up the lumps, "clean, pure, and beautifully white," upon their sturdy little black bullocks and started on the long trek back to the hills.

Forbes visited the Lewayas in 1834 and saw them covered with salt of dazzling whiteness surrounded by the dark and sombre shade of the forest. The salt was by that time a Government monopoly and the pans were carefully watched to keep out intruders. "So," says Miss Gordon Cummins who visited these parts in 1880, "for the greater part of the year these shallow lagoons are utterly undisturbed, and afford sanctuary to innumerable birds and other shy creatures. Great mobs of snowy pelicans and groups of delicately rosy flamingoes stand reflected in the still waters and many crocodiles bask on the shores."

A man in the Resthouse came out on to the verandah and pointed out the heaps of sparkling white crystals far away across the bay. He had a fine specimen lump of raw salt in his hand. "Would you," he said, "like to taste pure salt without any drying matter in it?" I tried his sault. It was good and potent. The Lewayas must be worth a good deal to Hambantota Resthouse. I added quite a number of empties to the collection of bottles in the back premises.

I continued my journey along the road through low jungle until I crossed the bridge over the Walawe Ganga and came to the village of Ambalantota. The Culavamsa records that when Parakrama Bahu was on the throne of Polonnaruwa in about 1153 A.D., the Sinhalese fought a long and fierce civil war along this coast, and under the rice fields close to Ambalantota lies buried an ancient Capital of Ruhuna, the southern kingdom, called Mahanagahula. Any trace of the city that survives, remains, I think, still to be discovered.

When Forbes visited this district in 1834 he wrote: "This fertile, but unhealthy and thinly peopled district is oppressed by incredible numbers of elephants, bears, wild boars, and leopards, and abounds in deer, pea-fowl, and game of every sort. At this time, measures are in progress which may do much towards restoring this district to its ancient state of prosperity; I particularly allude to the encouragement held out to labourers, and the facilitating of the destruction of wild animals by permitting the sale of gunpowder, even allowing it to be sold from Government stores."

I passed the road that runs up beside the Walawe Ganga to Ratnapura, and came on to the village of Ranna where the jungle begins to give place to civilisation represented by lines of

rather pale looking young coconut trees. This country is described in 1834 as being well populated, yet even thirty years before that time elephants were kraaled in this neighbourhood and led off to the stables at Matara to be sold and distributed. As late as 1800 Governor North witnessed the capturing of 170 elephants at Kotawy, ten miles north of Tangalle.

The country east of Matara about Dikwella and Tangalle was a centre of elephant hunting in Dutch times, and captured elephants were a valuable source of income. Governor Van Goens (1656-1665) in his instructions to his successor writes: "The time of the elephant hunt which is also of great importance, is from May till September or October, or so much longer as it would take the hunters to deliver the number of thirty **alias** and nine tuskers stipulated for. The hunters should not be allowed to get into arrears, except in the case of scarcity of elephants." Baldaeus, the Dutch historian, writes in 1672: "At Mature are vast stables, where the wild elephants are tamed, and afterwards sold to the Moors of Bengal and Coromandel." He adds: "It often happens that young elephants are taken in following the old ones. These are very unlucky: I remember, that one time as several of us were talking together one of these young elephants came slily and pushed with his backside against one of our company, that he was ready to fall upon his nose."

At Tangalle I made a deviation from my route to visit the cave temple of Mulkirigala, hidden in a great black rock standing out 350 ft. above the surrounding country, ten miles northward from the coast. I wanted to see it partly because it is a beautiful and very ancient place, built 130 years B.C. some say; but chiefly I wanted to see it to pay my respects to Mr. George Turnour, grandson of the first Earl of Winterton, and sometime Government Agent at Ratnapura. He became a Sinhalese and Pali scholar "under the guidance of Galle, a learned priest of the temple on Adam's peak." The Mahavamsa was known to exist but the Pali verse was so obscure, and learning in Ceylon was sunk to such a low ebb, that no one was found who could translate it. Then in 1826, in the temple of Mulkirigala, Turnour, with the help of Galle, discovered a **tika**, or commentary, of the Mahavamsa which opened up the text of the ancient chronicle, and so made possible the "Epitome of the History of Ceylon," and later, Turnour's translation of the Mahavamsa, which were the first great step forward in the modern study of Ceylon History. Turnour was born in Ceylon in 1799. He was a very modest man and an able government servant. Major Forbes, the author of "Eleven years in Ceylon," was his intimate friend and fellow enthusiast in Pali, and Ceylon History. Turnour returned

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

to Europe in 1842, with shattered health, and died at Naples on the 10th of April in the following year.

I stood upon the rock Mulkirigala at the top of the steps close to the small caves where the images of Buddha are enshrined. Behind me was the face of the rock sloping inwards. It was covered with innumerable white finger-marks made with chunam upon the stone to register vows made at the holy place, the hand and seal as it were for their fulfilment. On top of the rock is a white dagoba, at its foot the blue waters of the village tank. Many pilgrims come to Mulkirigala for it is a landmark of the country side, and has been a sacred spot for more than twenty centuries.

* * * *

I stood on the top of the lighthouse at Dondra Head. Far below was the water, black and brown and green. A fisherman upon a rock was engaged in casting and recasting his line, and never catching anything. Below him the transparent waves were lashing at the shore and rushing up the sand striving to get at the roots of the coconut trees. The green tree tops ran away from the foot of the tower and spread inland and along the coast towards the far distance where the Kataragama hills stood out clearly, and the heights of Haputale rose into a curtain of rain clouds. To the northward I could see Gongala that rises 4,465 feet above Deniyaya. In the eyes of popular romance a lighthouse should be solitary, a mysterious place where strange things happen and men go mad from loneliness. Dondra Head Lighthouse is all spick and span with fresh Government paint and polished brass work, and the keeper looked sane enough as he showed me the lamp and its revolving screen which works with weights and a chain like a grandfather clock.

"The lighthouse is 176 feet high," he told me, "and the last stone to complete it was laid on Queen Victoria's birthday in 1889."

I asked him if he found the life lonely in Dondra. "No" he said, "we're not lonely. There are plenty of people about here, and good many visitors come, and we can see the ships sometimes going eastward towards Singapore. But it's lonely down there" he added, pointing to the southward. "They say there's not a piece of land between this and the south pole. The open sea stretches all the way."

We turned our eyes inland again and I looked down upon the village of Dondra where a long history lies buried under the green hillocks and the labyrinth of red lanes twisting among the houses and coconut gardens on the headland where men sit and stare at a strange car, and children giggle and crowd round in the hope of seeing something out of the ordinary.

I climbed down the long iron stairway, round and round to the foot of the white tower of the lighthouse, and turned to the left down a lane to see what remains of the Lion Throne that stands under a mighty tree. A crowd of brown children gathered round and pointed and laughed. Then an old man came out of a house and showed me the bare stone pedestal and a few rough unshaped pillars which he said was once a king's throne: the Parangis had destroyed it, and this was all that was left. He guided me to an avenue of square stone pillars leading up to a carved gateway which stands in front of a humble modern temple. This carved gate is, I believe, the only perfect piece of carving left in Dondra to tell of its ancient works of art. On each door post is a fine sculptured figure of a horseman.

I came back to the main road, and crossed it, and followed a lane which leads up the hill to the Gal Ge. Upon a scrubby, desolate hill, all alone, stands this beautiful little grey stone building with its two dark chambers, part perhaps of an ancient Hindu shrine: for Dondra was the holy place of the red sandalwood image of Vishnu that was wafted across the seas to Ceylon during the reign of King Dapula Sen, about 790 A.D. Vishnu, in his incarnation as Rama, the warrior and true lover, had come to Ceylon to rescue Sita his ravished bride, and to slay Ravana the demon king.

Dondra, which is called, Devi-nuwara, the city of the Gods, has been a place of pilgrimage to Hindus and Buddhists alike for over a thousand years. Parakrama Bahu I. restored the temple in about 1160; and Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveller visited it as a sacred shrine in about 1344. The latter wrote: "We travelled thence, (from Adam's Peak), to Dinawar, (Devi Nuwara), a large town on the coast, inhabited by merchants. In this town there is an idol, known as Dinawar, in a vast temple, in which there are about a thousand Brahmans and Pogis, and about five hundred women, daughters of the infields, who sing and dance every night in front of the idol. The city and all its revenues form an endowment belonging to the idol, from which all who live in the temple and who visit it are supplied with food. The idol itself is of gold, about a man's height, and in the place of its eyes it has two great rubies, which, as I was told, (for as a Mohamedan he was not allowed to or would not, see it) shine at night like lamps."

As I was looking at the stone work of the Gal Ge, two village youths appeared from nowhere. They were handsome young men with long black hair and shapely limbs and highly coloured cloths. They had the gentle eyes and the slightly scornful lips of a proud beauty who has never seen a cinema actress. Moreover they were cheerful and ready to gossip. The hill, they said, was once covered with buildings, but the Parangis had

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

come and destroyed them all. No one knew when the Gal Ge was built or by whom, only it was once part of an ancient temple. It had been quite recently restored.

Then one of them began a story of how some Europeans in big white hats had come to dig for treasure inside the house of stone. They had gone on digging and digging and lifting out the earth and stones. But when they had got down about three feet, out of the earth came a great swarm of bambara bees, and the treasures hunters fled: he laughed aloud as he described the trail of spades and big white hats that they left behind them.

"There," he said, "you can see the loose earth inside, that they left behind them."

I asked him to lend me a mammoty, so that I might look for the subterranean bees.

He smiled, as if to say a tale's a tale and a mammoty's a mammoty, and the one would spoil the other, but in his words he vehemently protested the truth of his story.

I stood upon the hill beside the Gal Ge and tried to see old Dondra as it used to be. The lantana and weeds were swept away from the hills and the coconut trees vanished from the headland: behind me the daboga sprang up again from its grave on the crest of the hill, the courts and cloisters rose again around the house of stone; and the houses and temples ran down to the verge of the sea. Priests and pilgrims and merchants crowded the narrow streets making their way to and from the great central shrine. Couto, the Portuguese writer, has left a description of the place, which he very probably saw himself before it was destroyed. He says: "The pagoda of Tanaverem (Dondra) was the most celebrated temple in the island, and, next to Adam's Peak, the most frequented by pilgrims. The building was like a handsome city with a circuit of a full league. The temple itself was vast in size, all the roofs being domed and richly carved; round about it were several very handsome chapels and over the principal gateway was a tall tower entirely roofed with copper, gilt in various parts. Within was a large square with verandahs and terraces with a handsome gate on each side, while all around were planted sweet-smelling flowers which were used during their processions. There were several handsome streets where lived all the servants attached to the temple, chief among them being the women dedicated to its service."

That was old Dondra. And then came its terrible end.

In 1587 when Raja Sinha's guns were thundering against the ramparts of Colombo; the temple servants heard a rumour that the Portuguese were raiding the coast. Then in January, 1588 they learned that the terrible Thome de Sousa had burnt the

town of Galle. Then Weligama was plundered, and later refugees arrived from Matara to tell of the destruction of that town and the burning of its three temples. The men of Dondra built stockades on the shore and prepared to defend their holy place. They had not long to wait before they saw the Portuguese ships rounding the western headland and moving slowly towards them.

Couto tells the story of what happened:

"We went on board and proceeded to the pagoda of Tanaverem half a league further off ...... On approaching it we encountered a fierce storm which the Lascarins declared had been sent by God for the protection of His temple and they whispered that the Portuguese would never get near it. To disabuse their minds the Captain swore that he would destroy the building. The next day he landed his men and after storming the fortifications which they had on the shore we advanced to the temple, only to find that it had been abandoned and that there was no one left to resist our occupation. We burst in the gates and proceeded to destroy the idols of which there were more than a thousand of different figures of clay and wood and copper, mostly gilded. We destroyed the domes and colonnades and sacked the stores where we found a vast accumulation of ivory, fine cloths, coffee, pepper, sandalwood, jewels, precious stones and all the fittings of the temple, which we plundered as we desired and set fire to the rest. As the greatest affront that could be offered to the place we slaughtered within it some cows, this being a stain which could not be purified without the most elaborate ceremonies. We also burnt a magnificent wooden car built like a tower of seven stories and beautifully painted and gilt—a magnificent vehicle in which they were accustomed to convey the chief idol round the city. After this we returned to Beligao laden with booty and remained there awaiting instructions from the Captain at Colombo."

So the smoke of that frightful sacrilege and vandalism went up to heaven three hundred years ago, and Dondra was left a mass of blackened ruins which have since been buried or carried away stone by stone in the passing years, until there is now only the Gal Ge, and one templeless gateway to tell of the ancient splendour. Dondra comes to life in July when its great fair sets the village in a bustle, and fills it with booths and shelters and crowds of pilgrims. But now it looked like a city of the dead, of which some humbler and lesser race had taken possession, not knowing that they were building their houses upon a grave.

* * * *

There are little hills close to the sea on the road to Matara so that the road must wind about among coconut gardens tipped

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

at all angles, before it dips suddenly and runs along the open sand beach which lies before the town. And that is the reason why Matara is one of the few places in Ceylon that has cliffs facing the sea. The waves are for ever busy hollowing out caves and crevices in the soft base of the red faced cliffs east of the sand beach of Matara.

I passed along the sea front where white houses stand back among the groves of coconut trees. In front of one house was a notice.

Enquire Within Upon Everything.

Then the road came face to face with the long rampart which cuts off a triangle of land where the Nilwala Ganga runs into the sea, and forms the old Dutch Fort of Matara. The Rest-house is within the Fort and is said to have within its walls part of the old garrison stables. From the front door I could see the Dutch Church across the grass, where a large Appu was gently sweeping the dust from the old tombstones upon the floor. The back verandah of the Resthouse looks out upon the flat sandy shore and the sunlit sea. There I found a corner out of sight of other visitors where I could look up the history of Matara.

First there was the story of Kumara Dhatu Sena, the scholar King, who ruled 513-522 A.D. One day, when the King was in the house of a courtesan, he saw a bee alight within a lotus flower, which closed and imprisoned the bee. The scholar King wrote two lines comparing himself entangled in the toils of the courtesan with the bee secured within the lotus flower, and offered to grant any reward that might be asked by whoever could complete the stanza. The King's dear friend, Kalidas, the poet, was shown the lines by the courtesan. The King had written lines which Major Forbes translates thus:

"Inthrall'd by blushing sweets, their power shall keep
The anxious mind from rest, and eyes from sleep."

Below these lines the poet wrote:

"Tho' closed at eve, the glowing lotus see,
Unhurt, at dawn release the captive bee."

The whole verse forms an ingenious and elaborate kind of riddle in Sinhalese letters. The courtesan seeing the verse and desiring the reward for herself, murdered the poet, concealed his body, and carried the verse to the King. But the King at once recognised the hand of his beloved friend in the verse and so the murder was brought to light. The Rajavaliya records how the King in the depth of his grief, leapt into the flames of the fire in which the body of his friend Kalidas was being consumed, and "so immolated himself therein, and went to the other world." Thereupon his five queens likewise rushed into the

fire, and thus followed their lord. "Seven sacred Bo-trees were planted over their seven tombs, which continued to be held in honour till 1783, when a ruthless Dutchman cut these venerable trees and used the tombs as building material!" This legend has attached itself to Matara and men still point to the spot called Hat-Bodhi, seven Bo-trees, as the site of the tragedy.

The Culavamsa records how Parakrama Bahu's general passed along the south coast after 1153 in the campaign that was to subdue the southern province for the King. He made his soldiers fight an action "at the ford called Nilavala." The name Matara means 'great port,' and Nilavala is of course the ancient name for the Nilawala river.

In 1587 Matara was visited by the expedition which later sacked the temple of Dondra. The Portuguese historian writes: "The important town of Mature with its wealthy population of merchants was half a league further off and was destined to be given over to the plunder of our troops. We stormed it after some severe fighting and set fire to it in various places, our men plundering whatever they thought best. Among the buildings which were burnt were three pagodas of great beauty, a store full of cinnamon, and a large ship which was in the harbour."

In later years the Portuguese made a camp in Matara to store rice and gunpowder, and from it expeditions went out to attack the Kandyans, and later the Dutch, when the Dutch held the fortress of Galle.

In 1790 while the Dutch Burghers of Matara were sitting before their houses smoking their long pipes and sipping their Scheidam, a young German was making a journey across north Europe through the snow and ice of winter. He paid his way by playing the flute at the farm-houses where he sought food and shelter, and by giving young maidens lessons in music or in writing, and helping the old people to answer correspondence or in making up their accounts. One day, while passing a lonely snow-covered heath, he met an old Jew who asked to tell his fortune for a penny. The youth who was seeking his fortune at that very time was not unnaturally tempted to discover what it was going to be, and so crossing his palm with a penny, he held it out. The Jew scanned the lines, and bid him beware of rivers and streams, for death by drowning was written in the map of destiny, unless a happy conjunction of stars sent a blade of grass to save him. This cheerless pennyworth did not add much to the young man's hopes, and he went on his way in a thoughtful mood. The country was all covered with snow; and streams, rivers, and bridges were indistinguishable under the white shroud, in which winter had clothed the earth. Picking his way as best he could he held on to what he believed

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

was the road, when towards evening, and within sight of a sheltering farmhouse, he missed the track and breaking through the soft crust of snow, fell into a stream and was carried away by the current. A labourer passing by, who had seen the accident ran to his assistance, picked him up, and carried him to the farm-house, where under the kind attentions of the good people he soon came round. When he related his adventure with the Jew, the labourer, who had assisted him out of the water, was present, and confirmed the prediction; for, said he, it was clump of rushes the youth had held on to that saved him from drowning.

The young man held on his way until he came to Amsterdam where he sailed for the east, and at last landed in Galle. He learned the Dutch and Portuguese languages, and when the English came in 1795 he learned English, and showed such talent that Governor North appointed him sitting Magistrate at Matara. He was the father of Charles Ambrose Lorenz, who was born at Matara in 1829.

Lorenz is, I suppose, almost forgotten now. In a delightful little satire in "The Chandala Woman," the Ceylon student in England is made to utter a vehemently patriotic speech at a students' dinner in which he concluded with an appeal to his hearers to acquit themselves in a manner worthy of the traditions of Wall, of Alwis, of Lorenz. When he sat down in a whirlwind of applause, he was much annoyed when a dry old don sitting beside him asked innocently: "And how did these distinguished men acquit themselves?" He was annoyed because he found that he did not know himself: he had been echoing the language he had heard from the lips of other speakers.

But if Lorenz is forgotten, he was none the less a great man and played his part in the political development of Ceylon as an Unofficial Member of Council, and as editor of the "Examiner" newspaper. Matara saw him first as a mischievous little boy playing pranks upon his neighbours, but in after years, when his name stood high in the land, he loved nothing so much as a visit to his birth-place.

The town was then a little place in the back of beyond, and a narrow wooden bridge carried bullock carts over the Nilwala Ganga.

It is an interesting fact that two other distinguished men were born in Matara. The first was the Dutch Governor, Falk, who succeeded Van Eck, the builder of the Star Fort of Matara, and who was the first governor to cultivate cinnamon in the gardens near Colombo: he saw the beginning of the war with the English in Ceylon. The second was Sir Henry Lawrence, the soldier, administrator and philanthropist of India, who died in the siege of Lucknow. He was born at Matara in 1806, twenty-three years before Lorenz.

I wanted to find out about the harbour of Matara where the Portuguese burnt "a large ship." In the Resthouse I found a young man who looked as if he had recently left school, and who wore a bright blazer with a large crest upon the pocket.

"Have you," I asked, "ever seen a ship put in to Matara?"

"No" he said, "but I know about the harbour. Mr.———, the oldest man in Matara, has told me about it.. There used to be a line of rocks that side of the island. Come out here, and you will see."

We went out on to the sand where I could see the island that lies before Matara town, just clear of the waves breaking on the shore.

"The rocks were there," he said, pointing westward. "They protected small vessels, and the island itself sheltered boats. But the sea has come in in recent times, and is still coming in. You see the big stones put along the sea beach to keep the sea from eating into the road. That is why there is no harbour here now, and I never saw a ship in Matara."

I parted from my new friend and walked along the top of the ramparts of the main fort of Matara, where the embrasures for cannon look out over the green esplanade. I passed under the clock tower set up "by the chiefs and headmen of the district," and went down the steps and through the gate, and followed the road across the iron bridge over the river. The roads of Matara are shaded by magnificent trees and under their broad avenue I came to the wide approach that leads up to the Star Fort. A yellow-legged cockerel was marching up and down on sentry go before the gateway that bears the name of the Dutch Governor Van Eck. He gave the alarm as I advanced, and the women and children fled cackling within the walls. The fort outside is a grim little stronghold with double walls shaped like a four pointed star. Between the two walls is a moat twenty feet wide. It looked a difficult place to attack. When I got inside everything was changed. I found a quiet home shut off from the noise of the world by the thick walls. At the foot of a flight of steps covered with pot-plants, a well fed cat was washing herself and pausing every now and then to eye the sparrows hopping about in the dust close by. There were no old cannon to be seen and no signs of old time military occupation. The little courtyard and everything in the building spoke of long peace and security. Yet this was once a frontier fort against the Kandyan Kingdom, and Governor Van Eck built it as an outpost to protect the lives and property of the subjects of the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

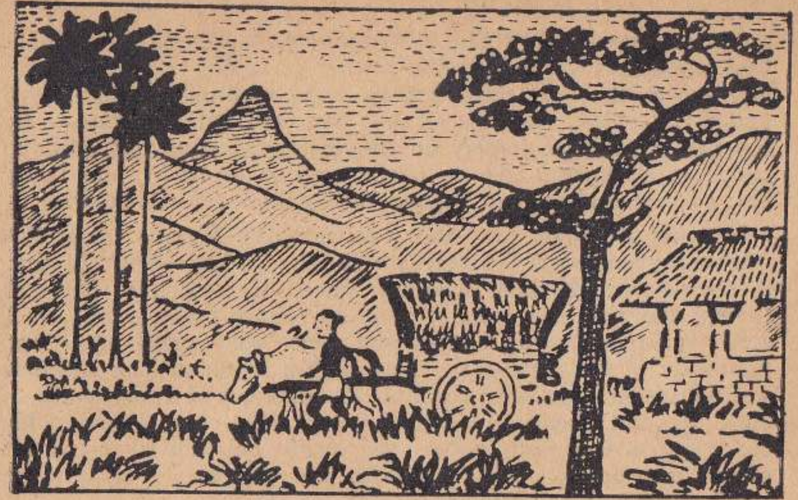
Dutch East India Company who lived along the road to Galle, from the inroads of the restless hillmen who wanted an outlet for the King's trade and a share in the wealth of the Low-country.

I walked round the town as the lights came out one by one, and the boutiques looked cheerful and inviting in the falling darkness. Matara is a pleasant town free from the worst sophistication of larger places. The inhabitants of these parts are said to be of purer Sinhalese blood than any other district of Ceylon because they have had less intercourse with Tamils and Portuguese.

Perhaps that is the reason why they have a reputation for learning in the vernacular beyond that of almost any part of the Island.

I have always found the men of Matara loyal to their home town. Once, in Kegalle, I met a man who was, I think, a dispenser, and I asked him to guide me to the top of a hill that I wished to explore. He said he would, and as soon as he had spoken, I said, "You come from Matara." He had a peculiar way of speaking English that the people of Matara have.

"I do," he said, "I was born there, and I love the place." He was not at all offended when I told him how I guessed, but seemed pleased that he carried the sign of his native place about with him upon his tongue. He was proud of Matara as well he might be.



CHAPTER XV.

Weligama, Galle, Baddegama, Kalutara and Adam's Peak

I passed down the road westward through the unending coconut trees until I found myself in the main street of Weligama.

The Culavamsa gives an interesting account of this place in the reign of Parakrama Bahu I. The King's general, Rakkha, came this way to subdue the southern province, and he fought an action at Mahavalukagama, which is the Weligama of today. "While he sojourned in Valukagama, he reflected thus: 'These foes of a truth perish in great numbers, like moths who know not the danger of the fire and are all burnt therein. But when they have perished the land will become like to a wilderness. And they know not the great-heartedness of our King. From now onwards we must grant the foes who surrender, freedom from punishment and give them protection.' Hereupon he sent to some of the inhabitants of the province the message: "All those who would preserve their lives, let them come to me." Now when the merchants who dwelt in the port of Valukagama to whom their life and their money were dear, heard that, they came in great numbers, and with them other of the inhabitants from all sides."

Weligama was long a trading centre. Many a Portuguese ship anchored in the semi-circle of its bay in old days, and for

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

many centuries before the Portuguese came, Tamil and Sinhalese merchants frequented the town. It is now a pleasant village where the old Dutch houses seem to blink in their sleep under the palm trees, as if they resented being disturbed by the motor cars rushing by on the highway. But men still go out from Weligama and its neighbourhood to trade, and many an up-country shop-keeper comes home there for a holiday.

Beyond the town over the level crossing I came upon that interesting curiosity, the Kusta Rajah. I had been told that it represented the king who introduced the coconut tree into Ceylon and that this wonderful statue was his memorial. As I stood looking over the barbed wire fence that guards the stone figure cut in the rock, a tall man with a dignified look and hair well plastered down with coconut oil, came out of a tiny boutique close by and began to open the gate of the enclosure. He seemed to me at first to have the polite but slightly bored air of one who opens a gate and leads the way to the show at so much a week, tips prohibited.

I examined the curious head-dress of the statue with the figure of the Buddha set in the middle of it, and the heavy ear-rings in the drawn out lobes of the ear, and the peculiar way in which the fingers of one hand are held.

"Once there was writing on the rock, but now it has all been washed away by the rain," said the guardian, coming suddenly to life.

I asked him what the figure represented.

"There was an ancient king," he said, "who was plagued with a skin disease called Kusta. Perhaps it was leprosy. And he came to the temple of Weligama, and vowed to give a figure of himself in stone if he was cured. His prayer was granted, and he had this figure carved upon the rock."

Mr. Codrington writes: "The so-called Kusta Raja statue at Weligama is supposed to represent Avalokitesvara."

I have heard the interesting theory that this statue illustrates the prevalence of the Mahayanist heresy of Buddhism. The Buddha in Nirvana was thought to be too remote to be reached by human prayers and human worship, and common people wished for someone nearer to the common life of men to whom to pay their devotion. And so many Hindu gods found places in Buddhist temples. But some found what they needed in the Bhodisat, or he who is in heaven about to become a Buddha, but still within the circle of rebirths. It is supposed that this figure upon the rock represents the Bodhisattva.

There must have been a large temple upon this ground in old days when Weligama was a prosperous merchant city. Now there is practically nothing left but the beautiful silent carving

on the bare rock that still keeps the secret of its origin and its meaning from the traveller who pauses to look at it as he passes by upon the road.

* * * *

I came through the suburbs of Galle which are dark with the deep shade of coconut palms, and passed down a busy street of crowded boutiques until I came to the recreation ground. Every town in Ceylon has its football ground, but Galle is the one place where you can be sure of seeing a game going on at half past five of an evening. They take their football seriously in Galle and look well on it. There is an individuality about the whole place that is not copied from anywhere. As I drew near to the gateway of the Fort a girl went by in a tennis frock with a racket under her arm. The girls of Galle are beautiful.

The black ramparts of the Fort stand out against sea and land, a grim circle of black stone walls many feet thick. To pass under the great gate, grooved for a portcullis, is to leave the modern world behind and go back three hundred years into an old-world city that has forgotten to rush after the times like its sister Colombo. It seems impossible to believe that Colombo was once hemmed in on all sides by walls and ramparts like Galle. Here are narrow streets, and close packed houses, and one continuous stretch of tiles above them, so that the cats of Galle can walk right across the town from end to end upon the roofs.

The town inside the fort of Galle looks most like itself at night. The houses of wealthy Burghers look out upon the narrow streets through their rows of ghostly white pillars. Every house seems to be dark and lifeless, save for the festive rattle of knives and forks and crockery which sometimes finds its way through closed doors and shutters: and here and there a bar of light is thrown half across the street from an open doorway. The illusion is perfect of the days when each man's house was his fortress against the lawless within the city, and when the dark walls were necessary against foes without. A deep silence broods over streets and alleys at night, broken only by the footsteps of an occasional passer-by which go echoing under the wide eaves and die away in the distance. It must have been a wonderful place for footpads in old days. One's right hand goes across almost automatically to see that one's sword is loose in the scabbard and to feel for the pistols in the belt.

In 1640 the Dutch army 3,500 strong lay before the Fort of Galle. Two hundred and eighty Portuguese, sent in haste from Colombo to reinforce the garrison of the city, arrived after the Hollanders had shut it off on the land side, but nevertheless attacked with great bravery. Eight and forty of them won their way into the fortress. The rest perished.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Lourenco Ferrera de Brito organized the garrison and the citizens for the defence of the town. For eighteen days the cannon balls crashed through the roofs of the houses and battered the great stone bastions. Every night the Portuguese Captain visited the outposts accompanied by his wife who insisted upon sharing every danger with her husband. In the grey dawn of the 13th of March, 1640, the Hollanders rushed across the marshy isthmus, made a way across the moat with earth and stones, and laid their ladders across the breaches that their guns had opened and swarmed over the walls. Nearly every one of the defenders fought to the death.

"De Brito," says the Portuguese Historian, "carried himself on this occasion as he had done on others and received five wounds and a musket shot which broke his leg and felled him to the ground. The enemy rushed on him to kill him; but his wife seeing this, threw herself over him crying out that they might kill her but that they must not touch her beloved husband who was so badly wounded that he was now at his last gasp. The Hollanders who heard her cries saw a sight which they had not seen before in the thick of the fight while some were struggling to seize the fortress, others to defend it. A Captain of the enemy faced round and kept the others back, telling her that she could be assured that he would defend her, for her courage deserved even more. The matter spread abroad, and was so much praised by all that the General of the Hollanders ordered them not to kill anyone, and so they spared those who were captured in the houses, which they only sacked, and those who had fled to the church."

The gallant Portuguese Captain survived his wounds, and with his lady was sent with all honour as a prisoner of war to Batavia.

I walked under the water gate of the fortress that leads out on to the pier where the Dutch used to embark their bales of cinnamon. Over the gate is the carving of a cock and the date A.D. 1687. There was a handful of boats tied up alongside, and a few men loitering about, but nothing at all to show that business was humming. When Colombo harbour was established, and the age long stream of commerce was diverted from Galle, the ancient harbour fell asleep and dreamed of its former greatness.

It dreams of Moorish traders from India seeking goods that would find their way to the markets of Venice; of Arab vessels loading up with silks and jewels and spices taken from Chinese junks alongside; of Egyptian, Persian, Greek, and Roman merchants; and of cargoes of ivory, apes and peacocks loaded upon its wharfs to find their way to the holy hill of Jerusalem.

In 1505 a Portuguese ship first appeared off the coasts of Ceylon and found Moorish traders loading cinnamon and elephants in Galle harbour. In 1594 the Portuguese built a stockade in Galle, and in 1625 the Fort of S. Cruz at Galle was completed according to the plans of de Sa. It was only protected on the land side and was taken by the Dutch in 1640. The Dutch built the present fort of Galle which was handed over to the British in 1796. Nearly all travellers for the next eighty years coming by the sailing and steamship lines had for their first sight of Ceylon the hills of Galle and its beautiful harbour. Tennent writes in 1860: "The local prosperity of Galle is mainly dependent on the merchant vessels and steam packets which make it their rendezvous: and on the travellers from all parts of the East who are carried there in consequence. These are sufficient to support its numerous hotels, lodging houses and bazaars; but private residents complain, and with justice, of the increase of prices, and the excessive cost of living, which has been entailed upon them in consequence." But Galle was a dangerous place for shipping and no less than seventeen steamers were lost in the very harbour, a sad tale of monsoon havoc and the treachery of its rocky shores, which caused the great steamship companies to threaten not to call at Ceylon at all unless a safe haven was made for their ships. In 1875 Galle finally lost to Colombo the long battle over the harbour question, which changed her from the principal port of Ceylon into a quiet seaside town far from the main line of traffic.

* * * *

I left Galle in the cool of the early morning, while the sunbeams still came slanting across the road through the palm trees. The sea on the left was blue and glorious and broke on the shore in long battalions of white foam, making a picture in green and gold and blue such as only the East can show.

I thought of the many travellers who had passed along this road in the coach in former times, before the railway came and drove the coach off the road. I pictured to myself the gallant four-in-hand turn-out a real Christmas card coach, rattling through the gateway of the Fort and going off in a cloud of dust along the Colombo road, with a burly coachman on the box, and a resounding post-horn behind to clear the road of foot passengers, and dogs, and chickens, and long-nosed pigs; the flying mail that carried the letters from overseas to the Post Office in the capital. My picture was quite untrue: the post-horn was the only genuine thing in it. There is a description of the Colombo coach leaving Galle in W. Knighton's "Forest Life in Ceylon" published in 1854. This is his picture in outline:—

The old grey-bearded "boy" informed me that the coach office was not five minutes' walk distant, and at ten minutes to

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

five, while it was still dark, with a coolie or porter carrying my portmanteau I bid adieu to 'the hotel,' and set out for the office. The moon had risen an hour before, and its light, with that of the stars, was sufficient to enable us to distinguish objects faintly as we went along. At length we arrived opposite a large door, with two stunted trees on each side.

"Here, Saar," said the coolie, as he put my portmanteau down against one of the trees, exhausting in these two words nearly his whole available stock of English. I looked around, but saw no signs of coach or horses, of people or bustle. All was still. The coolie has made some mistake, thought I, and can't speak English. Perhaps the coach starts from some other place.

"Where's the coach that goes to Colombo?" shouted I in his ear, hoping, by the loudness with which I spoke, to make him comprehend me.

"Here, Saar," said he again, as he coolly proceeded, having found a large stone, to hammer it on the iron hinges of the door, shouting all the time! At length the violent knocking, and no less violent shouting, elicited a reply from within. The coolie turned to me with a grin, as if he would have said, "You see." At length the door opened, and a huge, half-dressed, negro-like Portuguese stood before us. His black hair stood up straight from his head like the bristles of a hedgehog, and added some inches to his height, which was in itself great.

"Does the coach start from here?" I asked.

"Yes, Sir," he replied, squeakingly; "in five minutes it will be off."

"O, then it only calls here," I observed.

"No, Sir, said he, in a half-feminine, half-boyish voice, that contrasted strangely with his uncouth figure———"No, Sir, it starts from here"; and as he said so, I saw a strange waggon-like vehicle lumbering up to us, drawn by four coolies. This was the mail coach—a miserable cart, with canvas curtains hanging down on either side and room inside for six at the utmost, whilst the driver might possibly accommodate one or two on his box! A flat roof covered it, whence depended the aforesaid canvas curtains, and on which I suppose luggage is sometimes placed.

Two horses, that did not look as if they were particularly disposed to go on, were speedily harnessed, and after another delay of five minutes for the coachman, also a Portuguese, preparations were made for starting. It took the united force of the establishment—coachman, grooms, coolies, and all—to set the machine in motion. Some turned round the wheels, others belaboured the horses, others pushed from behind, whilst two

pulled vigorously at the horses' heads and ears. At length we were fairly off—I the only passenger, my leather portmanteau constituting all the luggage! It was then a quarter past five; when they would have started had I not been going, I cannot conjecture. We rattled through the streets at a capital pace; but to my surprise, as I looked round I found our vehicle literally covered with natives holding on, on all sides, like shell-fish stuck to a ship's bottom. Even my friend, the negro-like Portuguese, was sitting composedly on the step by which I had mounted. I thought this very odd, but for a time said nothing. At length I asked my mop-headed companion whether they were all coming to Colombo.

"No, Sir," he squeaked out; "but there is another start at the Post Office." That explained it and I was satisfied.

"Arrived at the Post Office we stopped. There was a man in the verandah to wake first, which took some time. He proceeded to wake those within, by a repetition of the same process my coolie had employed to wake the "mail-coach office." There was the same hammering of a stone on the iron-work of the door, the same intervals of repose and renewals of the assault, and with the same result. A voice answered from within: the door was slowly opened; and at length the mail-bags were deposited in Her Majesty's mail-coach. I have heard that there are many strange vehicles employed by the Post Office in England to convey letters about, including hand and wheel-barrows, with the royal arms on them; but I do not think that in all Her Majesty's dominions there was a conveyance in 1843 that would have more surprised the royal lady herself, had she seen it starting, than the Galle and Colombo mail-coach.

"Portuguese mop-head was right. There was another start; and again was the entire force of the mail-coach office put in requisition—aided by sundry volunteers from the Post Office—to set us in motion, and again with the same triumphant success. We rattled under the gate of the Fort, and were gone. I looked round, but grooms, Portuguese, and coolies had disappeared. Their morning's duty was performed, and they were doubtless retiring to sleep off the fatigues of the exertion."

The writer goes on to describe the road as he saw it. He says: "I saw the sun rising over the forests and hills on our right, as we made our way rapidly along a beautiful road, lined on either side by masses of coconut trees—their graceful stems and the delicate tracery of their foliage becoming every moment more distinct. Occasionally we were near the sea, its waves breaking into foam on one side, whilst thick vegetation bounded our path upon the other. Troops of naked children whom we saw playing in every village or in the neighbourhood of the cottages, treated us to a friendly cheer as we passed, or contented

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

themselves with a quiet, silent stare, and then a short run after the vehicle." The coach continued its journey to the northward, "occasionally impeded by the difficulty of getting some fresh horses to start, and sometimes crossing wide rivers or small arms of the sea in large flat-bottomed boats prepared for the purpose."

* * * *

I crossed the Gin Ganga at Gintota, and went on along the road until I passed the end of the beautiful Dodanduwa lake: then I made a detour to the right and drove along by paddy fields and gardens down a lovely country road until, coming suddenly round a bend, I found myself in a little corner of Kent. There was the characteristic square church tower perched upon a small hill among the trees, with a sweep of lush grass meadows leading up to it: there was even a small red cow walking slowly across a field and chewing rhythmically as she went. I had come to Baddegama.

"What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle,
Though every prospect pleases
And only man is vile"

I sang to myself, under my breath. For Bishop Heber who wrote those lines came this way in 1825 and dedicated Baddegama church, the first church built by the English in the Island. How horrified the humble old Bishop would be if he knew that his hymn was to call out a set of letters to the papers once every four years or so, for he was a saintly man and hated giving pain to anyone. He must have had some premonition of evil when he wrote down the word "vile" as a convenient rhyme for "isle," for it appears that, although he must have had Ceylon in his mind, he crossed out Ceylon in the original manuscript and moved his accusation to the remoter regions of Java. I have never been able to find out if they write letters to the papers about Heber's hymn in Java.

The Bishop's wife has left an account of the journey from Galle to Colombo in her journal. The Bishop's party, she says, formed "a long cavalcade of palanquins and gigs, preceded by an escort of spearmen and lascarines in a uniform of white, red and black, and a conical red cap, with an upright white feather in it."

"There is one custom here," she wrote, "which I have not seen elsewhere, which struck me as remarkably humane; at certain distances along the road, large pots of water, with ladles attached to them, are placed for the use of travellers, and I have frequently seen one of my bearers take a draught with great eagerness, and then run to join his comrades at my palanquin." "The bearers swinging along at a steady trot with their 'Hi, ho hu—he hi hu,' over the loose sandy track in the dust and heat of the day might well be thankful to the charitable villagers who earned the merit of the water pots."

Of some of those same pots, twenty-five years earlier, in 1800, Governor North's retainers drank, as they ploughed up the track and ferried over the rivers with "160 palanquin bearers, 400 baggage-coolies, 50 lasquarines, six horses, and two elephants to carry His Excellency's tents." At that time travellers had to carry complete resthouses with them whenever they went outside the larger towns.

But I must not leave Baddegama without remembering "Grass for my Feet." If anyone should ever come to look upon the Ceylon villager as commonplace, or uninteresting, let him read "Grass for my Feet." In the pages of that book walks the villager all complete, to be loved and laughed at and laughed with. There goes "My Headman uncle walking homewards, slightly tipsy on toddy": there is my stone-mason uncle still holding up his cloth after crossing the stream, his hairy legs all wet, and the sand still clining to his feet. There is Pissu Balu Muttha, mad-dog grandfather, the most wise-looking man in the village, with a stately white beard that falls to his navel: he gets his curious name from his famous secret antidote to hydrophobia. There sits Kande Mama, the hill uncle, still wearing his cockney cap after a trip to Galle in connection with his chief hobby, litigation: his conversation is mostly a long rattle of laughter, "Hoo, hoo," as he sits in the verandah enjoying his betel chew while making the front of the house a red spattered battlefield of copious spitting. Mother, rather bored with the men's chatter, makes some casual comment as she refills the betel tray, thinking the meanwhile that a fresh layer of sand will have to be strewn on the front yard the following morning to cover up the traces of the evening session. There is the unmarried lady who committed the "Great Lapse" by bringing a daughter into the world: the ladies of the village found it hard to forgive her, not for the lapse, but because they never could find out who was the father of the child.

How intensely alive and loveable they all are in their rich rustic vulgarity and self-confidence. Is it not a sin to get up at four in the morning to read Addison's Essays for the London Matriculation when you have never read "Grass for my Feet"?

And the author of "Grass for my Feet" when a boy lived near to the village of Baddegama.

I returned to the main road at Hikkaduwa. In the village street I disturbed a number of fat blue pigeons feeding on the road in and out of the wheels of bull hackeries. They flew up heavily in front of the car and alighted again behind it. I found it

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

hard to believe that a chosen member of the pigeon family had covered the distance from Galle to Colombo in exactly forty-five minutes. Upon this same road, in 1855, a traveller, who looked up into the sky over his head, might have seen one of the "Ceylon Observer's carrier pigeons speeding towards Colombo with the news of the Battle of Inkerman written upon a quill of thin rolled paper attached to its foot. From 1850 to 1858 these birds carrier from Galle to Colombo the news brought in by the mail steamer, each bird bringing enough MSS. to fill one small type page of the newspaper." The birds covered the 72 miles in three-quarters of an hour, attaining the wonderful speed of 96 miles an hour if they followed the coast. To achieve this speed they required fine weather and the guidance of the coast line, and they were helped by having done the journey many times, and by the call of their mates in the pigeon-cots at Colombo. The pigeon post continued until the coming of the telegraph wire in 1858.

In the "Illustrated London News" of January 1st, 1938, already mentioned, the average maximum speed for homing pigeons is given as 45 m.p.h. Blue rock pigeons, when frightened, did 55 m.p.h. A pigeon at top speed with a tail wind did 60 m.p.h. So the "Ceylon Observer" pigeons put up a very exceptional record. It is interesting to note the speed of some other birds as given in the "Illustrated London News": the swallow does 106 miles an hour; the Golden Eagle being chased and timed with a watch did 120 miles an hour. The fastest bird was a hunting duck-hawk which did 180 miles an hour.

* * * *

I drove along the busy main street of Kalutara and turned to the left into the Rest-house.

In the garden I met a large turkey cock. He was standing face to face with the Rest-house keeper's cart bull, who was gently butting at him at the full stretch of his rope. The bull's mild eyes reflected the long patience of his race, the humblest of man's slaves, submissive alike under great kindness and savage cruelty, and only sitting down flat in the road with dogged obstinacy when the sun and his load become more than he can bear. But a turkey cock at full puff seemed to find the limit even of his patience and he tossed his head in quite a haughty manner and butted gently at the large football of feathers. The Malays call the turkey **iamblanda**, that is Dutch chicken—**blanda** being a corruption of Hollander. Perhaps the Dutch introduced the remote ancestor of the Kalutara Rest-house turkey into Ceylon. If so the bull might well regard him as an interloper, for his own memorial is carved for ever, together with his fellow burden carriers, the horse and the elephant, upon

the moon-stones that lead up to the most ancient temples in Ceylon.

The little boys were playing cricket on the village green, and their shouts and the crack of the ball on the bat came up pleasantly to the Rest-house verandah, which looks out over the cricket field, and across the railway to the sea. A well placed "sixer" hit from the centre pitch is sometimes carried off in the train that passes Kalutara Station. Between a long grassy sand bank and the railway, the Kalu Ganga finds its sluggish way past a row of dhobi stones into the sea. When the rains have been heavy in Ratnapura, the brown water swirls angrily between the piers of the iron bridge under the main road but when I looked at the river it was flowing smoothly along,—"meandering as a sapphire chain over the shoulders of the maiden Lanka" as the Sinhalese poet described it in 1620. From the bridge the distant mountains, crowned by Adam's Peak, can be seen cutting the horizon in a jagged line. Pilgrims from the Peak used to find their way back to the coast down this beautiful river, in the days before the railway had reached Ratnapura.

Stretched out in a long chair on the Resthouse verandah I could follow the game that was going on down below on the cricket field without the trouble of looking out. A shrill voice called, "Wait, wait, wait."

"What the hell, man, bowl," said another.

"Bowl, bowl, bowl."

The words all came out in threes, as sure as the speakers' mothers had dressed each one, in blue shorts and a white shirt. Each seems to be an unbending custom.

"Bowl, bowl, bowl."

Bang.

"Run, run, run."

"Shy, man, shy."

"Four for it, four for it, four for it."

There followed a long pause during which I imagined that somebody was doing some raking in the hedge.

Then it started again.

"Bowl, bowl, bowl."

Click.

"BOWLED."

There was an inarticulate protest that sounded like "trial."

"Clean out, clean out, clean out," yelled several voices with complete conviction.

These clean-limbed, graceful children never received a more blessed gift than cricket. When I think of the long optimistic

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

swipe of my own school days, and the inevitable click that seemed always to follow it, I never cease to wonder at the perfect harmony of eye and limb that Ceylon school-boys seem to inherit by nature. In the game that was going on below me, with no umpires to judge the strife, and apparently two and twenty opinions upon each turn of the game, there seemed to be very little quarrelling. Matters often came to a contest, but it was always a contest of lungs, and so far as I could hear, democracy invariably prevailed.

Outside the Rest-house I met a polite man clad in a white cloth, whose steel grey hair and moustache gave him a venerable appearance. Of him I enquired where I could see Kalutara baskets being made.

He looked rather surprised at the question and suggested the Kalutara Basket Hall.

"But, can I see them being made there?" I asked.

"You can't see them being made anywhere in Kalutara," he said. "They are made in the villages inland, Beruwala side. The women and children weave them from strips of the indi palm gathered in the jungle. The dye used to be made from roots in old days, but now it comes from abroad, from Japan perhaps, or India, or Germany. What a pity the school is not open today. They make the bags in the school nowadays. But they don't sell like they used to do, people have not the money to spend. But they will know all about them at the Basket Hall."

So towards the Basket Hall I went, across a muddy common where another cricket match was going on, mostly in Sinhalese this one. The fielders were all cunningly placed, not according to the designs of the bowler, but according to the shade cast by a few odd coconut trees that overhung the field. Their comments on the game were mostly made in fours as near as I could count, and with much vehemence, as if the maker of them wished to take off his coat and fight about it, which, however, he never did. Judging by the dampness of the wicket-keeper's shirt this game was being more strenuous than the other in spite of the friendly shade and despite the fact that it was being played with a humble and aged tennis-ball.

As I watched the game I could see the Fort of Kalutara upon its mound commanding the river and the road which passed beneath its walls. "Seven leagues to the South (of Colombo)," says Ribeiro, "on a small promontory at the mouth of a river of the same name stands the fortress of Caliture." It was built by Jorge de Albuquerque in 1622 between the two governorships of de Sa. It was visited by Raja Sinha I, captured and refortified by the Dutch, and then re-captured by the Portuguese. On the 14th of October 1655 the Portuguese finally surrendered the Fort to the Dutch. It looks so unlike a fort now that I suppose hundreds of people pass it by without ever guessing that cannon smoke once hung about its walls.

The Keeper of the Basket Hall was despondent about trade.

"We buy less and sell less," he said. "Formerly we bought a thousand rupees worth of basketwork a week. Now we buy a hundred over. We had an order for two hundred hats from Denmark, but they all came back. They wouldn't sell, I suppose."

There was a long counter running the length of the hall, with a number of chairs behind it.

"The ladies sit there on Saturdays", said the Caretaker, "and the villagers bring in the work that they have to sell, and it is valued, and brought for our stock. Perhaps fifty villagers come, perhaps a hundred with children."

All around the hall were cases crammed with the beautiful designs and colours that reminded me of the feverish annual search for Christmas presents. There must be few houses in Ceylon which the hands of the Kalutara villagers have not served with at least some small piece of ornamental work, even if it be only a betel pouch: and there are ladies all over the world who carry these many coloured handbags: "from somewhere in the East, my dear; I don't know where. George got it when he was passing through you know: very convenient to carry, and so useful."

I suppose anyone could build a factory and turn out a million identical Kalutara baskets in a week, but so far the village industry has won, and still holds its place among the few traditional arts of the country, like the metal and lacquer work of Kandy, and the red village pottery that is set out by the roadside in so many villages to the north-east of Colombo; and like the cloth-weaving industry at Batticaloa. Long may they all flourish.

As I sat on the Rest-house verandah in the darkness after dinner, I could see the lights of the fishing boats twinkling out at sea, and from the black line of palms across the river came the regular beat of tom-toms, and the long drawn wail of pipes. Kalutara is a pleasant place by daylight, but when the magic of night falls upon it, it becomes enchanted, and common everyday things, the river, the sea, the trees, the moonlight, become transformed with a mysterious loveliness, which breathes with the very spirit of Ceylon.

* * * *

From Kalutara I made a dash eastward to Adam's Peak. The road passes through Ratnapura, a city of gems, in whose

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

paddy fields you may see the shafts of gem pits running down into a stratum of watery gravel where the jewels are found.

The Ratnapura district is famous for the beauty of its country girls. A Portuguese historian writes: "An ugly woman is very rare among the Chingalas, and all have beautiful eyes. They are clean and tidy, clever at cooking and pay much attention to their hair;............they wear a jacket and a cloth which reaches down to the point of the foot in a very dignified and stately fashion." Ribeiro, they are his words, must certainly have marched along the Ratnapura road.

I began to toil up the long hill path worn by the feet of pilgrims for thousands of years. No one can help feeling his heart moved to love by this holy place. To the Christian it seems like Christmas Day when he sets his feet upon the road that leads to the peak: there is peace upon earth and good will towards men: every white-clad pilgrim he meets has love and kindness in his eyes. Nor is the kindness only his eyes. I saw a youth helping his aged mother up the weary stone steps. She climbed so slowly even upon his arm that it seemed that she could never reach the distant summit. I asked where they had come from.

They had come by a series of buses from Wellawatte and after leaving the last bus had walked all the way.

They had already been four days on the road.

I wished them well on their journey.

"**Karunawai, karunawai.**"

A strong limbed villager went by mounting the steps as easily as if they were the flight before his own house. On his shoulder was a child, fast asleep, with his black curls mixed with his father's hair and his arm hanging limply down his father's broad back.

We, the pilgrims, toiled on along the steep path, up a flight of steps, more steps, and still more, a weary climb, steeper and steeper. "Sadu, Sadu, Sadu." "Glory to God in the highest." Darkness came on and the path was buried in the deep shadow of the surrounding jungle. Our lights are lit to guide our weary feet up the long slope. They make a twinkling winding line of tiny sparks upon the mountain side and men putting out their lights and going to bed in lonely bungalows over the hills tell their wives that there are many pilgrims on the Peak tonight.

I thought of many centuries that had seen men toiling up the sacred mountain.

A Persian poem by Ashref the Zaffer Namah Skendari records that steps and chains were set upon the path up Adam's Peak

by Alexander the Great (Tennent II. 606). If that is so, the mountain must have been held holy before Buddhism came to Ceylon.

It is said that Parakrama Bahu I. made a journey on foot to worship at the shrine on Samanhela, and caused a temple to be erected on its summit. The mountain was visited by King Kirti Nissanga in about 1201, and by Parakrama III. in about 1267.

Up the same path in about 1344 came a Muslim traveller on a pilgrimage to the holy Footprint. He was Ibn Battuta. From his home in far off Morocco, he had gone to the holy city of Mecca where he spent three years in study, and then visited the Muslim trading stations of the east coast of Africa. He came back to Mecca, crossed Asia Minor and the steppes to Central Asia and Kurasan. He and his train of followers entered India by the north-western gateway, and reached Delhi where he was given a rich sinecure by the Sultan. After seven years he fell under the Sultan's displeasure and was forced to give up all his worldly possessions and become an ascetic. The Sultan was pleased at this act of self-denial, and later Ibn Battuta was appointed an ambassador to go on a mission to the Emperor of China. After many adventures he passed through South India and visited the Maldive Islands. Here he says "the inhabitants live on a fish called qulb-al-mas, which has red flesh and no grease and smells like mutton. On catching it they cut it in four, cook it lightly, then smoke it in palm leaf baskets. When it is quite dry they eat it." Ibn Battuta was a great theologian, something of a reformer, something of a soldier, something of a poet and a saint, and yet a man of the world. He was respected and often feared. After spending some time in the Maldives he became an object of suspicion and dislike and so he found it expedient to leave the islands. He landed in Puttalam in 1344. Here he found a Pandyan officer of Ayra Chakravarti, who had invaded Ceylon in 1314. He tells of the hospitality which the people of Ceylon showed to him although he was a Muslim. They lodged him and his company and fed them on flesh and rice served on banana leaves, which, he says, the Indian people would never have done. They were however very careful not to eat any food which the strangers had touched.

The ruler in Puttalam lent him a palanquin and slaves to carry it and he set out "with four Yogis whose custom it is to make an annual pilgrimage to the Foot, three Brahmans (who were going to visit the Footprint of Siva), ten other persons from his entourage, and fifteen men to carry provisions."

"The mountain of Sarandib," he says, "is one of the highest in the world. We saw it from the sea when we were nine days'

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

journey away. On it there are many evergreen trees and flowers of various colours, including a red rose as big as the palm of a hand:" so he describes the rhododendrons on the Peak. 'There are in these mountains vast numbers of monkeys. They are black and have long tails, and their males are bearded like men.' He adds that he heard that they have a king who wears a crown of leaves and leans upon a staff.

He met 'the flying leech' which, 'when a man approaches jumps out at him, and wheresoever it alights on his body the blood flows freely. The inhabitants keep a lemon in readiness for it.'

'There are two tracks on the mountain leading to the Foot, one called Baba (Adam) track, and the other Mama (Eve) track. The Mama track is easy and is the route by which the pilgrims return, but anyone who goes by that route is not considered by them to have made the pilgrimage at all. The Baba track is difficult and stiff climbing. Former generations cut a sort of stairway on the mountain, and fixed iron stanchions on it, to which they attached chains for climbers to hold on by.

'The blessed Footprint, the Foot of our father Adam, is on a lofty black rock in a wide plateau. The blessed Foot sank into the rock far enough to leave its impression hollowed out. It is eleven spans long. In ancient days the Chinese came here and cut out of the rock the mark of the great toe and the adjoining parts. They put this in the temple at Zaytun (in China), where it is visited by men from the farthest parts of the land. In the rock where the Foot is there are nine holes cut out, in which the infidel pilgrims place offerings of gold, precious stones, and jewels. Beneath the mountain is the great lake from which the rubies are taken; its water is a bright blue to the sight.'

So the stout-hearted old pilgrim went down the mountain to continue his journeyings, to Bengal, to Assam, to Sumatra, to Peking, and back to India, to Syria where the Black Death was raging, to Mecca and back to his native Morocco, where, at the order of the Sultan, he dictated to one of the principal secretaries, a record of his travels which have been estimated to have covered at least 75,000 miles.

Ibn Battuta travelled to visit the holy places of his faith, and the extent of his travels helps to show how great was the influence of the Islamic empire in the fourteenth century.

In the far east there was the great Indian Muslim empire and a long line of Muslim colonies along the trade routes: in Europe, Africa and Western Asia, the Mohamedan principalities shut in Christendom on the South and East. It was this blocking of the Eastern way to India and China that sent Columbus across

to America, and forced Vasco da Gama to make his long and perilous journey round the Cape of Good Hope. The discovery of a way round the Muslim empire altered the history of Ceylon, and it is not surprising that when the Portuguese came to this Island they were bitterly opposed by the Muslims upon whose trade preserves they were encroaching.

They found the power of Islam in the far east in a state of decline, the seeds of which were visible when Ibn Battuta returned from Peking to Morocco.

I thought of another pilgrim of our own time who toiled up the steep path, and made it the centre of the wild adventures that fill his novel. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch passed this way about 1890 and the romance of the Holy Mountain is told in "Dead Man's Rock," written upon the Cornish cliffs and at Petworth in Sussex.

The toil and weariness of the climb seemed to grow less as I came out on to the edge of the great cone of rock that stands out from the surrounding hills and is the peculiar characteristic of Adam's Peak. The steps grew more steep and more slippery but the end was in sight and there was a current of expectation in the air that carried the mind above aching knees, and empty hunger, and shivering cold and sleeplessness: I could feel them all, but what did they matter when the end was so near and the great revelation about to be made? For it is impossible to climb the peak with a crowd of pilgrims without feeling something of their single-hearted ardour and expectation.

We came at last to the foot of the parapet that holds up the platform round the summit. A bell rang out over our heads, one, two, three, four, five, and on to sixteen times: some pilgrim was proudly claiming the number of times he had made the ascent.

We climbed the last few steps on to the platform. Men and women bowed to the earth towards the holy rock in the centre. Torches and lamps swayed and flickered in the darkness and lit up faces filled with joy and kindness. We joined the line of pilgrims climbing step by step over the topmost crag until we stood upon the very summit and then there, at our feet, outlined in the rock under its little shelter of wood and metal was the Sri Pada, the holy Footprint, which has called men to this lonely mountain top from the ends of the earth since as far back as man's longest memory goes. Men, women and children knelt and touched the holy ground with their foreheads. The offerings were made. The long climb finished, the pilgrimage accomplished, the merit won.

There came to my mind the words of the most lovable Buddhist Priest in English Literature when he said, "These are

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

indeed my hills. Thus should a man abide, perched above the world, separated from delights, considering vast matters."

The crowd on the platform began to move over to the East. There was a faint glow over the mountains and the square Bible Rock below the peak turned from black to grey. Every eye was strained to catch the first beam of the rising sun. The eastern mountains showed primrose and pale red. The light increased and threw faint shadows westward across the jungle tree tops. Then there was a burst of golden glory. Men's faces turned from grey to golden brown. The sun was up. We looked once more upon the wondrous miracle of a new day.

As far as I remember we looked at the sunrise for twenty minutes as it hung like yellow fire upon the eastern hills and woke up birds and beasts and insects and sent them all forth ravenous to the daily food-getting. Then we moved round to the western side of the platform. For some minutes nothing was visible, then there gradually formed upon what seemed the far western horizon an exact reproduction of the peak upon which we stood. So perfect was the shadow that when we climbed upon the crest and waved our hats we seemed to see an answering movement from the hill of mist.

As I looked at the shadow on the horizon it began to collapse and vanish away, but in its place a long cone of shadow was stretched out westward over hill and valley until it seemed to end in the faint grey haze that hung over the distant line of the sea.

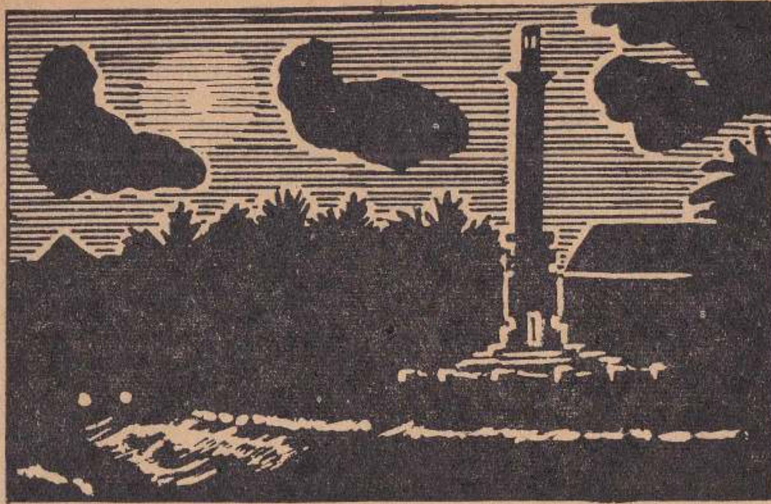
The shadows of lesser hills were hard now and every jungle tree was lighted on its eastern side. It was broad daylight. The chill of night was yielding to the sun and pilgrims let their blankets hang more carelessly from their shoulders. Minute by minute the long cone of shadow shortened and shortened until it lay in the valley right at our feet. The vision was ended and the miracle complete.

What a wonder is this shadow. How strange it is that this mountain almost alone in the world shows it. I have heard that such a shadow may be seen somewhere in the Alps: in "Ceylon in the Jubilee Year" Mr. Ferguson records that a similar effect is found "only at sunset on Pike's Peak, Colorado, 14,147 feet above the sea, and nearly double the height of Adam's Peak. There towards sunset, the shadow of the moun-train creeps along the level praire to the horizon, and there begins to rise up into the sky until the sun has just gone down."

In 1833 the top of the peak was occupied by a little tallipot leaf hut which held a camp bed and a little folding chair and table. They belonged to Major Skinner who was making a map of the district. He lived upon a daily ration of boiled rice, and

a little salt fish which was served out most sparingly, about a square inch to each meal. The whole country at that time was covered with dense forest and not an acre of cultivated land was to be seen. The elephants in the wilderness of the peak were so numerous that their tracks greatly facilitated the map-maker's work, so judiciously were they selected and so well trodden. The top of every ridge had its broad road, along which one could drive a carriage; from rangs to range one was always sure to find a cross road, which invariably led to the easiest crossing place of the river in the valley. From the holy mountain Major Skinner took some of the angles from which the first map of Ceylon was made.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org



CHAPTER XVI.

Panadura, Moratuwa, Kotte and Colombo

I motored over the bridge that crosses the Kalu Ganga and was soon once more in the thick palm groves. Nature seems prolific beyond belief in this district, and it is a marvel how the earth can support vegetation so thick and trees so numerous and fruitful.

Panadura village had finished its day's work in the offices as I passed through, and the male citizens were going homewards. The boutique-keepers had time to sit and gossip without being disturbed by customers. From one small shop came the suave voice of the B.B.C. announcer in England, relayed, I suppose, from Colombo, and magnified by the loud speaker into a devastating blare that filled the whole street. That shop seemed to be popular. Its prosperous keeper was telling a good story to a group of young men in many coloured sarongs and handkerchiefs, who stood round laughing, and spitting vigorously into the road at the best turns in the yarn. The B.B.C. announcer was quite cut out.

The Portuguese had a church at Panadura, but it was destroyed by a Sinhalese Prince called Tribuli Pandar, the year after King Philip of Spain married Mary of England, at the time when England and Ceylon shared a Prince for a while with Spain and Portugal, in the person of Philip II.

Three miles beyond Panadura the road runs along the side of the Moratuwa lagoon until it passes over the water into Moratuwa town.

On October 17th, 1655, the Portuguese fought their last open battle in Ceylon with the Hollanders on the shores of Moratuwa. According to Ribeiro the Portuguese had nine hundred men while the Hollanders mustered six thousand four hundred and a large number of lascarins, "but," he adds, "to our men the whole of Holland seemed a trifle," and the Portuguese army "without reducing its pace charged with great courage." After a furious engagement the numbers of the Dutch began to tell and they worked round the right flank of the Portuguese and surrounded the Portuguese army. "We lost in this battle five hundred and twenty men, and those who escaped had to trust to their heels, for the enemy gave no quarter to anyone who fell into their hands."

As I left Moratuwa behind I felt that I had come to the end of rural Ceylon. Everything else seemed to be an appendage of the great city of Colombo. Railway stations came closer together on my left hand, and the stream of business men and clerks returning home from work at the thousand desks of Colombo, came like a great wave of humanity ebbing out towards the last suburban villas of Mount Lavinia and Ratmalana.

It seems incredible that within the last hundred years men have shot deer in the fields at Mount Lavinia, and that men feared to pass alone through Cinnamon Gardens for fear of footpads. Robbers and deer have gone, but there still survives him who helped to make and keep the wilderness of cinnamon that stretched from Mount Lavinia almost up to the guns of the Fort of Colombo, and he is brother crow. To realise how intensely important cinnamon was in former times one must remember that to destroy or damage cinnamon plant was punished with death, while "the very crows which served to distribute the wild seed, might not be killed, in spite of all the damage they caused." (Ceylon and the Hollanders, P. E. Pieris, 1918). It was largely the cinnamon trade that drew the Moors and the Portuguese and the Dutch to Ceylon. It has always been a puzzle to me why cinnamon was so much in demand. So far I have only found two answers. In the History of England by C. E. Carrington and J. H. Jackson (page 231) it is said that after the Turks conquered Egypt in 1517 and locked the last of the old trade routes, "the great problem of the traders of Europe was to find a new road to the East, and particularly to the "Spice Islands." In those days there were no root crops (turnips, sweeds and such) on which beasts could be fattened in winter, so men ate only salt meat between Martinmas

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

(November 11th) and Lent. There was no tea and coffee; there were no potatoes and few other vegetables or fruits which could be kept in winter. For this reason sugar from the East Indies, pepper from the Malabar coast, cinnamon from Ceylon, nutmeg and cloves from the Moluccas and the Celebes, imported at great expense, were regarded almost as necessities, to give a spice to salted meat."

So it was for the table of the squire and the soldier and the city merchant that the woods of Kandy were ransacked for cinnamon by the Portuguese and the Dutch, and those polite and flattering messages sent to Raja Sinha II so that he might not interfere with the Charlia cinnamon collectors when they paid their annual visits to his territories.

Chaucer, in the Prologue to the Canterbury tales, (which all good pilgrims carry about with them), says of the Franklin, or landed country gentleman that—

> It snewed (abounded) in his house of meat and drink,
> And all dainties that men could think
> After the sundry seasons of the year
> So changed he his meat and his supper.........
> Woe was his cook but if his sauce was
> Poyniant and sharp............"

and no doubt the good cook often turned aside his master's wrath with the flavour of Ceylon cinnamon.

The other answer is found in Cordiner's Description of Ceylon, Vol. I page 417 where he says: "One thousand bales (of cinnamon) are said to be consumed annually by the slaves in the mines of South America. Each slave receives a certain quantity per day, cut into pieces of about one inch in length, which he eats as a preservative against the noxious exhalations of the mines."

Ferguson (Ceylon in 1893 p. 51) records that the Romans paid in Rome the equivalent of £8 sterling per pound for cinnamon. The first mention of the spice being procured in Ceylon occurs in the voyages of Ibn Battuta, the Moor, who set out from his native city, Tangiers, in the year 1324, and devoted twenty-eight years to a pilgrimage in the course of which he visited Ceylon and climbed Adam's Peak (Tennent Ceylon Vol. I. Second Edition, p. 577).

The Dutchman De Koke conceived the idea, in opposition to the universal prejudice in favour of wild-grown cinnamon, of attempting to cultivate the tree. This project was carried out under Governors Falk and Vander Gaff with extraordinary success. (Ferguson, Ceylon in 8193, p. 274).

Cordiner tells how Governor Falk planted the cinnamon berries in his garden at Grandpass and watched the plants grow up

quickly with every appearance of flourishing. But one morning his gardener came to report that they had withered and died in the night. The Governor thought that things looked rather suspicious with his plants, and when he made inquiries, he found that "a Cingalese, who earned his livelihood by barking cinnamon in the woods and saw, with vexation, the planting of it, which in time would render the gathering of it more easy, had secretly besprinkled them in the night with warm water." (Cordiner I. 415).

Further experiments were more successful and cinnamon gardens sprang up on the West coast wherever the guns of the Dutch Forts were close enough to protect them.

The British abandoned the Government cinnamon monoply in 1833. The trade was declining then owing to the competition of cassia and especially to the fact that merchants kept the price of Ceylon cinnamon so high that buyers preferred inferior cinnamon from India and Java. (Ceylon under British Rule, Mills, p. 209).

So cinnamon ceased to grow along the coast from Mount Lavinia to Kollupitiya, and the white sand of the cinnamon gardens in which the bushes flourished is now covered over with bungalows and flower beds and only peeps out here and there where the ants dig extra deep, and the gardener is not looking.

* * * *

I turned aside from the road at Wellawatta to visit the village of Kotte. In about the year 1415 Parakrama Bahu VI moved the centre of government from Rayigama to Kotte.

Upon the bridge which crosses the point of the arrow head of the Kotte lagoon I met a Chinaman clad in khaki with a large khaki bundle upon his back.

We talked about trade.

"Veree bad, no monee, no monee, these days," he told me.

"Which part of the East do you come from?" I asked him.

"I coming Peiping, you know, Peiping," he answered.

Surely of all races the Chinese best deserve to grow rich. Which of us would like to take a load of Kalutara baskets and plumbago elephants and go and hawk them round Peiping on foot? I like these Chinese hawkers. They get jeered at by people who would not dare to venture one-tenth of what they dare for a few rupees profit, and yet they are always smiling and cheerful, and enjoy a passing jest with the best.

But this particular Chinaman had a grievance and squatted down on his haunches to lay it before me.

"Housh, Housh, I going, I undo. Lady, ver big red colour red face lady," and he violently rubbed his yellow cheeks to illustrate what the lady looked like.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

"Little boy, no big, no big. I undo, I forget, I no looking, two pillow-cases," and his hand seized up the imaginary pillow-cases and trucked them under his khaki stern, to show what the little boy had done.

"Mishtake, Mishtake, finish, velly bad, not gud. I go see' I go see."

"Do you know," I said, "that an army of your countrymen once marched over this ground and carried away the King of Ceylon captive to China?

"Yesh, yesh, mistake, finish, two pillow-cases," he answered.

"I go see."

And off he went I could hear his curious cry, "Seelk, seelk" coming down the road which he had taken.

And yet it was true what I had told him about his countrymen.

In 1408 Chang Ho, Ambassador of the Emperor of China, bearing the Imperial edicts and presents, visited Ceylon, where the King "decoyed his party into the interior, threw up stockades with a view to their capture, in the hope of a ransom, and ordered soldiers to the coast to plunder the Chinese junks." (Tennent, Vol. 2, p. 599).

The Chinese invested the King's city and captured the King, whom they carried off to China.

The Sinhalese chronicle gives the other side of this event. 'During the reign of Vijaya Bahu, Dosrajah, King of Great China, landed in Lanka with an immense army; and, under pretext of bringing presents and curiosities, craftily carried away King Vijaya Bahu, who fell into his hands, foolishly thinking that he had brought presents as other foreign princes had done in the time of King Parakrama Bahu......... Taking many captives Dosrajah returned to Great China." (Rajavaliya, Gunesekera, 1900, p. 66). Some historians think it was Rayigama, that the Chinese invested, and that they carried off one of the sub-Kings of Ceylon.

Before the Chinese came, and after they had left, Ceylon was divided into a number of petty kingdoms most of which professed more or less allegiance to the throne of Kotte. This was the state of things when on November 15th, 1505, the famous message, recorded in the Rajavaliya came to the aged white-bearded King Parakrama Bahu VIII at Kotte. The messenger said:

"There is in our harbour of Colombo a race of people fair of skin and comely withal. They don jackets of iron and hats of iron: they rest not a minute in one place: they walk here and there; they eat hunks of stone and drink blood; they give

two or three pieces of gold and silver for one fish or one lime; the report of their cannon is louder than the thunder when it bursts upon the rock Yugandhara. Their cannon balls fly many a gawwa and shatter fortresses of granite." The first Portuguese had arrived under Don Lourenco de Almeida. In the Gordon Gardens at the side of Queen's House is the Padrao, the coat-of-arms of Portugal carved upon a rock, with which the first comers claimed the headland of the Southern breakwater of the present harbour as a trading station for their countrymen.

It was a turning point in Ceylon History when the mason carved the Padrao in the stone and cut his own initials beneath it. The change began when a man first invented the art of tacking in a sailing ship. The Greeks and Romans and Norsemen had a sail that would only go before the wind. When a ship could tack, long journeys could be made. Then another man invented the mariners' compass, so that sailors had a vehicle and a guide over the wide sea. With these two aids America was discovered, and a way was found round the Mohamedan block in Western Asia, and the Portuguese reached Ceylon. From that time onwards the age-long pressure from South India was checked and the fate of Ceylon was to depend upon ships and the sea.

In 1518 the Portuguese general de Brito brought four hundred men including masons and carpenters; he immediately commenced to build a fort of stone and mortar, using pearl oyster shells for the necessary lime, and also constructed some houses and dug a moat.

As was to be expected the Moors, jealous of this encroachment in their trading centre, stirred up the Sinhalese against the newcomers, and attacked the fort. But the Portuguese held their ground, and it was not long before they were sitting in council with King Bhuvaneka Bahu as his allies, at Kotte. They were discussing what steps should be taken to curb the growing power of Prince Mayadunne, one of the ablest of Ceylon's chieftains, who was building up a kingdom for himself at Sitawaka near Avissawella. A fine Devale of stone said to have been built by Mayadunne's son, Raja Sinha I., may be seen there to this day.

The next scene is a panic in Kelaniya: Bhuvaneka Bahu, the King of Ceylon, has been shot dead as he looked out of his palace window. "Some say this hurt was done of set purpose; others that it was done unwittingly; God alone knoweth which is true." (Rajavaliya). "Some years later a Portuguese soldier when on his death-bed confessed that it was he who had fired the shot: that the matter was a pure accident, for he was

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

aiming at a dove at the time." The shot, like William Rufus' arrow, remains a historical mystery.

Then comes the picture of the solemn baptism of the next King of Kotte, Dharmapala, in 1557.

Three years later Mayadunne and Raja Sinha were investing the walls of Kotte. The Portuguese historian describes the situation thus:

"This city is like an island with a circumference of two thousand paces and encircled by a river which can only be crossed in boats. It was connected with the mainland by a narrow neck called Preacota which was fifty paces in width and strongly defended by a double row of ramparts. Over the river was a bridge which is on the road from Colombo.

"Raju's first attempt was made on Preacota. His men advanced at a point where the river was low, led by the elephants with large swords and knives fastened to their trunks. These were, however, turned back by our fire lances. A desperate struggle followed in which both sides lost heavily, the King (Dharmapala) and the Captain bearing themselves like brave elephants. The priests were in the forefront of the fight, exhorting the warriors and administering religious consolation to the wounded. For several days and nights the struggle was kept on, our men never leaving their arms, with little time for food and even less for sleep. It is astonishing what gallant deeds the ill-clad soldiers, picked up at random from the banks of the Douro and Minho (in Portugal) achieved. With dauntless courage they maintained the fight, facing the numberless crowds of the enemy, individuals repelling elephants each one of which would create a panic in an army."

Raja Sinha next tried to attack the place by boats and rafts as well as at Preacota. The island was covered with smoke and blood and the air filled with shouting, and the crocodiles in the lagoon of Kotte received a ghastly prey.

At last Raja Sinha was forced to withdraw his men. He had failed to capture the island. But success was to come to him in the terrible battle of Mulleriyawa. De Couto, the Portuguese historian describes the battle thus:

Dom Jorge, the Portuguese Captain, waited a few days for a favourable opportunity and learning that Raju was encamped in a field with three or four thousand men, he attacked him unexpectedly at dawn and compelled him to retreat followed by our men, and seek refuge in a wood. We hastened in pursuit when our Captain was warned that our powder was exhausted; he proudly replied that he could load his guns with sand and win the day at the point of the sword; but when orders were given to advance our men hung back, whereupon Raju who realized what had taken place immediately charged. Dom Jorge and the cavaliers who accompanied him did what they could to rally our men. We reached a passage which had been blocked by the enemy with trees; while these were being cleared the war elephants which had been despatched by Mayadunne to the assistance of his son came up. One of these monsters was just on the point of seizing Dom Jorge, when a soldier who saw the peril he was in placed his gun against the elephant's forehead and by firing it compelled the animal to turn back, and thus afforded Dom Jorge an opportunity of escaping. Another animal attacked the standard-bearer who drove his spear to which the standard was secured against the animal's forehead and broke it into splinters; but the poor man was immediately thrown into the air and dashed to pieces. Another soldier, a veteran in our service, was more fortunate and succeeded in turning the animal away by a blow from his halberd. Our men by this time had made their way through the passage though with heavy loss, but some of the enemies' Aratches appeared in front and they soon found themselves between two fires. Dom Jorge now gave up everything for lost, but fortunately a soldier, whose name I do not know, chanced to fire a cannon which our men were abandoning, with such fortunate aim that the shot went right into the middle of the enemy and caused them to hesitate. Dom Jorge at once rallied his men and got them on board the boats which were near and escaped, leaving more than sixty dead including some fidalgos on the field; he was so disheartened at his failure that he threw himself on the ground cursing himself for his folly."

This great victory was a personal triumph for Raja Sinha. When he heard of the Portuguese advance he sent the Wickramasinha, or commander-in-chief, to hold the enemy in check at Mulleriyawa, but the Wickramasinha was forced back upon the King's main army. The fight had been so fierce that the Portuguese were unable to follow up this first advantage, and Raja Sinha, putting his whole force in motion, advanced to Mulleriyawa. He sent a thousand trained soldiers to take the Portuguese in the rear, while he himself led the attack in front with his war elephants, and 1,000 Illanga spear men, and the Radage companies of Alutkuru and Hapitigama Korales. By personal efforts Raja Sinha helped in no small degree to turn imminent defeat into a complete victory. Riding through the ranks and animating them with his presence and encouragement, he at once closed with the Portuguese in order to minimise the effect of their fire. But Sinhalese impetuosity could not force back the disciplined troops of Europe, and Raja Sinha saw his soldiers slowly yielding ground. "The King," says the Rajavaliya, "would not permit his army to retreat," but again urged them on, and at length drove a way into the

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

midst of the Portuguese. The Portuguese, unable any longer to load their guns, clubbed them and met the foe hand to hand. 'So desperate grew the struggle that Portuguese and Sinhalese alike clung to the tails of elephants and fought.

The King, on horseback, flew from side to side encouraging here, and threatening there. Sparks flew from smitten corselet and cuirass "like a play of fireworks," whilst smoke enveloped all 'as the mist in January." "That day blood flowed like water on the field of Mulleriyawa." The Portuguese further pressed in flank and rare "could not retreat one foot." It is said that they left 1,600 dead on the battlefield.Raja Sinha's triumph was complete.

Soon after this battle the King and his Portuguese allies retired to Colombo and abandoned Kotte, and the wild elephants captured what the war elephants could not.

As I stood on the bridge looking at the peaceful coconut groves of Kotte it seemed incredible that this place had ever echoed to the thunder of cannon and the yells of fighting men, and that its brown water had been stained red with blood. I went down the road to see what was left of the old city and fortress. In the Buddhist Temple on the left of the road I found a few carved stones one of which was in daily use for the rolling of chillies. But no one that I could find seemed to know anything of the days when Kotte was the capital of Ceylon.

At last I found a tall villager with a walrus moustache and a well oiled konde behind his head who said that there were some stone pillars in a garden not far from the temple.

We waded through a forest of spear grass until we came to an oblong mound under the coconut trees, beside which were a few square rough cut pillars. And that is all that is left of a King's Palace.

"Private parties earn a livelihood," writes Dr. Paul Pieris in Ceylon the Portuguese Era, "by systematically digging up the foundations of the palaces (in Kotte) of the last Sinhalese Kings and selling the material to house builders. Public departments led the way by removing the granite columns for bridges."

I went down the road to see if any further remains were to be found. I met two boys on bicycles who showed me what I wanted to see. I have said that Kotte is shaped like an arrow head by the lagoon that washes two sides of it. The boys showed me, above the playing field of the C.M.S. School what is left of a ditch, and a rampart built of huge blocks of cabuk. This rampart ran right across from barb to barb of the arrow head. Further down the road is another similar defence: the ditch is plainly visible, but all the cabuk defences have been carried away.

"And where," I asked the boys, "is the tunnel that runs from Kotte to Kandy?"

They knew the place well and the ancient tradition that attaches to it. We went along the road to another Buddhist Temple to look for the entrance to the tunnel.

We climbed up a steep bank and came to a place where there are a number of trenches cut deep into the cabuk. There before us was an arched doorway leading into what looked like a narrow dark cave.

"I'll go in and look," said one of the boys.

"You know the story," I said, "that anyone who enters this cave never comes out again?"

The boy hesitated. Then he grinned.

"After you," he said to his companion.

They had a bit of a tussle and at last both fell in together and I followed.

As we got used to the gloom we found ourselves in a little bell-shaped chamber cut in the cabuk and supported in the middle by a neatly shaped pillar. There was no passage to be seen anywhere.

One boy walker round and round the pillar and declared that he felt himself getting nearer to Kandy every moment.

The other held that the passage was there all right, but that it was securely stopped up.

We failed to find any signs of stopping, or any trace of a tunnel, but the entrance to the passage is doubtless still there waiting for its appointed finder.

I returned to Wellawatte, and went along the road towards Colombo.

Heaven looks after drunken men, and children—and pedestrians on the Galle Road. At last the road widened and the tidal wave of traffic gave way to the smooth waters of Kollupitiya, a pleasant introduction to the city of Colombo. In 1800 a red road of cabuk blocks led from the Fort through Colpetty which was then a place of merchants' country residences.

How close the country came up to the walls of the Fort of Colombo may be judged from "the number of monkies who run wild about the fort"......as Robert Percival tells in his Account of Ceylon 1803 (page 104). 'Both crows and monkies know how to avail themselves of any entrance, which they find or make into the houses, and it requires no small attention to prevent them from picking up loose articles. While I was at Colombo, I recollect a very mischievous monkey who used to run wild about the fort, and was so very cunning that it was

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

impossible to catch him. One day he suddenly made his entrance into my apartment, carried off a loaf of bread from my table, and made his escape. I immediately gave the alarm to an officer I observed standing at the next door; upon which he ran in to secure his own breakfast; but, to his great mortification, found that the monkey had been beforehand with him, and was already scrambling up the roofs of the houses with a loaf in each paw. Next day the same monkey snatched off a very fine parrot before the gentleman's face to which it belonged, tore it to pieces, and then held it out to the gentleman, with many expressions of satisfaction and triumph at the exploit.''

I looked down from the top of the War Memorial Column on the Galle Face and saw the city of Colombo spread out, high built and economical of space in the Fort, low and smoky to the north and east, but the whole half-buried in tree tops so that it looked green and beautiful in the sunlight. The long white arm of the lake stretched out and cut the city in two: and I could see how the line of the coast makes a convenient hook to hang up the harbour. Far away on the eastern horizon the faint outline of the hills and the horn of Adam's Peak kept watch over the Island of Lanka.

Colombo may be exotic and cosmopolitan, but it is nevertheless a store-house of history.

Ibn Battuta (1344) writes of the city:

''We journeyed to the town of Kalambu, which is one of the finest and largest towns in Ceylon. In it resides a wazir and ruler of the sea, Jalsti, who has with him about five hundred Abyssinians.'' That is to say it was in the hands of the Muslims.

I am told that a Chinese writer of 1349 speaks of Kao-lang-pu. (R.A.S. Journal 1933).

Perhaps there was a village Kolontota, or perhaps a village of Kolamba. Whatever it was the Portuguese corrupted it into Colombo.

When the capital of Dharmapala shifted from Kotte to Colombo it was not long before the city was invested by Raja Sinha I. There followed a desperate struggle in which the fate of Ceylon hung in the balance.

According to De Couto, Raja Sinha's army before the walls consisted of fifty thousand men of war, with 60,000 workmen and camp followers, 2,200 elephants, 150 pieces of bronze artillery, large and small, 4,000 draught oxen, 10,000 axes, 3,000 crowbars, 20,000 billhooks, 2,000 picks, 6,000 hoes, 400 smiths to prepare arrowheads and other implements, 1,000 carpenters, 400 gunners—Javas and Caffirs and of other nationalities, most of whom had destered from the Portuguese.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org