D.T. DEVENDRA

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By

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ON THE ROAD TO SORABORA

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THE above stanza occurs in the Veddah Invocation to Kiri Amma in the Kolamaduva ceremony, and is one out of a collection made by the Seligmanns in 1911.

The haunting melody of its verses lingers long in the mind of one who travels in the deserted wilderness of Bintenne. The pathos of the music is truly symbolical of the vast deadness of a perpetual forest.

The rains which set in late in the year and the swelling of the Mahaveli drive the wild beasts to the Alutnuvara banks. January is, therefore, no safe month to the visitor. But a two days' bright sun early in the month was a sore temptation to us.

The road to the River of Great Sand passes through formidable mountains. The best known of them is the famous

Nugetenne Gap. It is flanked on the right by the grim height of forest-clad Medamahanuvara, and on the left by Navanagala associated with a visit of the Buddha when on His way to strike terror to the demons at Mahiyangana. Medamahanuvara was once a sub-capital of the Kandyan kings and furnished them with a haven of refuge during times of stress. To the patriot the name is poignantly sorrowful, for it was here that the last king was taken captive by a clique of his treacherous subjects and handed over like a felon to the power of his enemy.

Nugetenne Gap exposes one to the play of the four winds of heaven. From here one catches the first glimpse of a section of the vast plain of Uva.

Chenas up the steep slopes of neighbouring hills, the soft green of kurakkan and long stalks of maize dotted all over remove your thoughts from the precipitous nature of your motor-road. A particularly refreshing note is struck by young rice-fields neatly terracing the hillsides and cultivated far higher up there than I had seen before. These are the remnants of a bygone prosperity.

The industry of the villager is an object lesson to those pseudo-critics who

decry his innate laziness. Especially noticeable is the absence of capitalist estates which exude desolateness from every bush or tree.

Passing Madugoda with its welcome Rest House you drive along a winding road that is covered with thick forest with an occasional clearing or two.

Tavalantenne, once a halting place for caravans, is the only plain of any size, although pack-bulls form the chief medium of regular transport in these areas, it is largely deserted.

Roaring mountain rills cascade down the hillsides. Their deep gurgling is heard far down in the dense vegetation of valleys infolded with neighbouring mountains.

The P.W.D. road has now ended. The grass grows profusely in the centre of our rough road, but the wheel track is happily tarred.

The descent begins. Eighteen frightful hair-pin bends have to be negotiated on the loose gravel of an uncertain road. Virgin jungle grows on either side and mercifully withholds from view the awfulness of the precipice. The road falls some 2,000 feet and there is probably no steeper one anywhere in the Island. Not many

years ago, even a midget car could not take the sharp bends without being reversed.

According as the foliage permits one gets an indescribably wonderful panorama of Uva right from the first hair-pin bend. Lining the horizon are to be seen mountains of curious shapes. One appears like a dagoba tilted half-way up from its base. There is a pair that looks like twin heaps of grain; another seems to be an Athayagiri in the distance.

Sorabora glistens in the bright sun like a large puddle of highly irregular shape. Arms extend this way and that. From now on as the sharp descent brings us nearer the valley of the river the sublimity of the approaching view is almost inexpressible.

You may make a halt for refreshments at Gurulupota, near the 35th mile post. Here is a quiet circuit bungalow which will help relieve your motor-sickness.

The Yakkha tradition would seem to linger still in these regions. When our guide, a bright young village lad, was asked to sing us a few *sivpadas*, he gave the startling reply :

"But there are devils here, Sir, I cannot sing."

The road again. It now runs on fairly level ground which is welcome after one's frantic efforts at keeping equilibrium in the car. A gap to the left shows a beautiful waterfall in the distance of mountains. This is the Ratnella Falls. The falls must be of formidable size for the hurtling sheets of white water are plainly discernible.

The beauty of Ratnella is resisted only with great difficulty.

The waters flow in a deep narrow bed that adjoins the road on your left. This stream is known by the unfamiliar name of Hasalak Oya.

The road ends on a bank crested by the Rest House garage.

A short walk brought us to the Mahaveli. Its waters, fed by the rains of December, whirled swiftly on its broad bosom. The curling eddies and dangerous currents seemed to mock at the sides of the almost disintegrating ferry boat. But the lord of creation had circumvented the dangers that lurked in their depths, and our fears were calmed when the *Reinda-mahatmaya* brought us in safety to the other bank.

Mahiyangana dagoba is the first object of interest here. This dagoba which should occupy pride of place amongst our sacred buildings is in woeful condition. The very atmosphere of the spot sanctified by a visit of the Enlightened One is depressing in the extreme.

A collection of boutiques brightly illuminated at night but garishly ugly in the light of day encircles the temple precincts. The townlet is called Alutnuvara, the New City, founded on an unassailable site on Mahaveli's bank.

The few houses are low-roofed and ill-ventilated. Cattle roam about as cheekily as they do in the Hindu quarters of India. There was an old fashioned house in front of which was the curious spectacle of two ancient cannon placed upright like gate-posts! They tell a good tale without doubt.

A considerable portion of the dagoba is in utter ruin. Large masses of masonry lie halfway down its side. The compound is strewn with bricks. Pillars, stone, rubble and other debris lie wherever they have fallen.

Snails crawled up to the stone altar and ate up the offered flowers while we were lighting candles and

incense sticks and a monk was standing close by! It is said that when hundreds of candles are lit during the pilgrim season they are spirited away by practised thieves as soon as the backs of the devotees are turned.

The Alutnuvara Rest House was presided over by a feeble but very likeable old man picturesque in a thin long beard. In his genial and comforting presence you soon forgot the menacing words of a printed notice that the nearest postal and telegraphic services are respectively 30 and 22 miles away; and that your latest paper may be anything up to three days old!

The Rest House is said to stand on the site of a palace of Dutugemunu. Later, Rajasingha of Kandy built his palace in this commanding position and exerted every bit of his ingenious brain to drive the hated foreigner out of his native soil. A large glazed pot filled with sulphur had been dug out in a corner of the compound. The saltpetre necessary for their campaigns is said to have been manufactured by the Kandyan kings out of bats' droppings mixed with water.

The track to Sorabora lies through four miles of forest. It is full of bogs

in January and fraught with danger from wild beasts.

The earliest sign of the proximity of the tank was a 'village' of two huts whose occupants gathered round us in no time. Miserable malaria stricken people they were all with enlarged spleen. There was a little strip of a girl, barely in her teens. She was an expectant mother! Such is the toll of poverty in the jungle.

Beautiful Sorabora, tank of our dreams! Flower blushing unseen in the loneliness of Bintenne!

From the top of the rock that rears itself in front of you like a forbidding wall you command a beautiful view of the far famed tank. On your right is a deep gorge of twenty feet or more. This is a sluice cut out of solid rock, and the waters tumble down to flow along a channel to fields far away.

The other sluice has also been cut in granite, and it is no wonder that the villager seeing such marvellous work describes it as the work of supermen. Hudu Banda, who hailed from a village deep in the mystery of the forest, a retiring forester whose acquaintance we made, offered us the name of the *Yodaya*, Bulatha, a

strong man of Dutta Gamani, Paladin among kings.

The loveliness of Sorabora is enhanced when it is full, as when we beheld it. There were no trees growing in the middle; no mud or sandbank told a tale of collecting silt. It is as well drained as when the first engineers made it.

Narrow inlets and creeks can be seen in the far distance from numerous gaps in the densely grown banks. Flocks of birds sport on its waters. An impudent teal sails with disdain almost in the jaws of a crocodile whose snout cleaves the water like the nozzle of a torpedo. A sudden flapping of wings and harsh cries betoken a scared feathered tribe. Perhaps the shaggy front of an ominous solitary *kula* has frightened them.

The beautiful *olu* lotus has disappeared before the ravenous jaws of mud-turtles. None of them can now be seen.

Powerful binoculars reveal no signs of civilised life. Deep in verdant glooms keen eyes or nostrils are doubtless aware of the presence of human intruders in land forbidden to that ilk by the tradition of countless centuries.

Scarcity of game compelled Veddahs

who once inhabited both banks to abandon their Horabara.

Over hill and dale, over crag and giant tree broods the vast mystery of a great forest. And, clad in a mantle of darkest green Sorabora sparkles in the noontide sun. Fleecy clouds fleck an azure sky, the out-drawn note of a hidden bird is wafted across the sheen of deep waters. Comes a sudden wind from the portals of heaven. A hundred wavelets dance in the joy of the sun. The leaves of many a hoary tree rustle in its green recesses. Truly did the poet ask:

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AMAZING ELAHERA

EVEN in a land in which amazing works of water carriage are a commonplace, the Elahera Scheme cannot fail to excite the wonder of a visitor whoever he may be. Situated in the old fortified region of Alisara, Elahera Channel was the work par excellence which tapped the waters of Ambanganga, and, after reinforcing a series of reservoirs such as Minneriya, Giritale, Kaudullu and Kantalai, is believed to have been continued almost to the mouth of the Mahaveli by the harbour of Trincomalee. For this reason it is that people assert that Tambalagam Bay was, once upon a time, an expanse of waving fields of rice which, subsequently became a sheet of water when the floods hurtled through mighty breaches in the rubble bunds.

But the original scheme is obviously much older than it is generally believed to be. It dates back to the fifth and sixth centuries, to Mahasen and Agbo I.

Such an achievement is awe-inspring. And so, it could not have been

done by any save giants. Hence the upper section of the chain was given the name of Yodiye-bendi-ela.

The road to the present scheme of restoring Elahera branches off from Naula. It is thick forest even now and frequented by wild animals, who do not seem to be scared away by motor transport which breaks through their domain. Here and there are small clearings which are links of a chain that ends in Irrigation Town. Labourers who use the road during daytime invariably carry guns. Game is evidently crying to be curried. We saw ourselves a marvellous jungle cock, flame-coloured and emerald, grubbing for a late breakfast in a very leisurely way by the side of the motor road.

The anicuts are close to the twelfth mile-post. The smaller dam almost adjoins the road. A short walk in the forest brings one up to the main dam.

The nearer and smaller one appeals to the student. At the time we went it was working for the benefit of the cultivators. Its concrete dam holds up a tributary of the river and the raised water is deflected along a channel which has been deeply cut in rising ground. A few yards away is

the sluice-gate. It both controls the water and prevents the silting of the full length of canal. A flight of steps on each side permits one to get down right to the surface of the water—provided one has the nerve to withstand the mighty roar of the bridled river or see the spectacle of water racing at terrific speed through the canyon.

But this fury soon emerges, like the chrysalis, into the ancient way of placid waters. They flow smoothly on, with no thought of hurry in their mind. For they have to halt a while at the many controls whereat they pay due contribution to the fields of men for whose benefit that great sovereign of old Lanka had garnered them in precious drops from the heaven above.

From this spot the visitor drives with the old channel on the right. Bushes and trees sometimes grow in the middle of the water, but do not hinder its progress.

Irrigation Town is a few miles farther down. It is not so much the mosquito-proof quarters that attract attention as the clutter of boutiques and booths of that ilk. Unfortunately for us, a couple of days earlier had been pay day. As Elahera Alutgedera Punchi Banda, our young cicerone, informed us, no savouries

had been left over to outsiders—except that eternal *aluva*.

The town itself is full of bustle so that one hardly remembers it lies on the fringe of a great forest. A bridge spans the main channel by which the road curves, to be continued in rough fashion on the bund itself. Where the flow falls sharply down, concrete steps have been constructed to break the force and prevent erosion.

A rugged road caked with wheel tracks leads one to the present terminus, namely the Government school. Here again is the river. A bridge has been partially built across it from either bank. When completed it will link up the now imperfect roadway to Pallegama from which the mileage is now counted.

Returning to the bridge over the ela we drive along the bund with uncomfortable jolting. Here may best be seen how the broad ribbon of water trails in easy gradients so imperceptible that its stillness appears to mirror the umbrageous giants that align it all the way along.

Kongeta Oya now breaks in with a sharp challenge. It cuts right across the channel with rugged sides. But human ingenuity has accepted its challenge.

With appliances and material of an iron age it has made a fine flume to conduct the vital waters and, hey presto! has even built a sound roadway for all transport including ours!

We get down here. We admire the defiance of nature. But we rejoice in the victory of our fellows.

Some while later we alight on old-time work. Man had built solid spills, *galvanas*, of hammered blocks of granite, several feet broad and over a sheet of rock with deep drains whereby the impudent water of a stream had been checked long before his modern compeer came hither with his iron and concrete. Here on the rock are sockets, square and circular, which had held up the water before it was ladled out, so to speak, to the crying fields below.

Over the Karandagolle Oya was the next conduit-cum-road. It is the land between this stream and the first that is proposed to be leased out for development.

"First to us, people of the place," explained Punchi Banda.

"Who then were the lot we passed?"

"Oh, outsiders—from Matara to Matale," he said laconically. "There are only thirty families here," he conti-

nued, mentally puffing out his chest, "who can say they are local people."

"Then why the name Alutgedara?" put in our driver. Punchi Banda ignored the levity.

"We are getting the land at fifty cents a year," he said.

"For how long? Keeps?"

"Oh, no. For ninety-nine years." There came to my mind the words of the chronicler of the deeds of Parakrama the Great:—

"To put away the sufferings of famine from living creatures that most excellent of men had many tanks and canals made in diverse places."

Our benison on you, Punchi Banda, and your kinsfolk.

Farther on we came to the tamarind tree of venerable aspect where, says tradition, the great king had kept a fleet of boats which were to clean up the great channel. Tales there are, too, of water traffic between Elahera and Minneriya in the dim days of yore.

Proudly did Punchi Banda point to the knotted rings that encircled the 26 foot thick patriarch.

"See those? Marks made by mooring-ropes!"

"How long ago? A hundred years?"

queried Jehu. "Yes, must be about that time. Perhaps more." Punchi Banda was weak on time.

The tree verily impresses. Officialdom, which can be sentimental once in a way, has marked off the tree by an iron railing.

And so, those who pass by—not the motorist, for he is held up shortly ahead by the last point of road at Heerati Oya—but the wayfarer to the regions beyond through forest trails and by lairs of lurking Death, lays on the iron fence that primal sacrifice of verdant twig freshly plucked, at the altar of that divinity of Minneriya, who may not be seen, but who breathes with the breath of a forest's being.

COLOSSUS OF THE WILDS

SCANTY references to the colossal Buddha at Ataragalleva, whetted my desire to see an image which seems to have been completely forgotten by everybody. When I set out on my quest I knew little of its situation, beyond the fact that it was somewhere about Elahera.

At Elahera, we picked up, not without difficulty, young Punchi Banda, one of the few we came across of those who had been to see the image. Beyond the irrigation terminus we crossed the Ambanganga by a suspension bridge. The river bifurcates at this place and the bridge, which is in four spans, is an unusually long one, rocking far too much to our liking. To add to the discomfort, the dry rungs crackled ominously, and the vertical supports leaned so far out of reach that we could grip only one rope at a time.

We were entering the forest. Intuitively we stuck our leafy offering to the deity of Minneriya on the fork of a *kumbuk*; it was, I think, more to ease the conscience of Banda, who would not have

relished the company of irreligious folk.

We emerged into the Pallegama road. This road is now laid out roughly. A partly built concrete bridge, which is to replace the suspension bridge, will join it with Elahera and Naula.

The morning march on the rough roadway was very exhilarating. Boughs of great trees shut out the mounting sun; singing birds challenged our replies to their calls from the leafy recesses. Orchids throve on humid trunks, and the naturalist of the party collected the finest wild fox-tails that he had seen. They would soon be preserved, and he wanted to make hay while the sun shone. We met an occasional straggler trekking to Elahera. One man interrupted his business to hack off some branches that drooped over the road. The previous evening he had been scared into the belief that it was an elephant. It was broad daylight, we were dull townsfolk, and the implied warning was lost on us

A little channel slid silently on our left. It led to some village, though we had never yet seen chena or watch hut.

We now struck off the main road and followed a foot path. Some while later, we came upon a chena. We crossed a stile

and entered a compound, to the barking welcome of two bristling dogs. We had come to Ataragalleva, a hamlet of half a dozen families.

The crowd that gathered round us had bulging bellies, the stamp of malaria. Sundara, a village elder, told us that the fever was always with them. Often there was none so hale as could be sent to Elahera to fetch quinine. The talk brought his dame from her pounding. She eagerly asked if we had brought medicine. A girl was shivering with ague in the compound where she stood staring at us with fever-shot eyes.

We were drinking the water Sundara had offered us hot travellers, when the dogs set up another din. We looked and saw a derelict old woman hobbling on a stick with which she shooed the dogs away. Her head was shaven and she was dressed in a saffron robe. She regarded us with bleared eyes and passed us by. The folk collected round the aged religious woman who was the only living embodiment of religion in this outpost.

How came she to adopt the mendicant way of life in this wild place? Perhaps she had learnt a lesson of lasting value in this distant village in the jungle.

We left Ataragalleva after crossing two immense stretches of fields. The second of them, known as Ulpathevela, was a tangle of weeds. It had to be watered by the sky alone, so Banda explained.

We now entered the jungle again, one so mazy that our guide was constantly losing his way. Not a hidden chena was there to indicate civilisation. We had left it for good.

An hour's walking brought us to a high bank overlooking the Ambanganga. A steep descent brought us to where the waters of the river trammelled by rocks above form into a deep wide basin.

The uncertainty of our quest prevented us from enjoying a dip in this nature's own swimming bath, sheltered by falling boughs intertwined with giant lianas. Moreover, crossing was a serious problem.

It was the famous spot known as Namal Kumara Ella, after the South Indian marauder who had been such a terror to the lassies of old Alisara (Elahera) seven centuries gone by, and whose settlement had been here, on the confines of Parakrama Samudra.

At this place Ambanganga is squeezed as if in a press between two reefs of

rock, It had been raining up river and the swirling brown waters were visibly increasing in volume, while we watched with some nervousness.

Jumping across, however fraught with danger, was the only way to reach the opposite bank. The bolder spirits took a running leap, and the timid one of the party was helped over an improvised bridge of cut poles. We should have abandoned our quest had we known at the time that the gorge was 37 feet deep. Numerous sockets on the rocks point to the existence of a bridge, or of a dam, in the days of old.

The forest on the other bank was wilder than that we had traversed. At noon it was half-lit. The odd thing was that not a noise, not even the note of a bird, broke its stillness.

Of a sudden we dipped into the dry bed of what had been a broad channel or moat which could have been watered from Namal Kumara Ella. Its sides were lined with dressed blocks of stone. We climbed up into a huge area littered with bricks and stone.

Everywhere we turned we saw stone embankments, mounds which told of collapsed buildings, pillars and steps of

stone and other evidence of life deserted long since.

The site is called Maluveyaya. It had been a religious establishment some thousand years ago, even before Polonnaruva times.

Here we lost the track once more. Endless trails which crossed and re-crossed were bewildering enough to anybody, even though he was not a Punchi Banda with an aptitude for losing his way.

At last he saw a landmark. It was a square cistern of moulded granite which lay deeply sunk in the humus. The vessel was in such good condition that it could be put to use any day.

The track was picked up once more. Elephants' droppings and tusk marks of pig were prominent along the way. In fact, it was wild jungle, and ignorant as we were, we were following the trail of wild creatures, with only a penknife as weapon. Missing the road again, we came upon Heerati Oya, a desolate stream in the thick white sand of which we sank ankle deep.

Banda, who had been going ahead, cautioned us against making any noise, and stood as if rooted to the ground. When

all of us had come up, he pointed to the gleaming sand.

What we saw froze our blood. In the sand, deeply sunk, were marks of an elephant's feet!

It had been sporting in the stream, and apparently had made off on hearing our signals to one another. It had nearly crossed to the other bank (we were to go in that direction), but having changed its mind had circled back, re-crossed, pulled up a shrub or two on the way, and deserting its road, bolted down stream ahead of us. The sand thrown up by the beast was oozing with water. We had been travelling against wind all the time.

We continued our way with palpitating hearts. We had not gone far when a troop of monkeys sounded an alarm in the trees close by, the first noise we had heard after leaving the village. Immediately there was a sharp "E-E-K!" and a heavy form thudded across our path. Although it was a matter of feet, the undergrowth was so dense that we saw no more than a fleeting patch of black or dark brown in between. With parched throats, we discussed turning back. "Elk," whispered Banda, whom the heavy rush had scared out of his wits.

Time restored confidence, and we marched on. At last we came to a sweep of the main river. Alongside a ridge of rock which overlooked the water was the object of our quest, a colossal recumbent Buddha.

We bent down at its feet.

The statue was of immense size, nearly 40 feet. It was carved out of the living rock in the 'Parinibbana' pose, which is not easily discernible now. The face had been totally mutilated; there was a gash on the upper thigh below where the left hand rests. It was not due to weathering, but the work of treasure seekers.

A ruined brick plinth covered with thorny scrub denoted the existence of a vihara which had housed the image. Behind the Buddha, in the bushes, was a Dagoba badly breached.

Although a first glance impresses one with the similarity of this image to its more perfect fellow at the Gal Vihara, Polonnaruva, the size of bricks, the lack of folds in the robe, and an inscription discovered at Maluveyaya, have helped in tentatively fixing its date to the 10th century. So that this sculpture seems rather to have furnished the inspiration to the artist of Gal Vihara, than vice versa.

With this as a model, he would have had little difficulty in fashioning the greater piece of work at Pulasthipura.

We hurried back as it was getting late. Numerous animals had forded Heerati Oya in our absence.

Arrived at Namal Kumara Ella, we saw that it was a spate of dreadful waters churning whitely against the reef. We had no way but to attempt to ford the swollen river below. We discovered a tolerable passage directly below the mouth of a tributary, the Kaluganga. Standing neck deep at times, with changing cold currents threatening cramp, and the volume of water quickening as we remained, we certainly should have paid the penalty for our rashness.

We wondered how our skins remained whole. Great is the god of Minneriya, so Banda assured us.

But my thoughts were not of him. They were of the great Buddha of the desolate forest, sleeping an eye-less sleep, in the muteness of its mutilation. The rolling centuries, and the hordes of wild creatures that pass it by are, indeed, kinder to it than have been the hearts of grasping men who would not suffer it to lie in the peace of a pitying forest.

VILLAGE IN THE JUNGLE

NORTHWARDS, beyond colonised Hingurakgoda, is a mighty forest. In its dark womb lie bullet-pricked elephant, matted bear, and surly wild buffalo.

Looking at it the traveller sees little which betokens human life. But, ringed by giant trees with mesh of tangled thorn, are little-known hamlets, like oases in some wilderness.

One of these villages in the jungle is the hamlet of Divulankadavala. It lies some eight miles on the straight road which passes the markets of Hingurakgoda, and crosses the channel that conveys the waters of Minneriya tank to thirsting plantations.

One Saturday morning, I was waiting for the country cart which was to take a party of us to the village. Soon it came, a "half cart," minus roof. It clattered down the rough roadway to the jingle of the bells on two sturdy bulls. They were bursting with health, but for which, we were to learn later, they would

not have lived through the strenuous drive of that day.

Past broad acres reclaimed from the forest, we drove into the heart of the wild. For the first couple of miles we travelled in comparative comfort, over a road which owes its existence to survey parties.

Soon the aspect changed. This was no road, but a rude track. It went over rocks and roots, dipped into the heavy sand of dry river-beds, or skirted great trees, satin, ebony, palu and veera. We drove through brakes, with saplings throwing out spiked tentacles as if to rake our flesh. Not many vehicles or oxen could have stood the ordeal through which ours passed with gallant heart.

The wild broke out into the open park-land known as *damana*. It is a strange area, this meadowland intersected by small clumps of trees and looking like some Brobdingnagian trans-plantation. But for the white stretch of roadway that ribbons it, one should easily lose one's way in it. Landmark there is none. Viewed from whatever angle, the aspect is bewilderingly the same everywhere.

The *damana* abounds in game. Even at mid-day one catches a fleeting glimpse of muntjac or deer as they hurdle

across one's path. The occasional late traveller never fails to bring home the heaviest "bag" he can carry.

The season was at its hottest at the time of our visit, and the undergrowth nicely browned. So what traveller could resist the temptation of throwing a flare into the dry bush? All along we saw huge charred spaces with trees still smouldering. The men had another reason for applying a brand. The periodical firing kept their roadway clear of the bush.

A narrow water channel with low mud banks, through which our wheels cut, was the first indication of our approach to a human habitation. The village soon appeared on our right. Its straw-thatched cottages were set on the fringe of a great stretch of paddy fields. The whole atmosphere was charged with prosperity, although Tikiri Appu, a village worthy, and his brother-in-law Kawrala, endeavoured to impress their hardships on us.

Brightly shone the sun of noon on weighted paddy. There was a tale of scarcity of water, but that did not hold water with us. Industry seemed to be the watch-word everywhere in this remote

outpost. Here was no slow-dying horror, after a Leonard Woolf.

We "gate-crashed" into the village itself, across a broad clearing flagged with stones and ribbed with spreading roots. Our hind quarters and "innards" long rued the roughness of that day—but help there was none.

A clearing encircled the village for thirty fathoms. It was the first of its kind I had seen. Known as "tis bambe," it was introduced by the early British administration, both to provide air and sunlight, and to afford protection to the village folk from wild beasts. Being a wholesome provision it has always been enforced.

The space was littered with the dung of cattle which shelter in it for the night. A heavy stockade of thick trunks closely set together, ran round the village. A similar fence demarcated the several "compounds" which form family units. A "compound" has two or more huts of close relations. Two thick logs, which do not allow cattle to stray from one place to another, went to form the gates.

The two odd score families which formed the population kept their premises spick and span. The houses were neatly

layered with mud and cow-dung. They were built lengthwise and narrow. Each had a small strip of verandah; the living quarters were without windows. The yards were very tidy. The hot winds, which were unruly at the time, necessitated constant sweeping of the yards. Strangely enough, there was an incredible volume of fine dust, which was continually being stirred. This was doubtless the cause of conjunctivitis that prevailed, particularly amongst the little ones. But the people never bothered to treat the affected eyes. The pomegranate leaf lotion, which we recommended, appeared an unheard of remedy to them.

There were unusual features in the huts we saw. The grinding-stone, for instance, was in a corner of the verandah and set on a plinth of beaten mud. It had a shallow depression like a saucer. One fire-place, as the architect amongst us noticed, was built behind the door and against it, more or less.

The men and women were a comely lot, with typically regular Sinhalese lineaments. Kawrala, however, despite his vehemence to the contrary, appeared to be a village Veddah type. (He assured us that the nearest Veddahs were at Rota-

veva). We meant no reflection on the honest soul. His wife, too, was extraordinary, being not merely fair of complexion, but possessing light, almost straw-coloured, hair. Modesty outran the inquisitiveness of his lady and she retreated indoors when we sought to converse with her.

There was not the slightest trace of malaria amongst the people whom we saw. But the children were otherwise.

"No, Sir," remarked Tikiri Appu, "we are not plagued with the fever. This is a healthy place to live in."

"Yes," chimed in Appuhamy, his handsome younger brother, "we have enough to eat and live. All we need is a few cartridges. These elephants—why they come almost to our doors! And how ever can we stop them when cartridges are Rs. 5.75 the box? Please leave us some of yours."

"But, look, why are your kids so sickly, if you say your village is healthy?"

Kawrala stuck a wad of *tala* leaves into his cheek, inserted the quarter of an arecanut, and said, "Miserable brats! That's what they are, honestly, Sir. Else, why should they fall ill, when

we never were so at their age? Karumakkarayo!" And he spat out.

Coconuts! If additional proof is needed of their will to work, the few coconut-palms that we saw were sufficient. A colonist of Hingurakgoda told me that leaves for thatching were brought by them from Batticaloa. And here at Divulankadavala, only 8 miles away, Man had grimly set out to grow the precious palm, and succeeded, too!

Fat pods of luscious drum-stick hung overhead like suspended ranks of a shower. They melted, almost, in my mouth, when I ate the curry for dinner at home the next day. Berries of strange trees padded the ground on which we walked. Birds of unknown hue and form trilled a paean of welcome to us, their guests.

Bear and elephant walked right into their midst, I was told. Neither was easy to fight, being versed in the ways of Man who had alas! set his searing seal on them. Wild buffaloes harassed their kine. The ordinary cattle were a problem. They were useless for field-work, and cows' milk did not form part of their diet.

"Doesn't the *tamby* come here?"

"No *tamby* will we allow here," was the fierce reply.

"We will not give one night's shelter to any strolling vendor, though he is welcome for the day. The day we fall to his wiles, that day we seal our doom."

The rules of caste bind them as they do others. They were all of one community. When social duties had to be performed, people of appropriate castes were summoned. The washermen, for instance, had to come when they were needed, from twenty miles away.

There used to be a school, but the numbers being small, some dozen, the building stood deserted. The figure had subsequently increased to thrice the original; but the villagers could not get the institution re-opened. A monk had come in to continue the good work, but had left them after a while.

They had also lost living contact with religion since the departure of the monk. But a short time ago an elderly "upasaka" took up his abode in the forest, two miles away. Our visit happened to be on a full moon day, and we saw the man in the village where he had come for alms. He was a quiet, bearded man, of sturdy frame well suited to the hardships of climate to which a stranger is prone in a forest vil-

lage. He went about his work, unmoved by the stir caused by our visit.

Six miles away, in yet denser forest, is the extensive ruin of Medirigiriya, with its magnificent Vatadage and a breached dagoba. Here the devout folk repair for worship.

We went some distance beyond the confines of the village. Two miles' walking brings one to Kaudullu Oya, to a point where may be seen the ruined dam, built of huge blocks of stone, which diverted the water into the Yoda Ela which Parakrama Bahu I had extended from Elahera.

Still more fields with romantic watch-huts, as if on stills, testified to their industry. The place was infested with bear, said Tikiri Appu. Once six brutes had clustered and growled about a rock he had rested on.

A stench assailed our nostrils. We located it—a string of big tank-fish strung up on low branches by some village gourmet who had probably tired of continual game. Further ahead, another had cut up a wild boar that had fallen to his ancient flint-lock the previous night. The flesh fetches fifteen cents the pound at Hingurakgoda Fair.

Some deer and two pairs of jackals, the picture of sleek health, crossed and re-crossed us. They were never completely scared, but rather seemed to be suspicious of our doings in this, their domain.

"Don't you fear the jungle? Minneriya Deviyo guards you, doesn't he?" I asked.

"Our two hands, and a gun between, are our god, sir. As for him you name, why, he may be there. But how can he protect the man who goes careless and unarmed?"

Practical religion, and learnt from a forester!

"Been to Kandy, Kawrala? There's a great Esala Perahera there, you know."

"Aiyo, sir, what Kandy for the likes of us?"

We returned in the gloaming, hoping to see the forest life of the parkland. Darkness came soon. It swallowed the men of Divulankadavala.

THE ROYAL CITY OF HANGURANKETA

DIYATILAKA Nuvara was the euphonious name borne some three centuries ago by the royal city of Hanguranketa, capital of the Kandyan Kings during certain periods. The modern name is traditionally said to derive from Sanga-ruvan-keta, by reason of a golden ear of corn discovered in a field; and a devout king gifted it to the priesthood.

The city is situated in Hevaheta, the Province of Soldiers. The region was also known as Katapulululurata, the word signifying constabulary.

Hanguranketa is on the western slope of Diyatalakanda, and is well known for a popular perahera which immediately follows the Esala Perahera of Kandy. The mountain had the reputation of being an effective barrier against the enemy, for farther off lay a wild region where no enemy could pursue a fleeing king. When the Dutch invaded Kandy under Van Eck and foolhardily penetrated to Hanguran-

keta, their diarist reported "a considerable number of men was seen to escape into the mountains with tawny elephants and with palanquins."

It was "Rahasin Deiyo," the captor of Knox, who popularized the city, and the best description written of it lies to the credit of this Englishman. Here it was that the king fled from the rebels and "where the king ever since he was routed from Nellemby in the Rebellion Anno 1664 hath held his Court."

Digligy-neur, as the writer calls it, was the fifth city in the kingdom. It came into prominence solely on account of its strategic position; "hardly a worse place could be found out in the whole Island."

The palace was near the mountain near which no one presumed to set foot. A thick wall of mud, thatched against the heavy rains encircled the precincts. Within this wall were numerous houses, which, for the most part, were humble thatched huts. But some, evidently those which belonged to the nobles, had two storeys, and were well tiled. They were fully ventilated, rather unusually for the dwellings of those days, had large open galleries, and were "rayled about with

turned banisters, one ebony, and one painted."

The palace itself seems to have been a remarkable building, and its mazy devices reminded Knox of Woodstock.

Infinite precautions were taken to ensure that no suspicious character entered the place. Constant guards, man and pachyderm, kept strict vigil. The monarch had greater faith in a company of Kaffirs than in his own people. Between every watch a fearful din was made in order "to keep his people waking, and for the honour of His Majesty." Obviously the revolt had taught him a useful lesson!

The Queen herself, who was from Malabar, lived apart from him in Kandy. He appears to have made ample provision for her.

The city is connected with several well-known incidents in history. Bystervelt, the bold Dutch soldier who risked his life in trying to remonstrate with the king against his detention of previous emissaries, was brought here in procession, received, and appointed Mohottiar. Laisne de Nanclars de La Nerolle, the Frenchman, who was impudent enough to enter the king's city on horseback, was awarded six months in chains to ruminate

on his arrogance. And it was also here that Mahastana the king's son, believed to have been poisoned soon after the rebellion was presented as heir to an incredulous nobility by the aged king who himself prostrated before the youth to convince his sceptic audience.

Sri Vijaya Rajasingha, the brother-in-law of Kundasale Raja and the first of the last Indian line in Ceylon, lived in the city so long that he came to be known as Hanguranketa Raja.

Less than a century after Rajasingha the city was sacked by the Dutch soldiers of Van Eck. After the ravaging of the place for two days, the palace was reduced to a heap of ashes during the reign of Kirti Sri.

Despite its spoliation by the Hollanders the city does not seem to have lost its popularity, for Sri Vickrama Rajasingha himself made good use of it. The approaches were thoroughly fortified.

Two British detachments under Colonel Baillie and Lieut. Colonel Logan, invading Kandyan territory in 1803, effected a junction here, and by the 15th of March, another palace had been burnt down.

But, like the phoenix of legend, it

Relief of Pancha Nari Ghata (five women vase) from Palle Devale at Hanguranketa

rose again from its ashes. On the 11th of November, 1810, D'Oyly received intelligence that a new Walauwa was being built at Hanguranketa. Four months later the king went to reside in the city.

By the side of the highroad are the remains of a clay wall which are believed to be a part of the original one. The site of the palace is pointed out on a stretch of paddy fields behind the Devale. The Lake, too, which ornamented the city as in the case of Kandy, is said to have been extensive and a Bo sapling grows on a mound where a *patthirippuva* once was.

On a short pillar at the compound of the Palle or Alutnuvara Devale is a very elegantly executed sculpture representing *Pancha-nari-ghata*. *Ghata* is a pot or vase.

Five women are grouped to form this shape.

There is also a pair of guardstone tablets at Arattana temple which is of obviously genuine Sinhalese workmanship. In the temple may also be seen heavily carved stout pillars of *milla* wood. These, though lime-washed, show the charred marks of the days of arson and plunder.

ETCHINGS IN EKIRIYA

THE soothing touch of perfect solitude, and the innocent charm of unsophisticated countryfolk, combine to make the village of Ekiriya a rare place for holidaying.

Passing Hanguranketa, one mile beyond Rikillagaskada, the rhythmic melody of which name does high credit to the postal brain who chose it as a centre, you come to Poramadulla junction, so named after the fight between two buffalo bulls in the traditions of young Gemunu listlessly roaming the regions of Kotmale. A stone *ambalama* and a dispensary building donated to the State by a local magnate are adequate sign-posts pointing to the red, gravelled V.C. road which leads down to the prosperous valley where Ekiriya nestles. Diyatalakanda, 5,000 ft., rises a forbidding wall, to ward off the village from the profanations of vice-ridden townsfolk. Dolugalakanda, Monaragala and Pahantibugala encircle it with rampart of Nature's own reinforced granite.

Manelpura Deva Kalingu! The music and romance of the name, our very own, truly symbolize the sons of the soil whose grandsires have lived here for generations numberless. And, as if the enticement were not enough, here is found the light-hued Sirimala, or a pair of lustrous-eyed and giggling belles, Sirimalee and Meṇiki.

Ekiriya village smiles broadly in prosperous fertility. Industry is the key-note of its sturdy peasantry. In its delicious climate thrive up-country vegetables and those of warmer regions, as well. Cabbages, butter beans, beets and turnips grow cheek by jowl with chenas of cucumber, pumpkin, kurakkan and mustard.

While cultivation strikes a loud note, there is also an industry whose fame is not despised. The pottery of Ekiriya is well known in these parts and the potters themselves quite a historic clan.

It is stated on authority that five chiefs came over from India with Mahagedera Holiya Banda, the descendants of which family held high place in the communal life until recent years. These five, Konda Singhaya, Balasuriya, Edirisin Deva, Panikki Henaya and Pathakaraya, were given *patabendi* names or titles of honour by Kirti Sri. Being regarded

above the common run, these master potters employed coolies to take their ware to the palace, and themselves walked behind decked in hat and *tuppotti*. The vessels (which were specially made) were placed on a mesh slung between two poles and borne on the shoulders of four men. A few of the carved and decorated poles are yet preserved as heirlooms in the families of the descendants.

The potters are considered higher in this village than their clansmen in the low-country. They are also cultivators, and some are really good exponents of Kandyan dancing.

Below the clustering houses of the potters is a long stretch of fields which once belonged to royalty. Along the same valley, a few miles down, was a demesne of the Maha Vasala, a *gabadagama*. One of these fields is yet called Mah Nila Mada, and on the hill slope facing it was a threshing-floor from where the king used to watch the harvest merrymaking.

Besides these, the village teems with hoary traditions, for it once formed part of the wilderness of Malayarata or the Region of Mountains wherein many a king in temporary adversity found safe refuge. There is, for instance, a coconut

grove called Rat-pat-ge where Pandukabhaya is reputed to have met Suvannapali, his future bride, at the touch of whose delicate fingers the banyan leaves on to which she was serving rice turned into gold. A tall mountain is indicated as having sheltered the youngster when he was campaigning against his uncles, or, if you would rather believe the *Dipavamsa*, he roamed as a robber. A few miles above, on the Rahatungoda road, there are persistent tales of Valagambahu's associations, and a stretch of fields is pointed out as the dried bed of a small tank built by him.

On a slope below a chena is a rock temple dedicated to Kohomba Deviyo. In times of pestilence, severe drought, or rainfall, the people induce the kapurala to invoke the god's aid. After the necessary ceremonies of purification, he enters the sanctum from where he takes out the sacred weapons. With these he comes out, and dances for a time in religious frenzy. When he has recovered from the divine touch, he replaces the weapons. It is firmly believed that the necessary good follows this rite.

Civilisation, as connoted by postal facilities or kerosene oil and salt, is three

or four miles away. The very chew is rough and ready, for betel is replaced by *demata* and areca by the bark of the *attikka* (fig).

In the quiet of the evening, when "peace comes dropping slow," droves of mild buffaloes are led homewards by their owners. A bright vermilion sky throws into lurid relief the tops of the mountains in the blue haze.

Twilight comes apace. The blue grows into slate grey. Suddenly, a melodious trill rings out across the darkening clumps. Ayith-thiya-a! Ayith-thiya-a!

Lights twinkle like glow-worms amongst the deep purple of the foliage. Hardly a sound stirs the close hush. All is still.

MEDA-MAHA-NUVARA IN DUMBARA

IF Sri Vickrama Rajasingha had succeeded in reaching the forest-clad fastness of Medamahanuvara would the story of the Kandyan people be a different one today?

It was evident that the King was bound thither, for in its vicinity lay several inaccessible and little-known hiding places used by previous rulers in times of danger. In the darkness of a rainy evening the king's followers lost the track.

The question raised above spontaneously springs to the mind of anyone looking at this grim mountain on the confines of upper Dumbara.

Medamahanuvara mountain, once known as Gale Nuvara, is situated at Hunnasgiriya some twenty odd miles from Kandy. It rears its forbidding head 4,394 feet above sea level. There is said to be only one way of approach to it, and that is through Medavatta estate.

Leaving the open estate behind, the

traveller approaches a dark belt of vegetation. It is a patch of jungle cleared for a clustering plantation of cardamoms.

There is no road beyond this plantation, and one has to be led by one of the very few local people conversant with the intricacies of the mountain. The going is exceedingly steep, the soil loose, and the seemingly firm foothold releases rocks that treacherously appear to be embedded in the earth.

Frequent halts have to be called, and soon one enters very dense undergrowth through which one has to creep on all fours. Our guide was armed with a heavy pruning knife and with it he hacked a way for us through the thorny tangle.

Half-way up we came across what looked like a broad ditch. On the further side of it was the ruined and thick wall of a building. It was evidently a guard-post overlooking a fosse. There were deep holes in the sides, doubtless meant for cannon.

The thick scrub on either side covers fearful ravines and dizzy precipices, but one could hear the dull roar of the wind from deep down, or muffled sounds of distant life. One side rises with such perpendicularity that it is a mercy it is

screened from the climber by a live wall of tall undergrowth.

The summit is crowned by the walls of a ruined building, about 9 or 10 feet high. With sturdy strength they have been defying the free play of the elements. A narrow square building seems to have been enclosed by these walls. Its ground plan is faintly discernible through the profuse vegetation.

The walls themselves are steep. Walking on them, one winces at the thought of being precipitated into the jungle growth, especially on one side where there seems to be a deep cavity in the centre of the ground. A few feet beyond the ruin is a pool of clear water which once graced a pond.

The view from the summit is magnificent. It alone is sufficient reward for the arduousness of the climb.

Right in front is Navanagala, which is separated by a deep gorge. Navanagala is a fearsome height of nearly 5,000 feet, and unassailable.

It is reputed to be frequently struck by lightning, a fact observed by the Kandyan Kings who are reported to have used a kind of non-conducting stone in the constructions on Medamahanuvara rock.

It is curious that this latter peak is not similarly struck.

To the right the hills fall off until a vast plain is seen in the blue haze. Lining the horizon are the mountains of Uva. An irregular patch of water visible in the dim distance proclaims the magic name of Sorabora. Medamahanuvara is one of the finest examples of a mountain top used, not merely for observation, but as a place of confident refuge. Perhaps it was first utilized in the 15th or 16th century. One is led to surmise that Rajasingha II. had this fastness in view when he fled before the rebels of his capital in 1664.

The safety afforded by Medamahanuvara was beyond question.

Even cannon are said to have been taken up to be added to the armoury. Cannon balls strewed the slopes and used to be offered by the villagers to the visitors.

Passing Urugala on the return to Kandy we come to Moragahamula. Here is a track that leads to Bomure in which village was enacted the tragedy that led to the fall of an independence which had lasted over two milleniums.

The scene of the capture is reached through some high paddy land. Here stood the house of Udupitiya Arachchy, over-

looking, as important Kandyan country houses do, a big stretch of arable land. It is now abandoned to the scrub. An ancient tamarind tree, said to date from the sad past, broods in silence over a nation's loss. A Government Agent had a stone pillar erected to mark the tragic site.

Nearby gurgles a pretty rivulet, a bath fit for a king. A short distance away, in the paddy fields, there used to be stone pillars marking the ruins of a royal rest-house, in a city now lost. It lay on the road to Mahiyangana and was, therefore, a halting-place of the Kandyan Kings on their pilgrimage to this hallowed spot.

This city was variously called Sandamahanuvara, Medamahanuvara and Veediye Nuvara. All traces of the city have now disappeared.

PUTTALAM, THE SALT CITY

PUTTALAM for the week-end? The horrible stench from that lagoon!"

Nothing to encourage the holiday-maker, I must say, but I never regretted the stay in our Salt Lake City. Shooting bravely along the straight track which gleams through patches of scrub and jungle, raising a trail of thick brown dust which settles comfortably about your person without so much as, "By your leave," one representative of our state railway manages to take you to Puttalam where you may slake your intolerable thirst about the time of the mid-day meal. You aren't on time. But, glory be, you are there.

Your introduction to the town does not impress you. The iron devil rattles over bridges which span rivers of—sand. Deduru Oya is a spate of white sand. Trees of fair girth have made up their minds to pass into the serenity of old age. A narrow channel of anaemic water crawls painfully alongside the hither bank. It reminds you of those unhappy European survivors of decimated armies in Kandyan

territory straggling their way to the sea-coast and safety.

The other streams have been handled worse by the obstinate drought, for none of them contains one drop of the sweet fluid. But the stars of Battulu Oya alone have remained favourable. This river is in full flood.

Cattle browse on meadows that were. One looks in vain for green grass. They seem to be cropping up lumps of dry earth. Midway between two stations the train pulls up with much labour and more creaking. You crane your neck out to seek the cause. The action is foolhardy, and may prostrate you with sun-stroke. But the original sin of inquisitiveness is still strong in us.

Here is no catastrophe for the inky sleuth to rush to his News Editor. Woman, as is to be expected, is at the bottom of it all—a train of the kind, really, come with a row of big-bellied pots to collect water from engine and tender. The engine acts as a reservoir all along that road in the drought-stricken area where the railway labourers live.

And so, with the sun giving its warm-

est welcome, you get off at the terminus nigh the hour of noon.

It is not easy to pick one's way in parched Puttalam. All roads look alike, with white gritty sand on either side, or avenues of stumpy *suriya* trees flapping flat leaves in a lagoon breeze. A heat haze uprises in quivering dance from the graphite-like surface of the roads, and the russet open spaces are caked to the hardness of brick. When rain comes times are equally depressing. It pours and pours, and casts a sickening gloom all over the place.

Talipot palms thrust their spikes relentlessly into the blue of the sky. There are hundreds of them aligned in scattered companies. A curious feature is that most of them are in the grip of banyans, the tentacles of the octopus fast around them. No explanation of the peculiarity is locally available. Inertia does not allow even functioning of the brain. Huge spaces may be seen on every side, but I believe they are Government property and taboo to private enterprise.

Puttalam's gleaming advertisement is its vast lagoon whose turquoise blue stretches as far as eye could see. In the dim distance is a coastline fringed with misty vegetation. Kalpitiya, famous in the late

annals, lies hid within these groves, and could be reached in an hour by omnibus. There is a pier at Puttalam where one sees padda boats and *dhonies* moored to stout piles. Alluring though the lagoon is and very shallow for the most part, few people bathe in its waters—which is surprising in a dry town. Except for those who suffer from diseases of the skin the local folk leave it alone. Sewage feeds the lagoon, but this is not why it is boycotted.

The reason was supplied to me by an optimist who thought he was an angler. He was perched on a pile, and a sociable sun kept him company.

"This is the worst lagoon in all Ceylon, Sir," he exclaimed, hastily attending to his line which, to his fond eyes, appeared to be pulled down. "There is a kind of snake we call Valakkadi in the water. It is a ferocious creature, Ugh! and if it bites you once, little is the hope of recovery."

It seems the snakes migrate to the open sea during a season, and here they are believed to perish. God be thanked! Perhaps they go out to breed as salmon and eel do.

One expects Puttalam to abound in fish. But, no, the fish hawked about comes from Chilaw. The lagoon variety, being

unpalatable, is not in vogue, except amongst unsuspecting holiday-makers.

If Puttalam ever has a minority problem, Tamils and Sinhalese have to make unnatural alliance! Muslims predominate in the town. It has always been a stronghold of this community. From here it was that the ubiquitous Moorman set out in troupes to the Kandyan territory with salt and areca, calico and dried fish, to make peaceful penetration.

The local community is a very generous one. One practical outcome of this virtue stands as the landmark of the place. This is the splendid mosque. This Temple of the One True God has cost them a tidy lot, and the money has been freely given. Standing at the edge of the lovely lagoon, and washed in soft tones of colour, it is one of the most pleasing sights to be seen in the place. Unfortunately, a dirty slum-looking bazaar area, charged with the rich aroma of Billingsgate and Smithfield combined (not to speak of the flavours of a school science laboratory), surrounds it on three sides and shuts a magnificent facade out of easy view.

Social life in the town hardly exists. Efforts to whip up the citizens into activity do not succeed much. Perhaps the

heat stands in the way of close co-operation. Each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost sort of attitude. Your colleagues cut you dead in the street. Enough of you in office has, perhaps, been too much. So, they pass you unrecognizingly by.

The few officials, the middle class ones, particularly those who come to "foreign" parts from the North, live a life of light-hearted bachelorhood, holidaying from their loud halves. So, the town has its compensations for all of us! However, I learn that one contributory cause is the dearth of servants, coupled with the problem of how to keep them when you do get them, especially those of the weaker sex among whom there is no unemployment here at least.

Two celebrities I have heard them tell of. One of them is the local millionaire who is said to dwell in a fortress of sorts entrenched within which he appears to pass his days engaged in the alluring hobby of periodically drying his mildewed currency notes, while a formidable labour force keeps strict guard. The other is an elderly retired official who hit upon the place as a permanent residence, because snipe is to be found at all seasons.

One hardly feels the heat at this time of the year, such a strong wind blows all day and night. But out in the streets it is different. For one thing I cannot forget Puttalam, for it was here, in the noon of a piping hot day, that I met the prize pessimist of my experience. He wore a thick woollen sweater on his person, and had fortified himself further by wrapping a scarf of the same stuff about his neck. If ever vinegar curdles, I saw it happening on his face. Or perhaps, he was some seer who expected a deluge from the sky whose deep blue was unrelieved by a single cloud.

The famous salt-pans are at Pallavi, a couple of miles away by the side of the lagoon. Here one may see numerous cadjan-covered cubes which are full of the stuff, and the blinding beds. Not the tiniest speck may be picked without running the risk of legal penalties. Two windmills pump the water into the beds along sluices from the lagoon.

Government has a monopoly of the manufacture, but private enterprise is also allowed, provided the grade conforms to specification and the whole output is sold only to the State. The salt produced here is reputed to be our finest. Table salt is

also prepared, and there is a proposal to prepare the stuff needed for medicinal purposes.

Pallavi is a colony by itself, and worth a separate visit.

Puttalam has oftentimes been a bone of contention between the Kandyan kings and their Portuguese and Dutch enemies. The kings made many attempts to possess the desirable spot, both to be assured of the salt supply and to have an outlet for foreign trade in cinnamon.

When the famous Ibn Battuta came to Ceylon, six centuries ago, he found the town a part of the Jaffna kingdom. It seemed to have been a pretty, little place.

WAY DOWN WELIGAMA

ROMANCE and idleness are blazoned on the South coast. Those who have seen its deep blue bays and creeks, broad beach and shingle, green rocky islets, margined by the slender coconut palm with a delicate tracery for its head cannot fail to recall the advertised glamour of Waikiki, Honolulu, and Bali, the Isles of the Blest.

The sturdy craft of the toilers of the deep lining up the white beach of the "Great Dumb Sea," seem to be out of place in a scheme of life that murmurs halcyon days to lotus-eaters. But who could resist the beckoning of the deep at their door? And so many a bold Southerner was lured over the big water into vast distances. To Los Angeles in America, right beyond the Far East to Fiji they have gone, these adventurous lads of the South.

One of the loveliest spots on this marine margin of Ruhuna, the land of heroes, is perhaps Weligama. Its safe and shallow bay caves deeply inland, bordered

by the broadest of sandy beaches. A truly restful Resthouse almost touches the sands. By it is a tall pillar on whose top is a fierce red light to serve as a beacon to distressed sailors returning home, for hidden rocks are many and have destroyed lives.

For interminable hours you could gaze on an emerald sea and fleecy cloudlets in an azure sky from which arrow-like the sea-gulls shoot down to rise again with the gleaming silver of a wriggling fish. Gnarled old salts will pass you in curious hats of plaited rush, or, bright-eyed urchins foregather to stare impudently on perambulating pests such as yourself. Female fashion parades pass impromptu before you, the elderly ones in *bola-hette*, the modest younger ones in long-sleeved and tight-fitting jackets, and here and there a vamp with the brazen semi-nudity of transparent muslin above her shapely waist. If you have taken a day off refinement and breeding, you could listen to rich choice Billingsgate, too. Put your foot in unwisely, and you could elicit the long tale of your ancestry, recounted from the beginning of time, uniform in its disgracefulness, abounding in the escapades of your peccant forbears

of both sexes, until (prudent man that you are) you slink away from the presence of your self-constituted family historian.

The one blot on the landscape is the desolate half-built house so familiar on the coast line. I have never been able to ascertain why the builder failed to complete the undertaken task. Litigation, perhaps, or hard times, are responsible, though I should imagine a lapse of memory is more likely in this region of perpetual sunshine.

Motoring, or footing it on the high road is fraught with grave danger. That longest of roads in the Island, the Galle Road, is a murderous death-trap here. It is too narrow for the mighty Diesels that plough it constantly. Houses are cluttered up higgledy-piggledy on either side. Like Topsy, the town has "just growed up." Many of the houses are thick-walled and possess heavy doorways and deeply embrasured windows of the late Dutch type. Representatives of rival schools of Ayurveda loudly display large boards. I expect professional jealousy does not exist here, for Weligama is a place of numbers.

One school has over one and a half thousand students on roll and a staff of

nearly fifty! It is held in two sessions. Another has eight hundred. The five hundred mark is a mere nothing in the outlying villages.

There seems to be a promising future for a speculator in the undertaking business.

Hetti Weediya, almost an alley, does not belie its name. In it reside most of the wealth, the power and the aristocracy of the town. The Power House is the one example of modern architecture, but seems to be apologetic about it as is becoming in a new comer.

There is a modern touch in Weligama's postal representative. Complete in regulation khaki he rides a smart bicycle and carries a natty bag slung across the shoulder.

Fish is obtained in plenty, but the prices are on the Colombo scale. Curd and treacle are as popular as in the old days. But it is a pity to see the old cottage industry of lace-making slowly dying out. The *beeralu-kotte*, once so familiar in the South is hardly seen.

The Chinese pedlar with his cheap lace will soon kick it out.

Superstition is meat and drink to the good folk of Weligama. Frenzied tom-

tomming is much in vogue of nights, the charming of water is the first stage of treatment for jaded appetite or high fever alike. It is not safe to gaze too long at a neighbour's garden. Mishap to plant or fruit will be put down to your evil eye. There is said to be a powerful deity at Kovilkanda who will never fail you in a fair need.

History has not passed Weligama by. The beautiful relief of Avalokitesvara (10-12 century A.C.) hewn deeply out of the rock is in view on the motor and rail-roads. But no savant may dictate to Weligama. You are gently but firmly told that the likeness is of Kustaraja the king who was afflicted with a disease of the skin.

Early last century Percival saw another statue of the same type close to it. But there is not a trace of it, not even a tradition. At Aggrabodhi Vihare is a bo-tree, sprung from one of the original seedlings planted over two milleniums ago.

Weligama is not an emporium; it does not prosper greatly from inland custom. Galle and Matara are too close. It is a sort of caravanserai, providing a halting-place for wayfarers from the hinterland.

ON A SOUTHERN RIVER

ONE of the most enjoyable places to spend a holiday is the broad bosom of some quietly flowing river. It is an inexpensive way, although most of us do not realise it.

Nearly every river of South Ceylon has a picturesque appeal to the holiday-maker. At a first glance some of them are not sufficiently inviting, but a trial soon convinces one otherwise.

Seen from the high-road or railway station, Maduganga at Balapitiya, for instance, appears a narrow and close muddy stream. But if you were venture-some enough you will find that not far away from the town it expands into a veritable inland lake clustering with numerous dark-green islands. One of them, Maduva, has two fair-sized roads and a respectable population. Beside the lovely shingle of another, Kothduva, is a pretty temple gleaming whitely in the sun. Little Five-Cents Island is tenanted by a couple of families of the deer tribe. So many others there are which provide the

ideal setting for the picnicker. Those who want a spice of adventure should set out in a narrow boat in the teeth of a strong breeze. They will experience uncomfortable waves, dangerous enough to capsize their ridiculous craft.

Polatuganga at Weligama presents quite a different aspect. It looks alluringly broad and safe where it empties into the sea by the bridge on the main road. We decided to try a day on it.

We took boat—by which is meant a raft—a little way up stream at Koledanda, underneath a tarred bridge of repellent look. Two wiry youths were in charge of the oars, while Mahatun, captain and owner, obligingly coxed for us.

Here a word of warning must be uttered to the river-fiend. Never set out later than 7 a.m. You will soon regret it, as we did!

A few minutes' rowing brought us to an open stretch flanked by the hilly region of Galkaduva. Low bushes laden with blossoms or weighted with strange fruits drooped on the water. The succulent *kirala* fruit was only beginning to bear, and we missed a favourite Southern delicacy. Clumps of thick-leaved spiky bushes grew by the margin. In several

places *kekatiya*, which grew at the bottom, floated on the current. It looked curiously like the streaming tresses of a proud damsel. White hooks, that were its blossoms, reared themselves above the flowing water. The white, brown and pink *olu* bloomed nearer the banks. Two other varieties of larger water lilies there were. One of them was thorny, and is said to be much sought after for the table.

The swish-swish of our oars startled the water fowl amongst the sedge. Rising noiselessly they winged away ahead of us. Often we saw their russet and black backs only. Sometimes we spied an ashen-hued *koravakka* with white streaked head and needle bill. Seldom did it fly, but rather glided quickly away to conceal itself among the water-reeds in a split second. We put up heron and egret from their solemn brooding over the water. They would flap away with heavy wings to the accompaniment of raucous cries. Nesting-places there must have been in plenty, although we were not so lucky as to come across any.

The river was growing narrower as we rowed up stream, and there were few shallow places. Being confined to a narrow bed, it races along in a strong current.

One of us wished to try his hand at punting, but Mahatun announced that the river was "at least half a mile deep" there. It was no mere alarm, for the long bamboo failed to reach the bottom by a long length.

The sun was now blazing uncomfortably on us and we "anchored" at a small creek. We got out and stretched our cramped legs a while. At Ilvatta we refreshed ourselves on young coconuts, *habala pethi* and jaggery, and after the inevitable chew of betel were ready once again.

The river now gurgled past the broad and pleasant fields of Jamburegoda, fringed by mangroves and *kaduru* trees. At Kokmaduva the river bifurcates and reduces the journey by nearly a mile. Laughing merrily under a bright sky was the great expanse of paddy fields, and prosperous indeed appeared the rural scene. The seasonal rains, however, cause a heavy flooding of the river. The region is very low and flat, the forest land has not been cleared, and the entire part becomes waterlogged for a considerable length of time. Fields are abandoned or the sown crops totally destroyed. The fields at Kananke especially are very productive and in the

event of a flood escape being provided a large area would come under cultivation.

Brick-makers were busy scooping out slate-coloured clay. Clad in loincloth only, their smooth lithe bodies would have furnished splendid models to some Grecian sculptor of old. A blue sky was above, relieved by masses of white cloud. A kite was spiralling up and up until it became a black speck, while another, probably its mate, vol-planed gaily as though to show herself off in her charms.

Once we came by a bathing-place where we surprised a Diana at her bath. With a glance of modesty outraged she scrambled on to the bank. But from the safety of its distance she smirked coyly when we pointed the camera at her pretending to take a picture.

Mahatun who had been mostly expending his lungs in vociferating instructions to his two underlings, now found their pace too slow and decided to lend a hand with the oars. The change was instantly evident. His broad back rippled with glistening thews as he heaved to. The raft glided in poetic smoothness in answer to oars bending to rhythm. Little eddies swirled past us in which one almost felt like doing a mad jig. But one had to

be careful. Mr. Croc., whose name here was legion, was somewhere on the watch with cunning slitted eyes.

One stretch we passed where the river seemed to make subterranean noises. When Mahatun struck the bottom with his oar-blade it rang out hollow. We were being rowed over a submerged length of rock.

By now the heat was terrific as the sun played mercilessly on us, and our tempers were fast fraying. Mahatun it was who came to the rescue. Spitting out a red quid, and gargling his mouth noisily, he settled down to enliven the proceedings. It was a bravely long recital concerning a Vidane Mahatmaya of his acquaintance.

One could see that Mahatun was a born raconteur, perhaps his calling had made him one. We strained our ears to catch his lightest word. There was not a noise save for the swishing of the water, the creaking of oar-handles in their primitive row-locks, or the harsh call of some moor-fowl.

"It was during the German war," he began, "and one day news was brought to the *Ralahamy* that a cheetah was destroying buffaloes in the fields. Firearms were not obtainable, but he had one of his making, with a barrel as long as this boat. He

loaded it and with it on shoulder turned his steps to a neighbouring hill from where the whole country was visible.

"When he reached the summit he heard a fearful din on one side, across the water. Shading his eyes with one hand he gazed intently for some time. Lo and behold! He saw thick smoke and flashes of fire, and heard the tramp, tramp, of many men. It was the Great War! Disgusted at the folly of these men he turned and looked in the opposite direction.

"Right in the valley miles and miles below, he saw the marauding cheetah creeping on his belly like the sly thief he is. He took aim at the brute and pulled the trigger. The herald of Death sped blithely.

"The way was long, and evening was approaching when it passed one far away village. The Arachchi was counting his coconut picking when he saw the speeding bullet.

" 'Where are you going,' he asked, 'and why in this haste? Come up and stay the night. It's getting late and I will not allow a brother official's kinsman to get benighted.'

"So the bullet went with him. They dined and together made a night of it with

some old stuff left behind by a party of Excise raiders. Their long carousal disturbed many a respectable neighbour.

"Early next morning, having taken sad farewell of its kind host, the bullet hurried on its mission. It caught the lawless cheetah right on the forehead, passed through the entire body, and emerged from the rump. It had done its duty."

With many a similar tale of the *Ralahamy* we beguiled the journey which was now getting tedious. We reached our destination, Kananke, a little after noon.

The evening was well gone when we took our places on the return journey. A crocodile had called in our absence, and had left a trail of muddied water in lieu of a card!

We floated smoothly down stream. The tide had set in, and the river appeared to be in flood.

In the gathering dusk the bushes on the banks took sur-realist shapes. We went underneath arched bridges of bamboo and areca which looked like those pretty ones painted of Japanese gardens. "Kapparakata puvak, puvak!" sang a shy *koravakka*, safe in a gloomy recess amongst the rushes.

FROM THE GREY FORGOTTEN YEARS

A CAVE OF STONE AGE MAN

ABOUT four miles to the north of Rambukkana in the heart of a village on the plain beside a plantation of jak is to be seen a curious structure of stone like the table of some giant of the good old days. It is called by local folk, Maliyadeva Guharamaya, the dwelling of the last great Initiate of Buddhism in our Island.

There is no history connected with this structure. For, it belongs to a period before history ever came to be written.

The building, if it can be so styled, is known as a Dolmen, a word probably derived from Cornish and meaning stone hole. The dolmen at Padavigampola is the only example known to exist in Ceylon of structural work by Stone Age man.

Stone edifices like dolmens and the Stonehenge were once associated with the sun-worship and human sacrifices of the Druids.

Scholars are of opinion that they were chambers for the dead or (and) temples of a primitive cult. The dead were

held in awe and worship, consequently they were housed magnificently in contrast with the living who were satisfied with caves and crude rock shelters.

The tribal chieftain of Neo-lithic man, the probable author of dolmens and other megalithic structures, was buried in these chambers of stone, and earth heaped over the pile. There were also huge mounds of earth and rubble known as 'barrows' which contained stone 'boxes' within them.

The origin of these monuments has not been discovered. Chains of dolmens exist, chiefly along the coast, from India to Egypt, from Asia Minor along the Mediterranean littoral (both African and European), up the Atlantic, across the North Sea in the Scandinavian countries, and, in special, Denmark by the Baltic, the source of amber supply. The islets of the Mediterranean, particularly Malta abound in these relics.

It is contended that a race of Asian sea-traders who colonised in the Mediterranean spread their art of erecting these lithic monuments amongst the people with whom they came into contact. Monuments of antiquity such as dolmens, megaliths, cromlechs, menhirs, are connected with

sea-trade and ore deposits, of gold, copper, tin, besides amber. Hence some scientists call the traders megalith-builders. These monuments have not been discovered in the heart of Europe, in Germany (central) and Austria, for instance, and this negative evidence led them to associate them with sea-borne traffic.

The Azilian period of the early hunter and nomad is said to have ended eight to nine thousand years ago. Then came Neo-lithic man whose 'advanced civilisation' with polished stone implements, hatchets, saws, hafted axes, adzes, etc., enabled him to put up crude settlements grow wild crops and throw up protecting palisades. Crops necessitated the recording of seasons, hence the Stonehenge which was a chronometer in addition to its 'religious' significance. Such buildings are attributed to this new Stone Age of 'improved' stone instruments.

The dolmen at Padavigampola has only three sides. The door is nowhere to be seen. Each side is one solid block of gneis roughly fashioned into rectangular shape. The left wall and the roof, which latter is an enormous slab, have cracked right across on account of a soft vein in the hard rock.

The heaviest slab by far is the roof. It is of the same thickness as the walls. This block weighs thrice as much as a wall. It is interesting to speculate how men using stone tools were able to lift into position this mass of granite weighing several tons. The roof inclines about 10 degrees to the right.

A slab smaller in dimensions than either wall serves as the back door of the dolmen. It is not long enough to fit right across the two major walls. Consequently, it leaves a space of 2 feet from the back end of the right hand wall. It too seems to have been bigger originally. Probably a crack loosened one portion and this has evidently been removed later, possibly by the recluse inmate who used the opening as an exit.

The whole structure seems to have been closed up, almost airtight, with one slab in front and another behind. In this manner it would have been a sealed box and a fit receptacle for the sacred dead. Grooves of over a foot in breadth are cut at either end of each wall so that two slabs could be fitted into position to seal the whole effectively.

Padavigampola is nearly 40 miles from the sea-coast. How comes it, then,

that this monument has been set up at such a distance? The answer is furnished in these words of a famous anthropologist, Professor Childe :—

"But it must be remembered that most of these tombs, and especially those in the hinterlands, were not built by the visitors themselves, but by natives who had assimilated the idea rather imperfectly and were trying with increasing ill-success to copy the models that they had seen. These latter were far too pre-occupied with their cult and the labours it involved to make any real progress in the more practical arts."

KORATOTA CAVE TEMPLE

IT is not often that one looks for caves and inscriptions in villages in the neighbourhood of Colombo. Anuradhapura and its environs are yet too strong a lure for both the archaeologist and the seeker of adventure. However, within a radius of fifteen miles from the city, there is more than one place of unusual historical interest.

One such place is Koratota, a village two miles inland from Kaduvela. A pleasant road, leads one through typical low-country scenery, occasionally relieved by a dark clump of trees somewhat savouring of the Sri Pada climb.

Two miles of walking expose to view a steep rock on your left, and a bend in the road brings you to Koratota. Passing the monastery which stands on a slight rising on the ground you see three steep flights of well-cut and arranged stone steps which take you to a vihare at the base of a beetling crag.

The rock menaces you with its vertical steepness except at the base where there are

four caves of fair size which have, doubtless, afforded excellent protection to the ascetics who had lived there, centuries gone by. One of these caves has been utilised for the vihare. The biggest of the existing caves is a late work of Nature's execution, for huge slabs have fallen off from the side of rock, making a deep hollow.

Behind the giant figure of the recumbent Buddha and the base of the crag are three or four large holes. The biggest of these is popularly credited to have been used by a demon as the entrance to our world. This demon bore the singular name of Kapiri Yaka (Kaffir Demon), a name derived from the curliness of his hair and the darkness of his complexion.

Kapiri Yaka was reputed to have indulged in quaint antics. His favourite pastime was dragging the acolytes and temple-boy into the wilder portions of jungle, until the thoroughly scared participants in his game were rescued by the powerful mantrams of the then incumbent, Sobhita Thero, himself a person of manly parts. Whenever the monk had occasion to stay away, he is supposed to have left a charmed cane behind him. A stout birch-

ing made the obstinate demon leave his hold on his hapless victims.

Since the demise of Sobhita Thero, Kapiri Yaka was effectually shut up in his lair, for the successor to the incumbency took the precaution of closing up the hole.

A long and deeply cut drip-ledge runs a good length along the boulder. This ledge seems to have served its purpose very well, because, while the portions above it are black and overgrown with moss, the part sheltered by it has the appearance of freshly cut gneiss.

How well a drip-ledge answers its purpose! There had been a slight shower before I reached the cave, and I could see miniature waterfalls cascading down the precipitous sides, breaking up into a slight shower. Every drop fell right away from the mouth of the cave. The cave gives shelter from the heaviest downpour. The trees that would have grown in front of it must surely have broken the force of the monsoon winds. The rock is about seventy feet in height. Its summit permits walking about.

The inscriptions are cut well below the drip-ledge. They are beautifully preserved.

The characters are in the earliest script, that is, Brahmi, and may belong to any period between the third and first centuries B.C. :—

The cave of the Chief Sumana (who is) the son of the Chief Sumana.

(The cave) of Beautiful Appearance (to the) Sangha of the four directions present, future.

The cave of Mahabiya, daughter of Maha Raja is given to the Sangha of the four directions, present, future.

One cannot say who these two Parumakas were, who went by the name of Sumana. We are not told what king is referred to.

During Devanampiya Tissa's time, branches of the royal family had been established at Kelaniya.

Descendants of Kaffir folk are still evident in the neighbourhood. This fact is interesting in view of the superstition concerning the demon alluded to above. Some six or more centuries back, when Ibn Battuta visited our shores, he made mention of a Moorish pirate, an Admiral, Jalasti by name, who had a garrison of Ethiopians and levied customs duties, guarded the sea, and took upon himself similar functions in Colombo. It may be that these men settled down permanently in the neighbourhood of the city, and the villagers are their descendants.

HERMITAGE OF YAKKALA

WHILE the attention of most people is directed towards the Dry Zone civilisation and the cities of the dead past, few look about near Colombo to gather historical information. Kelaniya with its legendary associations of the Naga king, Maniakkhika, is commonly thought to furnish the only evidence of pre-Christian occupation of Colombo's neighbourhood. Nevertheless, within a radius of 20 miles, there are at least two places containing cave inscriptions definitely pointing to the occupation of this part of the country during the very earliest times of recorded history.

The ancient kingdom of Kalyani formed a sub-division of Maya Rata. In the reign of Tissa, "Beloved of the Gods," and possibly even before, minor branches of the royal family had been established, subject to the main line at Anuradhapura, both in the principalities of Rohana and Kalyani. We find this overlordship recognised later, too, for King Kelani Tissa was paying tribute to Elara, and holding

his kingdom in fief from the Dravidian conqueror.

The pre-Christian inscriptions to which reference is made below, doubtless belong to this period. On a later day, this part of the country seems to have been deserted for some time. It was natural enough, seeing that the region is wet and swampy, and liable to floods.

Pilikuttuva, the first place of note, lies a couple of miles off the Yakkala junction. It is at the commencement of a long range, that, with hardly a break, extends a good way inland terminating at Maligatenne.

The temple has made full use of the caves in its building programme; walls are put up to reach the drip-ledges and the natural rock roofs serve as good shelter from sun and rain. Isolated boulders have compelled the monastery to have several huts, a practice which was very popular in the days of old.

Crossing a bridge that spans a narrow water-course, the visitor hears the dull flow of subterranean water, but not a drop is visible. However, if he walks right round the rock, he will see a streamlet emerging into the open, from under. This stream continues through a small tunnel

to a disused pond on the precincts of the upper building. Situated as it is to serve for a natural reservoir, the pond may have been put to storage purposes by the monks of old, and digging into its baked mud may yield valuable finds.

On the left is a rock cave overgrown with scrub and thorn. On the prepared surface beneath the drip-ledge three large letters in Brahmi script are still visible, despite the moss that grows thickly. A space intervenes between the second and third letters, the flaking of the rock having obliterated a letter in between. With the missing letter supplied the inscription reads: *Manorama* (the Cave of Beautiful Appearance).

Passing the temple precincts underneath an awe-inspiringly high vault of a rock on whose thirty feet high surface the stone mason has cut a ledge, one comes through bush and bracken to a smaller cave. The characters cut in here are quite clear and regular. They read: *Dakina lene* (the Southern Cave).

In every direction are caves, crags, and boulders, bearing sure signs of ancient occupation. At one spot a tongue of sharp rock enables the observer to perch on its cleft top to look nearly twenty feet up

into a narrow cave at the very summit of a perpendicular crag. This rock stands thirty or forty feet sheer from the surrounding ground, but a drip-ledge has been cut even on it. One wonders why the mason has taken all this risk, and who the monks were who resided on this dizzy eyrie. However, from the geography of the whole place, particularly from some ledges cut, an explanation seems to lie in the assumption that the soil has shifted considerably from its original position. This is especially noticeable in the case of a low rock on which is a drip-ledge although it is but shoulder high. No cave is to be seen underneath. But the rock is half-sunk in the soft, loose, soil and a little stream flows by it. In the course of centuries the earth has been washed down to cover the cave.

A few hundred yards away from the temple compound, on the outskirts of a rubber estate, is the cave with the longest inscription of all. The roof of this cave is one big slab of rock sloping gently to rest on a neighbouring rock wall. The cave has both an entrance and an exit. A curious circumstance is that out of the 15 letters of the first part of the inscription, 8 are turned *upside down*. Some of

the stone masons were Indians, and whether this peculiarity was due to their unfamiliarity with our language, or is some scribe's playful prank, a sort of riddle-me-ree like the *perali basa* occasionally insculped, one is at a loss to say for certain. The cave records that it had been "granted to the Sangha of the four directions, present and future, by Ati Buti, the brother of the Chief of the Royal Bodyguard."

Through the kind courtesy of a friend I obtained two coins which had been given him by a previous incumbent. A number of such coins had been melted down by the villagers who did not know their value. The coins I have belong to late 13th century, the Dambadeniya period, and it may be surmised that Pilikuttuva had been used for other purposes at a later date. This view is strengthened when it is considered in conjunction with Maligatenne.

The wildness of the place, its scenic position, and countless rock shelters on every side must surely have rendered Pilikuttuva in ideal hermitage.

Maligatenne, the next place of interest, is reached by way of the Buthpitiya Government school. It commands a wonderful view of the surrounding

country, and is strongly reminiscent of Sigiriya.

Maligatenne is popularly credited with having been a refuge of Mayadunne during his many retreats from the Portuguese forces that pursued him towards his kingdom of Sitavaka. The Tooth Relic is also believed to have rested here for some time, and a Diyavadane Nilame who went by the name of Hiripitiye Rala is supposed to have flourished in a neighbouring hamlet, Malvatu Hiripitiya. The rocks and caves that are plentifully scattered as far as Pilikuttuva make it almost certain that it formed part of a great forest retreat of monks.

On the first rock is a cave turned into living quarters by a monk. A tamarind growing in front of his dwelling enables one to get at the top of the rock. Running round the priest's quarters is a winding rock passage like a long gallery.

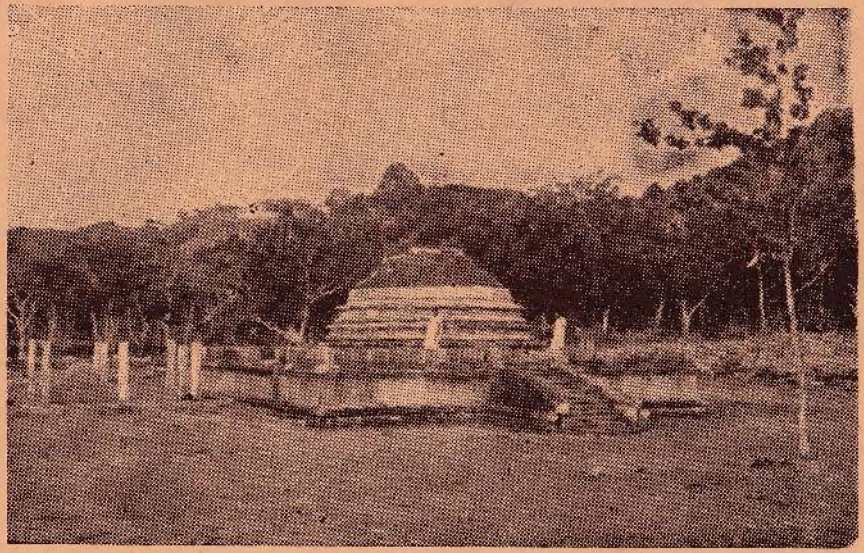
There is a small cave hard by which may have been an image-house. A thick wall of mud and brick stands in front. A stone doorway worked with a flower *motif* at the edges is let into it, and inclines at a perilous angle. On the roof of the cave are to be seen two long-stalked lotuses. On a side is the clear outline of

a god, probably Vishnu. The blue paint outlining the figure is yet clear.

Passing numerous caves, the visitor comes upon two perpendicular walls of granite. There are steps up this natural passage. This defile is ideally suited for keeping a large army at bay.

The top of the upper crag discloses a grand vista of plantations, fields, villages, rolling plains and crags in lonely splendour. The leaves of a Bo tree rustle in the sweeping winds. Adjoining the tree, is a natural rock cistern that forms a beautiful lotus pond. Right underneath this crag, at its foundation so to speak, there is a large hole capable of admitting a large tall man. It goes to a distance of about 10 feet, beyond which it gets narrower as it winds a few feet farther on into the side of the rock. Above it is a similar hole. Both emitted the acrid odour of bats.

All the caves referred to above, were undoubtedly the work of kings of Kelaniya or Maya Rata, between the third and first centuries B.C.



Indikatuseya, Mihintale

evidence, itself needs some comments. It was a period of transition. That is to say, it followed what was perhaps the most barren and obscure period of epigraphical records, the period between the sixth and the eigth centuries. Further, it preceded the tenth century, from which period onwards the language began to take literary shape.

The nearer dagoba seems to have been the centre of an important mediaeval establishment. It is marked out by an unusual type of heavy stone wall. This is an uncommon feature. Walls found at similar sites used to be of brick. The area enclosed measures 193 yards by 113. No little care appears to have been bestowed on the formidable fencing itself.

The establishment was no ordinary one, as may be seen from the numerous ruined pillars, plinths, and so forth. It was divided into sections, marking halls, a scholastic establishment, rooms, privies and the like. There is also an exceptionally fine stone-revetted tank which at ground level covered 100 ft. by 80. The stone-lined drain which discharged water into it may be seen restored.

The dagoba was built on a platform five feet above the ground; it, too, had a

boldly moulded revetment wall. The court-yard enclosed was nearly forty feet square.

A belt of lotus petals was carved in stone round the stone-faced rubble plinth. The core of the stupa was of rubble, faced with stone; and on the top of the dome rubble of brick, with a thin facing of bricks laid in mud.

Though small, the dagobas had been elaborately constructed. They did not have the usual shape, but resembled more the Indian types, as at Sarnath, a cylinder with a rounded top. Attempts to rebuild in the usual shape were not successful.

The other dagoba furnished some useful information. In the course of work there were noticed small brick chambers in the middle of the construction. They throw a valuable light on the internal arrangement in the construction of early Sinhalese dagobas.

There is one other aspect about the twin dagobas. Dr. S. Paranavitana thinks that the solid spire, as now seen, evolved from the series of umbrellas which adorned the top of early dagobas; and assigns the date of the change to the period between the sixth and the eighth centuries.

Bricks of the period have been found at the site, with masons' markings to indicate particular courses of the spire in which they were to be laid. Thus the view is supported.

The origin of the name in vogue cannot be traced. Bell identified the dagoba erroneously with Kantaka Cetiya. It is just possible the the generations that preceded him and us erred in like fashion, and that the name is corrupted from its name. The reason for the prefix *Indi* is a mystery.

Our orthodox chroniclers could have thrown some light on the problem. But they have treated the heretic fane with the contempt of silence. So evidently does the Poson pilgrim of today, who lays but a few flowers to wither on the lone altars of pretty Indikatuseya.

BY THE POOL OF BLACK WATER

THE visitor to Mihintale is often satisfied with a look at Mahinda's Bed, Ambastale, Aradhanagala, Maha Seya, and possibly Kantaka Cetiya. For, Cetiya Pabbata—curiously enough the same name had been given to Sanchi where Mahinda's mother, Vedisa Devi, had built an ashram for her saintly son—holds no more appeal than is associated with the first Buddhist missionary to Lanka.

Yet, if he cares to go a little way off this beaten track, he will discover a lovely spot whose wild beauty will bring peace to his soul and soothe the weariness of limbs much exercised. I refer to the pretty vale in which gleams the "winsome little lake" called Kalu-diya Pokuna.

The mid-day sun scarcely touches the quiet sheet for the fierce rays are rudely thrust back by the gnarled arms of sturdy sentinel trees.

H. C. P. Bell could not resist the charm of the Black Pool when he painted this picture of it:—

"The first peep of this delightful glen, as it suddenly bursts on the charmed gaze, is entrancing in its quiet picturesqueness. A more perfect sanctuary for the 'sons of the Buddha' could not be found anywhere throughout the length and breadth of Ceylon.

Or, "Fringed by umbrageous trees, which dip their boughs in its placid depths, and with the hills offer inviting shade, the sheltered tarn has acquired for all time the pertinent designation Kaludiya Pokuna, the Black-water Pool."

At the time of Bell's explorations the ancient name of the site had not been discovered. Subsequently, however, some inscriptions came to light. One of them refers to the ruined dagoba by the name of Dakinigiri Vehera. There are some pre-Christian inscriptions on a few caves that are found on the hill side. But the more interesting records belong to a later day, the seventh, ninth and tenth centuries. These have been published in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica.*

The Chronicles mention this Southern Hill as having been founded by Dutugemunu's brother, the Devout Tissa, about 70 B.C. Since then the monastic establishment has had many vicissitudes, including its occupation by the Dhammaruchi sect who were not of the orthodox school.

Encircling the lake are the ruins of many buildings. These had been cons-

tructed of plain stone devoid of the usual ornamentation. Possibly they belonged to the sixth century, the age of plain ashlar as exemplified by the better known Arankele and Ritigala. The place is of special interest to the archaeologist as furnishing one of those examples known as "moated sites."

Between the adjacent hill, which bears the hybrid name of Anai-kutti-kanda (Hill of the Little Elephant), and the margin of the pond, are a number of ruins. There is a tongue of rock whose top is reached by a flight of steeply cut steps and on which evidently was a building of sorts. The flat top is fashioned into a seat, and is commonly called *vajrasana*. Stonefaced structures had once adorned some of the caves. The largest edifice of all, perhaps, was the ruin through which the sightseer enters the precincts.

The most remarkable ruin in the entire site is a stone-porticoed house which had been built into a smoothly rounded cave. It is rarely that the visitor comes across one of this type, seeming, as it does, to retain its original form. It is a unique sight. To judge from the references that have been made to it in publica-

tions, it appears to have exercised much fascination on the archaeologist.

Two of the bathing pavilions below the bund of Tissawewa (one of which contains the remarkably lively group of elephants) are so similar to this structure that one is led to conclude that it, too, served a like purpose.

The pediment which is in sharp "Anuradhapura moulding" is finely preserved. The doorway and two windows are made of stone beams and simulate wooden posts. Indeed, the other pillars appear rather to have been turned out with saw and plane than with the implements of a stone-mason.

The portion which projects from the brow of the cave has a slab-roof supported by six cross-beams of stone. The arched-in "ceiling" and its moulding are reminiscent of the work in a modern storeyed building. It is more ornate and finished than the roof of the pretty pavilion at Anuradhapura.

Behind this facade is a four pillared section which leads to the inmost room, that is the cave space itself. The ground area is sectioned off into three.

Facing the stone-house are three ruined pavilions in a line, and two more

on either side, between. There is a flight of steps on the right.

Considered from many points of view the building is easily the most attractive ruin in the whole area, and worth going a long way to see.

A variety of shady tree known as *kalu thimbiri* is reputed to thrive on the banks of the pond. Though they are said to be easily distinguishable, one looks for them in vain. If not mythical, they probably belong to the genus *Diospyros*.

Kalu-diya Pokuna is more or less on the high-road that runs past Indikatu Seya dagoba. One may also cut across the steps of Kantaka Cetiya, and take the track which leads to the same road.

LONE RUIN OF NALANDA

THE village of Nalanda, which lies exactly halfway between Matale and Dambulla, has figured oftentimes in our history, from the early Polonnaruva period down to the middle of the last century. Its strategic nature was realised by the Great Parakrama Bahu who built a fort here, as well as several others about it. With the growth of the Kandyan Kingdom its name occurs, as is to be expected, more often in our annals. For it was an outpost of, and an entrance to, the royal district.

Through the *kadavata* of Nalanda passed the various European ambassadors who took the road from Trincomalee. The best known of the British embassies in this connection is that of John Pybus. Having crossed the river at "Nawlundy" he "passed through a kind of 'guard' which is a small inclosure with a mud wall on one side and two or three small houses on the other. Here lay an old iron three-pounder."

From the rebellion of 1818 till the middle of the last century there was a

British fort at Nalanda. It stood on a hill which is now called Kotuvegodella. The site is thick with scrub.

About half a mile on a village road opposite the Resthouse lies perhaps Nalanda's greatest claim on the student of antiquity, namely, the ruined building known by the unusual epithet of Gedige. It is pleasantly surrounded by fields and is close to a broad threshing-floor. It stands in lonely but majestic isolation, like some venerable ancient disdaining the companionship of 'teens. Oddly enough, its existence is unknown to very many who travel Dambulla way. The very villagers bestow but a fleeting glance on this intruder from a bygone age, and forget all about it.

"Mystery enshrouds this unique temple, which differs in so many particulars from all other shrines in Ceylon.

"Standing absolutely isolated on a patch of higher ground surrounded by paddy fields with no connected ruins now surviving, save a small modern dagoba of much later erection, neither record (lithic or other) nor tradition exists to give a clue to its presence, lone, ignored and but rarely visited by strangers, owing to its lying off the beaten track for the ordinary sight-seer."

So wrote the late Mr. Bell in his Report for 1910-11.

Even now the tale of woe remains unchanged.

The history of the ruin goes back to the 11th century when for nearly half a century the Island formed an appendage of the Cholian kingdom before it was wrested back by Vijaya Bahu I. Architecturally, it belongs to the later and elaborate Pallava period modified by Chalukya and Chola influences, besides exhibiting, in places, Orissan resemblances in ornamentation.

In it, says Bell, "a compromise was effected between the holder, yet more intricate, designs adopted for their sacred edifices by the Hindu cults, whether of Siva or of Vishnu, and the simple requirements of Buddhistic architecture unalloyed...

"Very special importance attaches to this unique temple, as it is the *sole example* yet discovered in Ceylon *of composite styles of architecture judiciously blended* to form a delightfully homogeneous whole...

"The Nalanda 'Gedige' is, so far as known, the only temple of Dravidian architecture in Ceylon, where the South Indian architects have striven to reproduce in *stone*, if but to a limited extent, the wealth of ornamentation lavished on lithic Pallava shrines at the zenith of their glory."

With such authoritative expressions of the value of this ruin we may pass on to a description of it as it strikes the general sight-seer. As seen today, parts of the Gedige do not "hang together properly," having suffered from an excess of zeal "in a well-meant but unfortunate at-

tempt at hasty restoration" by the Public Works Department early in the nineties.

On the ground floor at the entrance is a moonstone from which lead three steps which are flanked by *makara* balustrades. These lead one into a small courtyard which probably had half-walls. From here are two further steps. The first has two figures carved at either end and enclosed within pilasters; the second bears the *pala peti* design sculptured on it. The two balustrades are of the small elephant head and trunk type. Thus far the atmosphere is familiarly Buddhist.

We now enter a distinctly Dravidian *mandapam*. Here was a sort of colonnade, with four socketed pedestals of stone for pillars on right and left, and four again on either side of these two rows partly built into the half-walls that are remaining. They probably formed an aisle and supported wooden posts with roofing of the same material. The first pair of pedestals served to support the frame of a wooden door.

The sanctum is entered by a stone door frame, three feet by six. Two pillars in low relief stand in front of it. In the arch of this doorway are reliefs of struc-

tures resembling a modern pagoda. Among the other designs which form the friezes above are human heads placed within niches. On either side of the doorway, about a third of its height, are four dagobas in niches in the moulding. But more of this Buddhistic motif later.

The shrine seems to have been nearly air-tight then as shrines now are, perhaps so to cast nothing more than a dim, mysterious light into it. A high dome seems obviously to have crowned the edifice, and horse-shoe shaped frontispieces adorned it, on three sides at least. One of these, although imperfectly restored, helps the visitor to form a tolerable idea of what the original had been like.

The central theme of this restored arch is Vaisravana, in his representation as Kuvera, the god of good luck. On either side of him are two very lively figures of flying *vidyadharas*. Another pair may be seen above. There are also other reliefs, the strangest of them being a head which peeps out, as it were, in dismemberment. Underneath the figure of Kuvera is a lotus pedestal—which certainly cannot be ceded to him.

Many interesting features have been found in the premises. The *chef d'oeuvre*

seems to have been one of a Naga Raja. It was considered to have been the only one of its kind known in the Island, and had been deposited in the Colombo Museum for safety.

Placed centrally within the shrine, the roof of which is open to the sky now, is a much weathered image about three feet and a half, carved within a niche. It shows a resemblance to Kushta Raja, at a first glance. On the *thorana* are three faded figures of which the topmost resembles a Buddha's. The entire sculpture is on a lotus pedestal. A very worn Elephant-God, minus trunk, squats on a similar pedestal. To the left of the central figure is the headless and armless sculpture of a god with ornamented body. The statue of a life-size Buddha in two pieces found among the debris has been placed on either side of the doorway leading into the sanctum. If these two portions belonged to the same figure it obviously was stood on a pedestal. Several lotus pedestals are strewn bare of the images which they once supported.

All round the building there is a wealth of sculpture which will interest even the casual observer.

The Gedige is easily reached. It is being kept in an admirable state.

There is now no dagoba at the site; a small mound of earth shows where it existed.

The shrine is said to have belonged to the cult of Vishnu.

The images found may be explained away as having been possibly introduced after the Sinhalese reoccupation of the land. But the reliefs certainly belonged to the original structure. Then, again, Mahayanism has its share, too.

The term "Gedige" has a further interesting history. Confirming Bell's derivation, the Epigraphist of the Indian Survey (Southern Circle) wrote thus:

"My strong conviction is that the word has to be connected with Sanskrit "Ghatika' ..... The term occurs in many inscriptions and always in connection with important centres of learning ... There is also reason to believe that these Ghatikas (Colleges) were attached to temples ... Professor Kielhorn is of opinion that it denotes an establishment (probably founded in most cases by a king) for holy and learned men. There can, therefore, be little doubt that the ruined 'gaidigai' at Nalanda does represent an institution of the kind."

Can the very name of the village have been taken to signify this college of learning, type of its forerunner in the mainland? One wonders if the Gedige were a

Temple of Concord, as understood by the men of long ago.

Does this lone ruin of Nalanda represent some broad-minded ruler's magnificent effort, though alas! unsuccessful, to bring peace and harmony to the troubled soul of man in those days, nine centuries ago, when War and Death stalked the land?

VATA-DA-GE OF THE WILDERNESS

ACCORDING to popular belief there is only one Vatadage and that is the familiar shrine at Polonnaruva. It has been so prettily restored that it lends itself to constant advertisement.

Nevertheless, several other examples exist of these Circular Relic Houses, differing in arrangement and detail from that of Polonnaruva. Thuparama, Lankarama, Ambastale (Mihintale) and Attanagalla, are all Vatadages. Less known is the one at Tiriyay, thirty miles north of Trincomalee, at a spot called Kandasamimalai, where is an ancient Buddhist site called, in Sinhalese, Nitupatpana.

Medirigiriya, which is here dealt with, furnishes yet another little-known example.

Writing of the Polonnaruva shrine in the *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Dr. S. Paranavitana, both defines the term, and effectively disposes of the wrong impression that the shrine was one for the Sacred Tooth.

It is reasonable to infer the same in respect of other shrines. Hence, the Vata-

dage would merely be an artistic pattern with the central theme a *da-geba* (Relic Womb), where would be deposited valuable relics but not the Dalada itself. At the four principal points of the compass were entrances from which seated figures of the Buddha looked out. In the case of shrines with several rows of pillars, the intervening spaces were ambulatory passages used in the conventional way in the course of devotions.

Medirigiriya is 17 miles in the forest, slightly north-east of Minneriya. It can be reached by way of Hingurakgoda, from where a rough road of Kataragama type leads to a village called Divulankadavala. It can be done by some of the local "half-carts."

The journey, though exhausting, is thoroughly enjoyable. The scenery varies from reclaimed plantations of the colonists to *damana* or open, park country, grassland interspersed with clumps of dwarf trees. This gives way to heavy forest with tangled underbush cut, in places, by the sandy beds of seasonal streams. The country is full of bear, elephant and wild buffalo.

Divulankadavala, eight miles away and the terminus, is a lone village, clean,

and with every appearance of prosperity. It is, however, not wise to depend upon the place for provisions—or for water, if it can be helped.

Two miles beyond is Kaudulu Oya. Parakrama Bahu the Great had dammed the river at this point, and the ruined *amuna*, with its great blocks of stone, may be seen for some distance in the jungle on the thither bank.

Medirigiriya is four miles farther ahead. Part of the track is the broad disused bed of Yoda-Ela which the great king had extended from Amban Ganga to Minneriya past Kaudulu as far as Kantalai.

The major ruins are on two rocky knolls. On the nearer one is a breached Dagoba, which seems to have been dug into by no ordinary hands. The horizontal drain which is cut into the centre, as well as the vertical shaft, is skilful work. From here may be seen another hillock on which is the ruined Vatadage. The intervening valley is close thorn. It hides steps and a porch leading to the shrine which connected the two places. Approach to the principal shrine was over a massive stone-revetted wall.

Looking at the Vatadage, "the gem

of Medirigiriya" one is struck with admiration at the delicate and graceful pillars which ring the innermost object, a ruined mound of rubble and brick, a Dagoba. Three rows of these beautifully slender pillars are to be seen, many of them standing. A few shafts are broken and lie scattered about with their spreading capitals—like dainty bodies whose heads have been struck off by Time, fell executioner.

The pillars bear a remarkable resemblance to those around Thuparama. Doubtless they served a like purpose, namely, to support the beams of a roof over the Dagoba. Single lions and pilasters are carved on the capitals. One row of these octagonal shafts is sculptured with the familiar dwarf.

A low stone fence of Buddhist (Asoka) Railing pattern joins the outermost columns. This is a unique feature of the ruin, and at once differentiates it from all the others of its kind. Its Polonnaruva fellow has a floral design.

While there was one main entrance to the premises, from the numerous adjacent buildings, there are the four usual openings in the shrine itself. Several images have been discovered littered about.

Three of the four seated Buddhas, which had been within, now probably occupy their original positions.

On another mound, a little way opposite, is the many-pillared and three-chambered ruin of a monastic hospital. Here is to be seen a stone "medicine-boat" like the one by the road at Mihintale. One almost takes it for a sarcophagus.

Near this site had been discovered a weathered epigraph practically impossible to read. It is an edictal stone containing rules for the management of the medical establishment.

There are references to employees and serfs of the hospital; villages, lands and tenants attached to it, and also to State Physicians.

Another reference is to diet.

On the farther side of the Dagoba first mentioned is a cave of unusual shape. A pillared porch nearby shows that it had been a shrine. Close to this is a broken pillar containing a 10th century inscription of Kasyapa V, who, from this record and another, appears to have been a monarch who "took an interest in the establishment of hospitals." The record was engraved by three Officers of State. Asaholu Mihindu. Sumeragamu Sata and

Kundasala Kit, under a decree of the King's Supreme Council, about which, unfortunately, no more is to be known. There are also references to the Archery Department and Captains of the Bowmen. We learn, too, that Kaudulu was known as Rantisa-veva.

From these inscriptions Medili-Mandala, or Mediri-giriya in the mediaeval district of Bidervatukuliya, appears to have been founded shortly before Polonnaruva times. Several monarchs paid it attention. Of them, one is Gajabahu II, in whose domain it occupied a prominent position. It was here that he deposited his copy (stone) of the Treaty, whereby he and Parakrama Bahu the Great undertook to live in amity. The latter's copy is to be found at Sangamuva Vihare, off Gokarella on the Kurunegalle-Dambulla Road.

But Medirigiriya keeps its secret.

ROCK OF A ROYAL EDICT

TO Kit-Nuwara-Giri granted as Paraveni lands to be held so long as sun and moon endure Malabatuwa and 12 *yala*, 12 *amunu*, and 2 *pela* of paddy sowing extent to be held without molestation."

So runs a lithic record of the Great Parakrama at the foot of Devanagala rock.

Kirti-nagara-giri, general of Sinhalese forces despatched across the seas to Pegu campaigned there for five months, killed the foreign potentate who had dared the wrath of Parakrama Chakravarti, and returned to his native shores, a conquering hero. The whims of royalty are notoriously beside reason. But to Kirti was given the reward due to a faithful servant on account of duty well done.

This memorial of a monarch's gratitude will last, if not until the sun and moon do endure, at least for countless generations to come.

Devanagala, anciently called Isurumuni-paya, rears up in front of Bible Rock like some giant bun of granite. Its

hard surface of gneiss marks it out from treed knoll and forested mountain of the neighbourhood.

A few straggling *akkapana* shrubs, in various stages of sterility, cling in the occasional fissures with a tenacity that is astonishing.

It gives the climber the nervous feeling that he will slither down to destruction at any moment.

Near this ascent is a long inscription of the 17th century executed on the orders of King Vimala Dharma Suriya and recording a grant to the vihara which is now in ruins. The stone-mason or *galladda* has left his name for succeeding generations to read—"Gal-vadu Noide of Imbulgoda in Udapala korale." He was also responsible for the stone carvings, a fact which stares the reader in the face!

A little above the inscriptions is a large foot-print of the Buddha carved in very delicate outline with a margin of lotus petals. The two and thirty auspicious marks are plainly noticeable. "Gal-vadu Noide" was in very sooth an artist of much ingenuity. He has hidden no less than a dozen dagobas in and out among the toes, across and along the sole and outer framework after the manner of

a modern maker of puzzles who teases his clientele with concealed figures. The gentle ease of the flowing lines, I, at any rate, cannot associate with the fingers of an ordinary worker in stone.

An old dagoba crowns the hill. Nearly two-thirds of it retain the original globular shape. The lime outer covering has fallen off exposing the bricks, but one is struck by the symmetry of outline. A portion of the masonry has collapsed and the general appearance is reminiscent of Mahiyangana.

Below the rock that serves as a foundation is a lovely little lotus pond. Here grew tender rose-tipped flowers which were the pilgrim's bloodless offerings to the Enlightened One.

But the most interesting edifice on the top of this bleak rock, is the ruin of a roofless building, whose four walls are made of big slabs of smoothly dressed granite fitted together in marvellous fashion without the aid of mortar.

It measures over thirty feet by twenty. Two stone pillars still stand within the walls. The entrance is frameless, the door jamb and wings having been removed to the Colombo Museum in the early nineties.

The scenery from the top is marvellous. From the doorway one gazes on the pinnacled crag of Alagalla (Chitra parvata of yore) with the Kadugannava pass adjoining it. To the left is the jagged summit of "castellated Uttuwankanda." Right behind is the geometrical crown of dreaded Bible Rock (haunted by demons) with the giant Urakanda like an impenetrable wall, and, in its wake, its satellite Vakirigala. Encircled by these natural fortifications lie clustering plantation, field and village.

The commanding position of Devanagala makes it an ideal fort which, in fact, it really was. The great captain Vidiye Bandara, fleeing before the combined armies of Sitawaka and Colombo after his defeat at Pelenda in Kalutara, stumbled on this stronghold and allied himself with the ruler of the principality. At his camp he was helped by the King of Kandy, but was soon routed by Rajasingha, then a boy in early teens.

The descent on the other side towards Maha Oya is easier, but the steps here number over five hundred. Almost at the bottom is the older twelfth century inscription of Parakrama Bahu I. The first few lines have been re-incised for the

characters are much deeper than the rest which are very shallow.

The war against Pegu was begun in the twelfth year of Parakrama's reign, after he had unified Lanka.

The King of Pegu insulted the Ceylon ruler's ambassadors and seized a Sinhalese princess who was on her way to Cambodia.

The last reference to Devanagala in the Great Chronicle is in the name of that indefatigable royal worker in the cause of Buddhism, King Kirti Sri Rajasingha.

It is also freely said by the village folk that the awesome Dedimunda Devata Bandara, he who presides at the neighbouring Alutnuvara, has deigned to visit Devanagala.

But not superstitious awe, not the darkness of night, not the intense heat radiated by the sun of noon, could succeed in keeping away from Devanagala's granite top that fiend in human shape, the treasure-seeker. Evidence of his ruthless destruction is easily seen on the vihare premises. Who knows how much of archaeological value he has already destroyed?

WHERE THE "PUJAVALIYA" WAS WRITTEN

VAKIRIGALA, the hermitage of Mayurapada Sthavira, the author of *Pujavaliya*, and twice the haven of King Vijaya Bahu I, lies in the district of Kegalla, a few miles off Mavanella.

To reach it one must pass Epalava Estate. A few years back Epalava village was famous as the home of the best *udekki* players. Ran Naide, their star, is no more. There is no lineal descendant of his art. No longer does the hand drum evoke a responsive chord in the hearts of Epalava men.

Vakirigala is called Vata-giri, "the Rock of Winds," in the *Culavamsa*. Verily, the steep rock is a safe harbour to the fugitive. When it is viewed from the neighbouring fields, its likeness to the Lion Rock is amazing.

Approaching the foot of the rock by way of a steep foot-path, one sees a wonderful panorama. In front is thickly forested Urakanda, and to the left Bible

Rock or Batalegala, a dancing rock of Yakkha or Veddah in the years gone by. Right behind, in the distant but clear horizon, are outlined two mountains. In the valley between them, placed like a stick of chalk, whitely gleams Dawson's Tower.

The sight is wonderful. It is unforgettable. Lush green patches like squares on a draughts board, the flash of an occasional silver streak, the dull slate of an asphalt road meandering, the sharp white of homesteads nestling in verdant groves —all these refresh the climber in his fatiguing ascent.

The summit of Vakirigala is overgrown with dense jungle and scrub predominated by a species of plant with ferocious spikes. Two sides are of granite unalloyed, and do not permit any foothold. For dizzy sheerness they put Sigiriya to shame. The steadiest nerve will quail before their ledges. This eyrie is no favourite of the visitor, to judge from the up-gazing faces of wondering humans that look like insects right underneath you in the patches of open vegetation.

The thicket does not permit the observer to see traces of occupation. Nevertheless, Vakirigala had been a fortified

outpost of the Dakkhinadesa, adjoining the western confines of Ruhuna. It was a favourite stronghold of Vijayabahu I. in the later half of the 11th century.

Careful observation is required to notice traces of human occupation. Embedded in the undergrowth are a few granite pillars scattered here and there, that, but for patient investigation, would pass for ordinary rock. Another spot has a group of short pillars, after the manner of guard-stones. It is said that many a pillar that marked a royal edifice has been put to less romantic and less sentimental use by the villagers. On the brink of the nearer ledge is a small flat area which is the bed of a bathing pool.

The present temple, which is about a mile away on the lower slopes, is believed to have been the Mayurapada Pirivena, the Principal of which wrote the *Pujavaliya*.

On one occasion Manavamma, the elder son of King Kassappa, was carrying out certain "magic" rites. Skanda Kumara of Kataragama appeared before him riding his peacock. The divine bird pecked at the offerings, but finding no water to drink in the old coconut shell, flew at the "magician's face." The ascetic,

therefore, offered it his eye, out of which the bird "drank violently." The god granted him his wish and departed.

"Popular tradition places the legend of the incantation described in the Vakirigala-vihara in the Kegalla District. The magician is mentioned only in his later monk's name of Mayurapada. The Vakirigala-vihara is said to have been called in former times Mayurapada-paya after him." (Bell).

A beautifully fashioned cave behind the living quarters of the monks is pointed out as having been the celebrated author's residence. The incumbent laments that a stone *sannasa* granting 65 *amunams* of paddy for the upkeep of the priestly inmates, as one expression of royalty's gratitude to Mayurapada, has been deliberately destroyed by the villagers who desired sole proprietary rights over the fields they are cultivating at the present day

ANCIENT ARANKELE

A SMALL sheet of water mirrored the morning sun. It lay on the fringe of a jungle whose lengthening tentacles stretched out to close on it for ever. The momentary calm of the sylvan glade was ruffled by a sudden gust of wind bringing with it the breath of a hundred soft-footed creatures that lived in wooded valley and mountain slope. Wavelets danced on the breast of the water, and broke in flakes of foam.

This little water is all that remains of a tank. A low plain covered with scrub and tree, with here and there a muddy pool, tells the tale of a tank choked up by neglect. But the few villagers have bestirred themselves into activity at last. They have built a bund in order to save up the remaining water.

On this bund I noticed two seats made of logs roughly hewn. Their ruggedness fully harmonized with rural setting and rustic environment. They would grace any summer-house at Hakgala or Peradeniya. I wondered what man of art sought this rural resort.

They had been made for the recluse who lived in the jungle hard by. Of evenings, the few village folk would come to work at the bund, and the monk would leave his sylvan solitude to preach to them, thus relieving the tedium of labour, and ministering to spiritual need at the same time.

He would also tell them of days gone by, when priest and royal officer and village dweller worked together in this fashion for the benefit of the community. Good old days they were, when one thought stirred in the national bosom, the thought of national weal. Then came a time when this pastoral peace was broken. Factions, treacheries, wars, occupied men's attention. Agriculture was neglected, tanks left uncared for. From these learn a nation's sorrow.

At times the tale was long in the telling. A large yellow moon would slowly climb up the sky. Soft calls wafted from the dark pockets of shadows, and the soothing tones of the teller of the tale, would break the night's silence. Many a similar scene has doubtless been enacted in the days gone past.

Arankele, idyllic scene of this rustic labour, lies hidden on a slope of Dolu-

kanda. Dolukanda is firmly believed to contain a mysterious orchard abounding in fruits that are seen and enjoyed only by the famished wanderer.

It is known as Dohalapabbata in the *Mahavamsa* and was the camp of Silameghavanna when he defeated in battle and killed King Moggallana III who had lured his father by a deception and cut off his hands and feet. King Kirti Sri Rajasingha to whose pious decrees is due the continuance of the rituals in the temples of the Kandyan districts is also stated in the Chronicle to have attended to certain devout works in a temple near Dolukanda.

Arankele is some 8 miles from Kurunegala on the Dambulla road from where you have to branch off on a minor road about the same distance. A small bund of Batalagodaveva, a very ancient tank restored by Parker, crosses the road.

The place is said to derive its name from "Arahan Kele", the Forest of Arahans. Maliyadeva, the last arahat, is believed to have lived for some time in the beautiful cave. "Aranya Kele" or the Hermitage in the Forest is also indicated as its origin.

Hocart says, "In the age of plain ashlar, say about the sixth century, monastic settlements were based on a long paved avenue along the

foot of a hill leading up to the main tope or temple with paths leading right and left to other buildings."

Arankele is instanced as a case in point.

A broad path runs from the cave evenly up to a building which had been built of enormous slabs of hewn stone. The pillars that flanked this avenue are fallen down and embedded in the jungle growth. Minor avenues to right and left lead to ruined edifices; these shrines must have been of fair importance. One can reconstruct (mentally, of course) smaller places of worship as well as bigger viharàs.

The central building, apart from the monastery, is called the "Rame." Its foundation alone is visible, with here and there a stone pillar from what must have been the vestibule. The polished slabs of stone are about a foot thick, two feet and a half broad, and twenty or more feet long. A ten foot deep ditch runs all round.

The Cave of the Arahat is about half a mile from here. The paved road is relieved by stone steps wherever the ground is uneven. Halfway up the avenue is a circular arrangement of stones from where paths lead the visitor to other shrines.

There are two broad avenues, one

from the side of the tank, and the other from the cave. The "Rame" would thus seem to occupy the central interest in the building scheme.

Near the tank there are remains of two buildings which appear to have been twin bathing pavilions. The bathing pond lies right in front.

In this jungle, alone by himself, lives a Buddhist monk with not even a boy to minister to him. He has been here for a dozen years. He begged his food at first, but subsequently the villagers insisted on bringing him his meals. Possibly, they were struck by the greatness of a man who braved the loneliness of the forest!

Giant squirrels stare at you with impudent pink snouts. A porcupine crashes through the bushes. From the hill-top comes the scurrying of frightened feet, probably of deer, who seek to question your intrusion into their domain. The mingled notes of birds blare across the densely vaulted foliage.

Save these noises there is naught by way of life to remind you of what was once a busy monastic settlement.

GUARDIAN GOD OF SRI PADA

SAMAN Deviyo, is no mere god like the others of the Buddhist pantheon; for he is one who has trodden one of the Higher Paths (Sotapatti) of the Buddhist faith.

When Gautama Buddha visited Lanka "The Prince of Devas, Mahasumana of Sumanakuta mountain, who had attained to the fruit of entering into the path of salvation, craved of him who should be worshipped, something to worship." Then it was that the Blessed One gave of His blue-black locks which were deposited in a golden urn over which was erected a thupa of sapphire.

Nature worship and animism are such an integral part of primitive cults, and the association of prominent peaks with divinities so widespread in the world, that it is reasonable to suppose that this god of the Sacred Peak has his origin in the misty past before history dawned. Indeed, according to one account when a previous Buddha, Konagamana, visited Lanka, the peak appears to have borne the name of his chief thera, Mahasumana.

This, together with the statement in the Saman Devale inscription (which is no longer extant) that the god is identical with Rama's half-brother Lakshamana (Lak-Samana, Samana of Lanka?) seems to indicate a very ancient origin of the divinity associated with Sri Pada. However that may be, it is clearly evident that Lanka's first faith permitted the existence of pre-Buddhist local cults side by side with it. Even as late as the eleventh century this absorption of wood-gods may be seen still being continued, for the Mihintale Tablets tell of a fane of the goddess Mininal.

To the Buddhist pilgrim Saman Deviyo is a benevolent protector as he climbs the peak; without soliciting his aid (by means of a *pandura* in the local devale) he would not hear of setting out on the meritorious journey.

A certain fiercely anti-gods climber attached himself to a batch of pilgrims. His blasphemies horrified them, and one by one they continued to cold-shoulder him. He, however, trailed behind them determined to test his beliefs. But, though it sounds strange in these enlightened days, he could not reach his goal. Before he could get half-way through he was

seized with a violent chill, and it was with the greatest trouble (but much rejoicing by the rest) that he was carried back to Ratnapura, and left in the hands of friends who were ignorant of his fanatical attitude.

The spirit of the god broods over the forests of Sabaragamuwa and no harm befalls even him who fares out of season to the Peak. Providing the god is invoked, the very wild beasts do not harm the traveller.

Sabaragamuva, the special province of Saman, derives its name from the Veddahs (Sabaras). It is of more than ordinary interest therefore to find that a distant tribe of these jungle folk, those of Kalukelebe, believe that Saman Deviyo is one of the gods who could give permission to their deceased spirits to cause no more harm than bring illness on the tribe, and also to accept offerings to appease them.

Dr. S. Paranavitana makes very useful observations on this particular divinity.

He adduces arguments to identify Saman with Samantabhadra who is one of the eight principal Bodhisattvas of the Mahayanists, chiefly of the Chinese. Among points of similarity are the fol-

lowing: colour (blue or green), animal-vehicle (elephant), hill-home (Mount Omei in China). There is a divergence with regard to the weapons. In Upham's *History and Doctrine of Buddhism* the god holds a bow and sceptre in one hand. The Nepalese Samantabhadra holds only a sceptre, and no bow.

Saman Deviyo, unlike the rest, does not furnish us with many details concerning himself. It is surprising how much disagreement there is even in apparently trifling details. For instance, his weapons are a golden bow and arrow. But why is one who is a *Samyak Dristi* god and a Sotapatti, depicted with lethal weapons? Even his colour is given as blue, yellow and white.

ALIEN ARCHITECTURE

TO the Buddhists of Lanka there is no greater name of comparatively recent times than that of the Nayakkar, Kirti Sri Rajasingha.

This descendant of a country gentleman from Madura during a long reign of thirty-five years, virtually re-established Buddhism when it was verily disappearing from this, the land of its adoption. There is no place of Buddhistic worship in the Kandyan Provinces but recalls with grateful memory the unflagging zeal of this royal devotee.

Among the numerous objects associated with his revered name is a curious structure which goes by the name of Galmaduva temple. It lies on the farther bank of the Mahaveli, about three miles on the lower road to Teldeniya. Unfortunately it was never completed during the life-time of the King. But, as so often happens, the renovator has got busy, and his ugly hands are being heavily laid on it.

Emerging through the russet and dark green of the fruitful valley of Dumbara,

Galmaduva strikes a distinctively Hindu note to any observer from a hill-top in Kandy. A high tiered tower crowns the centre of the temple, recalling to one's mind the *gopura* familiar to temples of the Hindu faith.

On four sides of the central fane runs a gallery fifteen feet broad. Each wall of this gallery has five windows, except at the entrance where the middle one serves as a doorway.

An interesting and artistic feature of these is that they are cusped in the manner of Moorish windows. A long slab of stone, evenly distributes the pressure on the arch. This is further aided by a key-stone and two slabs placed obliquely. Thus the arches have remained intact for two centuries, which is all the more remarkable considering the fact that the bare unprotected walls stand, not only the vagaries of the weather, but in a humid valley.

The masonry and stone-work which had been completed by the time the work was abandoned, are in the accepted Kandyan style. Had they been completed the whole would today be an object of vast interest to the visitor.

However the most arresting portion of

the undertaking is the inner fane which is enclosed by the square gallery. This certainly had been completed; the Buddha image one sees today is on a pedestal originally left behind. From within, the central roof tapers upwards in tiers to a fine point, giving the appearance of an elongated dome. Underneath it one's echo reverberates powerfully, quite unlike what one experiences elsewhere.

Seen from without, this crown is a pyramid gleaming whitely in the sun. It comprises seven storeys or terraces. The first one has six pilasters on each side; between it and the wall are nine small tiers or mouldings. The second is a replica of the main wall in point of mural relief. On the four corners of each storey are small cupolas, or dagobas in miniature. The last, or the topmost alone is unadorned, its pyramid terminating sharply. It was evidently meant to have been crowned with a gilded *kotha*.

As in the *Pattirippuva* there are heavy mouldings at the base of the building; the top of the walls also contains deeply moulded cornices which project prominently. It reflects no little credit on the architect that, despite the weight on them, the beautiful arches have been preserved from collapse.

Various reasons have been advanced why the royal worker had abandoned the building so capriciously. One of them sets out that his Adigar built it as a surprise gift to his master. When the King visited it on his Minister's invitation, he prodded the inner walls with his stick, and misliking the arch whose collapse he feared at any moment, saw in it a plot against his life. Another story relates that when, on the orders of the King, the building had been nearly completed, he was told that there was a rock near by out of which a worthier temple could be made, as his predecessors had done. Hence Degaldoruva came into being, and Galmaduva left as it was. A third sees in it a house designed for the palladium, the Dalada. But in such a case no pedestal would have been erected for an image.

The general impression conveyed by Galmaduva is one of strength and massiveness. The windows are each three feet thick, and this thickness is further enhanced by the heavy stone border that stands out in high relief along the entire frame.

Galmaduva may be an architectural heresy to the orthodox Buddhist builder of today. But it is, in very sooth, a lost chord.

THE OLD PALACE, KANDY

WHEN the King of Egypt came to be called Pharaoh (Great House) because his dwelling differed from those of the common folk, which were made of mud, no one would have guessed that by a like mental process the appellation of Maha Vasala (Great House) would be given to his royal brother, vastly removed in race, country and by time, namely the King of the Kandyan country.

Perhaps, as the Temple of the Tooth does, this sole existing example of a royal residence would help the archaeologist in reconstructing the palace of our kings in the capitals that have been. For, in any country, the essential features of prominent buildings like temples and palaces generally remain the same. They follow the designs set down by the architects of old, and it is for us to arrive at these essentials after the accretions of a later day have been intelligently removed.

A short distance below the auspicious cave of Senkhanda is situated the Palace of the last King of Kandy. It is a somewhat unusual structure. It runs consider-

ably lengthwise, but lacks a proportionate breadth. The circumstance that it occupies the slope of a hill was, doubtless, responsible for this unusual feature.

Till recently the Palace had regularly been occupied by the chief administrative official of the Central Province, to whose needs it must have been adapted in the course of a century and a quarter. Perhaps the official Works records will throw light on these alterations. Even in the troubled last days of the kingdom the building had suffered somewhat.

Various visitors have made references to the Palace. On the authority of Spilberg, Tennent believed that the services of Portuguese prisoners were utilized in the building of it.

In his description of the MacDowall Embassy of 1800 Percival comments that it was "a poor mansion for the abode of a king." It lay at the further end of the main street (of two miles) which led to the principal in the city. The grounds were enclosed by a high wall. Since this Embassy, remarks Philalethes, the Palace had been repaired and ornamented. The detachment commanded by the ill-starred Davie was, it may be mentioned, garrisoned here.

A notice in the Government Gazette of 24th February, 1803, stated that the King had fled from Kandy after setting fire to the Palace and several of the temples (sic). The soldiers of the invading army succeeded in putting out the fire, but nearly all the building had been consumed.

According to D'Oyly's Diary entry of 21st October, a moat and a stone wall a little higher than a man, had been constructed by 1810. Kahapattala Unnanse of Malvatte temple, who had come to Colombo to make some purchases, related to him the current story that a *yaksha* had taken possession of the royal dwelling and that "he has been continually moving about the Palace, shaking and knocking at the doors and windows."

After the final flight of the King, Brownrigg and his staff went into occupation of it.

A sketch of Lieut. Lyttleton of the 73rd Regiment, shows the front elevation much the same as it is now. The principal differences were that it had no veranda; there were small square windows nearer the entrance and long rectangular ones, on the *Pattirippuva* side, all at uneven distances. The entrance porch, which was surmounted by a finial, projected in front.

Steps from here led to the raised compound which had been planted on. Below this was the first wall that may yet be seen covered with moss. The moat came next, and beyond it, bordering on the high road, the familiar triangular holed parapet. There was a broken gap in front; it re-appeared, a little to the right of the side steps, and was continued to the Maligava Vahalkada.

William Knighton found the ruins chiefly remarkable for the massive and substantial appearance of the walls and the excellent carvings visible in various places. The parapet seems to have taken his fancy. Who can fail to see its beauty, when on the dark nights of the New Moons of Vesak and Poson, hundreds of lights from the lamps of oil tucked away in the little niches, flicker and dance in the scented breeze?

About this time, too Dr. H. Hoffmeister, Travelling Physician to H. R. H. Prince Waldemar of Prussia, published an account of his travels. The party had tiffin with Col. MacDonald who occupied the Palace at the time. It was the Colonel who had caused a verandah to be erected in front of the principal entrance.

"The door is of clumsy device, supported by posts in the shape of dragons. The walls are

five feet in thickness, as are those of the ruined dwelling of remoter date. The one long hall of the interior has been divided into several apartments, and side rooms also branch off from it. The walls, although in most parts covered with a thick coat of white-washing, retain, here and there, traces reaching up to the low ceiling, of battle scenes, in which several leopards, a female figure and that of a man, are still discernible."

Oddly enough, absolutely nothing is to be seen tallying to this description. A decade later Tennent gave a better picture. The Palace covered a large area, but the buildings were mean, passages intricate and dark, chambers gloomy and confined. The principal rooms which remained at the time had been altered to suit the tastes of their European occupants. The style of decoration and the frequent recurrence of sacred geese amongst wall ornaments tell the Buddhist origin. Externally, the facade was imposing. The moat had been filled up a short while before. Before this was done, the crossing to the Maligava had been by a broad flight of steps over a bridge which led to the grand gate.

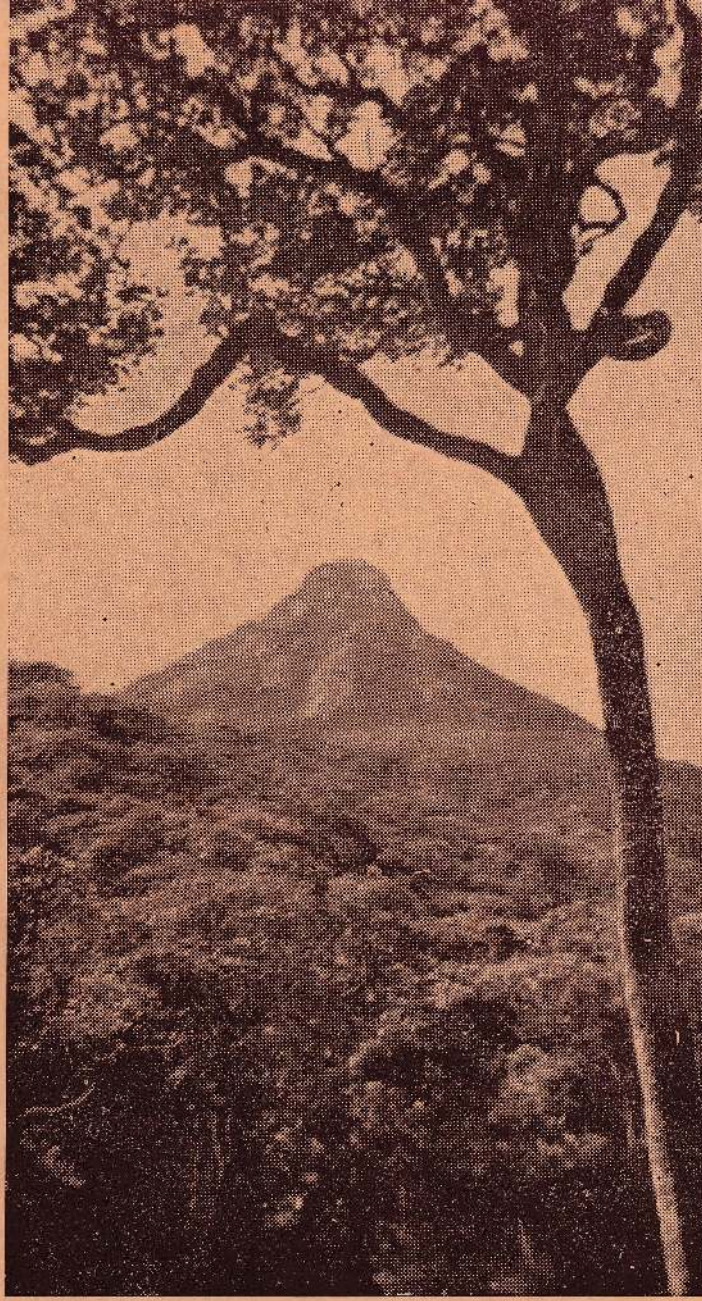
From all accounts, the Palace and its adjuncts formed three sides of a square, a circumstance which reminded a writer of its similarity to Seringapatam. The plan of a square for a city and its auspicious building comes down, according to Havell, from the time of the earliest Aryans. In-

teresting notes on ancient town-planning are also discussed by Hocart who draws on analogies from Burma and Siam.

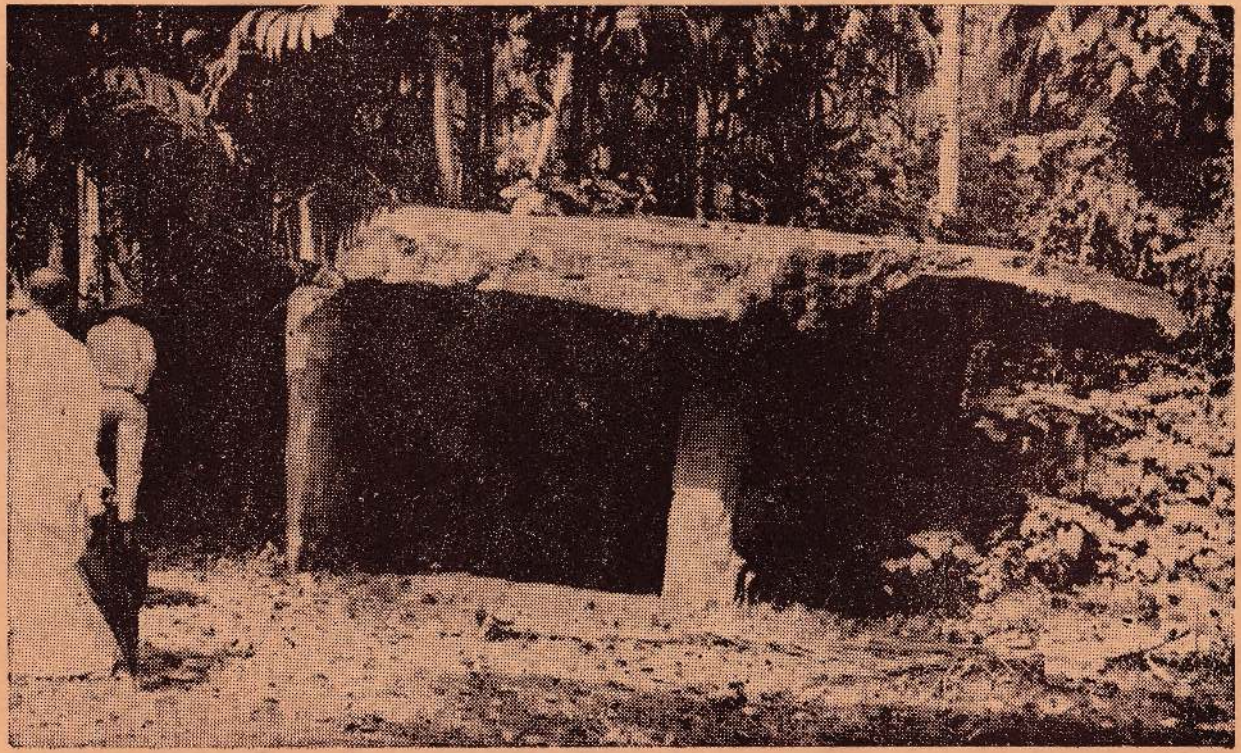
The central portion of the interior alone has anything decorative in it; on the two sides are several plain rooms. The main archway is very deeply recessed on account of the considerable thickness of the walls. It is opposed by another, both five-cusped, of the ogee pattern. A similar archway frames the wooden door.

Of wall decorations by the three front archways, are female figures, lions, hansas, and bo-leaves. Above the frames, all along, is a tiled frieze of small lions, with a large swan on either side of the main arch. Directly above the heavy base moulding at the bottom there are two lions facing the entrance. Between each swan and lion, and below the small frieze, is a strip of 5 birds (swans?) 3 of which face the same direction as the lions. Below the lesser arches there is one bird each. Lions standing and looking back are also in relief on the inner edges of the archways, two on each.

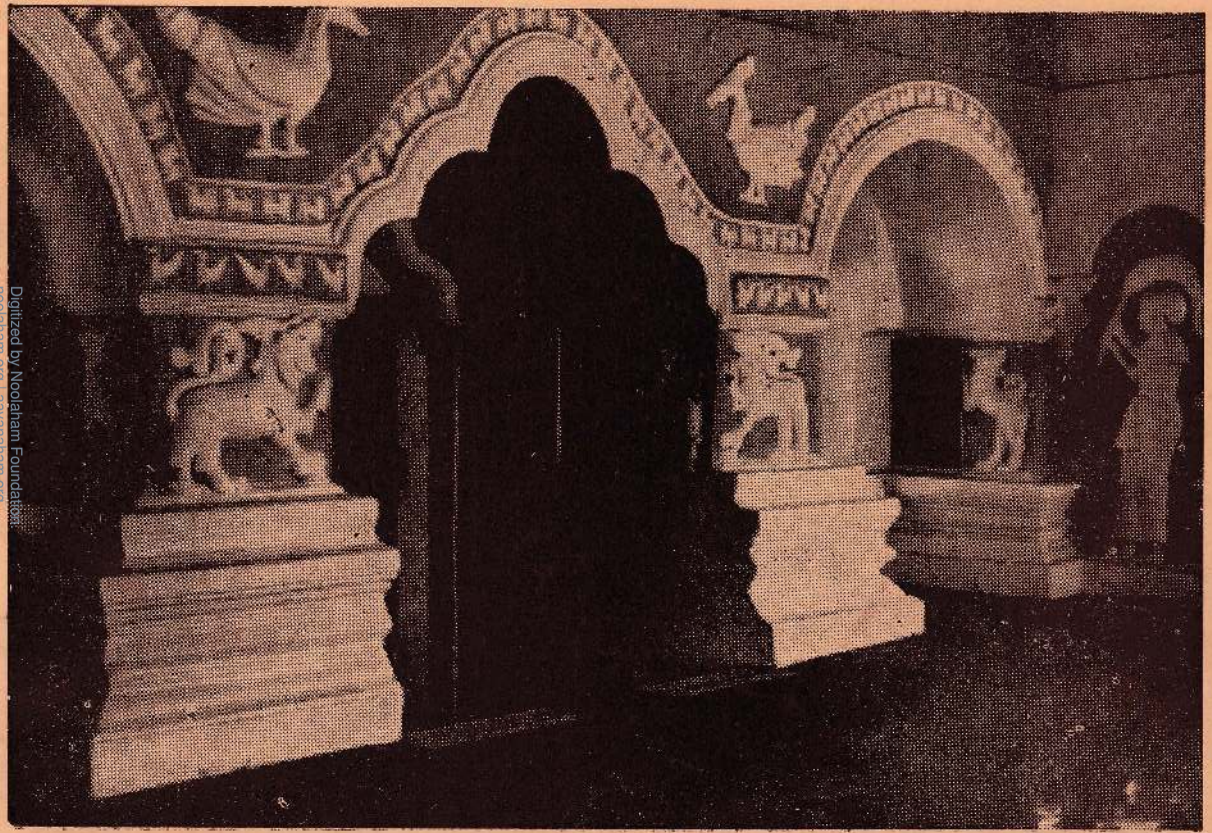
Perhaps the most curious reliefs are those of two women in Kandyan vogue holding *chamaras*. The large *konde* is set horizontally to the back of the head,



Sri Pada from Heramitipana on the Horton Route



View of the dolmen of Neolithic man at Padavigampola in Rambukkana



The Hall Doorway of the Old Palace, Kandy, showing reliefs.

as is the case with some figures at Degaldoruva. In the rear of the forward figure is a smaller representation, about a third in height, of the front view of another. The right hand is held down and left folded. The *konde* is bunched a-top the head.

Viewing the structure from outside, one is struck by the high foundation which was obviously necessary to bring the floor into level with the higher rear portion; the moulding of the bottom of the veranda wall is deep and high. On either side of the wooden doorway are the royal emblems of the sun and moon. A frame of tiled lions, from the same mould as at the Maligava, runs along the edges in pleasing pattern. The immediate left is flanked by a flight of steps from which may be seen deep small Kandyan windows faced with glass, exposing the Maligava premises to view. Between these and the doorway are two smaller ones similarly aligned.

WHERE ROYALTY BATHED

THE casual visitor to Ampitiya, a short distance away from the upper end of the Kandy Lake, will not fail to observe a motley crowd of bathers round a gushing spout into which tumble the crystal waters of a rocky rill. At all times of the day, and from good distances in dry weather, do these bathers congregate at the spot, and one could see them engaged in laundering, bathing or performing various items of an alfresco toilet. The water of the stream is said to be the best for many a mile around, as the knowing ones among the knot of bathers will tell you.

A little above this bathing-place is an object of interest, a stone basin supported by a stone pillar. It is an ideal open air bath, if only that were not banned. For, known as the Royal Spout, *Rajapihilla*, it has been secured against man to historic tradition.

Through the neatly cut drain of a stone conduit smooth water glides into the basin. The water is let out by three spouts and trickles down to the gravelly soil.

Underneath one spout is a slab of stone on which the bathers evidently squatted to hold their heads to the outflow.

It is here that the Kandyan kings are said to have bathed whenever they chose to do it outside the premises of the palace. The rivulet which fed the conduit pipe has since been deflected from its course. In former times it was known as *Heel-pen-kandura*, from the cold freshness of its water.

The following extract from the report of the Ratemahatmaya of Lower Hevaheta to the Government Agent, gives a portion of the connected tradition :—

"It is believed that during the reign of King Kirti-sri he caused the waters of all the natural springs in the vicinity to be weighed and tested, and the water of this Hilpenkandura was found to be the best of all. So His Majesty ordered that this stream should be kept exclusively for the royal household, and no one was allowed (except those of the royal household) to use it.

"The King also ordered a bathroom to be built there, surrounded with a strong wall, and a gate leading to it; and also appointed two officers—one to watch the *kandura* and one to guard the gate; and His Majesty made it a rule to proceed thither every Wednesday in a planquin followed by procession of tom-tom beaters, musicians and others. This rule was followed by his successors:"

The royal bath was a ceremonious affair and involved tortuous duties. It is possible to glean something about it

from the observations of two early writers, D'Oyly and Davy.

The bathroom, Ulpenge, with the adjoining dressing-room, Halumandape, lay between the Audience Hall and the Palace. The Diya and the Haluvadana Nilame respectively superintended the two tasks. The former was personally responsible for washing, combing, and dressing the King's hair, although he did not perform these tasks himself on every occasion. Sometimes, when personal service was called for, the two functionaries did each other's duties indiscriminately.

The King used to bathe daily (chiefly in warm water) at mid-day, sometimes in the afternoon. Two villages, Bolana and Lagomuva, were set apart for those who attended to the preparations for the bath. Tenants from them supplied fuel for warming the bath, and cleaned up the place, taking fortnightly turns. They took orders from the Diyavadana Nilame who, with the King's permission, set a Vidane over them.

Generally speaking, there were ten officers, known as Sattambi Ralas, who were directly concerned in bathing the King. Panividakarayo, or messengers,

were also appointed to summon all who had to render service. Both appointments were in the hands of the Diyavadana Nilame, subject to royal approval.

The Sattambis, and sometimes Panividakara Nilames, had to fetch water and pour it on the King. On special occasions the higher officials attended in person. Two at least of each of the two lower officials had to be in regular attendance at the palace. They had to keep themselves scrupulously clean, having to wash themselves twice a day.

The Sattambis "acted as petty chiefs of the people (about 500 families) that were attached to the bath." They were drawn from the best families; otherwise, they could not touch the King's person. They had certain privileges. For instance, the Adigars, who were given fairly extensive punitive powers, could not inflict corporal punishment on the Sattambis of the Ulpenge.

After the bath the King's hair was combed by one of these officers. Medicinal oil, duly prepared at the Beth-ge, was then rubbed and the hair was properly dressed. The service was known as *singa tevava*.

On the auspicious bath of a New

Year, all the ten Sattambis had to be present, and the service was led by the Diyavadana Nilame himself.

Next, the Chief of the Royal Wardrobe, the Haluvadana Nilame took charge of the king's person. On a *Yahaninda* in the adjoining room were spread a robe five or six cubits long, made of the finest texture (Kasa Somana), and a white Nilloru *tuppotti*. Helped on with his clothes (or rather robes, so long they were), the King now came out to transact any pressing business, or show himself, if need arose.

The Diyavadana Nilame was originally an official of the palace. It was Kirti Sri who commanded that the honours paid to him should be transferred to the Sacred Tooth. Hence the official's connexion with the ritual of the Dalada Maligava. He now takes rightful place in the Buddhist world of our Island as the chief layman.

The water of Heel-pen-kandura continued to be used in the religious services until modern conveniences obviated a toilsome process and led to the use of other water.

Fifty years ago, descendants of the guards at the bathing place were still living, to perpetuate the memory of the deserted spot.

ESALA PERAHERA RITES

THE definite Buddhistic connections of the Esala ceremony are but two centuries old. Although the fountain of instructions issues from the Dalada Maligava, it is the Natha Devale, relic of the worship of Mahayanist Avalokitesvara, that takes the first position in regard to the auspicious rites. The distribution of the "Esala Kap" is in its charge.

For this purpose a sapling of *Ehela* used to be taken. But jak is now substituted. A tree is selected, and its foot is swept and cleaned. Offerings are made of lighted lamps, and incense is burnt so that the sapling or branch may be purified in the traditional way. The tree is felled, or if a branch is taken it is severed, and brought to the Natha Devale. The kapurala of this temple apportions pieces to the other three devales. These are conveyed in procession by their respective tenants. Originally the services of Natha, Vishnu, Pattini and Kataragama Devales were performed by tenants from the vil-

lages of Malagammana, Alutnuvara (Kadugannava) and Bambava.

The stumps are laid on a white cloth. A workman dressed in white clean cloth and one who had performed the purificatory ablutions with lime juice and turmeric water comes forward and adzes and cleans the stump. Each one is washed in milk and honey and turmeric water and wrapped up in a clean white sheet. It is now ready to be taken into the temple.

About the time these operations are due to end, a message is conveyed by the beat of drum to the Vishnu Devale. This is taken up by the temple of Pattini. From here it is picked up by the drummer of Kataragama Devale. After this signal when the stage is set, the succeeding ritual is performed almost simultaneously in the four temples.

The *kapa* is taken in procession. This procession circumambulates the devale once, from left to right. The kapurale himself now attends to the rite of fixing it. In the Natha Devale it is planted within the porch. In the other three, small tapering cubicles, with rounded tops, adjoining the main building serve for this purpose. A coconut flower is

fixed on the ground by the side of, and along with, the stump. Four other flowers are also placed in the four corners.

The imprimatur has now been given, and for the first five days the Perahera is conducted within the temple grounds. The unpretentious Kumbal Perahera next issues into the streets of the city. It first calls at the Maligava, as the Perahera of the Temple of the Tooth must take precedence. The Kumbal Perahera continues for seven days after which it gives place to the Randoli Perahera.

The *kap* logs are kept within their shelters all this time. They are taken to the place of water-cutting on the last night. When the water that had been previously collected at the conclusion of the Esala Perahera is discharged, these logs, too, are thrown into the river. Here they mingle with the flotsam and jetsam. No further heed is paid to them by anybody.

All the operations required for the *rajakariya* are superintended by officials known as Wannaku Ralas. The registers of service are kept by Mohottalas.

Davy gave the following description of the ceremony in 1821 :—

"A few days before the new moon mentioned the people of the four principal Dewales assembled and selected a young jack tree that had borne no fruit, and the trunk of which was three spans in circumference. This they consecrated by fumigating it with the smoke of burning resin, by smearing it with a preparation of sandal-wood, and by making an offering at its foot of a lighted lamp with 9 wicks, of 9 betel leaves, and of 9 different kinds of flowers. This work of consecration was immediately followed by the operation of felling the tree, which was performed by the wood-cutter of the Maha Vishnu-Dewale, dressed in a clean cloth, and purified by washing himself with lemon-juice. He divided the trunk transversely into four portions, each of which was carried to its respective dewale, accompanied with the beating of tom-toms.

"On the day of the new moon the piece of consecrated jack-wood at each dewale was fixed in the ground, was protected by a roof, and covered and ornamented with palm-leaves, flowers and fruits. During this and the three following days, the priests of each temple carried in pompous procession round the jack-wood the bows and arrows of the gods."

RADIANT PEOPLE

PERAHERA TIME

FROM evening they come, these crowds of merry Kandyan villagers. Sirimala and Meniki are here with their cluster of kinsmen and neighbours. Punchi Menike and Ran Banda are attempting to herd in their care-free offspring, abundant gifts of the various gods whose favours they had solicited. Cheery, hail-fellow-well-met folk are they, with not a dream of tribal aloofness at this time, when one touch of Esala makes the whole land kin.

'Buses blare out in high dudgeon at these mere pedestrians who stride athwart the roads to which they do not belong. Cars honk and honk with the superciliousness of owner-driven vehicles. Plop! goes a balloon out of a pendulous bunch, and the vendor of *vades*, with broad grin on dark sweating face, cracks a joke at the man's discomfiture.

Bu-u-lath! The hawker of the pungent chew, his tray strapped round his neck, decorated with coloured tinsel, illuminated with shooting jets of carbide flame, tintinnabulates to the tune of a popular rag-time. Rich, juicy sugar-

canes are stacked high on the pavement. The gram-seller's board is loaded with sweet-meats of pink and vermilion, lurid colours that go straight to the hearts of his youthful clientele.

Here troops a number of late coming elephants making up lost time by ridiculous strides. Strings of riders on their backs move in vigorous undulations. They must surely feel sick about the pit of their stomachs. The loud bells cleave a quick passage for them. The pace of one does not satisfy the mahout. He pricks the enormous slow-coach with the sharp goad, or thrusts it cruelly between the giant toe-nails. The poor beast lets off a prolonged trumpeting. The scared crowds stampede in all directions.

Bands of gay young men in tasselled paper caps of pill-box shape, or tarbooshes of the same material, tramp past singing some music-hall ditty. They ogle at the pretty wenches who stare at them. The wenches are not displeased at this public tribute to their charm. Nevertheless like frightened rabbits, they scurry away from the path of the Don Juans because the eyes of elderly disapproval are on them.

It is nearly 7 p.m. the hour when the elite of Kandy emerge into the streets.

They have a dignity to maintain, the females especially. But their men companions are less restrained. You may even see a pillar of local society doing ayah duty. Trousers do not carry the same responsibility as they usually do, and at this time of high carnival you find their wearers munching a leisurely chew of betel, or diving with their fingers for roasted treasures within paper cones of gram.

All Kandy is host during Perahera days. Visitors usually invite themselves, but they find warm welcome nevertheless, —that is, if they do not upset the numerical arrangements of the housewife at the family board. But visitors are always considerate, and when they arrive unheralded and unsung, they bring their own provender.

It is your man who comes for his first Perahera who is the most harassing individual. He is utterly helpless, especially as the evening crowds have rudely awakened him from his fond belief that the event was a more glorified form of his village procession. He, therefore, relies solely on you to provide for the sightseeing, too.

Now this is the most unpleasant duty you have to perform as host. Business

houses who have been for eleven normal months of the year "assuring you at all times of the best of attention," hasten to disclaim you their "esteemed patron" if you come as a sight-seer. Or, if the inevitable happens and if you have fixed the management firmly with your eyes, you are given a seat on a soap-box from which you could have a stab, in Bertram Wooster's choice phraseology, at seeing the Perahera, through the occasional chinks in a solid wall of heads, at least ten deep, ahead of you.

Your best friends up the street have overflowed, goods and chattel, into the pavement, into which have been introduced rows of chairs, a luxury unthinkable at a time when every inch of space may be made to yield ground-rent. (Incidentally, what a high premium is laid on your friendship if you live in town along the Perahera route). You find you are too late here, too. What would your leech-like guest think of your failure to plant him comfortable and safe somewhere in this City, your stronghold? You would be a happy man if you could avoid probing into his bitter thoughts, anyhow.

Each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. At last space has been

very grudgingly allowed you on the bund, and you find yourself firmly wedged in between two parties of villagers. Among these honest folk of the muddy fields you are really at home, for their talk comes from their heart and savours not of the hypocrisy of the polished phrase that is the hall-mark of conversational charm.

The pageant of life passes first before you. The story is told of desperate work to save up the wherewithal for a fortnight's giddy whirl. Or, it may be that the folk have tramped the many miles that lead to the Great City from their little hamlet. The infant had a cough, but could not be left behind. Punchi Menike was long in coming back from service, one never knew if her mistress would release her for the family re-union. Luckily, that story of the sick brother held water. Anyway she came; that was a relief. Auntie in the valley delayed too long over her preparations. Did she think that Kandy was the distance of a *hoo*? The *bath-mula* had been too clumsily packed. It had to be re-done, and allotted more evenly among the party. The old Walauwa was being put up for sale by the Fiscal and the Mudalali's son was likely to purchase it. He was a generous body

and was going to make a little provision for the unfortunate Kumarihamy. Thus was gossip rolled on tongue, turned, and relished before it was swallowed like a mouthful of savouries.

Boom! The glittering cavalcade has started, and all necks are craned in the direction of the Maligava. Whip-crackers cut the air. The small *udekki* and the big Kandyan drum pulsate in the air already vibrant with the tingle of mediaeval music, of *pantheru* and cymbal, oboe and sharp flute.

An elephant ambles carrying the bearded Peramune Rala on its back. The Gajanayake Nilame in rich apparel and carrying a silver goad rides a-straddle on a more ponderous beast. From the eminence of its fleshy neck he gazes, hand on hip, straight ahead into the distance. Braziers smoking yellow and red are borne by "linesmen", and into this jumble of anachronisms are pitch-forked very modern rickshaws laden with sacks of desiccated coconut.

Sa-a-dhu! a vast cry rises into the packed atmosphere as the majestic Maligava tusker heaves into view. What dignity in its walk, and what a treasure on its back!

But it is the tiny many-coloured electric bulbs that swing merrily on the arched windows of the pagoda that capture the heart of rural lassies.

The Diyavadane Nilame steps out like some grand seigneur of old, and two rows of serpentine dancers sway and bow before him. But they are best, those whose rippling bodies tinkle to the music of metal plates, and whose speech is that of movement, be it of hand, finger or even the whole physique.

Last of all trail the palanquins of the gods. The only members of the weaker sex who participate in the pageant in honour of the goddess they serve, walk demurely past with becoming modesty before the gaze of thousands of curious eyes.

Pressing close behind in one solid phalanx one seething mass makes a beeline for the market square. They tread on one another's heels, but with no thought of discomfort they stare open-mouthed at the attractions.

A youth dressed astonishingly like a dancing woman trips the light fantastic toe. And do not the artless maids giggle at the antics of their torso-tossing "sister"? Bombay or Kashmir dancing, the

Marvellous Cow, Dante's Inferno, and what not, all in one breath. It is too much to digest. So think they as they struggle towards Bogambara Green.

Oh the Merry-go-round! Does it satisfy ever? Giddily are bearded gaffers caught up, but one loving arm is round help-mates perilously perched on wooden horses sporting loud colours.

It is getting late and the hour of return has drawn near. Enormous 'buses themselves looking like a perahera, chug-chug up the hilly roads. They are laden with foot-weary crowds.

To some this quick return has no romance. All time is before them. They seek the shelter of the kindly pavements, open verandahs (who asks for permission, anyhow?) or even trees. They curl themselves up deliciously. Soon they go off to a world of make-believe, and ever let their fancy roam.

LORD OF THE VANNI FORESTS

AMONG the gods or godlings worshipped locally is one whose unseen and mighty divinity every dweller of the jungles of the North Central and North Western Provinces recognizes without question, without seeking whose protection he does not venture out into the open. He is Aiyanar, or Aiyanayaka, god of the Vanni. To him there is no temple or other sanctum. A green twig suspended on a thread tied between two posts, or on the fork of some tree, is all the modest offering made by the sylvan folk who solicit his benevolence.

Aiyanayaka—to use the name in vogue amongst the Sinhalese—is essentially a god of kindness, albeit of great power. He, like the rest of his exalted position, is regarded by the kapurala as a Bodhisatva. Prayer is offered to him for protection from evil, sudden danger, wild-beast, or pestilence. The lethal weapon blessed by him is changed into a harmless missile though it speeds towards its goal.

Aiyanayaka is peculiarly the god of the Vanni. The low-country Sinhalese, according to information supplied to Parker by a kapurala, also worship him as Boksal, lord of the north in the divine quartette of our pantheon. Regarding the identity of the god who is given this name, however, there is much divergence of opinion.

Hindu mythology, too, gives a place to the god. But, as John Still supposes, one inclines to the view that he is one of those wood-gods who were being worshipped in Ceylon at the time Buddhism came, and continues to be venerated, to this day, by the adherents of the later faith which, with its unmilitant nature, has absorbed the primitive cults into it.

It is not the Buddhist and Hindu alone who find efficacy in a prayer to Aiyanayaka. The Muslim driver of our car reverently confessed to me his allegiance to the god, as he placed his leafy offering between the posts of a little booth by the wayside. Having repeated his credo, why may he not go one better than Malcolm Campbell in the derelict four-wheeler he drove?

By the bund of Tabbova Tank I

witnessed an open-air service in honour of the Lord of the Vanni.

It was a Saturday, the day set apart for this rite. At sundown a little group of colonists, augmented by a few local inhabitants, were assembled at a clearing in the shade of three giant trees.

The "temple" here was more elaborate than the general fane of the god. It consisted of a tiered platform of mud with brick facing. On the top were some crude images. The largest of them was the likeness of a grotesque bull. By it was one small figure of an elephant.

The structure was enclosed within four posts tied together with ropes on which were suspended tender coconut-leaf decorations. By the images, and against the platform, were placed old rusty iron weapons dedicated to the god. Amongst these could be noticed tridents, spears, bill-hooks, javelins, maces, and curved clubs. There was a long chank on the topmost platform, a little away from the effigies.

Three chatties of rice and gruel which had been cooked on improvised hearth-stones were taken out and placed in a row by the altar. One of the men, who officiated as kapurala, and who had his

mouth covered with a clean scarf, came forward and with a ladle took "thrice three" spoonfuls of the food, and served them into cones of leaf, which had previously been laved in saffron water. Handing them over to an attendant, he approached the altar, bowed to the effigies, sprinkled water on a plantain leaf spread before them, and arranged some betel leaves together with dried arecanuts on them.

Next he served out portions of the rice offerings, and smoked the oblations with incense which glowed on a rude censer. Last of all, he took a dried coconut, washed it, and splitting it into two before the shrine, placed the two halves on the altar.

Another mark of obeisance concluded his ministrations. Then he placed his palms together and made supplication. In his preamble he traced the genealogy of the god and described his power and benevolence.

"Not for the salvaging of sunken ships, not from disaster from wild buffalo, bear, cheetah, or wild elephant, not for the obtaining of treasure hidden, but that thy all-pervading benevolence may protect us from plague and pestilence, we who

dwell by Tabbova's Tank, come to thee, O Lord, who hast in keeping the open regions and the forested, in this, our land!"

The man now made his way a little aside into another shrine, that of the god Kadavara, the fierce, minister to Aiyanayaka.

The offerings to this deity, which were the same as those made to his master, were placed within three crooks made of forked sticks. These were the sole receptacles. The god had no altar. To him the kapurala prayed that he might "show our *pin-vattoruva* (tally of meritorious actions) to the Lord Aiyanayaka and, of his mercy, intercede with him on our behalf."

Short, quick, dance-movements of the hand with the ends of the scarf whirling in whiteness terminated the ceremonial. Finally, the ministrant went again to the shrine of the greater god and repeated the movements, somewhat more elaborately, before the entire ritual was considered over.

Dusk had come apace bringing with it an uncanny stillness. Would the god manifest himself, we asked, to partake of these, the offerings of his devotees?

A mighty crash from the dark re-

cesses of the forest startled us, inexperienced townsmen. Then another, and another, followed by a booming and a squawking. Simians homing in hot haste.

The kapurala, who had motioned to us to stay when we would have retired earlier came up to us with his hands full of some of the offerings—plantain leaf package of rice, half a coconut, betel and arecanut.

"Eat of this food, and transfer the merit thereof to the great Vanni Bandara. He will be good to you and watch over you as you drive through the forest this night."

We did not eat of the god's rice. We gave it, instead, to the first beggar we met in town. I hope it brings us no harm!

ROMANCE OF THE DUMBARA MAT

IN the days of Kundasale Raja, that is Narendra Sinha the last King of the Lion Race, there lived two brothers who were expert weavers. One day, they presented the king with a mat. They had taken great pains over it, one full week. The king was so pleased with it that forthwith he made them his weavers of mats. He established them in this village of Henavala, granting them forty-eight amunams sowing extent divided equally between high land and muddy."

The speaker was a venerable patriarch fair of face but sickly. As he spoke he was busily giving the finishing touches to a lovely mat that lay spread before him, taut on a frame. The soft tassels rippled over the edge on either side, he was knotting them up with a strong strand to conclude his labours.

"But, surely, your people must have come here from somewhere?" I asked. "Couldn't you tell me an older tale?"

"No, this is all I know. What more can I say? This only have I heard from my fathers. But it is also said that our

people came over with Prince Vijaya."

I changed the topic.

"Why don't you enlarge the size of your mats? This is only 6 feet by $2\frac{1}{2}$. You can see I am nearly as tall as that. It won't serve me living and how do you expect me to be wrapped up in it when I am dead?" said I, to the horror of the by-standers.

"Don't bother, Sir," came the ready reply, and with a merry twinkle in his light eyes he held up a mat lengthwise in front of me. "You see, this just fits your height. Take it now, Sir, when the time comes, I promise to make you a longer one!"

Henavala hamlet, the home of the famous mat-weavers, lies enfolded between the upper and lower roads to Teldeniya. Nestling amongst the cocoa plantations in the green vale of lower Dumbara, it is typical, though on a small scale, of the habitats of a sturdy yeomanry. Here the poorest man is lord of his hut and patch of land. Even his beautiful craft is only a part time occupation.

The villagers work on their land and leave off, whenever they wish, to follow the artist's occupation. All the same, nearly every day they are engaged in their

unique industry, as if time were hanging heavily on them.

The greatest activity is, of course, during the rush of the Perahera and tourist seasons. I fear that the menfolk need constant goading. They are inclined to shift the responsibility on to other and slender shoulders.

The visitor will see wooden pegs driven in the mud floor of every hut; these are to fix the required frame. Here the worker, man, woman or youth, squats down with one leg stretched out and is patiently engaged in turning out a mat, marketing-bag, or carpet, as the case may be. Bundles of coloured hemp fibre loosely tied round with a thread, are suspended in the middle of the cross-beam. From these, strands are taken out by a helper and quickly handed on with a deftness born of long practice, to the weaver in the necessary order and colour scheme. No mistake is ever made.

The fibre is of hemp or *niyanda*. The former is more in use, being the more easily obtainable. But the latter is finer, softer and stronger. At a first glance the curled *niyanda* leaf appears to be a drumstick in fine condition.

The thick hemp leaf is cut near the

stalk. Each leaf is sliced vertically into two. The half thus cut is placed lengthwise on a block of soft wood, generally *kekuna* held firmly with the toes of the worker, and combed away from him with a sharp-edged splinter of *kitul*. After two minutes' work, the green has been removed and one sees the silky white strands softly drooping in his hand. *Niyanda* undergoes the same treatment.

The process of dyeing, too, is simple and equally primitive. The colours generally favoured are green, maroon, yellow and black. Green dye has to be bought. Maroon is obtained by boiling the fibre in a fusion of *patangi* and *korakaha*. Ordinary saffron gives the yellow hue. But blackening is a more elaborate business. The strands are boiled in a mess of gall-nut, *bulu*, and a few other ingredients. Next they are dipped in a kind of black mud and left to lie for 24 hours. At first the colour is dirty, but with constant handling and preening a beautiful gloss results.

It is a common sight to see the village folk in hamlet, school, or the compound of a boutique, with bundles of fibre on one shoulder, employed in drawing out threads on to the *idda*.

The machinery used for the weaving of mats is necessarily primitive, and it looks almost absurd to us of the twentieth century to see them passing the strand through the eye of a long needle of *kitul* wood before putting it into position. They are, however, mightily satisfied with their own way, and I expect they will continue the same archaisms in years to come.

The art sense of the people runs along the same grooves.

Henavala is a pleasant hamlet picturesquely made up of a gentle, rolling country. Hanguranketa and granite-walled Hantane flank it on one side, and on the other the Hunnasgiriya range guards it, with the knobs of the Knuckles Group peeping over from behind.

The centre of the social and communal life is the school-building. The Bo tree opposite provides the only religious symbol.

I was startled to see a fair-sized community of Indian coolies settled down amongst them with even a school for their children! I was told that the village comprised one hundred acres, but the lazier folk having disposed of their property to the Indian immigrant at nomi-

nal rates, only some forty acres are now left to them.

There are nearly fifty houses in all, with a population of one hundred and fifty souls all told. This is the small community that has to hand down to future generations a beautiful art whose origin is veiled in antiquity.

The people have their own Headman Duraya.

Adventure has come in the way of Henavala folk. A few of them including women have crossed the great big ocean and travelled to Western lands, under the aegis of a well-known European showman.

"Wealth" was acquired in large measure by the bold pioneers, but it has been dissipated with light-hearted abandon.

The Duraya's dame enthused over her earnings in foreign strands.

"Oh, Sir, I brought Rs. 1,000 besides my pay. Pah! I didn't touch cent of it. *Don't you know the ways of the male*?"

A TALE OF MINNERIYA

KING MAHASEN brooded long at Sigiri-gala where he dwelt. The Minneriya District suffered periodically from scarcity of water, though the jungle conserved the water to some extent. If he could collect it all up in some way, a regular supply of the precious liquid would be ensured for the vast paddy fields that comprised the villages of that area. These were the troubled thoughts that passed in his mind.

There were two or three natural lakes of which he had heard from hunting parties. But these were owned by Veddah chieftains, people who were best left alone. He was King of all Lanka, and his word would, doubtless, be heeded. But he had no desire to strain the loyalty of any subject, let alone that of the elusive jungle dwellers.

Nevertheless, he had no other way out of the difficulty. He was compelled to approach the three of them to treat. He assumed no royal dignity. They were his partners and friends who should help him in his need.

By kindness, not unmixed with gentle diplomacy, he managed to win over two of them, but the third remained obdurate. Not even his fellow-chiefs could persuade him to part with his bit.

He must die the death, decided the despoiler. Death alone brought the coveted sheet of water.

One would have thought that Minneriya Wewa, the dream of Mahasen's life, would not prosper under such sanguinary auspices. But Mahasen was King and man. He pressed the fierce demons, *rakshas*, into his service, compelling obedience from them. Work thus begun could not but succeed.

Demon and human toiled shoulder to shoulder to fulfil the dream of a King. And thus was the great lake built. A chain of seven small lakes, visible at low water, comprises the Minneriya of today.

The work was over, the supernatural workmen had departed. But alas! the dam burst. The breach was instantly repaired, but disaster overtook the King's enterprise once more. The genius of his engineers availed little. Nothing could check the surging waters. The spirit of the Veddah chief, foully done to death to appease the ambition of one man, took

the revenge that was denied it in life!

One night, the despairing King dreamt a dream. Someone appeared to him and said, "O King! If thou wouldst win success in thy enterprise, thou must needs sacrifice something very dear to thee. Thy son and thy sister's son—let them be walled up in the bund. So mayst thou prosper. Of what account is personal loss to one such as thee, who desirest the good of all?"

In the morning the king remembered the dream. He sent for his little nephew, Kaludegala Kumaraya and accompanied by his own son, Hingurak Bandara, visited the scene of labour. Calling the chief workman aside, he explained the cause of the princes' visit.

But the man, himself a father, had no heart to obey the royal command. After much perplexity he hit upon a plan by which to circumvent the unnatural command of King and dream-prophet.

He stood the children on the wall, and, engaged in childish conversation built up the broken portion, brick by brick.

As soon as the last brick had been laid in position and the last stone set, he cut the neck of a sacrificial goat he had

kept tied up near him for the purpose. Strange to say, the bund held. Thus was the bloodthirsty spirit appeased.

A grand feast was prepared to celebrate the happy event. The sluice gates were opened and the first water let out into Rajaela, the King's own. In the midst of the rejoicing his thoughts went to the children whom he believed to be dead.

"If only my little ones were here," he lamented, "how much would they enjoy themselves!"

"Sire," replied a minister who stood by, "the little princes are not dead. We appeased the spirit otherwise."

"Oh, ye gods! My tank!" exclaimed the King. These were his last words, for he fell dead on the spot.

This is the tale told of the weathered group of statues that stands on the bund of Minneriya, a mile or so away from the Irrigation Circuit bungalow. His grateful people perpetuated the memory of a man who put the welfare of his subjects before personal ties.

Mahasen is worshipped as the God of Minneriya. His spirit broods over the vast jungle that was once the prosperous land he loved so well.

NEW YEAR IN THE VILLAGE

NEW Year's Eve. Sweetmeats are spluttering in the frying-pan. Mother is not satisfied although there are numerous well-filled fresh earthen pots in which crisp savoury "eats" have been stacked away from her light-fingered offspring. One can never tell how many visitors will turn up.

Unlike her usual sweet self, Grandmother is fussy and fretful, what with attempts to discipline her unruly charges. An aunt here, and an elder sister there, are running about desperately, each to finish her job of work before the night has advanced. Days of toil demand the rest that is necessary to greet New Year morn with fresh faces.

Neighbour Siyadoris has obliged his multitudinous progeny in the matter of a swing. Would father be behind? He has thawed for the nonce. Nay, has gone one better. Two swings, one for the tots, and another for the bigger children. This latter is a magnificent one. Its tough ropes had been arduously woven beforehand into four long strands stretched taut

through the "eyes" of coconut-shells. These are now tied to two rings of the thorny *kabarossa* creeper which have been passed through the trunk of an areca tied between two trees. Loops are made of each pair of ropes, and a plank inserted. This is pressed down, and now standing athwart it you are given a gentle push by a bystander.

Slowly to begin with, then faster and faster as the zest of see-sawing enters your light soul, you fly above into joyous spheres, and down again, with only a crocking of your quick knees and a spring back into position. There you are, very nearly at the cross bar. An enviously admiring crowd of spectators is below you—how superciliously you look down on them from your Olympian height! Your chest puffs with pride. From well-filled lungs the song of the elated swinger breaks in on your circle of admirers.

Sometimes your rakish pace is considered perilous and out rushes father querying if you are determined to break your neck. Your contrite look mollifies him and he goes away with a smile, for was he not a reckless boy once despite the surliness of responsible parenthood?

Oh, the spendthrift that father is!

Clothes for the home, sarongs, banians, coloured hankies, rice, dried fish—without which no meal has a tang in it—and, most glorious of all, packets and packets of red crackers, every one of these he has already bought with the recklessness of a multi-millionaire.

Dusk comes drooping slow, and night rolls heavily in. Time for the last meal of the old year. It is eaten in reverential silence, for a tinge of sadness descends even on the spirits of buoyant boyhood. And now to the mat, into the arms of Morpheus.

"And the Prince of the New Year dressed in gold and satin comes riding a milk-white steed..." So Grandmother had said the previous night. Long before the grey dawn breaks, we are up to welcome him. The light is barely enough to sweep the house and arrange the furniture. The white-sanded compound has to be expertly swept in the design of the coconut branch, before we can do our morning toilet.

The feel of new clothes. Frou-Frou! you rustle past, arresting the attention of others and compelling them to admire your patterned sarong, drinking in its shop smell.

Morning breaks in, heavily charged

with expectancy. It is loudly heralded by the lighting of innumerable crackers, or the dashing of *cheena patas*.

Devotions and formalities. Homage to the Enlightened One, first fruits of the savouries to the temple and the benign monk in it, offering of betel-leaves to the elders and begging their forgiveness "for any wrong that we may have unwittingly done in the past."

Tea is late, the fault of a delayed auspices. Now for the games. A little gambling is allowed to us boys.

After a sumptuous lunch the zenana indulges in music. A *rabana* is brought out and a giggling circle sits on low stools around, or merely squats. A preliminary drumming.

Evening brings in relatives and friends, preceded by servants bearing trays heavily laden. Gossip, relieved by vigorous munching, keeps everybody occupied, while the younger set stare daggers at their better dressed visitors before all fraternise for games. Your father being an elder statesman of the village, your turn of visiting comes last. From house to house you make the rounds. The inner man is well fortified when the long calls are over.

PILGRIM

A LONG train was drawn up alongside the Anuradhapura platform at Polgahawela. Despite its size it was depressingly empty. There was barely time to take our seats when we were jerked out on the road to the Holy City.

Dust clouds swirled in our wake. A big moon swished past the frowsy cocoheads. Blotches of jungle darkness raced backwards; a sheet of water gleamed for a second, then shot across our vision as the express sped past.

Something stabbed my sleeve. It left a throbbing pain. A lady passenger got it thud against her before it ricochetted into the dappled night. She screamed for a second; the next, she had a grievance. She insisted that she saw an imp of a boy hurling stones from a paper bag.

At the next halt, Potuhera, a complaint was lodged with the guard. But he laughed at her fears. They were flowers thrown into the compartment, he as-

sured, which was the usual way with those unable to make the great journey.

Like some ravenous sea-monster our train began to swallow shoals and shoals of white-clad devotees. The approaches to every station had been decorated. Often whole hamlets had foregathered to bid *au revoir* to travellers.

The once empty train was now entirely filled. Only those bogeys which could not reach the platform were yet bare. But not all the coaxings of the guard or station master could succeed in getting pilgrims into these. They either preferred the safety of those by the platform, or, being *kodi karayas* (freshers) trailed behind their leader wherever that worthy chose to go.

At last there was no more room, and we left behind scores and scores. With luck these could take the next train, but the plight of intervening stations is delay. In the meantime, as if pitying them, some cheery souls were giving a concert which kept those left over mightily amused.

Midnight was well past when we "docked" and the iron behemoth disgorged its passengers. Excellent arrangements had been made by the railway to reduce the inconveniences to which crowds are

subjected. Above the ceaseless chatter rose the blare of a megaphone announcer who counselled caution to climbers of iron stairs, which were liable to the treacherous, or indicated the existence of Pilgrims' Rests where one could always get a little breathing space. And so, the train load emptied itself out with no mishap.

But not to the resting-halls, for these were filled to overflowing. Instead, like an unexpected tide, they surged on everywhere in the city, even to the premises belonging to religious houses of other faiths than Buddhism.

Here at Anuradhapura during pilgrim time, permission is not sought from any householder to occupy his premises. My own host, for instance, took it quite like a stoic when he turned out and discovered his verandah and compound strewn with pilgrims of both sexes, of assorted sizes and ages. They are quite prepared for these contingencies. Often they delight in such social service, for they are the only days when their city of the past teems with life.

Clothes do not make a man, nor does a car, during a season of pilgrimage. In trousers or cloth, you have just about the same allowance of road, foot-path, or

shrine compound. As for cars, you will see Appuhamy and Hamine swanking with their kinsmen or fellow-villagers in as good a saloon as you have.

Crowds and crowds parade the streets like some processional, all through the night. After a spell of rest by the wayside, they are up with the lark. Menfolk go for a bathe in the waters of Malvatu Oya, to the diversion of tribes of monkeys, "men of old, reborn in the Sacred City", as they mostly believe. The women prepare a big meal of rice, coconut-milk soup, and *sambol*, with which to fortify themselves against a heavy day.

Out into the streets they step again, dressed mostly in white without the adornments of a life of vanity. A leader, man or woman, recites a stanza from the scriptures; the rear-guard takes up the refrain. Bulging pillow-case gripped tight, or bawling baby on hip, the womenfolk sing with untiring effort. In their make-up is something one cannot understand. They work the hardest, these slender beings of our homes. They collect firewood, cook, serve, wash up, mind the baby, lay out the bedding—how privileged the male, forsooth!—and yet with beaming face they journey afoot to endless places

of worship, only complaining when the artful male skips a place or two in the tiresome itinerary.

Vata vandanava is the only aim of most pilgrims. They have little time and less inclination for other attractions. Our "fellow hostellers," Helena Akka and party from Gampaha, were very decided on the point.

"Come round and see us when you come for the Esala Perahera,"' we invited.

"Esala Perahera? Why, we've seen the one at Kelaniya. Anyway, we're not interested in it. We are Ata Sil folk. But we'll come for the next Exposition of the Tooth Relic."

Of the eight sacred places none is more popular than the Bo Tree and the Ruvanveli. The former is nearly inaccessible in the mornings on account of the streams of little processions bringing offerings of milk rice. Ruvanveli is as spacious as the heart of the paladin who built it, and no worshipper needs to go away disappointed from it. The antiquities around it, and the pinnacle, evoke awe and adoration from devotees.

The eight sacred places over, you see them spreading wings towards every con-

ceivable ruin. Religious or secular they have the same fervent appeal. Groups may be seen, for example at the Buddhist Railing site, some with flowers and candles in their hands. It matters not if their object of reverence is a tomb, or stables, or bathing-pond. Each is hallowed by the memories of Arahats who are only persons whom they, in their awed imagination, associate with the past—bar the giants and pious monarchs.

Not by many is the idea understood of building in the stupendous. To these Ruvanveli, Jetavana, and Abhayagiri are works of "misguided piety" or "misapplied energy." But they were of an age when size alone indicated grandness. So was it with the monuments of Egypt. So it is with modern buildings, whether you spread them over the ground or rear them up skywards.

No pilgrim but bathes in one of the great tanks. Cheek by jowl they disport themselves in the waters that act like balm on bodies bruised by travel.

They are refreshed for the rounds to be made in the night, revitalized for the campaign of wordy warfare with the hordes of vendors in booths that have nearly barricaded the approach to Ruvan-

veli. Jaffna, permanently prominent in the city, displays palmyrah baskets and roots, earthen bowls, pans for cooking, and basket jaggery. The Sinhalese, strangely enough, hawk violent sherbets and *rabanas*. The Muslim trader has set up his open-air *manikade* of tinsel and gee-gaws, or printed calico. But one lives through it all.

Sadness descends on everybody when the return trek begins. Touching scenes are witnessed, sometimes, when farewells are taken. On the green near the entrance to the Sacred Bo Tree, a party of relations, who perhaps have met after an interval are bidding one another good-bye. With towel spread on the ground the younger ones are making low obeisance at the feet of their elders. The oldest of them, a veritable patriarch, touches the heads of his juniors with open palms as he pronounces some words of benediction over the kneeling one.

The centuries roll back from the vision of the watcher, and there come to his mind the suckling days of his tribe when the elder of the family was unquestioned lord.

The travellers are now in sprightly clothes, and flaunt the finery that be-

longs to a competitive world. But, in spite of the songs of adoration which they continue to sing, they troop by with less jauntiness. They yearn to throw themselves on the station premises, to snatch a hasty rest until the train which is due to take them is shunted up and ready.

For two days at least this march continues. Anuradhapura, roused suddenly for this fleeting period, lays its head down once again to continue its slumber for one further year.