Picturesque Ceylon

Colombo and the Kelani Valley

3.

PLATE I.

THE AFTERGLOW.

PICTURESQUE CEYLON

BY

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COLOMBO AND THE KELANI VALLEY

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON AND COMPANY, LIMITED
St. Dunstan's House
FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1893

PREFACE.

THIS work is a pictorial — not a literary effort ; nevertheless some information about the scenes depicted will, I trust, add to their interest.

My purpose is to enable the friends of European residents in Ceylon, and others who are interested in the Island, to obtain a better idea of its charming features than is possible from mere verbal description.

HENRY W. CAVE.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

COLOMBO AND THE KELANI VALLEY.

"Flattery is hushed when Ceylon is the theme,
As mem'ry on mem'ries throng, her charms to tell!
Are there not witcheries that through beauty beam
Unspeakable? yet, weaving such a spell
That limner, language, never can pourtray,
Though haunted by their magic power alway."

Mrs. William Dent.

PICTURESQUE CEYLON.

CHAPTER I.

COLOMBO: THE FORT.

THE folly of attempting to describe Ceylon is generally admitted. No words, indeed, can give a correct impression of the wild and magnificent flora of the island, or of the scenes of native life so perfectly harmonising with it; nor can the best pictures which modern art can produce awaken the full amount of admiration which the places themselves never fail to arouse. Nevertheless, some real idea of a place can be gained by the help of pictorial illustrations which are true to nature. Those presented to the reader in this work are faithful in all detail, and depict such scenes only as the traveller who journeys through the more popular and easily accessible districts of Ceylon will be certain to come across. It is upon the illustrations rather than the accompanying text that the faithfulness of the description here given will be found to depend.

The visitor who for the first time approaches the coast of Ceylon is at once impressed by the complete contrast which it bears to the barren and lifeless shores of Suez or of Aden. There he gazed upon scorching rocks without a spark of vegetation to relieve the dull monotony of a parched and sterile shore. Here he comes upon a scene of intense luxuriance, where life and light combine to greet the eye with never-failing interest. By this, which is the usual route, there is no gradual introduction to tropical scenery and vegetation. The beautiful palm-fringed shore at once bursts into view, teeming with animal and vegetable life.

But before mingling in this maze of Eastern wonders, it is worth while to glance around from the steamer, now safely anchored in the harbour of Colombo. The outrigger canoes (Plate ii) are so quaint and singular in form as to excite immediate interest. They are constructed from the trunks of trees, which are first hollowed out and levelled at the top; the height of the sides is then raised by means of bulwarks made of planks lashed on, and thus a narrow trough is formed, at the most a foot wide at the top, but with considerable carrying capacity in the hollowed trunk beneath. Safe balance is secured by an outrigger attachment, which consists of two curved poles of wood, extending at right angles to a distance of about ten feet from the body of the boat, and connected at the ends by a float. The various parts are stitched together with twisted cocoanut fibre, which holds them more safely than rivets, whether out in the rough and open sea, or in forcing their way shorewards through the boisterous surf. Boats of this construction are used almost universally

PLATE II.

OUTRIGGER CANOES.

by the Singhalese for fishing and for passenger traffic. They withstand the roughest sea, and literally fly before the breeze. Very picturesque, too, they look when manned by small brown figures, clad only in gay-coloured loin cloths and quaint straw hats.

As each steamer drops anchor within the magnificent breakwater of Colombo these curiously constructed craft crowd around, many of them bringing traders laden with precious stones, which they hope to dispose of for double or treble their market value to the unwary passengers; others plying for the hire of their boats to take passengers ashore; some with dusky Tamils, who sing unceasingly to the plash of their oars; many with comely Singhalese of lighter complexion, their long hair twisted into a thick knot surmounted by a tortoiseshell comb, giving them a curiously feminine appearance; some with Indo-Arab traders in their curious costumes of many colours, and their shaven heads crowned with tall plaited brimless hats of many-coloured silks. This motley fleet is the first scene of novelty that claims attention upon arrival in the harbour of Colombo. To the left of the canoes in Plate ii is seen a portion of the native quarter called the Pettah, the features of which will be discussed later on.

The visitor's next proceeding is to go ashore. As he passes down the gangway in the act of transhipping himself to the novel outrigger which he has chosen to convey him to the landing stage, he wonders what he is to do with his legs, the distance between the port and starboard bulwarks of the strange little craft being only nine inches. He soon discovers, however, that the method of arranging legs is one behind

the other; then, sitting on a plank placed right across the top of the bulwarks, he is quickly rowed to the landing jetty.

Passing by the Tea Kiosk, which has been established to impress all comers with the merits of Ceylon tea immediately upon arrival, he strolls up York Street, which is chiefly interesting from the fact that it contains two of the largest and best appointed hotels in the East—the Grand Oriental and the Bristol.

To one who has read Sir Samuel Baker's book on Ceylon, it is difficult to realise that this is the place described by him many years ago as dull and uncomfortable, with a single *soi disant* store and a barn-like hotel, the sight of which banished all idea of comfort. Colombo is now the home of luxury no less than of natural beauty.

After a breakfast of "divers curries and all manner of Eastern fruits," a Jinrickshaw will be found convenient in which to take a turn round the Fort or European business quarter. As is the case with most towns in India, the Europeans and natives have separate business localities. The Fort, now occupied almost exclusively by offices of the Government and European merchants, was originally constructed by the Portuguese, who took possession of Colombo in 1517, to protect their factories. In the following century the Dutch ousted the Portuguese and greatly strengthened the fortifications. The surrounding moat has now been filled up, and the high ramparts have disappeared. The Fort, therefore, now exists only in name.

PLATE III.

FROM PRINCE STREET TO PETTAH.

PLATE IV.

TO THE FORT RAILWAY STATION.

The roads, which are made with dark red cabook, are in almost every street delightfully shaded by green Suriya trees. A combination of colour is thus formed which is most effective in softening the tropical glare, and renders it possible to look upon the surrounding objects with comfort, even under the powerful rays of the midday sun. The Suriya tree (*Thespesia Populnea*) flowers profusely with delicate primrose-coloured blossoms, large and showy, changing to purple as they fade. In form they somewhat resemble the single scarlet hibiscus. By their means the streets obtain grateful shade, combined with most gorgeous effects of colour.

Plate No. iii gives a view of Prince Street, looking towards the Pettah, or native business quarter. It is a dusty afternoon, as the picture plainly shows. Natives employed in the Fort offices are returning home from work. On the left are two Singhalese peons, or messengers, barefooted, and wearing white comboys and jackets. In the centre is seen a Tamil cooly running towards the foreground, and a native policeman following in his rear. On the right, under the Suriya trees, are refreshment stalls for natives of the cooly class.

In the next picture (Plate iv) may be seen another class of natives leaving the offices in the Fort. These are chiefly clerks who live in the distant suburbs. The direction in which they are going is the Fort Railway Station of the sea-side line, which is just visible under the Suriya trees on the right of the picture. The railway which runs along the shore from Colombo to Galle has increased the popularity of the sea-side as a place of residence, and, as a result, charming bungalows have been built for many miles along the coast.

From the platform of the Fort Railway Station is obtained the view represented in Plate v. An enchanting fresh-water lake, stretching over many hundreds of acres, washes the railway embankment at this point. Groups of bronze-tinted figures are waist-deep in water, others are enjoying a swim, and a yet greater number are engaged near the bank in the destructive occupation of the dhoby or laundryman. The scene here depicted seldom varies throughout the year—men and women, carts and cattle, washing and washed. The carts arrive laden with clothes, which in this moist and hot climate, where many people use two or three washable suits of clothes in a day, amount to a sum of laundry work which would astonish the soap-using dame of old England. Here with a washing tub many hundreds of acres in size, and the cleansing stone of the dark, dank dhoby, there is no need of Pears' Soap. By first immersing one's shirts in the lake, and afterwards using them for some minutes as a sledge-hammer upon the huge blocks of stone which are visible near the bank, the dirt is soon bashed, not washed, out of them more effectually than it would be by any amount of hot water and soapsuds, but alas! at the expense of much wear and tear. In spite of the fact, however, that the moderate salary of the dhoby fails to compensate for the rapid reduction of the substance of one's linen, this method of washing is the best ever invented in point of cleanliness, if not of economy.

The palm-thatched bullock carts that are to be seen stationary in the water are of the kind used for heavy traffic. The driver stands between the bullocks and the cart. The weight is drawn by pressure of the yoke against

PLATE V.

COLOMBO LAKE.

the humps on the necks of the bullocks, which work in pairs.

This fresh-water lake is one of the most charming features of Colombo. Its ramifications are so many that one is constantly coming across pretty nooks and corners quite unexpectedly, each fresh view presenting a wealth of foliage luxuriant beyond description. Palms in great variety intermingle with the gorgeous mass of scarlet flamboyant blossoms, the lovely lemon-yellow lettuce tree, the ever graceful bamboo, the crimson blooms of the dark hibiscus, contrasting with the rich green of the areca, date, and palmyra palms, the huge waving leaves of the plantain, flowering trees and shrubs of every description of tropical foliage, the whole forming a border to the rippling waters, of unrivalled beauty and unfailing interest. A splendid carriage road follows the winding course of the bank, and is a very popular route for an evening drive. But by far the best view of the lake scenery of Colombo is obtainable from a boat upon the lake itself. The water is usually quiet enough for ordinary rowing boats, many of which, imported from Messum, Tagg, and Salter, the famous builders on the Thames, are to be seen towards the hours of evening.

The annual regatta upon the lake is an important social event. Rowing, as well as cricket and lawn-tennis, can be indulged in all the year round, and they are all very popular forms of exercise, and entirely suitable to the climate.

The Fort is, perhaps, the most uninteresting part of the whole of Ceylon, but it naturally calls for description first, being the part first seen by every traveller, and the only one seen by some.

Close by the Fort Railway Station are the Military quarters, five blocks of handsome barracks, which are unequalled in any other part of the East in point of healthy situation, design, and construction. They were built at a cost of £65,000.

In Queen Street (Plate vi), are to be found the residence of the Governor of the Colony, the banks, the lighthouse, and many merchants' offices. It will be noticed that the buildings in Queen Street, like most of those in the Fort, are hidden from full view by an avenue of Suriya trees. The lighthouse, which was built in the middle of the street in 1857, serves the additional purpose of a very useful clock tower. From the top of this the energetic traveller may obtain a view grand enough to compensate for the great inconvenience which an ascent in such intense moist heat will certainly occasion, a cold bath and an entire change of clothing being immediately necessary upon returning to mother earth. The lamp upon this tower is one of the finest in the world. It has a revolving dioptric light showing a triple flash at intervals of thirty seconds.

Queen's House, the residence of the Governor, is only a few yards beyond the lighthouse. Adjoining it is a fine terraced garden, the jubilee gift of the Hon. Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon (now Baron Stanmore). This is the brightest spot in the Fort, for there all manner of feathery palms, gorgeous crotons, and rosy oleanders combine to lend colour and fragrance to a charming corner of the European quarter.

The business of the colony, both legislative and commercial, is chiefly transacted in the Fort. In the early days of the

PLATE VI.

COLOMBO LIGHTHOUSE.

British rule the annual imports amounted to about £250,000. They are now about five millions. During the same period the revenue has risen from £226,000 to about one and a half millions. In the early days there were no banks, no good roads or bridges, very few schools, no hospitals, only four post offices, and no newspapers. There are now fourteen important exchange and deposit banks and banking agencies doing an annual sum of business amounting to about seventy millions of rupees, fifteen hundred miles of splendid metalled roads, countless good bridges, more than two thousand schools, upwards of a hundred hospitals and dispensaries, two hundred and fifty post offices, thirty-six newspapers and periodicals, and nearly five millions of acres of land under cultivation. The shipping entered and cleared in the course of the year amounts to nearly six millions of tons, as against seventy-five thousand in the early part of the century.

From this recital of figures some idea may be gathered of the importance of the Fort as a business quarter, and of the present flourishing condition of the colony of Ceylon.

CHAPTER II.

THE PETTAH.

LEAVING the Fort, we now pass on to the Pettah or native traders' quarter. European residents in Ceylon, as a rule, dislike passing through purely native streets, but the traveller finds many attractions in them, and is usually more interested by a drive through the Pettah than by any other part of Colombo. An accomplished authoress has well described it as "an ever fascinating kaleidoscope." The numerous races of people represented, Singhalese, Moors, Tamils, Parsees, Dutch, Portuguese, Malays, and Afghans, the variety of costume worn by each race in accordance with caste or social position, from the simple loin cloth of the cooly to the gorgeous attire of the wealthy and high caste gentleman, the different complexions and forms of toilet, and the avocations being carried on in the open street, are all entertaining to the visitor who for the first time becomes a witness of the manners and customs of Oriental life. At every turn the eye is met by a fresh picture, and a new subject for study is presented to the mind. This mixed and motley crowd live their life and carry on their labours almost entirely in public. Neither doors, windows, nor shutters interfere with a complete view of the interior of their houses and stalls. The handicraftsman works serenely in his open shed, sometimes even in the open street; women are occupied in their most domestic affairs unveiled

PLATE VII.

THE PETTAH.

from the glance of the curious passer-by, and tiny children, clothed only in the rich tints of their own complexions, sport amongst the traffic. All this harmonises charmingly with the conditions of climate and the nature of the people. The heat renders clothing uncomfortable, and closed-up dwellings unendurable.

The street view (Plate vii) has not suffered from any excitement caused by the presence of a camera, as it is merely the result of a snap-shot from a carriage while passing by. On the left of the picture is a kitchen cooly with marketing basket on his head, while standing near is his superior servant, the appu, or butler, dressed in a white comboy and black jacket. The appu comes daily to the Pettah for marketing purposes, and since carrying provisions is beneath the dignity of his position, he is always accompanied by the kitchen cooly, who in many cases is also the cook, for the appu does no work beyond the mere direction of the servants under him. Thus he has ample leisure to cheat "master," and this he does both constantly and effectually in his bazaar account.

The Singhalese are good cooks, and there are not a few amongst them who could prepare a dinner which would do honour to a trained French *chef*. Their curries are far superior to those of India, and are of infinite variety. Unfortunately the butchers' meat obtainable in Colombo is execrable, but with a very large variety of fish, plenty of poultry, good vegetables and fruit, and clever cooks withal, the drawback is not greatly felt.

In the middle of the foreground of our picture are two schoolboys, probably on their way home from the Royal College, an excellent Government school situated on the shores of the lake. On the right the street is lined with bullock carts, which have come to market laden with spices and rice.

At the end of this street may be obtained the most interesting view of the Colombo Harbour and the coast looking north towards the suburb of Mutwall (Plate viii). A little fleet of fishing canoes forms a pretty foreground to the picture. They are not left high and dry by a receding tide, but are beached while flying before the breeze in full sail, suffering no damage by the terrific force with which they strike the shore, owing to the peculiarity of their construction in being laced with coir instead of fastened with rivets. Nets are being gathered up by the fishermen on the sands, and sails are still left flying, men and boats thus unconsciously lending their aid to the artistic effect of the view. The same may be said even of the crows which have alighted on the halliards.

The Colombo crow has a character which has been noticed by almost every author who has written about Ceylon. He is to be seen in every place where food, good or bad, can be found. Unlike his species in Europe, he is utterly devoid of all timidity. For sheer impudence and cool daring he stands unrivalled in the feathery tribe. He will appear in your presence at the dining table when least expected, and fly off with a choice morsel; he will swoop down and take biscuit or fruit from a child's hand unoffered; he will come in at your bedroom window and rob you of the toast and jam brought in

PLATE VIII.

A CEYLON FISHING FLEET.

with your early cup of tea, and he is so quick and secure in his movements that he has been known to catch bread in his beak when thrown from a window before it can reach the ground. I have experienced his depredations in all these particulars, and have heard of many even more audacious. Some years ago, when I lived at St. Thomas's College, Colombo, where the dining hall is a separate building, accommodating over a hundred students, with a lofty roof supported by pillars, surrounded by a verandah and open to the garden on all sides, it was the custom to keep a Singhalese boy, with a rifle on his shoulder, patrolling around the verandah during meals to keep off the crows, a gun being the only thing known which the Colombo crow fears to approach. In this respect he seems to share the instinct of his species everywhere.

The suburb of Mutwall, a distant glimpse of which we get in Plate viii, is more beautiful and interesting than the residential suburbs to the south of Colombo; but, as the approach to it from the Fort lies through the native quarter, it is less popular. It contains, however, many fine bungalows, with very beautiful gardens, not the least interesting of them being Elie House, once the residence of Sir Emerson Tennent.

Here the noble Kelani (see Plates xxxi, xxxii, and xxxv) rolls into the Indian Ocean. Near to the mouth of this river is the most picturesque bit of coast near Colombo. The cocoanut groves which fringe the shore cast their shadows upon a little village of fishers' huts, scattered irregularly amongst a luxuriant undergrowth of curious grasses and red-flowered convolvuli.

At eventide, when the fishing canoes are drawn up on land, their huge square sails stretched out and drying in the breeze, and the afterglow throws a soft orange light upon the objects along the shore, the scene is most enchanting.

In the early morning, too, the constantly varying pictures that here meet the eye are interesting in the highest degree. As the outlying rocks form some protection from sharks, whole families of natives assemble at sunrise to indulge in a bathe in the sea; cattle and horses, too, are brought into the water to be cleansed and refreshed for the work of the day. Fishing from the rocks is indulged in by little naked Singhalese children with rod, line, and hook, but without bait; and very curious it is to watch them skilfully hooking fish in this manner as they rise in shoals near the surface of the water.

The natives in this district are mostly of the fisher caste and the Halagama, or Cinnamon peelers' caste. They are all Roman Catholics, and have built several fine churches, notably that of S. James, opened in 1872. This handsome building, which was erected at a cost of one hundred and fifty thousand rupees, has a congregation of about 3,500. It is most gorgeously decorated, the frescoes being by a local artist, to whom they do great credit.

On a hill at the southern end of Mutwall stands the Anglican Cathedral of Christ Church, built by the first Bishop of Colombo. From the tower a good view of the harbour may be obtained, but more interesting still is the curious sight of many thousands of acres of palms, which, when looked

PLATE IX.

HINDU TEMPLE.

PLATE X.

OF AN AGE TO BE CLOTHED.

at from this lofty eminence, seem to completely bury the city beneath their multitudinous crowns of gigantic waving fronds.

St. Thomas' College, which is situated in the same grounds as the Cathedral, is the most important centre of education in Ceylon. It has about 350 students of various races and creeds. The Cathedral does duty as a college chapel, and has an excellent choir supplied from the students.

The route from Mutwall through the Pettah brings us next to Sea Street (Plate ix), the trading quarter of the scantily-clad Chetties, an immigrant race from Southern India, who deal in rice and cotton goods. It is almost impossible to drive through this street at all, so crowded is it from morning to night with bullock-carts heavily laden with rice. The scene, however, is so purely Eastern that it is worth the trouble of struggling through the traffic as far as the Hindu temples on the left of the picture. Europeans are only admitted to the interior of these somewhat uninviting temples upon the condition that they will bare their feet. The exterior is adorned with hundreds of hideous figures representing various scenes in the history of the Hindu deities. The street itself is entirely occupied by Chetties, who are a frugal and orderly people, many of them wealthy, and nearly all of them great usurers. They are first-class accountants, and some hold positions of trust as clerks in the banks and in the offices of European merchants.

The rice dealers are conspicuous by the scantiness of their attire; they wear only a thin white muslin cloth, curiously arranged about their legs, and their heads are clean

shaven and bare. The accountants, on the other hand, wear a white comboy and jacket, with a large number of buttons of sterling gold, huge earrings, about three inches in diameter, reaching almost to the shoulder, and set with sapphires, emeralds, and rubies, a gold-braided hat of curious shape, and a gorgeous silk scarf around the neck.

The native boutique, or provision shop, which abounds in the Pettah and all native quarters, is fairly represented by Plate xi. The open character of the whole street is of this nature, the stalls varying only in the classes of goods offered for sale. Here (Plate xi) there are fruits, curry stuffs of dried fish, various spices, earthenware chatties, and firewood; in another shop would be seen all manner of vegetables; in others again gay comboys, or loin cloths, articles of native manufacture in brass-ware and pottery, and various useful articles made from the cocoa-nut and other palms. The money-changers' stalls, too, are perhaps the most purely Eastern of any, and are a prominent feature in these native bazaars.

Each little store is presided over by its owner, who almost invariably sits with his legs folded beneath him upon the sloping planks whereon his goods are displayed for sale. His customers are almost as varied as his wares. The Singhalese man, of sienna complexion, wearing his long hair gathered up into a knob surmounted by a comb of tortoiseshell, appears in various garb according to caste, even the comb assuming different forms in accordance with social position. The Singhalese women, too, have a multitude of distinctions both in dress and ornaments. Some of the highland women wear a single

PLATE XI.

THE NATIVE GROCER.

coloured cloth, which they wind about themselves in very artistic fashion, leaving one shoulder bare. The lowland Singhalese women have two garments; the comboy, reaching from the waist to the ankles, and a short bodice with low-cut neck. All indulge, more or less, in jewellery, consisting of necklaces and bangles on both arms and ankles, and rings on their fingers and toes. They wear their hair twisted into a lump at the back of the head and secured by pins of ornamental patterns. Many Tamil women wear but a single coloured cloth, which they gracefully entwine about their limbs, leaving the right side bare to the hip; but some wear, in addition, a tightly-fitting jacket, as shown in Plate xi. The very poor decorate themselves with ornaments of shells, sharks' teeth, beads, and berries.

The costumes of the native men are even more varied. The Moormen with shaven heads, crowned with curiously plaited brimless hats of coloured silks, and gorgeous comboys; the Parsees in white calico and still more curious headgear; the Tamils with religious symbols upon their foreheads, in white, black, red, or yellow, becoming turbans upon their heads, and the smallest possible quantity of clothing about their bodies, a square yard of coloured calico sufficing in most instances; the Afghans, contrasting with the Tamils in their superabundance of gaudy attire — such are the races, and such the dresses, of the native inhabitants of Colombo. They form very picturesque groups in the Pettah, which is at all times literally crowded with them, so much so that, when one is driving this way, the nimble muttu, or native groom, has to run the whole distance by the horse's head,

keeping up a continual shouting to warn them out of the way.

Infants are never carried in the arms of their mothers, but astride on the hip, as seen in Plate xi. Until about their seventh year they are left quite devoid of clothing. Scores of them may be seen playing by the roadside quite naked, with the exception, in some cases, of tiny bangles round the ankles and a silver chain around the loins. After about the seventh year the boys begin to wear comboys of coloured calico up to the waist, leaving the chest and arms bare, and the girls the same, with the addition of a calico jacket, as seen in Plate x. The Moors dress their children completely at about the age of nine (see middle figure in Plate x).

The race of Indo-Arabs, called Moormen, numbering about 150,000 in Ceylon, settled there at a very early date, and has always been the most active and enterprising part of the population. They are devoted to buying and selling, but never attempt manufactures of any kind. In religion they are Mahometans, and still use Arabic in their ritual, although Tamil has become their vernacular.

The practice of shaving the head, common amongst the Hindoos and Moormen, supports a very considerable number of native artists, who carry on the trade of the professional barber in the open streets. The operator (see Plate xii) sits upon his feet on a mat by the roadside, and his patient squats in the same manner facing him. What tough scalps these Tamils must have! The barber uses no soap to soften his victim's hair, but, wielding his keen weapon with wonderful

PLATE XII.

THE TAMIL BARBER.

dexterity, removes every trace of it by a few rapid strokes, leaving the surface as polished and shining as a new copper kettle. In some parts of Colombo a dozen or more of these quaint operations may be seen in passing through a single street, many of the patients being funny little brown boys of various ages. Singhalese men adopt the opposite extreme, and allow their hair to grow to its full length, which perhaps is a more rational plan, as it is certainly a valuable protection from the rays of the sun; but they are often just as busily occupied by the wayside in weeding out the native population from their lengthy silken locks as the Malabar Tamils are in the operation of being shaved.

CHAPTER III.

FROM THE PETTAH TO THE CINNAMON GARDENS.

UPON leaving the Pettah, a most interesting route to take in order to observe the manners and customs of the poorer classes of the native population in Colombo, and the great natural beauty which surrounds their dwellings, is by way of Skinner's Road, through the large and populous district of Maradahn.

A familiar character, seen at very frequent intervals by the roadside, is the old woman with her little frame or stall of betel (Plate xiii). The Singhalese, both men and women, indulge in the habit of chewing the betel leaf. This custom takes the place of smoking the tobacco leaf amongst Europeans, and the use of opium by the Chinese. The leaf, which in appearance somewhat resembles ivy, is said to possess constituents which compensate for a deficiency of animal diet. All the natives carry with them a small box containing three ingredients, viz., a few leaves of betel, some fine chunam, or lime made from pearl oyster shells, and a few slices of areca nut. They wrap a little chunam and areca nut in the betel leaf, and then convey it to the mouth. The effect of chewing this mixture is said to be soothing to the brain and encouraging to the digestive organs, but, however this may be, the more evident effect is the

PLATE XIII.

A SHOP WHICH PAYS NO RENT.

reddening of the saliva, which gives to the mouth an appearance of bleeding. The passion for betel chewing is very strong, and asserts itself in quite young children, who take to it as soon as they are able to get possession of a betel-box. The betel leaf is the delicacy which is being offered for sale by the Tamil woman in the right corner of Plate xiii. Her unlovely companion is catering for a more rational appetite with her baskets of fresh cocoa-nuts, gram and curry stuffs. The Singhalese girl on the left, having made her purchase of betel, has taken a seat for a little gossip, and is evidently in the act of placing a portion of the pungent delicacy in her mouth.

The homes of these people, being mere huts built of mud and thatched with palm leaves, are in themselves decidedly squalid; yet they have a picturesque appearance due to their charming surroundings, for they are always embowered in the choicest tropical foliage. The wants within these humble dwellings are indeed few. Living in a temperature which makes artificial heat unnecessary the whole year round, and renders clothing for the sake of warmth superfluous, the poor natives of Ceylon are far more comfortable in their modest huts than the poor in colder countries with their better-furnished cottages and the need for coal and warm clothing.

Within a few minutes drive of Maradahn is the luxuriant district known as the "Cinnamon Gardens," which consists of a park laid out as a Jubilee Memorial to Queen Victoria, a magnificent race-course, and many miles of splendidly made red roads through groves of cinnamon and every kind of

palm. The traveller will be greatly impressed by the excellent condition of the roads in all parts of Colombo, but especially in the Cinnamon Gardens. Their colour, so restful to the eye, is in charming contrast with the "irrepressible greenery" bordering and surrounding them on every hand.

The cinnamon laurel, which abounds in this district, is largely cultivated on the west coast of Ceylon. The export of the spice to the London market amounts to upwards of 2,000,000 lbs. per annum. The area of cinnamon under cultivation is about 35,000 acres, which is owned principally by wealthy natives. The operation of preparing the bark for the market is somewhat intricate and requires considerable skill. The tree is constantly pruned, so that it cannot grow to a great height. The shoots are allowed to grow for a couple of years, until they are usually about ten feet high; they are then cut down, the leaves are trimmed off and the sticks are cut up into lengths of about a foot; a knife is then inserted between the bark and the wood, and the bark is stretched and peeled off in cylindrical pieces, which are carefully placed one within another, and then tied into bundles. Fermentation now takes place, and this renders it possible to remove the outer bark, which is done by placing each piece of bark separately upon a stick and carefully scraping it. After this the smaller quills are placed within the larger ones, which curl round them, and thus form solid sticks of cinnamon spice some forty inches in length.

The "Cinnamon Gardens" of Colombo, once cultivated with immense profit by the Dutch, are now given up to the luxurious residences of Europeans and some of the wealthier

PLATE XIV.

IN THE VICTORIA PARK.

PLATE XV.

IN THE VICTORIA PARK.

burghers and natives. Each residence nestles in a paradise of palms and flowering shrubs of infinite variety, crotons most gorgeous and creepers innumerable, the latter overgrowing roofs and pillars and climbing the neighbouring trees, which they bespangle with their lovely blossoms. An evening drive through this part of Colombo is a botanical feast of the most exhilarating nature. In the part now known as the Victoria Park one may wander under the shade of palms and figs, or rest beneath clumps of graceful bamboo (Plate xiv), surrounded by blossoms and perfumes of the most enchanting kind. The huge purple bells of the Thunbergia creep over the archways, and gorgeous passion flowers, orchids, pitcher plants, bright-leaved caladiums and multitudes of other tropical plants everywhere flourish and abound.

To the right of the bamboos in Plate xiv is a specimen of the curious fan-shaped traveller's tree (*urania speciosa*), often wrongly described as a palm. Its long broad leaves collect water, which they filter into the close-set sheaths at the base of the leaves, whence the traveller can draw streams of pure water by simply piercing them with a knife.

The surface of the soil in the Cinnamon Gardens consists curiously of white sand, beneath which is a stratum of nourishing soil. It is this subsoil which supports the roots of the plants, and produces such luxuriance of vegetation; the traveller, however, is often much surprised and puzzled to see such abundance of magnificent trees and plants apparently nourished only by white sand.

Amongst the trees which attract the notice of the traveller the banyans stand pre-eminent. Those here illustrated are

specimens of the *Ficus Indica*. The pendant aërial roots of the tree in Plate xvi have not yet struck the ground, but in Plate xviii a further development is shown. Here the shoots have reached the ground, taken root, and grown into large supporting stems, so completely enveloping the original trunk as to produce the appearance of a miniature forest. The circumference of some single trees, which thus appear to the eye as a whole grove, extends to several hundred feet. Many of these trees are to be seen in the Cinnamon Gardens; they do not, however, compare with the fine specimens to be seen in other parts of Ceylon, some of which grow many hundreds of stems, and are capable of sheltering a thousand people. The famous Nerbudda tree is said to have as many as three thousand aërial stems. Colombo does not possess so large a tree as that, but at Negombo, on the western coast, an extremely fine specimen may be seen.

These trees are greatly in favour with the flying foxes, especially when ripe with seed, which serves as a dainty nocturnal feast to these curious bird-beasts. They sleep in them by day, suspended from the boughs by their claws, which at nightfall they unhook, and spreading their heavy wings, they fly around in large numbers, making no little noise in their foraging exploits. It is quite easy upon a moonlit night to bring them down with a gun. If not killed outright they are by no means gentle creatures to deal with, and the help of a hunting knife is not to be despised in view of the fact that they fight violently with their huge claws and sharp teeth. The size of their bodies is about as large as that of a cat, their wings measuring about four feet from tip to tip. Professor

PLATE XVI.

BANYAN TREE.

Haeckel has observed that they are very fond of palm wine, upon which they frequently get intoxicated by drinking from the vessels placed to catch the flowing sap.

Another member of the fig-tree family, the sacred Bo (*ficus religiosa*) flourishes in Ceylon no less than the Banyan. The venerated specimen still flourishing at Anaradhapura, in the North-Central province of Ceylon, is more than two thousand years old, having been planted B.C. 288. Certainly no tree in the world has had its history so carefully preserved. Native records exist sufficiently numerous and trustworthy to give fair grounds for the belief that this is the original tree, planted at Anaradhapura from a branch of the sacred Peepul, beneath the shade of which Buddha was wont to sit in contemplation. From this circumstance Bo-trees are always objects of the deepest reverence to Buddhists, who take the greatest care not to injure them.

Still another family of the same great clan is the India-rubber tree (*ficus elastica*), many fine specimens of which will be referred to in Vol. II. of this work. Its leaf is familiar amongst hot-house shrubs in England; in Ceylon, however, it is better known as a magnificent tree of some hundred feet in height, with huge roots like pythons creeping over the surface of the soil, in many instances to a distance which equals the height of the tree itself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MUSEUM AND THE SUBURBS OF COLOMBO.

ADJOINING the Victoria Park is the Colombo Museum, the finest modern building in Ceylon. It is entirely occupied with Ceylon exhibits; archæological, zoological, botanical, agricultural, industrial, &c., and in all departments it grows richer year by year. Especially interesting are the archæological exhibits from the ancient cities of Anaradhapura and Pollanarua, dating from the early days of the Kandyan Kingdom.

The natural history galleries contain many fine specimens, including a shark 13 feet in girth. Notwithstanding the great difficulties in the way of forming and maintaining stuffed and desiccated specimens in a climate that is moist as well as hot, the Museum possesses a rich collection of the fauna of the island. The insects are remarkably well represented, and are perhaps the most striking of the many collections in the natural history department.

Another delightful institution in this part of Colombo is the Garden Club, adjoining the Museum grounds. This is the rendezvous of the élite of the European residents, especially in the evening, when Lawn Tennis is engaged in upon some of the

PLATE XVII.

THE PINGO.

PLATE XVIII.

BANYAN TREE.

finest courts to be met with anywhere; and the play, too, is generally of an equally superior character, owing perhaps to the opportunities afforded by the climate for playing all the year round. The grounds are well kept and prettily laid out with the choicest of flowering shrubs.

From this point a pleasant drive may be taken by way of the road illustrated in Plate xvii, past the Government Agricultural School to the suburb of Bambalapitiya. The Agricultural School is a unique institution, established for the instruction of the village schoolmaster in the arts of agriculture in order that new methods of cultivation may be introduced through the teaching given in the village schools.

Passing on we notice pine-apples growing wild amongst the cinnamon bushes which are thickly planted by the road-side, interspersed here and there with cocoa-nuts, mangoes, and bread-fruit. The pine-apple is not indigenous, yet there are about ten thousand acres of land applied to its cultivation in Ceylon.

Another familiar feature of these roads is the Pingo cooly. The Pingo is a long flat piece of wood of the Kitool palm, tough and pliable. The cooly (see Plate xvii), having attached his load to the two ends, places the centre upon his shoulder, and by the elastic spring of the Pingo he is thus enabled to carry great weights for a considerable distance. Some Pingos are made from the leaf-stalk of the cocoa palm, which is even more pliable than the Kitool. This is a favourite means of carrying liquids, placed in earthenware chatties which are

attached to the Pingo by means of coir. In the illustration the Pingo cooly has a load of fresh cocoa-nuts, which are much heavier than they look, each nut containing about a quart of liquid.

A native character often to be met with in the suburbs is the professional snake-charmer and conjuror. He wanders from bungalow to bungalow with a basket full of Cobras, and with two attendants who assist him in his business (Plate xix). These snake-men are all Tamils; the Singhalese never engage in the profession of the snake-charmer, although some of them do a little amateur snake-taming. The Cobra is chosen in preference to any other species for the purposes of the juggler, owing to its supposed power of discriminating between persons, like some domesticated animals which recognise their owners but are particularly uncivil to anyone else. The fangs are by no means always extracted, the snake-men often relying on their personal mastery over the cobra, which they obtain in the first instance in the following manner:—The snake having been captured and placed in a small round basket, the snake-charmer entices him out by playing a pipe. The cobra erects himself to the height of some eight inches, and prepares to strike at his foe, who, however, seizes him by the tail and with a stick presses his head to the ground; then, placing his foot on the body, the snake-charmer releases the tail of the snake, and seizes him by the neck. After such familiar treatment the cobra soon begins to recognize his master, and will make no attempt to strike unless treated very roughly. The snake-men are exceedingly clever conjurers, and their singular tricks afford great amusement to travellers.

PLATE XIX.

SNAKE CHARMING.

PLATE XX.

THE HACKERY.

In the suburbs of Colombo the best specimens of the little trotting bull are met with. These are pretty smooth-skinned little animals, with deep dewlap, and a hump above their shoulders, by means of which they draw the Hackeries, or small two-wheeled cars, as seen in the illustration (Plate xx). Their legs are fine and slender, almost deer-like, and their pace is nearly equal to that of a good pony. They are guided in driving by thin reins of rope, which are passed through the nostril. Barbarous as it seems to bore a hole through this sensitive part for such a purpose, it is doubtful whether they suffer more by this method than they would by any other means that could be devised.

The Hackery is essentially the carriage of the middle-class native. The whole turn-out costs but a trifling sum—from thirty shillings to five pounds, according to the age and quality of the bull—and the upkeep amounts to very little, while the cost of fodder is only a few shillings per mensem.

Europeans, who live in outlying stations, sometimes keep a Hackery; but I have never known one who could drive the bull, which is trained to obey the native voice, and takes no heed therefore of such exhortations as "Pitta, pitta," "Muc, muc," when articulated with a strange accent. So the European who uses a Hackery takes a back seat and employs a native coachman.

The natives come to the Colombo races in Hackeries by the score, for they are very keen on the sport, and it is not an uncommon thing to see Hackery trotting-matches, improvised upon the return homewards. Whether they

"put a little on" in the various events which they come to witness I cannot say, but their propensity for gambling is so universal that they doubtless bet freely on their own Hackery races.

Upon reaching the Galle Road, in the suburb of Bambalapitiya, we come upon a species of cattle (Plate xxi) which differs from the little Hackery bull as much as our English cart-horse differs from a carriage-horse. These are indeed beasts of burden. Being of a larger breed, they are used for the slower and heavier traffic. They work in pairs, and draw their heavy loads by pressure of their humps against the huge cross-bar which rests upon their necks and is attached in the centre to the pole of the cart. In this manner they can draw heavy loads of from fifteen hundredweight to a ton for twenty miles each day. There are some twenty thousand of these palm-thatched carts and bullocks on the roads in Ceylon, mostly engaged in conveying produce to the ports, and returning laden with rice for the coolies employed on the tea and coffee estates. The drivers, one regrets to notice, do not exercise much human kindness in the function allotted to them, for in addition to the method displayed in the illustration, where we see the short cane being freely applied, they cruelly twist the tails of the poor brutes, thus inflicting great torture.*

For seventy miles the Galle Road is in no part much less beautiful than the portion illustrated by Plate xxi, which is within the Colombo municipality, as is clearly indicated by

* For a splendid specimen of the heavy traffic bull, see the Newera Eliya section of this work in Vol. III.

PLATE XXI.

GALLE ROAD, COLOMBO.

the gas-lamp on the right of the picture. This road, which is in close proximity to the sea, passes through a forest of palms, with here and there a pathway leading to the coast, down which we catch frequent glimpses of the shore. Although the character of the landscape varies little for the whole distance, yet it is never wearisome or monotonous. The naturalist is enchanted by the abundance of interesting objects at every turn; while to the enthusiastic botanist this seventy miles of road, densely bordered on either side with an inexhaustible variety of leaf and blossom, is a treasury unsurpassed in any other country of the world.

The brown thatched huts, groups of gaily-clad natives, animals, birds—all these add life to a scene that baffles description. Garlands of creepers festooned from tree to tree; huge banyans stretching in archways completely over the road, with the stems all overgrown by ferns, orchids, and other parasitic plants; here and there a blaze of the flame-coloured gloriosa, golden orchids, various kinds of orange and lemon trees covered with fragrant blossoms, climbing lillies, an undergrowth of exquisite ferns of infinite variety, all crowned by slender palms of ninety or a hundred feet in height—it is vain to attempt a full description of such a scene.

A tree will be noticed in our illustration with lateral branches thrown out in groups of three, some feet apart, and bearing a large crop of pods on the otherwise bare branches. This is the cotton tree, called by the Singhalese Katu-Imbul. It may be seen on this road in three stages; first, it becomes loaded with crimson blossoms before any leaves appear; then,

the leaves develop; and afterwards it bears pods as seen in the picture. When ripe, the cotton bursts from the pod, and where the trees are uncultivated it strews the road; but where cultivation is carried on, it is collected from the pods, and the fibre, being too short for spinning, is exported for stuffing mattresses.

By the streams and wooden bridges, which form a charming feature of this road, huge reptiles, harmonizing in colour with the vegetation around, bask lazily on the banks. On one occasion, while driving from Colombo, I saw a huge python lying asleep upon a piece of rock close to the road-side; it must have measured at least sixteen feet in length. The gigantic lizard, called by the natives the Kabra-goya, also lies quite heedless of the passer-by. This strange creature, some seven feet long, has a great resemblance to the crocodile, but is of a greenish colour and strongly marked with spots and stripes. He seldom moves unless attacked, when he is by no means so slothful as his appearance would lead one to suppose. He is an ugly monster, and very tenacious of life, his head being the only vulnerable spot. A gun is the only safe weapon with which to attack him, as a stroke from his tail has often proved sufficiently powerful to break a man's arm. Smaller lizards of great variety are to be seen on this same road, and huge crocodiles, too, by the larger water-ways.

Perhaps no sight to be seen from Bambalapitiya is more purely magnificent than the glow after sunset. The clouds on the horizon take the strangest forms, and are lighted up with tints far more beautiful that the sunset itself. Of course no

PLATE XXII.

AFTERGLOW, FROM THE SHORE OF BAMBALAPITIYA.

photograph can give an idea of this superbly delightful effect, but I have been able to reproduce, to some extent, the strange forms of the clouds, and to give some idea in Plate xxii of the weird effect at dusk caused by the palms which bend over the sea forming a foreground to the strange appearance of the distant sky. From these two palms we look straight out to sea, and although there appears to be a mountainous tract of country rising high above the horizon, this is in fact a mass of cloud, which has wholly appeared since the sun sank beneath the horizon some fifteen minutes before.

It is generally known that Ceylon, being only six degrees from the equator, has very little twilight, the space of time elapsing between strong daylight and darkness amounting to little more than a quarter of an hour. The time of sunset varies not more than about half an hour throughout the year. It will interest the amateur photographer to know that when I exposed the plate from which this view has been reproduced, it was already dark within the bungalow, and the faint light over the sea necessitated an exposure of forty seconds on the most rapid plate. Five minutes later it was totally dark.

A reference to the frontispiece will give the reader some idea of an after-glow effect some few minutes earlier than the one which has just been described, while there is yet considerable light over the sea. It is not often that such views can be successfully photographed, because, when the sun sinks below the horizon, a strong breeze generally springs up and causes such waving of the palm leaves that forty seconds' exposure would produce a mere blurred effect without any definition.

It will be noticed that the palm trees in the foreground of these after-glow pictures have, each of them, a palm leaf knotted round the stem. I have heard various explanations of this custom; in most cases it would seem to be a matter of superstition, the tree so marked being placed under a guardian spirit to prevent the cocoanuts from being stolen.

CHAPTER V.

DEHIWALA.

A COUPLE of miles south of Bambalapitiya is the interesting little fishing village of Dehiwala. Plate xxiii represents the fleet beached at sunset. How the Singhalese fishermen in earlier times met the difficulty presented to them by the Buddhistic precept, which forbade them to kill any living thing, would be interesting to know, but since about the year 1505 A.D., they have mostly become Roman Catholics. It has been said by some authors that they renounced Buddhism in order to avoid the difficulties thus placed in the way of their catching fish, but this is mere supposition and quite untenable.

When the Portuguese took possession of Colombo and the adjoining villages along the coast, they used great brutality in compelling the natives, who were mainly fishermen, to submit to baptism. They even pushed their efforts far beyond these humble people, and by threats of barbarous torture gained outward conformity to Roman Catholicism from the highest families under their power.

During the century which followed, a very large number of natives became devout and earnest in their new religion. When the Dutch in 1642 ousted the Portuguese from power,

and in their turn endeavoured to force their own religious views upon the natives by imposing fearful penalties upon those who adhered to the Roman Catholic doctrines, these poor people for the most part had the courage to resist so strongly that the persecution to a great extent failed in its object, and Roman Catholicism has continued to be the faith of the Ceylon fishermen to the present day.

The fisherman has no ambition beyond catching and selling enough fish to enable him to live in his little palm-thatched mud hut upon the shore. How utterly devoid he is of any spirit of enterprise, or wish to better his condition, is clear from the following facts, which point to a characteristic common among the poorer classes of the Singhalese.

The Portuguese established a fish tax in Ceylon, and the Dutch continued it; but under the British rule it has been discontinued, with the result that the fishermen, no longer having duty to pay, merely catch fewer fish, choosing to do less work rather than benefit by the remission of taxation.

This trait in the character of the natives of India and Ceylon is a most important consideration in the fiscal policy of the Governments. In England, taxes remitted fructify in the pockets of the people, but no results of this kind can be expected in Ceylon; the certain consequence of living being made easier by a remission of taxes is a large diminution of production. The primary duty of a government, assuming the responsibility of guardian to people of such a nature, is, therefore, to encourage industry and induce saving, by drawing away from them by means of taxation all that can be taken

PLATE XXIII.

A FISHING VILLAGE.

without discouraging effort, and to apply it to improving communications, protecting their health, and bettering their social condition by education, and their soil by irrigation.

From Dehiwala (Plate xxiii), we get a good view of Mount Lavinia Hotel, which stands on a rocky promontory at the point of Dehiwala Bay. This handsome building, thus standing prominently out towards the sea, was once a viceregal residence. There is a charm about its name which is fully realized in the character of the house and its surroundings. Being within an easy drive of Colombo, and having a well-deserved reputation for most excellent fish dinners, combined with good sea-bathing and freedom from mosquitoes, it is attractive to inland residents and travellers alike.

Sea-bathing in Ceylon is generally attended with great risk, owing to the prevalence of sharks; but at Mount Lavinia a reef of rock, about a mile from the shore, keeps out the voracious monsters, and renders bathing as safe as it is enjoyable. Large numbers of the dreaded white sharks, of immense size, are caught by the natives a couple of miles further down the coast. A spotted shark, caught here in 1883, and preserved in the Colombo Museum, measures 23 feet in length and 13 feet in girth.

The fish, which literally swarm in endless variety in the seas of Ceylon, are remarkable for their fantastic shapes and beautiful colours. Some 600 species have been caught, but it is doubtful what is the real number to be found about the island. Of those which are edible, the one most preferred is also the most plentiful—the Seer. In size and shape this fish

somewhat resembles the salmon, but its flesh is white. In flavour it is by some thought to be superior to salmon; but however this may be, it is certain that few people tire of Seer, although it is daily served at some meal throughout the year.

Plate xxvi represents the fish auction which takes place each day at Dehiwala. Very interesting to the traveller are these sales, which take place on the sands, not only as a study of native life, but as an exhibition of the strangest creatures brought forth from the deep.

Among the most curious are the Saw-fish. These are something like sharks in the body, but have a huge flat beak, with sharp teeth projecting on either side. This frightful weapon, in a full-grown fish of some twelve or fourteen feet long, extends to about five feet from the head. With it these monsters charge amongst shoals of smaller fish, slaying them right and left, and devouring them at leisure. The saws are sold as curiosities to travellers, and can generally be met with in Colombo from two to five feet in length.

The red Fire-fish, sometimes brought ashore, is of a remarkably brilliant hue. The Sword-fish, the Walking-fish—with curious arms and legs, by means of which it crawls along the bottom of the sea—the Dog-fish, marked like a tiger, and various species of the Ray, are frequently caught.

Many of the fish of Ceylon are more or less poisonous, but they are well known and seldom get into the market, although serious cases of poisoning by eating fish have sometimes occurred.

PLATE XXV.

THE BAMBALAPITIYA SHORE.

PLATE XXVI.

THE AUCTION.

Plate xxv shows the coast from Bambalapitiya to Mount Lavinia. Here sea-turtles are very plentiful. They are very frequently captured of huge size and weight, sometimes four or five feet in length. They differ from the land-tortoise in having large flappers like fins, with which they hurl great quantities of sand into the faces of their captors as soon as they have been turned over on to their backs.

This illustration also serves to show how very close to the water's edge the Cocoa-palm will flourish, and how gracefully it bends towards the sea.

On an average each full-grown tree yields about one hundred nuts in a year, and continues bearing for upwards of a century. The fruit is gathered usually every two months. The average height of the trees is from fifty to ninety feet, and the length of the fronds from twelve to twenty-five feet. It is estimated that there are two hundred and fifty millions of palm trees on the coasts of Ceylon, fifty millions of which are bearing fruit, and at a very low calculation they must yield more than a thousand millions of nuts annually.

The Singhalese say that the Cocoa-nut-palm cannot live far from the sea, or away from the sound of the human voice. Curiously, it grows in a belt of some fifteen miles deep from the shores, but, considering its value, it is hardly likely to be allowed to escape the sound of the human voice.

CHAPTER VI.

BUDDHIST TEMPLES.

ANOTHER feature of Dehiwala, which is very attractive to the traveller, is the Buddhist Temple (Plate xxiv). Although smaller than some others within a short distance from Colombo, this is the most convenient and the pleasantest to visit, owing to its being clean and well kept. The priests are very obliging, and readily afford any information asked of them.

Within are to be seen huge images of Buddha, both sitting and reclining. Mural paintings, of the crudest character, represent various legends of Buddhist mythology, and especially set forth the various forms of punishment in store for those who disobey the Buddhist precepts.

Before the images offerings of flowers are heaped; these include lotus blossoms, temple flowers, and blossoms of the areca and cocoa palms. No worshipper comes empty-handed; and the fragrant perfume is sometimes almost overpowering.

Near the Temple is a preaching-house, the interior of which is carved and very handsomely decorated. The clever designs

PLATE XXIV.

BUDDHIST TEMPLE, AT DEHIWALA.

on the floor of the Temple, which the natives have worked in mosaics from broken pieces of English pottery, are particularly striking.

The bell-shaped shrine, resting on a square base, seen in Plate xxiv, is one of the many hundreds of Dagobas scattered all over Ceylon, each containing some relic or saintly fragment. They are solid masses of masonry, all of the same form, but varying considerably in size. Some of those in the North-Central province are immense, one of them being 357 feet in diameter and 405 feet high. Its platform extends over eight acres of ground. The enormous mass of bricks used in the construction of this Dagoba alone was calculated by Sir Emerson Tennent to be sufficient to build a town as large as Coventry or Ipswich, or to build a wall ten feet high from London to Edinburgh. It is nearly two thousand years old, having been constructed B.C. 87.

There are several others almost equally large, but the number of smaller ones at Anaradhapura is countless. Most of them are said to have been built to enshrine some relic of Buddha or his disciples. The ancient city of Anaradhapura, once the capital of Ceylon, must have been indeed magnificent when these huge piles were carefully kept coated with chunam like polished marble and their platforms were occupied by whole regiments of sculptured elephants with real ivory tusks.

Amongst the ruins of this once mighty city, the thousands of huge monoliths are perhaps even more striking than the Dagobas. They are carefully hewn out of stone or granite,

and many of them are splendidly sculptured. For a space of sixteen square miles these wonderful ruins extend. The exquisite carving on many of the flights of steps is as perfect now as it was two thousand years ago. The semicircular stones forming the first of each flight are very remarkable; their carving represents a lotus-blossom, round which circle horses, elephants, bullocks, geese, etc. These are generally called moon-stones, and are peculiar to Ceylon.

The native chronicles give minute details about the construction of the Dagobas, Monasteries, and Palaces of this marvellous city, the ruins of which are the most impressive sight to be found in Ceylon. One monastery alone was built to accommodate a thousand priests. There were golden pillars in the halls, supported by golden statues of elephants, the walls were inlaid with costly gems, the thrones were of ivory, and the furniture of the most elaborate description.

Oriental exaggeration may to some extent pervade these chronicles, but such is the evidence, from the ruins still existing, of the wealth and luxury as well as the gigantic dimensions of the city, that much can be accepted as literally true which, without such evidence, would have been considered mythical. The great tanks, many thousands of acres in extent, which watered the beautiful gardens, are existing to-day. Even the names of the streets and the number of houses contained in them are given in the Mahawanso, a precious native chronicle. The size of the city, including the tanks and gardens, is mentioned as covering two hundred and fifty six square miles.

This reference to the ruined city is made here, only in connection with the history of the Dagobas, a small specimen of which is seen in Plate xxiv. A full pictorial description of the ruined cities of Ceylon will be given in a later volume.

CHAPTER VII.

MORATUWA.

THE traveller who wishes to see Singhalese life pure and simple should take train by the sea-side line to Moratuwa, a most interesting and picturesque village, about five miles farther down the coast than Mount Lavinia. Carpentry is the occupation of the people who live here. They work in a very primitive fashion, constructing their own tools, and employing their toes as well as their fingers in the manipulation of them.

Although not very skilful in designing, they are clever workmen, and carve beautifully. Some of their cabinet work is exquisite, but the chief industry of the village is the making of cheap jackwood furniture. Thousands of tables, chairs, couches and bedsteads, are made in the course of the year under the palm-thatched sheds on the banks of the beautiful lagoon of Moratuwa.

These workshops, embowered in the most luxuriant foliage, are so unlike the furniture factories of the western world, the work is carried on so patiently, and the surroundings are so fascinating, that we scarcely realise that the earnest business of life is being carried on.

PLATE XXVII

THREE MORATOWA MAIDS ARE WE.

Indeed, it is not being carried on as we understand that term in Europe. Imagine a dozen cabinet-makers from Curtain Road, London, being set to work under an awning of plaited cocoa fronds, in the midst of the most enchanting surroundings, including dozens of bright little fairies like those in Plate xxvii, with teeth like pearls in a setting of smiles, and their eyes all glistening with happiness, laughing and playing around them. Do you think they would do much work? No. Nor do the Singhalese; for there is no necessity to do so, when a shilling a day will provide the wherewithal for children to be as happy as these. These pretty children were three of a crowd who welcomed us as we disembarked from our canoe on the shore of the Moratuwa Lake. Their friends, the carpenters, were most hospitable, and welcomed us warmly, inviting us into their pretty little bungalows, and providing us with native delicacies in the way of food, which certainly were most cleverly prepared and cooked; and being served with scrupulous cleanliness, they looked most inviting, although some of them did not meet with a corresponding appreciation from our unaccustomed palate.

The gentleness and courtesy of these people cannot be spoken of too highly, and their appearance quite chimes in with those attributes. Slender frames, small hands and feet, pleasing features and light brown complexions are their common characteristics. The faces of the young Singhalese women are pleasing, their figures are remarkably good and well-proportioned, and their arms and hands are beautifully formed. An old maid amongst them is almost unknown. They marry very early, and are often grandmothers at thirty. After that age

they soon lose their graceful figures, and although they are as long-lived as Europeans, they lose their youthful appearance at an earlier age.

The marriage ceremony amongst the Singhalese is generally celebrated with great festivity, lasting many days, and in some cases even weeks. There is no occasion on which they spend their savings more readily or freely. The widest possible circle of acquaintance is invited to share the round of feasts and entertainments. Moreover, the surest passport to these festive gatherings is similarity of caste rather than of wealth or worldly position.

A pleasant way of making an excursion to Moratuwa is to go by the sea-side railway, and drive back in the evening by the Galle Road, through the groves of palms and shrubs which extend the whole distance. The light under these charming avenues after 5 o'clock in the evening is so pleasantly softened by the foliage that the vegetation is then seen to the greatest advantage.

As we pass through the villages, the groups of idle and contented folk seem quite in harmony with the features of the landscape. The naked little urchins, as seen in Plate xxviii, frolic everywhere, their well-nourished condition indicating plenty, and their merry voices happy content.

Along the road at intervals, for several miles outside Colombo, there are well-kept bungalows with large gardens, or compounds, as they are called, the habitations of merchants, civil servants, and officers, who are occupied during the day in the Fort at Colombo.

PLATE XXVIII.

BAMBALAPITIYA.

These bungalows are built in a very substantial manner of cabook stone walls, crowned with a high-pitched roof of red tiles, and surrounded by very deep verandahs, supported by rows of large white pillars. The verandahs generally occupy as much space as the rest of the bungalow, and are as a rule well furnished with teapoys and luxurious lounging chairs. Being cool in the early morning and in the evening, they are used more than the rooms in the interior, as they have all the advantages of out-door breezes with the best of protection from the sun.

As we get nearer to Colombo, one tree—when it is in bloom—will be especially noticed, the Plumiera, commonly called the Temple-tree, from the custom of the Singhalese in strewing the Buddhist temples with its beautiful and fragrant blossoms. There are two very fine specimens standing in the compound of a bungalow, named after them, on this road.

A couple of miles nearer to Colombo we pass through the suburb of Kolupitiya, thickly studded with native huts and bazaars. A stranger passing this way just after sunset would assuredly think that there was some fair or festival taking place, so crowded is the road, and so fully illuminated with lamps and torches. The temperature being very hot, and the roads red, these glaring torches and lamps, with the crowds of dusky people in bright-coloured costumes, present a scene as full of life and light and warmth as one could possibly desire to see.

In every direction the suburbs of Colombo are full of interest. I have, however, chosen to illustrate only those

which are most likely to be seen by the traveller who is a temporary visitor to the capital. Nor do the pictures here given represent carefully-chosen spots and scenes of native life, but simply the scenery and the incidents to be met with ordinarily and every day.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KELANI VALLEY.—FROM COLOMBO TO KADUWELLA.

I HAVE said that the Galle Road is unequalled in the intense luxuriance of vegetable life by which it is literally embowered, but what shall I say of the Kelani Valley? If the dense richness of leaf and blossom which environs the Galle Road is unsurpassed, in what way can the roads by the noble Kelani River lay claim to even greater distinction? It is romance that lends an additional charm.

Between Colombo and Ruanwella the beauty of the landscape is most stirring in its romantic suggestiveness. Scene after scene appeals to the imagination, and fancy fashions events of the wildest fiction.

There is, however, no need to draw upon the imagination; some knowledge of the real events which have actually occurred along this ancient route—the old road into the Kandyan kingdom—lends a vivid interest to well nigh every picturesque spot. The authentic history of this enchanting district is pregnant with heroic deeds, fierce battles, acts of Oriental treachery and barbarity, and many exciting and adventurous experiences, both of the Portuguese and the British, during their several attempts to subdue the power of the Kandyan kings.

At the time of these real, yet seemingly romantic exploits, anything like a well-constructed road was unknown. Roughly cut jungle paths, uneven and swampy, here and there impassable for wheeled traffic, and intersected at frequent intervals by wide and rapid streams; no bridges of any kind, and many an artfully-contrived *cul de sac*—these were some of the embarrassments experienced by the invader.

The fact of the district being subject to violent thunderstorms, which were immediately followed by the rapid rise and overflow of the rivers, rendered camping a matter of the most serious difficulty; moreover, the jungle was so infested with leeches, that it was often impossible to find any spot secure from their molestation. Even after the greatest precautions had been taken, the soldiers sometimes presented an appearance absolutely shocking, covered as they were with blood, and many of them having upwards of a hundred leeches adhering to their bodies at one time. Men would suppose only that they were in a profuse perspiration, but, upon removing their garments, they would find themselves literally covered with these voracious creatures, and bleeding from head to foot. The land-leech here spoken of is very small in size, and dark in colour, and is found only among the forests of Ceylon and in South America.

Inconveniences such as these, added to the great heat, (the thermometer being generally at about 100° in the shady jungle during the day, and falling to 85° at night) and the necessity of patching up the roads through ravines and defiles, might well be supposed to prevent an expedition from

PLATE XXIX.

JUNGLE IN THE KELANI VALLEY.

admiring those scenes, the natural beauty of which delights the traveller of the present day, enjoying, as he does, the advantages of splendid roads, good Rest-houses, and every comfort; but so romantically beautiful is the landscape in every direction, that some of the military officers who experienced all the trials and embarrassments which we have mentioned, described it in their journals in terms of such glowing enthusiasm, that it is evident their privations did not prevent them from being enchanted by the singular beauty of the country disclosed to them by their undaunted efforts.

No such spirit of adventure is required to explore the wilds of the Kelani Valley in the present day. The same fascinating landscape of undulating lowlands and lovely river views is there, but the modern traveller finds, not only excellent roads, but always a courteous, gentle, and contented population. I know of no other district in which Singhalese rural life is more full of interest. Even a visit to Hanwella is well repaid, although it necessitates a journey of twenty-one miles from Colombo. The primitive methods of the natives in the manufacture of the quaintest pottery, their curious system of agriculture, and the peculiar phases of their social life, are no less interesting than the beautiful country in which they live.

The accompanying plates represent the character of the scenery as far as Ruanwella, forty-one miles from Colombo. No. xxix gives some idea of the varied nature of the jungle foliage. The elegant Areca-nut Palms form one of the most noticeable features of the district. They adorn the jungle

on all sides. The pleasing effect produced by the beautiful delicate stem, with its rich feathery crest, upon the surrounding foliage will be seen in the example here pourtrayed. The graceful bamboos, the huge waving fronds of the plantain, the shapely mango, covered with the bell-shaped blossoms of the Thunbergia creeper, all seem to form a setting in which the elegant Areca displays its beauties to the greatest possible advantage. It so often happens in this lovely jungle scenery that the surroundings seem to be specially fashioned to aid the display of the beautiful Areca.

The quality of picturesqueness, however, is not the only virtue of this tree. It is very prolific in the production of nuts, which grow in clusters from the stem just beneath the crest of the palm. Previous to the development of the nuts the tree flowers, and diffuses a delightful fragrance all around. A cluster of nuts may be seen by the aid of a strong reading glass in Plate xxix. In size and appearance they are not unlike the nutmeg, and are similarly enclosed in a husk. What becomes of them is easy to realize when it is considered that every man, woman, and child is addicted to the habit of betel chewing, and that the areca-nut forms part of the compound used for this purpose; added to this, there is an export trade in areca-nuts to the amount of about £75,000 per annum.

Another tree attracts the notice of every traveller by its stupendous growth and gigantic fruit — the Jak (Plate xxx). It not only grows the largest of all edible fruits, but it bears it in prodigious quantity and in a very peculiar manner. As

PLATE XXX.

JAK FRUIT.

will be seen by reference to the illustration, it throws huge pods from the trunk and the larger branches, and suspends them by a thick short stalk. I have counted as many as eighty of these huge fruits upon one tree, some of them weighing as much as forty to fifty pounds. They are pale green in colour, with a granulated surface. Inside the rough skin is a soft yellow substance, and embedded in this are some kernels about the size of a walnut.

This fruit often forms an ingredient in the native curries, but its flavour is not liked by Europeans. Elephants, however, are very fond of it, and its great size would seem to make it an appropriate form of food for these huge beasts. After the elephant in Plate xxxv had been photographed, he was rewarded with a feast of this fruit, which grew plentifully on the trees upon the banks of the river.

The wood of the Jak-tree is largely used in Ceylon for articles of furniture. In colour it is a bright yellow when new, but after it has become well-seasoned it darkens very considerably, and if kept well polished it forms by no means a bad substitute for mahogany.

One circumstance should make this district a very popular resort for travellers, who too frequently see only the towns, and leave Ceylon without an idea of pure Singhalese life, or of the beauty of the tropical scenery of the low-country valleys. I refer to the excellent Rest-houses, which are stationed at convenient intervals, and which provide suitable food and accommodation to the visitor.

I cannot say quite so much in favour of the Coach service, although it is interesting in its way, and at any rate provides some excitement, pleasant enough for those who are not of a nervous disposition, albeit somewhat uninviting to the timid. Let me describe the methods peculiar to the Ceylon Coach.

When a horse's bolting propensities are found to be incurable, when his proneness to kick the tiles out of his stable roof has become a nuisance and expense, when he has completely smashed his owner's carriage, and knocked down the columns of his portico, and, by way of varying his escapades, has tossed his rider over a cinnamon bush, and has escaped from the saddle without breaking the girths, with the additional trifle of driving his hoofs into the lungs of the muttu, or horse-keeper, he is thereupon considered to have earned his promotion to the service of Her Majesty's Royal Mail Coach.

Personally I should be sorry if this were not the case; for a vicious horse affords me keen enjoyment. The Royal Mail Coach itself is not subject to damage, and even if the passengers are, the clever boys, whose business it is to persuade the gentle brutes to draw the coach, generally manage to contrive that no one gets hurt.

The entertainment provided for the passengers is, therefore, somewhat after the following fashion: A start is made from the General Post Office in Colombo with a coach something after the style of a huge waggonette, roughly constructed but of a solid character, and surmounted by a large canopy,

which serves as a protection from the sun, and is supported by iron rods affixed to the sides of the vehicle.

To this machine, for the first stage of the journey, a pair of horses of only third-rate vicious propensity are attached by means of scanty and unsafe-looking odd pieces of leather and iron links, which in some remote past may have done duty as good harness, but which now bear little resemblance to that commodity.

It would not do to start from the capital with horses of first-class coaching characteristics because the way lies for three miles through the thickly populated suburbs of Colombo; so the milder brutes, which have been partially tamed, are first hooked to the bar. They usually show a little sport at starting, but when once away the freight of passengers and post-bags is carried safely through the Pettah, and onwards at a frenzied gallop through most bewitching scenery to Kaduwella, the end of the first stage.

So far there is a choice of roads; one along the south bank of the Kelani River, where the views are surprisingly romantic and beautiful; the other, a more direct but rather less picturesque road, by which the coach usually goes.

Kaduwella is charmingly situated, and, like almost every village of importance in the Kelani Valley, has a delightful Rest-house, which is situated on a steep red rock almost overhanging the river, and commanding one of the many delicious views, where the noble Kelani winds round in various directions, and displays its undulating banks, always covered with the choicest foliage.

Here one may sit and watch the quaint barges and rafts as they pass, laden with produce for Colombo, or groups of natives, and cattle crossing all day long by the ferry close by. And whilst comfortably reclining in the charming verandah of this excellent hostelry, with peaceful surroundings and a sense of the most complete luxury and security, one may reflect upon the early days of the British possession, when Kaduwella was reached only by strong and narrow passes, with the very steep banks of the river to the left, and hills covered with dense jungle to the right, while in front were breastworks which could not be approached save through deep and hollow defiles.

The hostile Kandyans here made a stand against the Dutch, cutting off four hundred of their troops. The British, too, lost many men near this spot before the natives were subdued.

There is a famous Cave-Temple of the Buddhists at Kaduwella, very picturesquely situated under an enormous granite rock in the midst of magnificent trees and shrubs. It has a fine pillared hall, the bare rock forming the wall at the back. The usual colossal image of Buddha is carved in the granite, and is a good specimen of such figures.

Behind the Temple a magnificent view is to be obtained from the top of the cliff over the hilly country. The jungle is thickly inhabited by troops of black monkeys, flocks of green parrots, huge lizards like young crocodiles, and myriads of smaller creatures. Indeed the zoologist, the botanist, and the artist need go no further for weeks; — but we must return to the Royal Mail Coach.

PLATE XXXI.

FROM KARAWANELLA BRIDGE.

The quadrupeds of third-rate vice which brought us to Kaduwella have been placed in their stalls, and we now find a pair of the very first class, standing like lambs in the road. The passengers must be seated before these amiable brutes are brought blind-folded into position. All the weight that can be given to the Royal Mail is now in full requisition. The coachman takes his seat, but the running boys have still got hold of the horses. The off-side "gee" is deceived into approaching the coach, but only so far as the end of the pole, where he objects to any other position than that of facing the coachman; so while he is in that attitude, the chain is attached to the pole, and the near-side trace hooked to the bar. All efforts to move his hind quarters into position are unavailing. The near-side beast is now appealed to. He absolutely refuses to approach within some yards of Her Majesty's Mails, and so one of the tired horses, which has done the first stage, is again brought out and placed alongside of his recalcitrant successor at some distance behind the coach. This trick deceives him into thinking that he is going back to his stall. He now moves on fairly into position, and the traces are promptly hooked. The other horse remains as he was, facing the coachman. The near horse backs, but the wheels are held by coolies. The boy then slips a coir rope round his hind fetlock joints, and with a sharp friction endeavours to excite him onwards, but all to no purpose; he rears, bites at his keeper, and tries his best to back the coach into the ditch. As a last resource, a fire-stick is resorted to, and with fire at his heels he makes a frenzied bound, which starts the coach-wheels rolling, and drags the off-side horse almost into position, and off they go at full gallop, but with only three traces as yet

hooked to the bar; the fourth remains in the hands of the boy who runs with the off-side horse, and this brute will not close in to the pole and give him a chance of hooking it on. After about half a mile, however, this is accomplished. The running boys, who are now getting pumped by the terrific pace, fall back, and spring on the coach-wheels, where, if the coach is full of passengers, they rest, holding on to the iron rods which support the canopy, and changing feet as the rapidly revolving hub gets hot by friction. The hubs of the coach-wheels are in this way brightly burnished by the boys springing on to them for a rest while the coach is rattling along.

The endurance of these boys in running with the horses is as amazing as their agility in springing upon the hubs of the wheels, and in bounding off to the horses again, in case of any danger, when going at the utmost pace. The coachman certainly holds a pair of reins, which are handed to him as soon as the animals can be got into going position, but compared to the work of these young horse-tamers, his duties are of little account.

The time lost in starting is soon recovered by the pace, for the more disinclined the horses have been to start, the faster do they go when once they are off; and it frequently happens that they do not slacken their furious gallop until the end of their stage is reached.

Travellers who, from a disposition to nervousness, are unable to appreciate the novel method of transit employed for the conveyance of passengers by Her Majesty's Royal Mail Coach, can adopt the alternative of journeying by Bullock Cart. This

mode of travelling is free from the excitement inseparable from sitting behind untamed horses, and has not only the advantage of perfect security (except, of course, when the Royal Mail comes into sight), but also gives ample time for the enjoyment of the various quaint scenes of rural life to be met with at frequent intervals along the road.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KELANI VALLEY (continued).—FROM KADUWELLA TO RUANWELLA.

THE large village of Hanwella is reached at the twenty-first mile-post from Colombo. Here, as at Kaduwella, the Rest-house commands a beautiful view of the river. Enchanting as every acre of this district is, the river views are surpassingly lovely, especially the one from Karuwanella Bridge. This is about the farthest point to which the Portuguese, and the Dutch after them, ever managed to penetrate. Here many fierce battles were fought against the Kandyans, with the result of much signing of treaties and truces, which were seldom or never adhered to on the part of the native defenders of the interior.

The central districts of Ceylon were at that time well-nigh impenetrable owing to the density of the jungle and the entire absence of anything like good roads. Moreover, the then malarious character of the forests rendered it impossible for European troops to hold their positions for any length of time without being decimated by disease.

There are plenty of heights from which to view the diversified character of the country. Immense perpendicular ledges of rocks (see Plate xxxiii) rise from the forest, rearing their

PLATE XXXII.

THE KELANI RIVER.

stupendous heads above the thickets of palm and bamboo. But even the rocks of granite, which appear to be upheaved in giant masses all over the forest, supply nourishment for luxuriant vegetation. Such is the nature of this bountiful climate, that the most solid rock is forced to decompose in sufficient degree to nourish some of the most beautiful forms of vegetable life. That great endowment of the human race—the soil—is seen in this bounteous land to be actually produced upon these rocky eminences by the hand of Nature herself. An absolutely bare rock is very seldom met with. The abundant rainfall and the heat combined seem to pulverise the hardest surface, and to bring out latent forces from which springs food for man and beast.

Exhaustion of the soil is a doctrine much preached in Ceylon, in connection with the great coffee failures, and there is no doubt of the truth contained in it. Fertility has often been destroyed outright by the wanton abuse of nature; and, even in this fertile land, where the climatic elements are so favourable to production, the enterprising European planter frequently miscalculates the amount which nature is prepared to bestow. There remains, however, the fact that even the undecomposed rocks constitute a wonderful store, from which human wants are being supplied by process of nature, though slowly and in small degree. It is only the already decomposed surface that is subject to immediate exhaustion; there still remains a fund for future supplies, and upon such a natural endowment the human race has lived for ages past.

The reward of human labour is, however, very apparent as we proceed further into the district of the Kelani Valley.

After passing through the beautiful village of Avisawella, where, by the way, there is such a comfortable Rest-house as to deserve the name of a well-appointed hotel, the scenery changes somewhat in character. It is not less bold, but the lands are more cultivated. Within the last ten years thousands of acres have been planted with tea, pretty bungalows have been erected on the various estates, and the whole surroundings have assumed the character of commercial enterprise.

Of the various places which the traveller will find most interesting to visit, perhaps none will prove more attractive than Ruanwella. The Rest-house and its grounds, which are on the site of a ruined Fort, are in themselves full of interest, and will be found so conducive to comfort as to make the visitor who is not pressed for time very loath to leave. A fine archway, the entrance of the ancient Fort, is still preserved and forms an interesting feature in the gardens. Near to this is one of the most remarkable Mango trees in Ceylon, about ninety feet high, and more than that in circumference; it is literally covered with the Thunbergia creeper, which, when in bloom, presents a magnificent appearance. In the grounds, too, are to be seen very fine specimens of Cocoa trees, graceful Papaws, many large Crotons, and a large variety of gorgeous plants which flourish here in great perfection.

The Papaw grows to a height of about fifteen or twenty feet. Its stem is slender and straight, covered by a diamond-shaped pattern, and surmounted by a crown of very prettily formed leaves, beneath which grow bunches of fruit, in shape resembling a melon. The fruit is edible, and indeed much

Plate XXXIII.

ON RUANWELLA TEA ESTATE.

liked by some Europeans. It is said to be a very valuable aid to digestion, the amount of pepsine contained in it being highly beneficial to dyspeptics.

A pleasant stroll from this spot, through shady groves of Areca, Cocoa, and other palms, brings us to a part of the river which is not only very picturesque but also commercially important. Here we can see the quaint produce boats and the curiously constructed bamboo rafts being laden with freight for the port of Colombo.

A glance at the picture (Plate xxxii) will enable the reader to see the chests of tea, which have already been placed in the central boat, and by the aid of a reading glass even the shipping marks, denoting the destination of the chests and the nature of their contents, can be distinguished.

From this point to Colombo the distance by water is about sixty miles; and such is the rapidity of the current after the frequent and very heavy rainfalls, that these boats are able to reach Colombo in one day; the only exertion required of the boatman being such careful steering as to keep clear of rocks, trees, and sand-banks. The return journey is, however, a most arduous task, and demands great labour and perseverance for many days. This facility of conveyance is of the greatest benefit to the planters, especially in point of expense.

The presence of crocodiles, which infest all the low-country rivers of Ceylon, seems not to deter the natives from indulging in the exercise of swimming, of which they are particularly fond. In the plate last referred to, a man may be seen thus enjoying

himself in mid-stream. During the expeditions made by the Dutch, many soldiers are said to have been dragged into the river here by crocodiles, and an authentic account is given of a private of the 19th British Regiment being suddenly seized and dragged down by one of these voracious brutes whilst engaged in washing his clothes from the bank.

Crocodiles of immense size still infest the Kelani; but they are not so numerous as they were earlier in the century. There is a trustworthy record extant of one of these formidable reptiles, twenty feet in length and as thick in the body as a horse, being captured by a native near Ruanwella, and sent to the Lieutenant-Governor at Colombo. It required two carts, placed one behind the other, and drawn by eight bullocks, to transport its huge body, while the tail still trailed along the ground. On being opened, it was found to contain the head and one arm of a native man yet undigested.

During fine weather the river can be forded at this point, and it is quite worth while for any traveller who visits Ruanwella to cross over and follow the path, seen in Plate xxxv, which leads to Ruanwella Tea Estate. A visit to this beautifully situated plantation, opened up by Mr. H. Drummond Deane and the Hon. T. North Christie, a member of the Legislative Council of Ceylon, is in itself worthy of the journey. The wonderful change that has been made from jungle to orderly cultivation can scarcely be realized when walking along the excellently planned roads, and gazing upon the flourishing tea-bushes, where only four years ago all was a mass of wild and almost impenetrable thicket. A glance at Plate xxxiv

PLATE XXXIV.

RUANWELLA TEA ESTATE.

will enable the reader to see something of what the ability and energy of English tea planters can accomplish in so short a time.

The most unmistakeable open-hearted welcome and generous hospitality are proverbial characteristics of the Ceylon planter, and although the courteous Superintendent of Ruanwella Estate may perhaps not thank me for publishing the fact to the world, he possesses these qualities in a degree which is most fortunate for any visitor who sets foot upon the excellent and romantically positioned tea property under his charge. A walk round the estate, with a pleasant chat on the methods of tea cultivation and manufacture, and many other subjects suggested by the varied and delightful surroundings, is an agreeable preliminary to a call at the Bungalow, which is situated on a pretty knoll overlooking the cultivated part of the estate. Hard by this dwelling grow in profusion all manner of delicious fruits, more especially magnificent pine-apples, the finest both in appearance and flavour that can be met with in Ceylon, many of them growing to a girth of twenty-four inches. Most grateful it is to feast on such luscious fruit, after the expenditure of energy demanded by the steep banks and rocky eminences over which we have climbed, and this, too, with the temperature at 90° in the shade.

Some conception can be formed of the rugged beauty of the yet uncultivated portion of Ruanwella Estate, by reference to Plate xxxiii. Precious stones were found here in abundance in the days of the Kandyan kingdom. The name Ruanwella indicates "a place of precious stones." Among the gravel and in the sandy beds of the streams, it is easy to find tiny crystals

of ruby and sapphire, but without considerable plant and very careful working it is difficult to obtain anything of commercial value. Even in cases where there is no doubt of the existence of precious stones in considerable numbers, it is seldom that the European estate-owner cares to invest any of his capital in gemming operations; he prefers to apply it to uses which will yield him a more certain return.

Tea flourishes splendidly in the Kelani Valley, and the yield per acre is very much larger than in the mountain districts, but the flavour, as might be expected from the forcing nature of the lowland climate and temperature, is stronger than that of tea grown at a higher elevation.

By referring to Plate xxxiv it will be seen that the bushes are planted in lines at regular distances apart. Manufactured tea consists of the young shoots, which are plucked and conveyed to the factory, where they undergo a process of withering and firing. Every year the bushes are pruned down to a height of about two feet; and eight weeks after this the first "flush" of young shoots is ready for plucking. The rapid growth of the plant in this tropical climate produces new "flushes" at intervals of about ten days.

The plucking is done by coolies, both men and women, who carry baskets upon their backs suspended by means of girdles from the crown of the head; and into these baskets they cast the tender half-developed leaves over their shoulders. Twice every day the baskets are carried to the factory, the leaf is then weighed and spread out upon shelves of canvas to wither. The withering rooms are kept at a high temperature, and as dry as

PLATE XXXV.

FORDING THE KELANI AT RUANWELLA.

possible. The next process is to place the withered leaf in a rolling machine, an ingenious appliance which twists and bruises the leaves, freely bringing out the juice. They are then placed in trays to ferment, when they change to a greenish copper colour. Successful fermentation depends in no small degree upon the knowledge and skill of the planter in the art of tea-making, and this also greatly determines the quality of the tea.

A further stage in the manufacture has to be reached before the leaf becomes tea; this is a process of firing, which is carried out by placing the withered and fermented leaves upon trays, in a large iron drying machine, until it is thoroughly crisp and dried.

So far the various sizes and qualities of leaf remain mixed in one mass, and it is not until it has all become manufactured tea that the varieties known as Pekoe tips, Pekoe, broken Pekoe, Souchong, Congou, and dust, are sorted and separated from each other. The broken Pekoe consists chiefly of the opening bud of the leaf, and gives the strongest tea; it is, therefore, usually mixed with the coarser leaf, termed Souchong, before it reaches the consumer.

It is fortunate for the owner of a tea estate when the factory can be so placed as to obtain water power for driving the roller, as the expense of keeping engines at work by means of fuel adds greatly to the cost of manufacture. The method of utilizing water power will be seen in Plate xxxiv.

There is no doubt that the unparalleled success of tea-planting in Ceylon is in a great measure due to this pure and

wholesome method of manufacture, which contrasts greatly with the methods adopted in China and Japan, where such ingredients as Prussian blue and soapstone are often used to improve the appearance of the finished article; notorious, too, is the Chinese custom of manufacturing ordinary tea from leaf-dust by an admixture of clay, and manipulating once-used tea leaves in such a way that they can again be sold as genuine tea.

Besides the advantages which Ruanwella affords of a pleasant abode for the traveller, and an opportunity of seeing the perfection of tea cultivation, the sportsman also, and the naturalist will here find plenty of pleasurable occupation. It is quite worth one's while to make the acquaintance of the Ratamahatmaya, or native chief of the district. He is very willing to oblige with either assistance or information, and as he is able to place a splendidly-trained elephant at the service of his visitors, his aid is of no small advantage. Of this gentle and useful animal I have given a faithful representation in Plate xxxv.

The jungle on all sides abounds in wild animals, birds, reptiles and insects, many of the last-named being formidable enemies to man. Monkeys of the Wanderoo tribe are very numerous; there are several species of varying sizes. The tiny little fellow whose portrait I give in Plate xxxvi was captured in the following curious manner:—It had ridden on its mother's back to the end of a huge bough that overhung the Kelani River, but so rapidly was the river rising, in consequence of recent heavy rains, that when the mother was about to return to the jungle, she observed that a downward curve in the centre of the bough was by this time under

PLATE XXXVI.

COMPANIONS.

water, thus cutting off her retreat. For a moment she hesitated; then made a flying leap over the water that covered the bough, but her baby, being unprepared for this event, fell into the stream, from which it was immediately rescued by a Singhalese man who happened to witness this interesting little scene. The baby monkey soon became deeply attached to her rescuer, whom she voluntarily accompanies at all times, unless she has been tied up. The Singhalese man (in Plate xxxvi) is a domestic servant, employed in the capacity of cook by the officer in charge of the Government Public Works of the district.

Should this short description of the Kelani Valley induce others, who are as yet unacquainted with its many attractions, to go and see it for themselves, I have no doubt that they will agree in their verdict that the scenery is exquisite, and that the scenes of rural native life are deeply interesting; whilst another feature, peculiar to Ceylon, and unique in itself, will be strikingly manifest,—I mean the fact that the European planting community consists entirely of gentlemen.

LONDON:
EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE,
Her Majesty's Printers,
DOWNS PARK ROAD, HACKNEY, N.E.