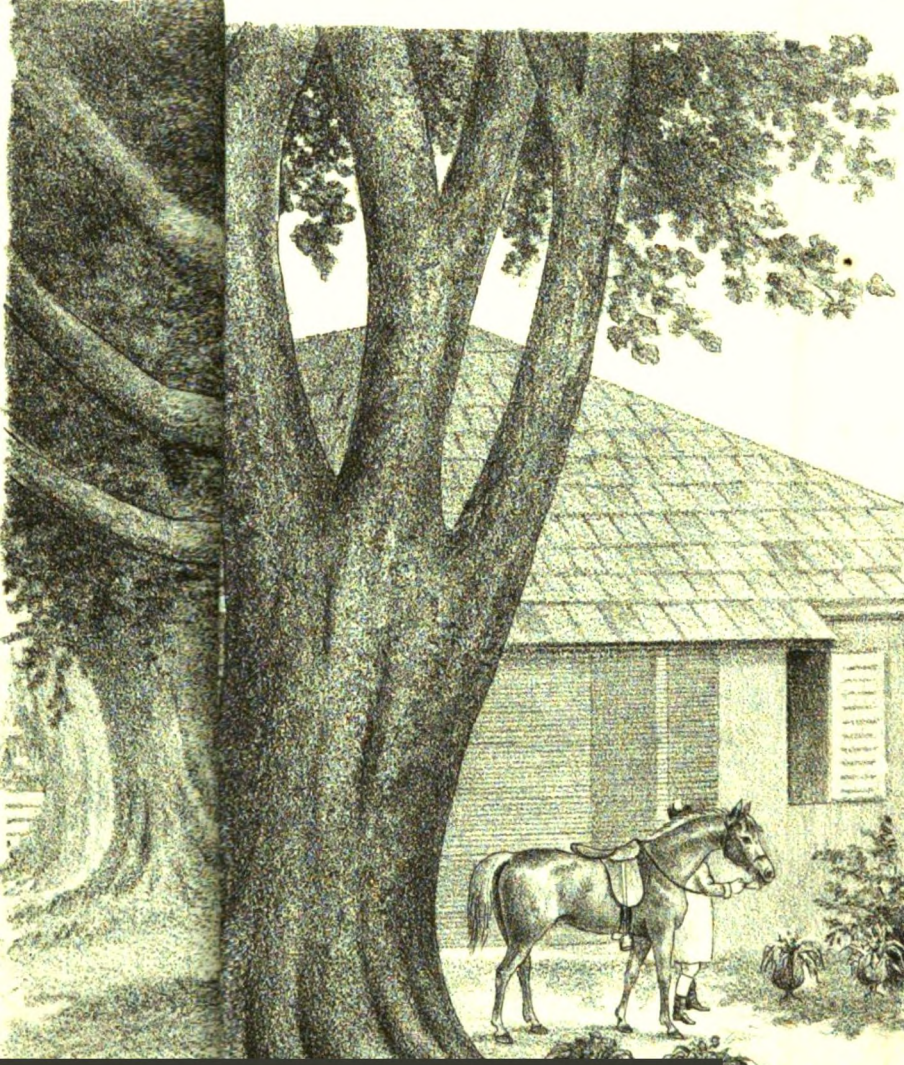


A trip to Tissa

Robert Burleigh Campbell

A TRIP TO TISSA,

CEYLON.

BY

R. BURLEIGH CAMPBELL.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY STRANGEWAYS AND SONS,
TOWER STREET, UPPER ST. MARTIN'S LANE.
1884.

Dedicated to

SIR JAMES CAMPBELL, BART.

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE NEPHEW,

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

A TRIP TO TISSA, CEYLON.

A TRIP TO TISSA, CEYLON.

CHAPTER I.

IT was in the middle of the month of May, 1881, that I was ordered by Government to undertake some special work which would necessitate a visit to Tissamaharama, in the southern province of Ceylon. As the visit was likely to extend to three months, or longer, I determined to write to Hugh Austin, my oldest and best friend in the island, to apply for leave and accompany me if he could manage it. I despatched a letter accordingly, and in due course received his reply. His application had been sanctioned, and he only awaited the arrival of a supply of ammunition, and an addition to his battery in the shape of an Express rifle, to join me at Galle.

In the meantime I was not idle, and selected a strong double bullock-cart for the carriage of our stores and camp furniture to the happy hunting-grounds of the south, with a sturdy Singhalese nigger as driver; George, an intelligent native lad of seventeen summers, who spoke capital English, as my own personal attendant; Mathis, a well-known shikaree, and, to his discredit be it said, an ex-convict; and Sinho, the little gun-bearer.

Towards the end of the month Austin made his appearance, and a goodly appearance it was. Imagine a fellow

some six feet two in height, and broad in proportion; a small head, fixed on a rather short, muscular neck; features of which Adonis himself might well have been proud; and, to crown all, a wealth of curly brown hair, showing in all its glorious disorder as he stalked into my office and greeted me by flinging his battered old helmet at my unoffending head.

'I danced a war-dance,' he said, 'when I received your note, at the prospect of quitting the magisterial bench for three consecutive months; and as I was looking over some J. P. cases in chambers when it came, my Interpreter Mudaliyar must have thought me somewhat crazy; but he quite appreciated my spirits when I explained the cause, and begged to be permitted to accompany me, so I have brought him. He is influential in his way amongst the natives, has pluck, and might be useful.'

'All right,' said I, 'the more the merrier. Of course you have brought Kismet with you, as you will require a good strong mount. I intend deputing to the Devil the task of carrying my illustrious body; and the Mudaliyar can put Flora Temple in the dog-cart, and pave the way for us as far as Tangalla.'

I had invited a few jovial friends to meet Austin, and it was a merry party of six which sat down round the flowered satin-wood table, covered with a snowy damask, and supporting dishes of roasts and *entrées*.

A dinner in Ceylon is dry without a liberal supply of the liquid element; and as a dry feast conduces to tie up the tongues of both guests and hosts, I took care to depute to George the charge of a supply of champagne and beer *ad lib.*

Austin sat facing me at the foot of the table, and his handsome face glowed with pleasure and good nature at

the prospect of a pleasant evening, to be followed by a three-month holiday, with no daily attendance at court, no proctors and *peons*,* nor annoying native witnesses vying with each other to tell the biggest lie and take in his acute worship the *naddu carè uennanse.*† Parrington and Maxwell sat on his right and left respectively; the former a clever and steady young writer (Civil servants, on their first arrival in the Island, are attached to the Secretariat, or Government Agents' offices as writers), with a large supply of ready wit, and a determination to be Governor of the Fijis at no very remote period; the latter, a bulky, yet handsome and somewhat rowdy planter. On my right sat Henderson, the judge of the district and a most inveterate punster; and on my left Irvine, of the —— Regiment, who had come over from Secunderabad to patch up his health, which had given way, not to mention his collar-bone which had been broken by running his horse after dinner at what he supposed to be a buffalo barring the way, and what turned out to be a five-foot stone wall.

'I wish I could go with you,' sighed Irvine.

'Better not,' said Parrington, 'unless you lay in a small stock of collar-bones before starting.'

Irvine reddened a bit, but laughed good-naturedly as he replied, 'It's all very well chaffing, but the sensation was anything but pleasant. Have any of you fellows missed a step going down-stairs in the dark? Well, it's something similar, though the shock was greater and the result more disastrous. I thought it was a buff and would bolt, but it was neither the one nor did the other. It's vexing, to say the least of it, to cast your bones asunder, but adding injury to injury to find that your horse has managed to rid himself of a pound or so of flesh off his knee.'

* Messengers. † Magistrate or judge.

'What did you do with the brute?' I asked.

'Sent him to the vet.'s and had his knee doctored and painted so well that you wouldn't know he had damaged it. In fact he's as good as new, and,' he laughed, 'I'll sell him to you cheap for your trip.'

My reply was to pull down the lower lid of my left eye, and make a very unoriginal remark.

'Less bargaining and more liquor,' said Maxwell. 'His Worship over the way can't bear horsey talk.'

'I'll beer it then,' said the judge, as he drained his glass of nut-brown ale.

'You're something of a shot aren't you, Maxwell?' I asked. 'I remember hearing of your first attempt in that line shortly after you took up duty as *Sinne Dora** on Le Vallon Estate. Spin the yarn, and fill your glass.'

'Thanks; I'll reverse the order, and first fill my glass. Now then you warrior across the table, lend me thine ear and find in me a companion in adversity. Once upon a time——'

'Drop the Grimm style,' said Henderson, 'and come to the point.'

'Well,' said Maxwell laughing, 'I was lying awake one morning shortly after taking possession of my room in the big bungalow on Le Vallon, when I saw what appeared to me to be a rat-snake cautiously moving along the rafters above my head. I have a horror of all such oviparous brutes, and, thinking it a capital opportunity of testing the powers of my deringer, took aim and fired: imagine my chagrin when the P. D.'s favourite black cat came down with a yell.'

'Must have been his tenth life,' remarked Parrington. 'Unlucky for you. What did you do?'

* Assistant Superintendent.

'Sent him to the cooly lines to be curried, and promised the P. D.* never to do it again.'

'For which piece of short-sightedness you ought to have had the cat,' said the judge.

Dinner passed off pleasantly, and we were plunging into walnuts and raisins, when we were disturbed by a succession of howls coming from the direction of the stables. Rushing over, we found that the Devil had caught my horsekeeper, a Tamil, by the seat of his only and scanty garment—an old pair of my duck trousers cut away at the knees—and was viciously shaking him. As one might imagine, the cloth, not proof against such rough treatment, gave way, and *Muttu*† rolled on a heap of straw, where he invoked the aid of his parents, and commenced preparations for his departure to another world by the confession of a limited number of minor sins. We had him out, and finding he was more frightened than hurt, cautioned him to tie the horse up in future before commencing grooming operations, and returned to our wine and post-prandial cigars.

In all my experience of horses in Ceylon the Devil was the most vicious I ever came across. He had been a racer in his day, and had won several cups; but developing a morbid inclination to indulge in human flesh, his owner sold him to a coach-proprietor, by whom he was put between the shafts, and, being worked hard, had sobered down a bit. Admiring his massive proportions and fast, steady trot, I purchased him cheap. Being now only moderately worked he took to his old habits, and many are the narrow escapes I had of being kicked into another world. He was a hero in his way, had killed one horsekeeper and smashed fourteen carriages before he came into my possession; but once made to go it was a treat to be

* Superintendent. † Horsekeeper.

on his back or sit behind him. To this day I bear the mark of his gentle hoof on my left knee, a kick which laid me on my back for a fortnight, and it was not the first or last I received before parting with him, which I finally did, to the relief of my anxious relatives.

On the following morning began our final preparations for departure. The cart was despatched early and our horses sent on to Matara, there to await our arrival, my horsekeeper taking with him a letter to the rest-house-keeper to look after the animals and provide breakfast for two next day. About 5 p.m., having packed up our portmanteaus, we joined the tennis players at the club court, and passed the evening pleasantly amongst our friends of both sexes. Tea, and something stronger, were provided on the ground under the shade of the suriya-trees (*Thespesia populnea*) which bound the court. The party broke up at dusk, when we made our way to the Oriental Hotel, where we dined.

One of the P. and O. boats had come in that morning, and the *table d'hôte* was well packed with passengers bound to Australia and China. Both Hugh and I were silent, intent on listening to the varied conversation around us, and amused at the eulogiums passed on the scenery round and about Galle. A few had run up to Baddegama for a glance at the sugar plantations and manufactory there, doing the twenty-two mile return journey on horseback. Some had driven to Wackwella and breakfasted at Bogaar's restaurant, which stands on a hill five miles from Galle, and commands a fine view of the town with its pretty harbour, on the south. Northwards is the Hiniduma, or Haycock Hill, whose purple dome can be seen far out at sea, acting as a guide to the crews of the fishing-boats and coasters. In the nearer distance can be traced the sluggish waters of the Gindura river as it winds its way through mudded fields

and green *deniyas*;* disappearing in dense masses of tangled jungle, or under the shade of the lofty cocoa-palms, and again showing itself only to be lost once more in the broad expanse of some reed-grown swamp. Others had been content to wander about the town and bargain with the Tambies, as the Moor traders are called, for curiosities such as elephants cut in ivory and ebony, porcupine-quill boxes, tortoise-shell ornaments, toy canoes, and the thousand-and-one oddities brought to the hotel and hawked about the streets when there happens to be an influx of passengers. Wary, indeed, must the youthful globe-trotter be unless he is content to receive cut-glass for the valued sapphire and ruby, or well-gilt brass for the pure metal. I have known one of these swindlers ask 5*l.* for a ring and come down to 30*s.*, a sure proof that the gewgaw is not worth more than a rupee.

Unfortunately for Galle, the P. and O. and other mail-boats, as well as most of the steamers, make Colombo their port of call now that the breakwater there is nearly completed, and there has been in consequence a general exodus of merchants, chiefly natives, to the capital.

Hugh and I spent the night at the hotel, and took our seats in the royal mail coach for Matara which called for us at 5.30 in the morning. A few preliminary false notes followed by a shrill call from the bugle, and off we rattle at a swinging gallop, under the old Dutch arch, and over the bridge across the dry moat; past the esplanade, with the harbour and shipping to our right; into the native town, with its boutiques on either side the street; and finally, passing the Kachcheri, or Government Agent's offices, we leave Galle behind us and hurry along the metalled main road.

* Low-lying grassland.

CHAPTER II.

THE stages are five miles apart. At Ahangamuwa, or the 'sleeping village,' we get out to shake our limbs and light our cigars. Taking our seats again on the box by our copper-coloured driver, who is dressed in a blue serge suit and a forage cap, we rattle on, and in an hour reach Welligama, where the coach stops for a few minutes. Alighting, we walked to the rest-house, which is about fifty yards off the road to the right, and overlooks the pretty little bay with its boundary of large black rocks on the one hand; and on the other, a long stretch of cocoa-fringed beach on which are stranded frail-looking canoes of various sizes.

A curious object met our gaze on the step of the verandah. We could not, at first, distinguish whether he was a large monkey, or a small boy; but presently seeing him go on all fours, leap on the verandah rails and cling to them, decide that he must belong to the Simiadæ family, but the link is missing and he exhibits no tail. Wondering, we approach, and find that he is in reality a human being but covered with hair, and with a face the exact counterpart of a wandurá (*Sing.* monkey). At the time of his birth this creature's parents, who belonged to the fisher caste, were in very poor circumstances. So soon as the monkey-boy, as he is called, could crawl from the hut to the roadside, he excited the compassion of some, and disgust of the other travellers, and by many years of importunate begging succeeded in accumulating a sufficient sum of money to enable his people to erect a substantial house, and purchase a few acres of ground in the neighbourhood of the village. What would Barnum not give to add this abortion to his extensive show

A little over an hour's drive from Welligama and we enter the noisy main street of Matara. Here the post-horn is brought into constant play, and carts and hackeries make way for us. The latter is a peculiarly light little two-wheeled vehicle on springs, generally hooded, and drawn by a single zebu. The unfortunate horses have a liberal supply of the lash and increase their pace, until we seem to fly past the houses and native shops. Nupe church to the left; the police station to the right; and the Start Fort, the residence of the Public Works Officer to the left are soon passed, and we rumble over the big iron bridge across the Nilwelli Ganga (blue-sand river); under the Dutch Arch; turn a couple of sharp corners round the esplanade, and stop opposite the rest-house. After depositing most of the passengers here with their luggage, the coach makes its way to the post-office a few doors further.

John, the rest-house-keeper, a tall sleek Singhalee, with clear-cut features and light-brown complexion, meets us at the door with a broad grin of welcome, for he knows us both well, and shows us to our rooms. We refresh ourselves with a tub and clean clothes, preparatory to paying our respects to the Assistant Government Agent, whose bungalow is over the way, and by whom we are kindly persuaded to stay and breakfast.

Our cart had arrived the night before and had started early that morning, and the Mudaliyar had also driven on in the dog cart to Tangalla, twenty-two miles farther, where we were to meet him on the following day.

After breakfast Hugh and I returned to the rest-house; and in the afternoon strolled over to the Star Fort and called on the Sinclairs, returning with them to the rampart, which divides the fort or old Matara from the New Town, and which is the usual evening promenade of the resident

Europeans. Here we find most of the Government officials, whilst others join in a game of cricket or tennis on the green below. At dusk we bid adieu to our friends, and, partaking of an early dinner, mount our horses and start on our onward journey.

It is a brilliant moonlight night, and the pale light falling across the tall cocoa-nut trees and quaint mosque casts weird shadows on the roadway, and almost motionless river. The streets are nearly deserted, and the silence of the night is broken by the quiet hum of voices issuing from the closed boutiques, or the more discordant barking of a pariah dog disturbed by our approach, whilst from not a few of the huts might be heard the nasal lullaby of a mother sending her infant to sleep, as she sits on the ground, the child cradled between her legs which are stretched before her, with its head resting on a pillow thrown across her feet.

Three miles from Matara we pass the little village of Dondra, the southernmost part of the Island. It is nine miles from here to Dikwella, and the road for the most part skirts the shore, only separated from it by a narrow strip of cocoa-nut gardens. Occasionally it turns more inland and we lose sight of the sea, and the cocoa-nut topes clustering above our heads envelope us in almost complete darkness.

'Dark as Hades!' ejaculates Hugh.

'Yes, one expects every moment to see the spirit of some dear departed suddenly appear from the deeper shade of those clusters of wild pine (Pandanus). They look like a forest in miniature with those fantastically shaped stems and crowns of prickly pinnate leaves. I often place a bunch of the fragrant flowers amongst my clothes, but my bhoy tells me they attract snakes.'

'I hardly believe it as I have often done the same with no such result. Hark at those brutes!'

Just then the melancholy wail of a pack of jackals broke upon our ears and added to the weirdness of the surroundings, so that we were glad when a turn of the road brought us again in view of the sea, sparkling in the bright light of a tropical full moon.

The Dikwella rest-house is near the one hundred and twelfth milestone, and about a hundred yards from the beach, which can be seen from its verandah. Here we were glad to dismount, and, after seeing to our horses, seek our respective cribs.

Early next morning the rest-house-keeper, Babua, an aged blackamoor who reminded you of a gorilla, knocked at our door and handed in a bottle of 'telijja,' or sweet toddy.

The kitul, *Anglicè*, Malabar sago palm (*Caryota urens*), begins to flower in its seventh year. Before the flower opens it is cut, and a chatty, or earthenware vessel, is attached to it to collect the toddy which is subsequently made into jaggery or sugar. This toddy is seldom allowed to ferment,—rá as it is then called,—and the cocoa-nut toddy is what is more frequently used to make arrack. The kitul sweet toddy when newly drawn is a refreshing drink, and is known to be a cure for the Ceylon sore mouth in its primary stage. When the tree is from forty to fifty years old it is cut down, and the pithy substance enclosed in the trunk from the top, just below the branches, to a few feet down, is taken out, dried, and pounded, and made into a kind of sago very commonly used by the natives, and said by them to be most nutritious.

Shortly after daybreak we were again in the saddle; and after a cool ten mile ride came in sight of the Tangalla Jail,

standing on an elevated piece of ground just above Christ Church, a neat little building which was pushed to its completion by the late respected judge before he left the district on pension. A few hundred yards further, on the slope of the hill, is the judge's residence—until a year ago the rest-house—and court houses. Here the road curves to the left, following the sweep of the sea, and a minute's hard riding brought us to the rest-house, where we off-saddled. The Mudaliyar met us at the gate, the cart with the rest of our gang having pushed on.

The Tangalla rest-house overlooks a picturesque bay on which float numerous little fishing canoes, the swarthy occupants of which seem to haul in tiny denizens of the deep with the greatest ease and rapidity. The line is cast by the fisher —the rod used being invariably the dried centre-rib of the leaf of the kitul palm, which is exceedingly light, about twelve feet long, and admirably adapted for the purpose,—the canoe is propelled hither and thither by the only other occupant, and presently the rod is raised with a jerk, and a streak of silver is seen flying through the air. In a few moments the fish is deposited in the bottom of the boat, and the hook is again taking its speedy course of destruction on the surface of the still water. The bazaar is just below the rest-house, and here the fish caught in the morning are sold; the incoming of the boats being a signal for the neighbourhood to turn out of their huts and invest their cents in sprats and the long eel-like fish which abound in the bay.

We remained at Tangalla for a week, tempted to do so by the prospect of some good shooting. On the morning after our arrival we determined to visit the Mulkirigala Temple, and taking our guns with us started at dawn, the Mudaliyar, or chief headman of the district, accompanying us. Beyond the bazaar we passed the small teak and satin-

wood garden, and, crossing the wooden bridge over the Kurundu Oya, took the road to the left.

A mile's drive brought us to capital shooting ground. Miles of open low-lying country lay stretched before us, bounded in the distance by chènad slopes; the marshy ground extending eastward almost to the sea. Birds were plentiful, the swampy fields being in some parts covered with the white-plumaged egret (*Ardea Garzetta*), whilst flocks of teal would occasionally fly whistling over our heads.

Shots followed in quick succession from our respective guns, but the hour's sport proved an expensive luxury to me. Seeing an egret perched on the back of a buffalo I fired and killed it, some of the shot finding a home in the back of the buff, which objecting to the peppering, took to its heels. Not until then did I notice that it had a calf by its side. After this accident the mother would, in all probability, refuse to give milk; and as this would result in the death of the young calf, I bought the two for twenty rupees and sent them to Tangalla, where I subsequently sold them for fifteen rupees, the calf dying a few days after. Immediately after this exploit I returned to the road, where I found Hugh and the Mudaliyar awaiting me in the trap.

'Have you bagged anything?' I asked gloomily as we drove along.

'Not much; only half-a-dozen elephants and a couple of rhinoceros,' said Hugh, with a winning smile.

'Shot cost me twenty rupees,' I grunted. 'What a disreputable figure you look!' I added, eyeing him for a moment. 'Judging by your appearance you must have made close acquaintance with a buffalo wallah.'

'True for you, I did! I had been out barely ten

minutes when I was up to my waist. The Mudaliyar has to thank me for leading the way. The next time we go out together on a similar expedition, and when paddy-fields are to be the order of the day, I'll give you precedence Mudaliyar.'

Mr. Candamby smiled and looked at his snow-white sarong.

'I fear the colour of my cloth wouldn't stand the test, sir; and if you insist on my taking the lead, I shall have to prepare myself for the occasion by dressing——'

'*A la goyiya*,'* I chimed in. 'You'd look a pretty figure, Candamby, dressed in a handkerchief, three feet of string, and a bamboo hat covering your *caput*.'

The aristocratic Singhalee could afford to smile at this picture of himself, as he pointed to a veritable *goyiya* driving his team of buffaloes to the scene of action.

I was driving the filly, Flora Temple,—as bonny a little mare as you could wish to see. She was of a dark roan colour with black points, and feet like a deer. With her the whip always lay idle, and a soft word from me was sufficient to quicken her pace. I was obliged now, however, to take her along easily, as the road had narrowed and was badly cut up in places; indeed, at one point a culvert had given way, and we had to obtain a few planks from a neighbouring hut before we could proceed; so that we were thankful when we reached Udukiriwilla. Here we repaired to the bungalow occupied by the guardian of the tank, by whom we were courteously received, and were soon busily engaged discussing the remains of a cold fowl, and rapidly reducing the pile of hoppers—a sort of muffin made of rice-flour—before us, washing the whole down with tasty country-grown coffee.

* Husbandman.

The bungalow occupies a pretty site above the Udukiriwilla Tank bund, and from its verandah can be seen, in the far distance, the hill ranges of the Morawak Korale. In the immediate neighbourhood, and for some miles eastward, are extensive tracts of paddy-fields irrigated by the tank, and looking very much like narrow seas of emerald green; the islets are represented by small plots of higher ground, scattered at intervals, and covered with a luxuriant growth of cocoa, kitul, and areka palms; and breadfruit, jak, and mango trees. Near the dwellings grow the broad-leaved plantains, with their bunches of green and yellow fruit, which when half ripe, the tree is cut down, another springing in its place from the roots; a few sugar-canes; the indian corn, growing to a height of eight and ten feet, with their jointed stems crested with long sweeping blades and waving plumes, while from the end of each cone droops a long silky tassel of green. The cones are covered with a number of seeds, which, when unripe and boiled, make a much-relished delicacy for the table. Among the vegetables which carpet the ground are melons, cucumbers, and sweet potatoes; and growing from their midst are shrubs of the chili, wambatu or brinjal; a viscous vegetable called bandakai; and unlimited weeds. A little plot of half an acre, with an equally small area of paddy-field, is a sufficient inducement to the generality of Singhalee peasantry to retire and settle down to a life of drowsy idleness; but with such a climate as Ceylon there is every excuse for inert indolence to those whose wants are few. Again, excessive fatigue and exposure are apt to sow the seeds of the so-called jungle fever, which, when once it works its way into the system, is not easily eradicated.

At certain harvests called 'Maha' and 'Yala,' the paddy crops are gathered in, and man, woman, and child

turn out and work. The ground is now dry and hard, and can be walked upon without fear of a sudden disappearance. The women cut the corn, tying it in small sheaves, which are carried by the children to the threshing-floor, generally occupying a central position, where they are stamped upon by buffaloes driven and guided by the men. The straw is either carried to the neighbourhood of the huts where it is subsequently stacked, or taken to the road and carted away to the nearest town for sale. The grain is again trodden over, and finally, whilst a few sweep it in heaps, others use a shallow basket made of split cane with which they fan away the chaff and dust. The grain is then put into two-bushel sacks and stored, and afterwards, as the requirements of the household demand, it is pounded and converted into rice. Government gets one tenth, one eighth, and more rarely one fourth share of the crops; a certain share is then given to the cultivators; a portion laid aside as seed; and the remainder goes to the owner of the soil. When the monsoons set in, always with much rain, the sod is turned and the ground flooded and ploughed, each *goyiya* building a narrow *niyara*, or embankment of mud round his claim, which, after being well mudded by himself and his team of buffaloes, is manured with bone-dust. The seed paddy, previously prepared by first being soaked in water in a gunny sack until the roots begin to show, is then partially dried and scattered over the fields. At this time, and also when the grain is ripe, a shed of kadjans—the dried, plaited leaves of the cocoa palm—is erected on poles some eight feet above ground, where the watcher takes his place and keeps off the numerous doves and ortolans by repeated shouts of 'Ho-ha!' or by pulling a string which is attached to rattles placed at intervals throughout the fields.

It was early June now and the paddy plants were still growing, while the *goyiya* slumbered, or lazily reclined by the door of his hut while the wife of his bosom inspected his head in search of the lively little flea and calmed his ruffled temper by combing out the mass of long and wavy black hair, deluging it with fresh cocoa-nut oil, and finally tying it up behind in a knot, or *condé*, as they call it. A few only of the more actively inclined would work at their korakhan and menéri (fine grain) fields.

I may here mention a peculiar superstition which prevails in this part of the island, and connected with it an incident which occurred shortly before my visit. It is believed that during harvest operations all should be merriment and rejoicing, and ill-news be kept in the background, otherwise a famine would be certain to follow. On one occasion an unfortunate youth conveyed the intelligence of the death of a near relative to some of his friends who were working in the field. Goaded by their superstitious fear they beat the poor lad so unmercifully that he died a few days after.

The morning was now well advanced; the sun shining fiercely from a cloudless sky. Clothed in suits of a bottle-green colour provided for us by the Basil Mission Weaving Establishment at Canonore, and with pith helmets covered with the same material, Austin and I, carrying our guns and accompanied by a couple of small boys, walked down to the bund, and taking a path to the left skirted the tank. The large sheet of water was covered with innumerable birds, whilst on the bare branches of some solitary dead tree in mid-tank were perched one or two of the black-plumaged darters. On some of the sand-banks lay crocodiles basking open-mouthed in the sun, and looking very much like logs of dead wood. Fearing we should disturb the smaller game we resisted the temptation of firing at

them, and tramped along the pathway and through the low lantana scrub, with their flowers of pink and deep orange, and bramble-like berry; the curse of Ceylon. Many years ago this shrub was brought to the island from the Mauritius, and placed as an ornament in the garden at 'Queen's House:' now there are very few patches of high ground which have been neglected for a few years which are not covered with it.

Presently, we hear a succession of prolonged and mournful whistling sounds issuing from a berried tree not many yards distant; and cautiously making his way to the spot, Hugh, with one shot, brought down a couple of the bright-plumaged batagoya, or green pigeon.

There are several species of the wood-pigeon in Ceylon. The 'Allu-Kobaya,' or literally 'ash-pigeon,' which corresponds with our ring-dove, is the smallest. Next comes the 'Neela Kobaya,' or blue pigeon, the head and tail being a dark, and the wings a rather bright and glistening, green-blue. Then comes the 'Batagoya,' from bata, the bamboo-cane which forms part of what is termed 'Jungle' in Ceylon. This is the prettiest of all the species, being a light yellow or primrose, blue, and green prettily blended, and marking the wings and head. The largest of the species is the 'Maÿilagoyá,' which is of a dull slate colour, and as large as our English wood-pigeon. Lastly we have the 'Gal-paraya,' or rock-pigeon, which are found in large numbers on the isolated rocks on the coast.

At the first shot the pigeons dispersed, and Austin walked stealthily to a clump of tall jungle where a call, sounding very like 'Geor Joyce,' proclaimed the proximity of a jungle-cock. This is one of the handsomest of the feathered creation infesting the woods of Ceylon. The male birds have very brilliant golden-red plumage, with

sweeping blue-black tail-feathers. They closely resemble our game-cock in every respect, barring the crow, which is as unlike that of our rooster as the piping of a canary is to the chirp of its mate; the one is loud, continuous, and shrill, the other short and hoarse. They are pugnacious in the extreme, and have spurs, which in slang parlance may be called 'a caution,' being about an inch and a quarter in length. Crouched under the shelter of a leafy shrub I have frequently watched the birds as, with defiant cries, they approached each other from either side till meeting in the open a battle royal would ensue, and end by a shot from my gun depriving both combatants of life. The hens are all alike and are speckled deep brown and grey.

Tempted by a flock of teal which had settled on the water not far off I waded into the tank; but, as there was no cover to screen my approach, they took to flight. Noticing a large bird standing on the stump of a tree in a marshy part of the tank at some sixty yards distance, I brought it down with my rifle, and, when fetched by my boy, was agreeably surprised to find that I had bagged a marabou, a bird now very seldom met with in Ceylon, and whose plumes, which are found under the tail-feathers, are as handsome as they are rare and valuable.

I was now beginning to feel tired, as well as intensely hot and uncomfortable, and, calling to Hugh who had missed his quarry, we returned to the bungalow, first quenching our thirst with a kurumba or young cocoa-nut, the water of which, with a dash of lime-juice, has only to be drunk when hot, tired, and thirsty, to be appreciated.

After breakfast we enjoyed a quiet siesta on lounges in the cool verandah, and in the afternoon drove to Kahawey, five miles distant, where we were shown, and duly admired, a figure of Buddha in a squatting posture. This figure, which

was carved out of wood, was about six feet high, and most æsthetically painted, the predominating colour being yellow. It stood on a small table, and in front and on either side were several similar, but small images cast in brass and silver, as well as a representation in silver of the Sacred Bo tree. The inside of the walls of this little wihara, which was not more than ten feet square, was decorated with rude paintings of Siva, Vishnu, and other Buddhistical deities; and a couple of large, uncouth, black figures guarded the entrance. On the outside of the walls were paintings describing the different places of torment, and several figures undergoing punishment. Close by, on a rock, stood the dagoba, or cenotaph of Buddha, shaped like an egg cut in half and standing on its base, and crowned with a small gilded spire. A little beyond was the 'Bana-gé,' a circular-thatched building with mudded half-walls, in the centre of which was a small stage or pulpit from which the priest delivered his discourse on the life of Gautama from dusk till daylight, the audience squatting on the floor or reclining in an easy attitude; while the arachchi, or principal headman of the village, seated close to the pulpit, would now and again interrogate the priest on any point which he may be at a loss to understand, or encourage him to proceed by frequent and glib 'Ye-hes,' signifying 'I understand.' A little beyond the bana-gé was the 'Pancela,' or monastery, a substantial mud-and-plaster building with a tiled roof. In the middle of the compound flourished the sacred 'Bo' (*Ficus religiosa*); and the air was laden with the perfume of sweet-scented flowers, that of the temple tree (*Plumiera*) predominating.

We returned at sunset and spent the evening playing at whist in which the Mudaliyar and guardian, a burgher, joined.

CHAPTER III.

We were up early next morning and started on foot for Mulkirigala, which was reached after a walk of a little under three miles. The wihara and dagoba here stand on the top of a rocky hill, the pancela being at the foot. Rude steps had been cut to the temple so that we found no difficulty in the ascent; and on reaching the summit we were amply rewarded for our not difficult climb by the magnificent view which greeted our eyes.

Far away in the distance rose the coffee-clad hills of the Morawak Korale, standing out against the horizon in all their rugged grandeur, while seemingly in their midst could easily be distinguished Sri-pada, or Adam's Peak, in the Ratnapura district. Towards the south was the deep-blue sea with its snowy specks of fishing-boats; and here and there a low white line which marked some hidden reef; while in the farther distance was a dim outline, which leaving in its progress a dark cloud behind it, pronounced it to be a steamer homeward bound. A sigh escaped my lips as my eyes rested on this object, and my thoughts took their rapid flight over thousands of miles of ocean to a little green spot in a country churchyard where my heart with its first and only love lay buried.

'Homesick?' asked Hugh, as he kindly took my arm.

'Suffering from a slight attack of nostalgia,' I replied, as with another sigh I bottled up my feelings. 'Give the monkeys a few nuts, Hugh; good-natured as you are I am sure you have some brotherly feeling for them;' and I indicated a long-tailed chattering group, perched on a rock close at hand.

'Stow your chaff, and let us follow our saffron-robed brother into the wihara.'

A young priest had accompanied us and now entered the temple, which is cut out of the solid rock, rough and uncouth enough on the outside and cavernous within. The uneven walls and roof were painted to portray incidents in the life of Gautama, as well as the ingenious tortures awaiting sinners in the lower regions; also the happiness which will accrue to those who strictly follow the precepts of Buddha, and make Nirwana, utter annihilation, their aim in each successive life. There were also several life-sized figures of the deities sculptured in the solid rock, and reclining before us under a gauze veil was a huge figure of Gautama measuring some eighteen cubits in length. On a table in front of the figure stood several golden, silver, and brass images; and on either side of the table were two large elephant's tusks, each about five feet long.

A number of villagers of both sexes were assembled together on the well-trodden floor of the compound in front of the 'Shrine of the Tooth'—mothers carrying their babes, and the younger women leading the elder children, while a plump youngster might be seen perched on the shoulder of his happy father, and, clothed in an English frock of many colours, with a flaming red and yellow bandana tied round his head, and proud of his gaudy raiments, you expect every moment to hear him crow. Not a few of the younger children came in their skins and nothing more, with perhaps in a few cases a piece of string tied round their waists, to which was attached a silver ornament in the shape of a heart or a bell. I doubt if even in England you would find children with such plump forms and sweetly expressive features. Up to the age of twenty the Singhalese peasantry are remarkable

for their beauty of form and feature, especially the women; the rounded chin and soft, full lips, *retrousée* nose, and almond-shaped eyes, fringed with long, black lashes, a too-narrow forehead, with jet-black hair, remarkable for its quantity and length, which both sexes wear tied behind in a knot. The lower classes are decidedly better-looking than their more aristocratic sisters, but after twenty-five they become *passé*, and rapidly age, and very many of the older women are quite repulsive. The hideousness of their aspect is intensified by the habit of chewing betel, a mouthful consisting of a leaf of the betel pepper spread over with a small quantity of moistened quicklime (chunam), and wrapped round a few scrapings of the areka-nut. This causes their lips and teeth to be dyed a deep-red colour, and in some cases, after continued use, and unless much care is taken to clean the latter daily, it blackens and destroys them.

This quaint admixture of youthful beauty and aged ugliness carried in their hands, and in shallow baskets, flowers of the jasmine; temple-tree; hibiscus or shoe flower; and the beautiful rose-coloured nellum, or water-lily (Nellumbium), the lotus of the Hindus, to be offered at the shrine of Buddha,—a poetical instance of their religious ceremony. All were clothed in their Sunday best, the men with different-coloured 'sarongs' and white vests: and the women wearing comboys, a cloth worn round the waist reaching to the ankles, and corresponding to the sarongs of the men; and loose, white, embroidered jackets, in many cases trimmed with a quantity of lace worked by themselves: for it was 'Poya' day, the Singhalese Sabbath.

Shortly after we left we could hear the nasal twang of the youthful priest as he chanted the 'Saranagamanaya,' or Buddhist prayer, the crowd meekly kneeling and devoutly repeating each line. The prayer had evidently been con-

cluded when we reached the foot of the hill, for the air resounded with loud and frequent cries of 'Sah!' a corruption of 'Sahdu,' meaning praise, a word which is also used at every mention of the sacred name of Gautama.

We did not return to Udukiriwilla, but took a short cut across country to the minor road of Kahawatte. Crossing on our way the wooden bridge which spans the Kahawatte river, my attention was attracted by numbers of fair-sized fish under the shadow of the bridge. Throwing some crumbs into the water I was surprised to see with what little fear they came to the surface, all excitedly scrambling for the food. A shot from my gun proved destructive, and the majority suddenly disappeared, leaving some of their number floating dead on the water. The shot attracted the attention of the Mudaliyar who was lagging behind, and on joining me and seeing what I had done, he raised his hands in sorrow. 'These are sacred fish, Mr. Mackenzie, and are daily fed and cared for by the villagers: should they find out what you have done, I fear they may show their resentment in some unpleasant way. Leave the fish to be carried down stream, and let us hurry on.'

I expressed my regret at having unknowingly destroyed what was held so sacred, and we entered the little mud bungalow, a building of three small rooms and a verandah, erected for the convenience of the Assistant Government Agent when on circuit, where we breakfasted. Here we rested till the afternoon, starting again at 4 p.m.

A couple of miles from Kahawatte is the Beliatta Bazaar, which on certain days in the week is a rendezvous for the neighbouring villagers who flock in with the vegetable products of their gardens slung on pingoes,—long laths of some tough wood smoothed and pointed at the ends. In this way a man of ordinary strength can carry heavy

loads which are attached to both ends of the pingo, which is then balanced on the shoulder.

Four roads branch off from the bazaar; one to Kahawatte, one to Dikwella, another to Hackmana, and a fourth to Tangalla. Each boutique has a frontage of about fifteen feet, and depth of from twenty to thirty feet. The generality of them have, besides an inner room, a verandah, walled on three sides and open in front, where the goods are displayed. In one might be seen glass-doored almirahs, or wardrobes, in which are stored clothes of various patterns and qualities, most of them gaudy in colour and rough in texture. Merino vests, leather belts, and necklets of bright-coloured beads are strung from pillar to pillar across the entrance; whilst on wooden shelves are exposed paper umbrellas, cotton, buttons, and all the paraphernalia of a haberdasher's establishment. In the adjoining boutique will be found dried fish, onions, rice, shrimps, maldive fish, and English potatoes of very questionable quality; whilst the trader sits cross-legged in the midst of his odoriferous merchandise. On a slight elevation to the south of the main street is a raised cement platform with large white-washed pillars supporting a tiled roof under which the fruit and vegetables are exposed for sale; and beyond this is another similar building, the fish market; on either side are small boutiques and dwelling-houses. Remaining only a few minutes at Beliatta, we pressed on to Tangalla.

We spent four more days at Tangalla fishing in the bay, shooting in the neighbouring marshy grounds, and hunting along the shore for corals and shells of which we made a small but beautiful collection. Many an oyster feast did we enjoy on the rock-bound coast south of the town. Often were we surprised by the heavy waves as they rolled in, and, dashing against the rock on which we stood, drenched us to

the skin ere we could take to our heels. On one occasion I was washed into a basin hollowed in the rock, the receding wave leaving me standing up to my waist in water, much to Austin's amusement and my dismay. We were frequently assisted in our conchological collection by bright-eyed Singhalese urchins who would wade into the rock-bound pools, and pluck the large and prettily-marked shells which adhered to the rocks; sometimes diving for specimens of the vari-coloured corals which are to be found on this coast. These were often, though beautifully formed and perfect in every way, too large and heavy to be carried further than the rest-house, where I was obliged to leave them much to my regret.

On the morning of the 10th of June we left Tangalla and drove to Ranne, eight miles, the next stage on the road to Hambantota, and put up for the remainder of the day and the night in the little rest-house, a small, low-roofed building, consisting of two tiny bedrooms, and a dining-hall enclosed on three sides by a narrow, half-walled verandah, with the kitchen and outhouses at the rear. In front grew a noble specimen of the banyan-tree (*Ficus indica*). The parent bole was of large girth, and from its out-spreading branches depended numbers of rope-like stems struggling to reach the ground. Under its leafy shade squatted a number of gypsies, and on the branches above fluttered bright-plumaged birds which feasted on the red nuga berries (*Nuga*—Singhalese for banyan), and enlivened the place with their ceaseless chatter.

Our nomadic friends rose at our approach and salaamed low. By their cast of features and well-proportioned forms I should class them with the Rhodiyas, a caste much despised by the Singhalese and considered by them to be altogether too degraded to have any hope of Nirwana.

Nevertheless they were more pleasing in aspect than our gaunt high-caste, Vellalah rest-house keeper, who regarded their propinquity as an insult to his person, but, thinking discretion the better part of valour, left them undisturbed.

As I glanced kindly at them in passing, one of the four Amazons stepped forward, and taking my hand in her coffee-coloured palm requested permission to tell my fortune. Giving her a small piece of silver I told her that I already knew my sad fate, but that my handsome white-faced companion would no doubt wish to learn if the tender passion he encouraged in his manly bosom was reciprocated.

'Take care, Hugh,' I added to my friend; 'I see yonder Zingari scowling at us.'

'He'll have to hurt himself scowling then,' replied Austin, as he gave this bronze-coloured Minerva his hand and a piece of silver.

Taking his hand in hers, and tracing its lines with her forefinger, she proceeded to tell him that he would not marry the lady on whom he had set his heart; that he would marry twice in life; that he is destined to become a great traveller and author; make a fortune in precious stones; and finally shuffle off this mortal coil immensely rich.

'You've got your money's worth, Hugh; Minerva looks as if she'd like a kiss as well as your coin. Mudaliyar, she wants some of the needful from you,' I laughingly said, turning to Mr. Gooneratne, the interpreter Mudaliyar, who had accompanied us; but he only showed his white teeth and passed on to the rest-house where we followed him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE Ranne rest-house is not the most desirable of the country hostelry in Ceylon. The rooms are small, the roof low, and the verandah half-walled and narrow, giving you a cramped and stifled feeling as you recline on a lounge and fruitlessly endeavour to get cool. There is enough furniture to satisfy the wants of the passing traveller: amongst the rest two beds with coir mattresses, the ticking of which showed very dubious and greasy stains, as if 'Appuhamy,' on retiring at nights, or taking an afternoon siesta, had been indifferent where he placed his occiput with its recently acquired wealth of cocoa-nut oil, and endeavoured to keep his feet warm by ripping the cloth and diving into the coir. As for the latter, it proved that night to be tenanted by a variety of insects of torture, from the centipede down to the flea. My dinner had been moderate, very; but I awoke at midnight with the impression that I was undergoing the torments of the lower regions. A centipede had taken possession of the big toe of my right foot; a few species of the diptera were executing American-Indian war-dances on my breast to the tune of a dozen or so of mosquitoes which had found their way inside the curtains; and there was an odour of green bug about calculated to alter the most angelic of nasal expressions. The peculiar sharp buzz of a mosquito as he approached my forehead, and the satisfied whine with which he alighted on it and proceeded to make me personally acquainted with his proboscis, completed the Elysian state of my feelings and making a few cursory remarks I sprang out of bed and fled to the verandah where I found Hugh smoking and star-gazing, with his arms folded and resting on the low verandah wall.

'I didn't disturb you, old man,' he said; 'you were apparently in the land of Nod and enjoying pleasant dreams. I couldn't sleep, and am afraid I vexed the dear little things in the mattress as they began to bite and play tricks; so bethought myself of my pipe and the gentle zephyrs out here. I never before came across a larger assemblage of mad insects in such a small space: the bed literally teemed with them, and to judge by their voracity they must have been fasting for at least a week.'

'I feel as if I was thoroughly perforated. Look at the banyan-tree, Hugh; it is literally ablaze with the lights of those fireflies whose brilliancy can only be compared to the stars of heaven. Let us sleep out here, it is more pleasant than the room.'

Wrapped up in our rugs we made ourselves as comfortable as we could on lounges, first lighting a log-fire near us to keep away the mosquitoes. Free from their ceaseless hum and the close atmosphere of the stifling bedroom, we gave ourselves up to the god of sleep, and slumbered peacefully till awaked at the first streak of dawn by the *réveille* of chanticleer.

Our first thought was the rest-house book, in which we entered our names, the amount due for occupation, stabling, &c.; and our complaint, suggesting that the beds be deluged with boiling water to dislodge the bugs, the mattresses destroyed, and a couple of new mosquito curtains obtained in lieu of the present ones, which, judging by the numbers and size of the rents might well pass for salmon-nets. This done we roused the keeper, and, while he was preparing our coffee, strolled to the river which crosses the road at the upper end of the village, and divesting ourselves of our pyjamas, turned into water-babies for a few minutes.

'It's confoundedly uncomfortable standing in the water, Colin,' shouted my companion; 'the minnows have taken a fancy to my calves, and won't let them alone. Provided with a net we might ——.'

A skilful stroke of my open hand on the water choked further utterance, and a friendly battle ensued until put a stop to by the warning cry of 'Kimbula! kimbula! prawē-sama mahatmaya, kimbula!' (Crocodile! crocodile! take care, sir, crocodile!) from the admiring spectators on the bridge; and sure enough, not many yards from where I stood, we saw the snout of a young croc appear for a moment above the surface of the water. Not wishing to be dismembered, and something more than our calves being in danger, we hastily gained the bank and made a rush for the ambalam, a tiled shed erected on the roadside for the convenience of the native travellers. Here we dressed ourselves and were soon enjoying our morning meal of coffee, eggs, hoppers, and plantains.

Clouds were gathering thickly in the clear horizon, and the day promised to be wet and stormy; but we had hitherto experienced such fine weather that a few heavy showers would be rather welcome than otherwise. Whilst preparing to mount my horse a heavy drop fell on my bridle-hand, the forerunner of the storm which was presently to burst upon us.

'You don't mind a wetting, Colin?'

'Rather like it,' I replied, as, with the aid of the two horsekeepers and a coat over his eyes, I mounted his Satanic majesty who immediately reared and commenced a pugilistic encounter with the air, the frightened horsekeepers taking to their heels. A tap on his head with the handle of my hunting-crop brought him on all-fours, and a gentle enticer from the spur resulted in his kicking a hole in the verandah-wall. Another touch, and he pounded a small

well in the hard ground of the compound; another, and he brought his head round and snapped his teeth within an inch of my leg. Hugh sat grinning on his horse a few yards ahead of me, but his expression changed, when after a couple of quickly-repeated raps from my whip the Devil leapt forward, gave Kismet a blow which nearly took all the wind out of him, and madly rushed to the road and over the bridge; Hugh and the Mudaliyar in the dog-cart following as fast as they could. We went over a mile of ground before I could conquer him, and then he stood panting and subdued, until the others came up. After this the pace was fast, but steady.

The rain-drops fell fast and heavily, and before we had covered half our journey the gates of heaven opened and the rain came down in torrents. The lightning flashed in blinding sheets, and the thunder rolled incessantly over our heads. The stout saplings in the jungle bent like reeds to the force of the storm, the once upright paddy plants were here and there broken and tangled, a stout young tamarind on the roadside was struck by the lightning before our eyes, and the electric fluid passing down the trunk stripped it of bark on one side; there was a few minutes' lull and the tempest again raged in full fury, stripping some of the trees of their branches, and causing the roadside-drains to turn into diminutive torrents.

Both the storm and our ride lasted a little over an hour, and a most woe-begone spectacle we presented as, after a ten-mile ride, we off-saddled at the steps of the Ambalamtota rest-house. Engaging a couple of Tamil coolies to attend to our horses, we entered the bungalow, and a change and a warm drink restored our spirits and prevented any ill effects from our late soaking.

The little village of Ambalamtota is situated on the

banks of the Wallaway River, and comprises the rest-house; a Buddhist temple; a toll-station and arrack tavern combined, where they retail the spirit at eight cents a glass, and keep a small supply of bottled beer on stock; about half-a-dozen huts; and a few boutiques. The banks of the river are lined with the cocoa, and other palms and fruit-trees; but the soil beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the water is so arid that it does not repay the trouble of any extensive cultivation: and the low land is so impregnated with water containing salacious matter that it is impossible to grow paddy on it. The Mudaliyar of the division lives about a mile seawards from the village and in the afternoon we paid a visit to the Walauwa, as the residence of these chief headmen is called. We were kindly received by Mr. Tillekeratne, and shown by him into a small reception-room which was furnished with a jak-wood round table; three or four chairs; an office table; a lounge; and a book-stand, on which lay scattered a few English novels, one or two copies of the Government Gazette, and a number of vernacular papers. *Café noir* was shortly served with a varied quantity of Singhalese cakes, of which, respecting our digestive organs, we partook but sparingly. A beautiful girl with a slight figure, light-olive complexion, and eyes which rivalled those of the fawn in their tender languishing expression, waited on us, and captivated the susceptible heart of friend Hugh; but she was the quintessence of shyness, and the soft black eyes, with their long-lashed lids, never for a moment glanced upwards as she brought in the tray and covered the table with a clean white cloth. Curiosity, however, got the better of her maidenly reserve, for soon after she left the room I saw her standing behind the door peering at us.

We afterwards strolled to the seaside, a few minutes' walk, and watched the crested waves as they rolled in,

bringing with them quantities of shells and shingle; and now and again pieces of coral, which the natives collect and convert into quicklime. At sunset we returned to the rest-house, Hugh walking with slow and reluctant steps, and often looking back in the hopes of catching a last glimpse of the charming demoiselle of the Ambalamtota Walauwa. A turn of the road brought us face to face with the young lady, who, at first startled, soon regained her composure, and, amused at the eloquent expression of Austin's face, rushed past him with a ringing laugh and fled like a deer homewards.

After dinner we resumed our journey by moonlight. The storm had cleared the air, and a cool, fresh sea-breeze fanned our cheeks as, after crossing the large wooden bridge which spans the river, we rode through a park-like country where the jungle only grew in small clumps, and at some distance apart. It is here that the sturdy ponies known as Hambantota tats are reared. These hardy little animals stand from twelve to thirteen hands, but, as a rule, are stubborn and slow. Five or six of them were quietly grazing near the road as we passed, and inquisitively followed us for half-a-mile, when they suddenly broke into a trot, and, leaping the roadside ditch, cantered across the open plain. A little farther on we passed one of their number lying dead across the drain, his back apparently broken. How the accident happened we never ascertained.

A couple of miles from Ambalamtota we passed the little village of Karawilla, where the natives grow in their gardens tobacco, as well as cucumbers, tomatoes, and other vegetable products. The country about here is remarkable for its paucity of vegetation. The herbage is scanty, and surrounded by masses of dense thorny jungle. The cactus-tree (*Euphorbia antiquorum*), known by the Singhalese as

the 'Daluk-gaha,' puts in an appearance, and the cocoa-nut and other palms almost entirely vanish, the very few seen looking scraggy and barren. There are extensive plains and salt lakes in the neighbourhood of the town of Hambantota, and at certain seasons the whole district is alive with game. The sea here is rapidly encroaching, and the old road has been almost entirely obliterated by the sand. The shore is lined with sand-hills about fifty feet high, and embedded in one of these, with the top only visible, was an unfortunate cocoa-nut tree, guiltless of fruit or flower. At the entrance to the town are a number of wells and bathing-places for the convenience of the inhabitants, who are chiefly Malays of the Mohammedan persuasion. Beyond the wells is the mosque, where the road branches, one leading to the Assistant Agent's quarters and offices, and the other to the rest-house. We took the latter, and in a few minutes had dismounted and retired to our respective beds, and, wearied with our storm and moonlight ride, slept soundly till morning.

We took a hasty look round the town next day, visiting the little library, and Kachcheri, and calling on the Assistant Agent, who is deservedly reputed to be one of the best shots in the island, his well-furnished bungalow being profusely ornamented with bear-skins and buffalo horns, deer, elk, and panther-skins, and footstools made of elephant's feet, whilst the walls are studded with deer and elk-heads, handsomely mounted, all being trophies of his success with the rifle. We afterwards called on and breakfasted with the herculean Public Works Officer, whose generosity only equals his pluck.

CHAPTER V.

HAMBANTOTA is one of the ports visited by the Colonial steamer Serendib on her trips round the Island; and the bay to-day was alive with fishing canoes and 'Dhonies,' or trading vessels, which carry away the quantities of salt collected in the leywyas, or salt lakes, from which the revenue of the district is principally derived.

On returning to the rest-house we found Mr. Dhoole, the intelligent Malay Mudaliyar, waiting for us, who kindly offered to assist us in any way. He was followed by the Mohandram, who ranks next to the Mudaliyar, and by other natives holding minor Government appointments.

European officials, wherever they go in the Island, are treated with the utmost respect, provided their conduct in turn is courteous and not overbearing. The following lines addressed to a relative of mine may give the reader some idea of Singhalese urbanity:—

'TO THE INTELLIGENT WILLIAM GORDON FORBES, ESQ.,

'*Who holds the appointment of Assistant Government Agent of Matura.*

'Oh, beautiful Matura!
Inhabited by Sreekantawa, Goddess of Beauty;
Charmed in the possession of rivers of clear fresh water,
Where clouds are mirrored. Abounding with white plastered houses,
Adorned with manifold paintings, which captivate the mind.
Pearl of Lanka! City of Palaces of the chief gods!
As full art thou of loveliness as of beauteous women,
Who carry the palm e'en from the courtesans of the gods:
Incessantly overflowing with splendour and glory;
Glittering with the varied mines of precious stones and pearls

Overflowing with the gloried splendour of the white kings
Who yield whatever is desired, and are descended
From the Heaven of Europe, the ornament of the world.
Thou, our respected Agent, art a celestial tree
Of plenty, sent from above to accomplish the designs
Of the inhabitants of this town, who give thee thanks :
For thou art eminent in goodness and understanding.
Thou dischargest the duties attached to the Kachcheri
Most conformably with the regulations provided.
Thou hast built, with the aid of the people of Matura,
Multiform excellent roads, like unto those in Heaven,
Which had long been in a very muddy and broken state,
But, by grav'ling them and overspreading them with white sand,
Thou hast made them fit for us to travel with more comfort.
Dextrous as thou art in the performance of thy duties ;
Pitying the sick ; relieving the poor, who all love thee ;
And affording the strong means of earning their livelihood
By trading in jack-fruit, cocoa-nuts and bread-fruit and rice.
Thou hast erected at Cotuwagoda, in the centre
Of the old boutiques, a magnificent, spacious hall,
Bright and glorious as the Council Chamber of the gods,
Standing on forty painted columns like silver pillars,
With a well-smoothed floor and tiled roof, being in length
One hundred and fourteen cubits, and eighteen cubits wide,
Thus presenting great lustre. Through thy valued medium
Many have obtained appointments, such as Modaliarships.
Thou, oh, great sir ! art possessed of a bosom resembling
The most beatific Residence of Sreekantawa.
Thy wife, the virgin Matura, has with great eagerness
Joined you, her lover ; and she is ornamenting herself
With the attire of the new decorated improvements.
Even the Singhalese people, being very highly pleased
With the works described and so generously carried out
By you, who art possessed of so great power, do constantly
And continually sing songs of praise and success.
May the great Lord Jehovah, Who preserves all life and love,
Watch and protect you, and pour on you all desired blessings,
Unmingled with any ill, that you may happily live

One hundred and twenty years, enjoying health, joy, and peace.
May you, with your family, shine long in fair Matura,
To promote the welfare of the inhabitants !'

Our cart arrived at Hambantota as we were on the point of leaving; so, giving the driver, or 'Karatté-kāraya,' instructions to engage fresh bullocks and hurry on, we started on foot for Welligatta, sending our horses on before us. On reaching the village, an eight-mile walk, we noticed a good deal of excitement amongst the villagers collected together in the compound of the Agent's bungalow; and, on inquiry, learnt that only a few minutes before, a panther had carried off a buffalo calf and was no doubt now lurking in the dense jungle which bordered the compound. The excitement was catching, and we eagerly grasped at the the opportunity offered of an animating hunt. Beaters were engaged to surround the jungle, and a couple of the best shots amongst the natives present were stationed at two points where the brute might possibly escape, whilst Hugh and I entered the wood alone. Slowly we fought our way through 'briar and bramble' for twenty minutes, when a warning cry from one of the men caused us to halt and look around. Rifle in hand, and with my hunting-knife conveniently placed, I watched Hugh, who was standing under a tree where there was but little underwood, and was anxiously scrutinising the scrub beyond. Presently he raised his rifle, and, taking steady aim, fired. The cry which followed proved that the shot had told, but not with deadly effect, for before I could make my way to the spot Austin was floored by the force with which the infuriated animal sprang on him.

Poor Hugh! The sleeve of his coat was torn open and disclosed a wound from which the blood flowed freely, while, with one paw on his chest, the panther stood glaring

at me, apparently undecided whether to attack me or finish my friend first. Not a moment was to be lost; so, muttering an inward prayer, I took a couple of steps forward, and, aiming between the eyes, fired. With a frightful roar the brute sprang in the air, and then fell dead at my feet.

'Thanks, old fellow; I'll do the same for you some day,' murmured the dear boy.

'Are you very much hurt?' I asked.

'No, only a good deal shaken and bruised. Wrap your handkerchief round my arm. It's a nuisance damaging oneself like this at the outset.'

'Blame attaches itself in that quarter,' I said, pointing to our prostrate foe. 'You were too precipitate, Hugh. Why didn't you wait until I came up, and we might both have fired at once? It were impossible to miss the brute at that distance.'

'You know my reason?' he asked.

'I think I can guess; you wanted the kudos of the whole transaction to fall solely on your own broad shoulders, you selfish animal on two legs.'

'Not far wrong,' he replied; 'but instead of kudos I had the confounded brute on my shoulders.'

Assisting my friend to rise, he took my arm, and we slowly made our way back to the bungalow, where we found an expedition consisting of a number of men armed with flint-locks, katties, and mamoties ready to start to our assistance. The beaters having made a speedy retreat at the sound of the first shot, under the impression, no doubt, that it was a case of '*Sauve qui peut*,' had raised the alarm. Despatching four or five of them to bring in the body of the panther we retired to the bath-room, where I treated Hugh's arm to a cold-water tub and bandages, using the tender leaf of the plantain before it unfolds as a cover to prevent

the bandages from drying too quickly; this is an easily obtained and capital substitute for oilskin. As it was impossible, under the circumstances, to continue the journey at present we remained at Welligatta for a few days. The Wil Widahn, a headman, whose duty it is to attend to all work connected with the paddy-fields, pandy-rents, &c., suggested a devil-dance to aid my friend in his recovery, a hint which resulted in my telling him to take his superstitious notions to Jericho.

Austin's arm quickly improved, and in four days he was able to move about without danger. I employed my time in the interval in attending to some work I had in the neighbourhood, and in occasional raids on the jungle and pea-fowl. Often has my sport been spoiled by the warning call of the alarm, or painted plover, as it rose in the air with its shrill and repeated cries of 'Pity-to-do-it!' disturbing the distant peacock as I advanced with cautious steps; and rousing the deer who were quietly browsing or amusing themselves with their gambols in the open plain unconscious of my stealthy approach.

On one occasion I took a long ride to Kirinde, a little seaside spot some sixteen miles from Welligatta, where I remained overnight. The village consists of about half-a-dozen little houses; the Agent's quarters; and a bungalow partly in ruins, built some time back by Mr. D——, late superintending engineer of the Basses lighthouses, and now being restored by Mr. Dhoole, who has purchased it from Government. The lighthouses stand some miles out at sea on large rocks and are faintly visible with the naked eye, the one from Kirinde and the other from Palatupana. Adjoining the A. G. A.'s bungalow are the salt stores, covering nearly half an acre of ground. There are several leywyas at close intervals along the coast from Hambantota to Palatupana

and Yala, some eighteen miles beyond Kirinde. The one I visited had a stretch of sand separating it from the sea, in which, at certain seasons, a channel is cut permitting the water to enter the leywya. Next the sand-bank was a small expanse of water forming a shallow lake of about an acre in extent; from this ran an ara, or broad uneven channel, in the bed of which the salt lay. Some portions were very white and pure, presenting an appearance of recently fallen snow; others, again were dirty and broken, resembling partially thawed ice in a city road-side drain. The salt forms best on a muddy bed. The two tables in the Kirinde bungalow are curiosities worthy of a place in the British Museum. On one, a roughly planed board of very old jak-wood standing on four posts, were carved the names of a few of our aristocracy and other sportsmen who had passed on their way to Yala, the best shooting ground in the province.

Returning to Welligatta early next morning I found Hugh, with his arm in a sling, awaiting me in the verandah, and ready to start for Tissa. Flora Temple was harnessed to the dog-cart; the 'Devil' and Kismet sent on by their respective keepers, and we quickly passed over the ten miles of road between Welligatta and Weerawella, and adjourned to the P. W. D. Officer's bungalow, where we were received with open arms and a sumptuous breakfast. Then, starting on foot, we walked along the cart-track to Tissa, a distance of three miles. Crossing the Kirinde river about half way, we trudged onward under the shade of the huge kumbuk and margosa trees, on whose branches numbers of black-faced monkeys with grey coats sat chattering; birds of every description whistled and chirped in the forest on either side; whilst, occasionally, a large grey squirrel would leap from bough to bough until brought

down by a well-directed shot from one of our guns. Now and again a mouse deer, or walmiya (*Memimna indica*), would cross our path; and more rarely an antlered stag would bound across the track. A splendid peacock, with a magnificent tail measuring some six feet in length, fell to my gun.

A few hundred yards from the commencement of the tank bund are the ruins of the Menik (jewel) and another dagoba, monuments of old bricks, which were at one time covered with cement and elaborately decorated; now they stand stripped of their former splendour and overgrown with grass and scrub. Close at hand are several massive pillars of stone, each about twelve feet high and two feet square; and the ground is strewed with slabs of stone, and bricks.

Emerging from the forest we see the large tank on our left, some three or four miles in circumference, and bordered with magnificent specimens of forest trees. The water is nearly hidden with the nellum or water-lily, and numbers of the Anatidæ and Rallidæ flit hither and thither on the surface. Grebe are plentiful as well as the coot, tank-pheasant, diver, and teal. The crocodile is not wanting, and in the farther end might be seen a herd of wild buffaloes wallowing in the muddy bank.

About a quarter of a mile below the tank is the principal dagoba, formerly a ruin, but now being restored, rising to a height of a hundred feet; and under its shadow are the pancela and other buildings connected with it. Here numbers of pilgrims annually bend the knee on their way to Katragam, some thirty miles further. Ruins of palaces and temples are scattered over the flat country, which is being rapidly cleared of its woods and cultivated; and it is to be hoped that this district, which three hundred

years before Christ was one of the richest in the Island, may shortly regain something of its pristine glory.

My trip is over, gentle reader, and my tale is told. Dare I venture to hope that it has not been without interest, and that the reading of these pages will give you as much pleasure as it has given me to write them?

A SINGHALESE DEVIL-DANCE.

A SINGHALESE DEVIL-DANCE.

AMONGST the superstitions which prevail at the present time in Ceylon the Devil-dance, or demon-worship, disputes priority with the planetary worship, and is alluded to in the earliest traditions of the Island.

The peculiar faith which the natives place in the beneficial effects of this ancient custom, which forms no part of the Buddhist belief, can only be attributed to the fact that the Singhalese, above all other races, are most weak-minded and effeminate, and, like the bread-pill which is given to the hypochondriacal patient, they will grasp at any and every means, imaginary as well as real, to relieve themselves of bodily or mental ailments.

Should the treatment of the wedá, or native physician, fail in restoring health to the body or mind, steps are at once taken to procure the aid of the Kapu-rála, or demon's priest, who, although of low caste, forms a most essential portion of the native community, and is the dread of the more nervous European whose bungalow may happen to be in propinquity to the performance of himself and his colleagues.

Special permission has to be obtained from the proper Government official, should there be occasion for this cere-

mony to be performed within the limits of any municipality; but this necessity is done away with in the more rural districts, and a most lawless din, from dusk till daylight, is the result.

Curiosity tempted me on more than one occasion to visit the hut where a devil-dance was in prospective; and for the sake of inquiring more closely into the details of this peculiar custom I have sat out the performance, returning to bed at five in the morning more sleepy than edified.

The neighbourhood of the hut is decorated with stems of the plantain-tree placed as posts in the four corners of compound, and connected with each other by arches of the areka wood cut in lathes. From these depended the young leaves of the cocoa palm, with here and there a cluster of its fruit and flowers. On one side a sort of altar is erected of the same materials and similarly decorated, and lighted by small torches stuck in the soft plantain-stem, the upper end being composed of several folds of old linen steeped in cocoanut oil with which the flame is fed. On the opposite side of the enclosure is a framework about four feet in height, on which is represented in clay a figure of the particular demon supposed to torment the patient; and in the centre is placed a mat of split reeds, on which the devil-dancer performs his gyrations, surrounded at a convenient distance by two or three tom-tom beaters, and his admiring audience.

Every civility was shown me as I entered the charmed circle, and a very dirty chair, covered with a clean white cloth, was placed at my disposal on the raised verandah of the hut. Here I took my seat and smoked the Jaffna cheroot politely offered me by the master of the ceremonies.

The performance commenced at 7 p.m. and was kept up till dawn. The Kapu-rála was clothed in knee-

breeches of coarse blue serge and a well-patched coat of the same material, with large, brass, navy buttons; hollow metal rings, called 'Salamba,' to which were attached small bells, encircled his arms and ankles; his face was masked, and in his right hand he carried a yakadupha torch.

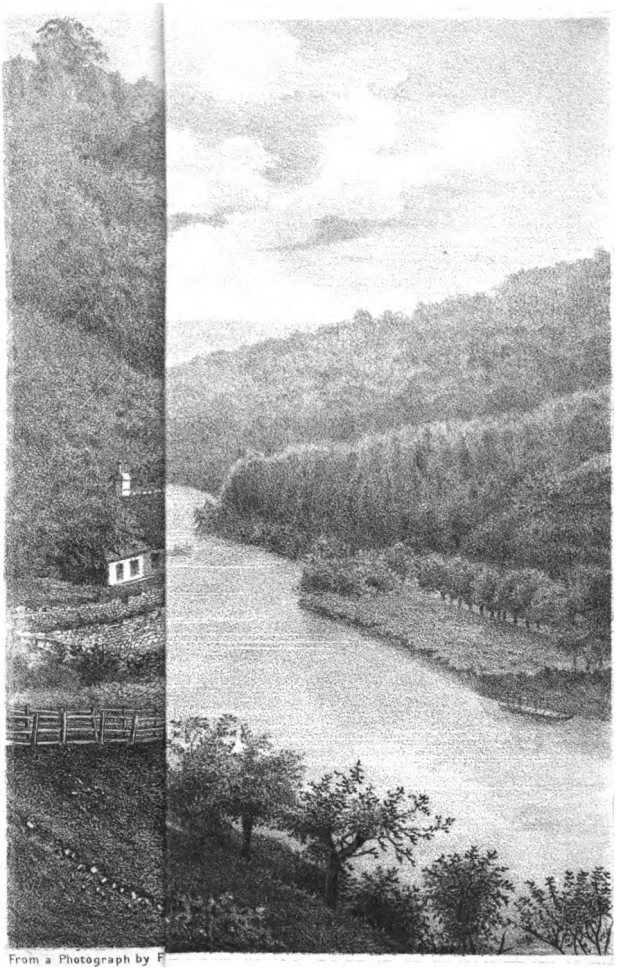
Starting to his feet in sudden and apparent alarm he executed a lively dance to the quick beat of the noisy tom-tom, his eyes at times starting from their sockets, and his whole frame quivering with excitement. In moments of frenzy he would rush towards the person for whom his incantations were performed, and, drawing a deep breath, rapidly repeat some mystic sentences, and try the nervous system of the invalid by suddenly throwing a handful of some powdered resinous substance, called 'dummalla,' into the torchlight, which would blaze up and for a moment illumine the surrounding objects, then sink into a dull blue flame. Retiring to an ante-shed, he would return differently and more sparingly equipped, and still masked, and continue his laborious rites with untiring energy, until, after a good couple of hours of perpetual and violent motion, he would sink exhausted on the mat, his hair dishevelled, and beads of perspiration pouring down his half-naked body. A few minutes' rest and a chew of betel, and he is again on his feet; first moving slowly and keeping perfect time with feet and arms to the sound of the tom-tom, now increasing the rapidity of his motions and anon relapsing into a languid shuffle. To the din of the music were added the voices of the musicians exorcising the evil spirit in some most monotonous ditty, the Kapua occasionally joining in a short, gasping voice like some evil sprite bereft of speech.

The motionless body of spectators, some standing and others reclining on the ground; the background of cocoa and areka palms, with the wild figure of the Kapu-rála; the

whole lit up by the lurid glare of the torches, made a most uncanny and ghostlike scene not easily forgotten.

At dawn the music ceased, and the tired dancer fell in an apparent swoon on the floor of the compound: the clay figure was carried amidst loud shouts to a neighbouring field, where it was placed with an offering of flowers: I took flight to home and bed, and the patient died a few hours after.

A NIGHT'S SALMON-FISHING ON THE WYE.



From a Photograph by F

A NIGHT'S SALMON FISHING ON THE WYE (MON.).

CHAPTER I.

'God made the country, and man made the town!
What wonder, then, that health and virtue, gifts
That alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound;
And least be threatened in the fields and groves?'

TO the hard-working man of business nothing can be more pleasing than the advent of the day on which he leaves his desk, and the noise and bustle of City life behind him, and finds himself whirled along by the iron horse; away from the cares and turmoil of business, to the health-giving pleasures of country life, for a fortnight's well-earned holiday.

Such were my feelings when I left London one bright day in July, by the 3.15 train from Paddington, having booked for Symond's Yat, a hamlet five miles north-east of Monmouth.

The journey occupied a little over four hours including the changes, which were at Gloucester and Ross. The country through which we passed is well worthy of description; but as these pages are only intended to give the

reader an idea of one of the many methods of salmon-fishing, I shall say nothing of the beauty of the scenery on our route, more especially between Ross and the Yat, and making the train a very express one indeed, will land him at once on the platform of the Symond's Yat Station.

Here I was greeted by the smiling face and portly figure of my old friend the station-master; also by the proprietor of the hostelry which stands on a slight elevation above the tunnel, and which is known as 'Prospect House,' where I had previously engaged rooms, and where I met with a refreshing reception in the shape of a delightful cup of tea and fresh country bread-and-butter; to say nothing of a small jug, which on inspection proved to be filled with delicious cream—a marked contrast to the sky-blue chalk and water purveyed by the London dairyman as 'pure milk.'

After tea, feeling somewhat tired with my journey, I took a seat on the balcony in front of my sitting-room, which was on the upper storey, and feasted my eyes on the grandeur of the scenery around me; and, soothed by the influence of a pipeful of 'Primrose,' I forgot, for the nonce, the existence of London, and felt myself budding into a poet.

Behind me, rising to a height of about 550 feet above the river, are the Coldwell Rocks, in very truth a

> 'Beetling brow,
> In craggy nakedness sublime.'

And standing out from amidst the dark green foliage, like a sentinel on guard, is the 'Long Stone,' a perpendicular rock about fifty feet in height. At the foot of the rocks, in sinuous curves, flow the lazy waters of the Wye. To give the reader an idea of the tortuous course of this erratic river, it is only necessary to state, as an instance, that the

tunnel referred to is about a quarter of a mile long, the river winding over five miles to accomplish the same journey. Stretched before me, beyond the river, are wooded slopes and undulating fields, with here and there an orchard, and white-washed cottages nestling amidst the shadowy trees.

The splash of oars in the water, and merry voices singing in chorus, aroused me from my reverie; and having prepared the tackle for my own fly-fishing, I retired to the tidy little bedroom prepared for me, and after partaking of what is not uncommonly known as a 'nightcap,' placed myself between the sheets and slept soundly till morning.

About nine o'clock, after enjoying a substantial breakfast with an appetite unknown to the City man, I strolled down to the riverside where I was accosted by Jarret, otherwise known as 'Longshanks,' a boatman and fisherman employed by a Monmouth fishmonger, who kindly promised to initiate me that evening into the mysteries of salmon-catching by night.

We accordingly met about 8 p.m. on the landing-stage below the station and punted across the river, and after walking for about five hundred yards along a narrow footpath through the woods, parallel with the river, we stopped.

Jarret pointed to a punt moored close to the bank in deep, still water, behind a stone dyke which projects about three yards into the river, 'There, sir, is where we fish; and because the current outside this wall is rather strong, the fish coming up stream make for the neighbourhood of the boat for a rest.' After a few minutes he continued, 'If you'll stand by and look on, I'll prepare the tackle. Hi! Jim,' he called to his mate in the boat, 'take the liquor on board, and place a rug somewhere for the gentleman;' and he handed in a small gallon-and-a-half

keg of beer, whilst from the capacious pockets of his well-worn great-coat he brought forth a loaf of bread and a large piece of cheese.

'Bound to have these 'ere, sir; and as I know'd you was a gentleman what smokes I left my baccy behind. We couldn't do without a drink, and I'd as soon leave my head behind as my pipe,' bringing to light from the depths of his waistcoat pocket a well-coloured clay with a very short stem.

I smiled as I produced my well-filled pouch, and told him he was at liberty to take as much as he wanted provided he left a little for me.

'Now, sir,' he resumed, 'having put the tackle together, maybe you'll not be too proud to give me a hand, and get some firewood.'

Amused as well as interested with the preparations for our comfort, I gave him a hand, and we collected a bundle of dry sticks which we laid in an old zinc bucket in the boat and lighted, and placing a small quantity of coals on the crackling wood we soon had a cheerful fire burning.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE proceeding to give an account of my night's experience I must give the reader a short sketch of the stopping-net, &c., and the way in which it is managed.

Two poles, each twenty feet in length, and an inch and a half in diameter, are fixed together at one end at an angle of about fifty degrees; these are termed 'Reams,' and are made of stout ash, or indeed any serviceable wood. About five feet from the top a third stick, called a 'Spleeder,' is fixed crossways to the two poles, making a framework in the shape of the letter A. To the spleeder,

and the two reams below it, the net is attached. At the spleeder and the ends of the reams are two lines, called respectively hand and head lines, both of which keep the reams in place. The whole apparatus is then lowered into the water up to the spleeder, and the triangular part of the frame, leaning over and into the boat, is supported by a pole termed the 'Steeker' in such a manner that it can be removed with ease at the slightest indication that a fish is within the meshes. Finally, there is a staff, resembling on a miniature scale a policeman's truncheon, which is used for the purpose of dealing the death-blow to the fish when landed at the bottom of the punt: this is called the 'Knocker.'

Everything being in ship-shape order I eagerly watched Jim, who took a seat at the end of the punt farthest from the shore, and, dropping his hand over the side, took up a handful of the net in such a manner that any movement of a fish trying to force its way through the meshes would be distinctly felt.

In the middle of the boat was our primitive stove, and at the shore end sat Jarret and myself. In this position we remained for about half-an-hour, the two fishermen alternately explaining to me the various modes of salmon-fishing and spinning yarns of their experience in that line.

'The heaviest salmon I ever caught in this part of the river,' said Jarret, 'was a splendid gilling which just turned the scale at forty pounds. We landed him in the boat; but, bless you! his leaping powers were too much for the knocker, so that I was obliged to throw my coat over him. Jim, there, tried to sit on him, but was nearly bowled over. We pocketed ten shillings by that catch, and, as it wasn't the only one that night, we were merrier than usual going home in the morning.'

'Yes,' chimed in Jim; 'Longshanks was not only merry in the morning, sir, but he was a devilish sight merrier in the evening. Ah! he's a rare one to tipple; he's as quiet as a lamb too over it, not one of those fellows who double up their fists when they're in liquor.'

'Like yourself, Jimmy, my boy. He's a hero, sir, when he takes a drop too much on board. You'd ha' laughed had you seen him on the railway line one night squaring up to the 7.15 train; and but for myself and two of the porters who took a fatherly interest in him——'

At this juncture Jim gave the steeker a blow with his fist which sent it with violence against the bucket, which in turn upset, and the live embers falling on the tarred bottom of the punt set it on fire. It was all the work of a few moments; and as I, with the aid of the bucket, was doing my best to extinguish the fire by swamping the boat, I was unfortunately unable to witness the landing of our first catch, which proved to be a 'botcher,' a local term for a salmon weighing about six pounds.

The keg of beer was now broached, and, dispensing with tumblers for the simple fact that the only one we brought was broken by Jarret at the outset, we in turn placed the bunghole to our lips and took a deep draught of the invigorating liquid; the loaf and cheese then gradually disappeared.

Then the net was again lowered, and this time Jarret kept guard. I lighted my pipe and threw myself on the rug, whilst Jim, after relighting our bivouac fire, took a seat beside me and likewise smoked the pipe of peace.

We had been thus seated barely a quarter of an hour when down again went the 'steeker' (no bucket upset this time), and I could clearly see all that passed, and to my intense excitement and delight observed a lordly fish, known

as a 'Gilling,' splashing and making frantic efforts to clear the netting. A few moments sufficed to safely land him in the bottom of the boat, and having been previously instructed by Jarret in the use of the knocker, I took a steady aim at the head between the eyes and brought it down with force enough to fell an ox; but, alas! in my excitement I missed my object, and only succeeded in bruising my fingers by bringing them in violent contact with the bottom of the punt.

'Try again,' said Jarret, laughing; 'but take care you don't damage the boat this time.'

My second attempt was more successful, as I gave the fish a clean hit which so stunned him that it only required another and more gentle tap to entirely deprive him of life.

It was now my turn to watch, and I must admit that it was with no small amount of trepidation that I took my seat and laid hold of the net. Half an hour passed without the expected indications. I began to wonder how many fish had come up to the net, and not receiving the usual rough treatment had turned away with the observation, 'Here's an amateur at work!' An hour passed; I began to feel the effects of the chill night air, and my eyes languidly turned in the direction of my cosy bedroom in Prospect House, and I thought of those nice clean sheets and soft pillows. I was beginning to feel very drowsy, and the two men sitting opposite were silently warming their hands over the fire, and occasionally indulging in a quiet laugh, no doubt at my expense. Suddenly I started up and exclaimed, 'Hallo! I have caught a fish!' The 'steeker' was kicked aside and into the water, where I nearly followed it. Both the men were simultaneously on their feet: down went the handle of the reams and we stared into the net; but,

Heavens! no fish. A moment's silence and the stillness of the night was broken by the loud and continuous laughter of my companions. I looked bewildered, then slowly became conscious of the fact that I had dropped off to sleep and dreamed that some kind water nymph had rewarded my patient watching by sending a forty-pound 'gilling' into the meshes of my net. Gentle reader, I leave you to imagine my feelings.

This little incident succeeded in effectually rousing me, and, handing the net to Jim, I again brought my lips in friendly contact with the bunghole of the beer-keg, and took a draught which revived my drooping spirits. Thenceforth I gave up all ambition to become an adept in the art of salmon-catching, and contented myself with the butchering part of the work.

A 3.30 a.m. we had caught seven and lost four fish, and Jarret suggested that we should stretch our legs by strolling over to the Keeper's Lodge, leaving Jim in charge.

Wishing Jim a pleasant morning, and placing a piece of silver in his hand as I heartily shook it, I jumped on shore, followed by Jarret.

Three of the salmon caught bore marks of having been recently engaged in some desperate conflict. One of them had three ugly freshly-healed wounds, one near the head and two on the right side, appearing as if the scales and a portion of the flesh had been scraped off. Each of these scars was about three inches long and an inch wide. I was told by Jarret that they had probably been occasioned by a free fight with some larger fish at the mouth of the Severn.

Our fishing was over, and I must admit that, though tired with the unwonted exertion of sitting up all night, I never for a moment regretted the part I had taken in the little adventure.

CHAPTER III.

I WILL now bring this story to an end by devoting a chapter in relating some incidents which occurred during the night, and after we left off fishing.

A heavy white mist had hung over the river during the greater part of the time, and prevented my admiring the scenery, which, lit up by the light of a full moon, must be surpassingly lovely. The dim outline of wooded slopes on the one hand, and the craggy precipices of the Coldwell Rocks on the other, the sudden splash of an occasional trout as it chased and missed some wary minnow, the water-rat causing a gentle ripple of the water as it slipped from the bank and crossed the stream—all tended to enhance the weird stillness of the night hours. From the next fishing-station came at intervals the sweet, manly voice of a young fellow-fisher as he sang some new and popular ditties—now a Salvationist hymn, and again a quick, lively, waltz song. One of these, I remember, was 'The Reign of the Roses,' and the melody never struck me as being so sweet as when it came, in rich, full tones, through the calm night-air across the water. At times two boys, brothers of the singer, would add their young voices, and join in chorus, while in the distance could be heard the faint, answering echo.

After wishing Jim a pleasant morning and leaving the punt we walked slowly for about a mile through the woods and fields, visiting the different fishing-stations as we went. There is something so refreshing in the freedom of country life when you lay aside society etiquette with your 'top' hat and black coat, and put on a free-and-easy manner with

your rough tweeds and shooting-cap. At each of the stations Jarret put the question, 'Well, what luck?' and by the replies received we congratulated ourselves on having made a very successful haul, taking into consideration the unsatisfactory condition of the river.

Arriving at the 'Keeper's,' which is about a hundred yards from the river-bank, I was amused at the distinct echo which mocked Jarret when he shouted out, 'Hi, Brown, I want you a minute!' This set me shouting in turn until the noise of many voices awoke the slumbering Brown, who put his head out of the window and gruffly inquired from what lunatic asylum we had recently escaped.

'Usk Jail,' replied my companion, laughing, and added, 'Wake up, Brown, and give us a glass of milk and a piece of bread.'

Entering the lodge we made ourselves comfortable for a few minutes preparatory to my finding my way home. I was anxious before leaving my friend to purchase one of the smallest of the seven salmon caught, but was told that he dared not sell it, as should he do so and be found out he would get into fairly hot water, so I tempted him no more.

'What agreement do you make with your employer?' I asked.

'We catch the fish, sir, and he provides us with the materials for making the net, and he also pays for the license. We get threepence in every pound weight; not much when you take into consideration the hardship of sitting out all night, and various little expenses we are put to. The size of the mesh of the net we use, which is 10 inches, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches from knot to knot, causes us to lose a great many 'botchers,' so that we drop a few pence in that way; and the law prohibits our using a smaller mesh. Jim was caught poaching one night and had a decent fight with

the fellow who wanted to collar him; he was summoned before the magistrates and got twenty-one days.'

'Is there much of that sort of thing going on?' I queried.

'Not much, but now and then hunger drives them to it; but I think it's a proper law for the fish, as otherwise the gillings would be more scarce.'

Thanking my companion, I left him to make arrangements with Brown to send the salmon into Monmouth, and, returning to the ferry, rowed myself across the river.

The rest of my story is soon told. Divesting myself of my clothes I dived *in puris naturalibus* into the stream,—had a most enjoyable bath,—returned to my quarters at 6.30 a.m. and a few minutes after I dreamed that I had individually landed a gigantic gilling which ate bread-and-cheese, smoked a cutty pipe, and had just done twenty-one days on its head in Usk Jail for poaching minnows.

FINIS.

LONDON:
Printed by STRANGEWAYS & SONS, Tower Street, Upper St. Martin's Lane.