READING FOR TRAVELLERS.

PICTURES

FROM

THE EAST.

BY

JOHN CAPPER,

AUTHOR OF 'THE THREE PRESIDENCIES OF INDIA,' 'OUR GOLD COLONIES,' ETC.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1854.

Price One Shilling and Sixpence.

JOHN E. TAYLOR, PRINTER, LITTLE QUEEN STREET.

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PREFACE.

THE accompanying "Pictures" were sketched after a long sojourn in Ceylon, — the most favoured island in the Indian Ocean. They first made their appearance in 'Household Words' and the 'Edinburgh Journal,' and with the kind permission of Mr. Dickens and the Messrs. Chambers, the Author lays them in their present form before the public.

Should these sketches from life succeed in conveying to the reader a more vivid conception of some phases of life in our Eastern dependencies than may be derived from other sources, the Author will feel that his "Pictures" have not been altogether without their use.

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PICTURES FROM THE EAST.

CHAPTER I.

THE GARDEN BY THE RIVER.

JANZS LEYDEN was as happy and jovial as it was possible for any ordinary Custom-house clerk to be, in the sea-girt, sunny isle of Ceylon. The sleepy apathetic peons were perfectly taken aback, as they watched the ebullition of Dutch mirth that gushed from the person of the little chief clerk. The oldest Custom-house underling did not remember to have seen so much jollity within the dark, dusky walls of that strange, straggling old building; no, not since they were little boys, and first learnt to enjoy betel. Janzs was so elated, that he made a very poor day's work of it, in his large, solitary, prison-like office; he pretended once or twice to be deeply immersed in some tables of exports; but it would not do: one column of figures danced about before his eyes, with its *vis-à-vis*, and the totals at

the bottom went up the middle and down again, to the merry country-dance, which he could not leave off whistling. When he began a letter, he got to, "It having come to the knowledge of the authorities that certain kegs of brandy have"—he suddenly remembered that the man he was addressing was hanged for smuggling last October. At last, after nibbing one or two pens, and untying and re-tying a few bundles of very neglected and extremely dusty papers with faded red-tape, he gave up the idea of being busy. The truth was, that Janzs was about to be married; that day week was to be the happy period, and as that was the first event of the kind in his life, he conceived himself privileged to be elated, and not altogether fit for office-work.

Finding an excuse for closing the Custom-house at an unusually early hour, the chief clerk saw that the establishment (two subordinates, and three peons) had departed and left the old office in proper order; and then, leisurely turning the huge key in the old iron-bound door, gave it to the head peon to deliver to the collector, who was, of course, quietly smoking his pipe in his own verandah. The sentry was seen to, a word exchanged with the corporal of the guard, and Janzs strutted out from under the huge dark archway, which led from the strong fort of Point de Galle toward the suburbs, where many of the better class of burghers then resided. In those days, even the chief clerk of a

public department could not afford to keep a carriage. None indeed but the very highest colonial officials could venture on such a piece of extravagance. This may be readily understood, when I mention that the whole of the money salary received by Janzs in one year, did not amount to more than some twenty pounds of our English currency. It is true there were additions in the shape of fees, and allowances of oil, wood, beef, salt, and other perquisites; nevertheless it did not on the whole amount to more than a very decent living for a young single man.

Such being the state of affairs, it cannot be matter for surprise that Janzs should have felt certain doubts about the future rising amidst his happy dreamings, as he wended his way home to his humble low-roofed bungalow; and thence to Katrina, who dwelt with her father not far away on an old Dutch farm.

If Janzs had been happy before, how much was his delight increased when the old Dutchman, his future father-in-law, alluded to a fine piece of pasture-ground and woodland which he intended to give him on the wedding-day! Money he had little enough of, but he had some rich land, and the young couple were to be put in possession of some thirty acres, which might one day be made to yield a comfortable addition to the clerk's little income. Here was a field for Katrina and Janzs to build hopes upon. Thirty acres of forest

and pasturage! The thing appeared almost too extensive to contemplate in imagination. The Fort of Galle occupied but twenty acres, and was it possible that he, a poor custom-house clerk, should become the proprietor of half as much more land than was spanned by that sturdy, rambling, old fortress?

The next day Janzs engaged a canoe to take them both to the identical spot; and after duty—as soon as cargoes of rice, salt-fish, and coir-rope could be hurried through the usual official routine—he hastened from the old dark office, and conducted Katrina to the bank of the river that flows from the lofty mountain-peaks, past the Fort of Galle, into the Indian Ocean. Half an hour's navigation, by means of poles, took them to the scene of their speculations. They passed many a pretty retired nook, many green paddy-fields and palm-topes; many deep shady dells, overtopped by clustering bamboos and towering arekas, where the echo of the cool splashing waterfall was only broken by the low, soft note of the wood-pigeon, or chattering voice of the monkey. They were delighted beyond their fondest expectations with the spot. It was so near to the town; it was so delightfully situated; it was so nicely timbered; why, there were sufficient trees upon it to build half-a-dozen bungalows, and still leave enough for pleasant shade and firewood. And then, the soil! Janzs, it is true, did not understand quite so much about agriculture as he did of entries and bonds and registers; but

Katrina declared it was magnificent. She had never seen such soil; why, it would grow anything! In short, they both arrived at the conclusion, that a handful of copper *challies*, flung broadcast upon the ground on any showery morning, would take root before night and grow into rix-dollars. Returning home, they indulged in all sorts of wild speculations about the future. Katrina, naturally of an imaginative turn, ventured to hint at a regular farm, cows and all; and Janzs afterwards declared that she even went so far as to suggest a flock of goats; but little Katrina always denied the charge most stoutly. They were to cultivate everything that would be wanted for food or raiment, from chillies for curry up to cotton for dresses. In short, they were to have a little Eden of their own making, where discord and care should never enter; where only sweetest blossoms and flowers and richest fruits should be found; where nothing that was bad, where everything that was good, should be seen. It was to be a bright spot that "Garden by the River."

Well, they were married and were happy, as all young married people are and deserve to be, and let us hope always will be. In Ceylon, amongst the Dutch descendants to this day, it is a common occurrence for young couples to take up their abode for the first year or two of their married life under the roof of the bride or bridegroom's parents. It may be that economy sometimes renders this pru-

dent; or it may happen that the young wife does not feel quite experience enough to undertake housekeeping all at once, and prefers a little further schooling on many points of domestic details. Be this as it may, it was a common custom in the days I am writing of; and since Janzs was an orphan, they took up their residence with old Lourenz, his new parent. The week of feasting and festivities and congratulations over, they settled quietly down at the paternal farm, as contentedly and as happily as though it were all their own. The little stream at the bottom of the long lawn that wound round the shrubbery so coaxingly and silently, did not run more smoothly than the current of their new-found existence. Janzs toiled harder than ever at export and import duties, and occasionally expressed regret to the head storekeeper, an old white-headed Malay, that there was not double the quantity of shipping entering the port. At his new home the clerk had little to complain of. Many a sacrifice did old Lourenz make to the comfort of the young couple. Janzs had free and unlimited access to his tobacco-store and his dozen or two of venerable meerschaums. Janzs was allowed one of the oldest and most valuable drinking-horns for his own especial use; and moreover Janzs was permitted to sit, in the cool of the evening, under the same wide-spreading mango-tree, and then, pipe in mouth, fall gently asleep, while Katrina sang an old scrap of a Dutch song,

or plied her needle, or drove away the mosquitoes from her father and husband.

Yet, with all this, Janzs occasionally felt not quite at ease, and was ungracious enough to vent his restless mood in presence of the father, who heeded not his desire for a little more independence, but quietly refilled his pipe, and settled the question with the unanswerable argument—pooh! pooh! Sometimes the thoughts of that sweet spot of wood and dell by the river-side came across the minds of the young people, and they sighed as they thought of the remote chance of seeing it as they had once hoped. Now and then Janzs thought of raising money upon it, to cultivate a portion at least, and erect a small bungalow; but a stranger to such proceedings, he fancied the scheme was far too wild and visionary for a clerk upon twenty rix-dollars a month to entertain. Each time he sighed, and gave up the idea.

Katrina had observed that her father had of late been absent from the farm more frequently, and for longer intervals, than was his custom; and that, moreover, he smoked more pipes and disposed of more schiedam during the evening, under the mango-tree, than she ever remembered him to have done at any time of her life. This state of things lasted for a few months. Janzs longed more ardently than ever for emancipation; Katrina sighed for a farm of their own, and the father plied more potently at pipe and dram.

At length old Lourenz told his children that he had a mind to go and see how their little piece of land was looking; and if they would go with him, perhaps they could contrive amongst them all to plan something to be done with it. No second bidding was needed. A large covered canoe was prepared with cushions and mats, and the party started on their visit, taking with them Katrina's younger sister and brother. It was near the end of January—of all months the most agreeable in Ceylon; the evening was so calm, and soft and fragrant; the air appeared to be as though poured down from some other and purer sphere, wafting with it songs of rich melody, and scents of rarest flowers. Nature seemed hushed and wrapped in sweetest peace. The monsters of the forests were at rest. The mountains far away flung their deep, saddening shades over many a league of plain; and even restless man looked forth and felt subdued.

Their light and well-manned boat went boldly up the stream, caring very little about the huge trunks of trees that at this time of year are met with in most Indian rivers, as thick as pebbles in a mill-pond. Torn from their birthplaces by inundations, they float down the rapids; until, arrested in their course by some trifling obstacle, they get embedded in the course of the river. The topes and dells and groves appeared to Katrina and her husband more beautiful than ever on that soft

evening; and had not their own loved spot been before them, they would gladly have landed a dozen times, to walk about and admire the romantic scenery. At last a bend of the river took them suddenly to where a rising wood-clad field told of their little domain.

But that could not be their land. Why it had a beautiful little bungalow on it, and one of the sweetest gardens round it that could be imagined; all fenced and quite complete. There were outhouses too, and a huge pile of firewood, and a nice winding path right down to the water's edge. Neither Katrina nor her husband could at first believe that they had not halted at the wrong spot: yet there was the huge Jack-tree at the landing-place, and there were the yellow bamboos and the green arekas by the little stream that came tumbling down the hill-side like a child at play. Well, they both declared they had never seen such a fairy transformation: it was like a story in some Arabian book—only a great deal better; for it was all true, and would not disappear at daylight, as many such things were said to do.

There was no end to the discoveries made by Katrina and her sister, in their rambles over the place; and though all was in a very primitive form, there was the foundation for a thousand comforts, and as many pleasures besides. Old Lourenz seated himself very quietly under a huge bread-fruit tree, and enjoyed his pipe and the contemplation of

the happiness he had stealthily bestowed. Labour costs but little in the East; and most of the materials for the building had been found on the spot. Houses are seldom built of brick in Ceylon, even for Government use. The best are usually made of "Cabook," a ferruginous clay easily cut from the hill-sides. It is quite soft when found, but quickly hardens on exposure to the air, and in time becomes more solid and enduring than any cement. Much of the work had been performed by the neighbouring villagers, for a little rice or tobacco; so that a great deal had been done for a very little outlay. It seemed however to Janzs as though a little fortune must have been spent upon their land, and he was altogether lost in the contemplation of so much valuable property.

The following week saw them in actual possession, and Janzs taking lessons in farming from Katrina, who assured him that if he worked hard enough, and lived long enough, he would make an excellent cultivator. By small degrees, and with many kindly helps from friends and relatives, the young couple found they had a tolerable establishment growing up in their charge. The clerk, at the risk of blistering his hands, toiled in the open air, morning and evening, whilst Katrina overlooked a brace of coolies, who laboured through the heat of the day. It was quite wonderful to see how things grew and prospered round and about them. No one in the district of Galle produced such delicious

plantains as they grew; their poultry was allowed to be unquestionably the finest in the valley; their butter the sweetest in the province, and as to bees, none thrived so well as did those of Katrina. What was better still, Janzs had, about this time, an increase to his salary of five rix-dollars a month; so that, on the whole, it might with truth be said they prospered; and indeed they deserved to do so, and no one thought of envying them their humble, quiet happiness.

In this pleasant way a year rolled past. At that time a vessel came into the harbour from one of the Eastern islands, noted for its fine plantations of nutmegs, a cultivation then highly remunerative, but which the jealousy of the Dutch Government rigidly "protected," by carefully reserving it to themselves. The commander of this ship had brought up with him, in a very careful manner, many hundreds of young nutmeg-plants, at the request, and for the especial benefit, of the Receiver of Customs at Point de Galle. These were brought on shore in barrels of earth as ship's stores, and left in charge of Janzs, who shortly afterwards received orders to despatch them to the country-house of his superior. One barrel was presented by the collector to the chief clerk, who, well aware of the great value of the nutmeg-tree, conceived himself to be at once on the high-road to fortune.

It would be difficult to paint the satisfaction

with which he knocked out the head of the barrel, on its reaching the door of his little bungalow, and feasted his own and Katrina's eyes on the sight of a hundred young nutmeg seedlings. It appeared to him as though a hundred little guardian angels had suddenly condescended to pay him a visit, to take up their abode with him for the remainder of his natural life. But what were they to do with them? Plant them, of course. Yes, but how, and where? Katrina was, for once in her little life, most completely at fault on a point of agriculture; and it turned out on inquiry, that old Lourenz knew about as much of the proper treatment, agriculturally, of the nutmeg-tree as did Janzs, or any of his office peons, or the old bald-headed Buddhist priest who lived across the river.

Great was the satisfaction of the chief clerk and his active wife to find that one of the sailors of the vessel, which had brought up the plants, understood the mode of culture, and was willing to come out to their farm and put them thoroughly in the way of rearing fine nutmeg-trees. Leave was obtained from the skipper, and the sailor was soon installed as hired cultivator under Katrina's own inspection. When Janzs arrived home after the first day's operations, he was astonished to find a number of moderately-sized pits dug throughout his best ground, at regular and distant intervals. He was with difficulty persuaded that these gigantic holes were necessary for the reception of the

Lilliputian plants. The sailor assured him that unless the holes were made at least five feet deep, and as wide as the outer branches of the future tree were expected to cover, the plant would not thrive. The roots were of the most delicate texture; and it was only by forming for their reception a roomy bed of light generous earth, that they would be enabled to arrive at the vigour necessary for the full nourishment of the tree, and the perfection of abundant crops of fruit. Janzs held up his hands in pure astonishment; but he supposed it was all right, when the two coolies flung basket upon basket full of surface soil, and river-mud, and dead leaves and weeds into these holes; and when the sailor, gently as a nurse with a young infant, placed two seedlings in each hole, a few inches apart, filled in some more rich loamy earth around them, pressed them softly down, and then finished the ceremony by a copious baptism of river-water from a cocoa-nut shell, Janzs was so pleased with the imposing appearance of the new plantation, that he did not heed the sailor's reason for placing the little seedlings in pairs; it was to ensure a sound, healthy plant, the strongest of the couple being left, whilst the more delicate plant was pulled out at the end of the first six months.

This however was not all the care that was needed for the young plants. A score of contingencies had to be guarded against. There might be too much sun, or too much wet, or the wind

might loosen them and injure the roots. Cattle or wild animals might get at them, and browse on their tender leaves, which would be fatal to them. Insects might prey upon the young shoot or the new bark. So that although, as Katrina was assured, when the trees did survive all these dangers, they would be certain to yield a lasting and golden harvest, it would not be without a long trial of watchfulness and care. But she was not easily daunted; the prospect of the future cheered on her little heart against all misgivings. She made the sailor-planter show her how they fenced in nutmeg-trees at Penang and the Moluccas, how they sheltered them from the scorching rays of the noonday sun, and how they protected them from the nocturnal attacks of porcupines and wild-hogs, by weaving prickly boughs around them on the ground. Katrina felt quite sure that she could manage the whole plantation, and bring every tree to full bearing; and the sailor took his leave, loaded with thanks and homely gifts. Janzs thought himself the luckiest and happiest of custom-house clerks, to possess such a wife, and such a garden of nutmeg-trees.

Years rolled on in Ceylon much as such portions of time are in the habit of doing in other places. They brought with them changes in men and things at the little sturdy fort of Galle, not less than elsewhere. Few changes perhaps were more apparent than those which were perceptible

in the nutmeg plantation I have described. The little whitewashed bungalow had spread forth wings on either side, and front and ends were shadowed by jessamines and roses. Topes of waving cocoa, and sago palms, and broad-leaved bananas flung a grateful shade over the lawn, and the sweet flower-garden, and the path to the river-side. The Lilliputian seedlings were no longer there, but in their places rose, proudly and gracefully, a whole forest of bright-leaved, flower-spangled nutmeg-trees; and amongst them might be seen, if you looked in the right place, Katrina, still busy, and smiling, and happy, with Janzs by her side, and a group of little rollicking children revelling on the soft green grass. Unwearying care and watchfulness had wrought wonders with those delicate nutmegs; and now the time had arrived when they were about to reap the rich reward of perseverance and industry. Janzs considered himself, as well he might, a man of some substance. In a year, or two, or more, all these beautiful trees would be in full bearing; and if, as they gave promise to do, they bore two or three hundred nuts each, there would be a little fortune for him; a larger yearly revenue than was enjoyed by his superior, the Collector of Customs, and all the clerks and peons together.

Fate however had decreed that all this was not to be. Those richly promising trees were doomed to an early and sudden death.

I mentioned how the Collector had obtained a vast quantity of these young nutmeg-plants. There were several thousands of them, and their cultivation had cost him some money, and more trouble. But whether it was that he selected bad land, or had them planted improperly, or neglected them afterwards, there is nothing on record to tell. Certain it is that his large plantation became a complete failure, much to his vexation. This was no whit lessened when he learnt, and afterwards witnessed, the entire success of his subordinate Janzs with his little garden of nutmeg-trees.

Van Dort, the collector, was a small-minded, mean-spirited creature, as you will soon see. He brooded over his disappointment for many a long day; until at length, in the very abjectness of his low heart, he thought that, if he could not succeed, neither should Janzs. He knew right well that there was an old Order in Council, forbidding any one in the States-General's possessions in the East Indies to cultivate spices, save and except in such islands as they declared to be so privileged; namely, Ceylon for cinnamon and pepper, and the Moluccas and Penang for the nutmeg and cloves. Confiscation and imprisonment for the first offence were the mild consequences of infringing this law. What the second offence was to be visited with was not exactly known; but better lawyers than Janzs were haunted with an indistinct vision, that in such a case was made and provided nothing

short of the gallows. Now Mynheer Van Dort was well aware of the existence of this severe order when he planted his large piece of ground; but he had reckoned on being able to sell his plantation and retire to Europe before the authorities at Colombo could hear any thing of the matter; for in all probability there were not three persons in the island who knew of the existence of such stringent laws. It occurred to him that, as he had failed and nearly all his trees had died, he might turn the success of his clerk to good account on his own behalf, by informing the Governor of the bold infraction of the laws by Janzs.

In those quiet bygone times there were but few events of importance to call for any exercise of power by the highest authority in the Colony. It was therefore with no little bustle that the Governor summoned his Council to consider and determine upon the contents of a weighty despatch received from Point de Galle. This was the letter of Van Dort the collector, informing them of the high criminality of his subordinate. It did not require much deliberation to settle the course to be pursued. The forbidden trees were ordered to be forthwith cut down, the property confiscated, Janzs to be imprisoned for five years, and the zealous Collector to be rewarded with promotion on the first opportunity.

Turn once more to the quiet, bright spot, the garden by the river. Janzs was home as usual from

his daily duties. It was evening. Katrina had given her last orders to the gardener and stock-keeper. The children were gambolling on the greensward under the large mango-tree. The favourite nutmeg-trees were heavy with blossom; the sun was still lingering amongst the topmost branches of the jambo-trees. Everything gave promise of one more of those many happy evenings so prized and loved by Janzs and his little wife; when a canoe dashed heavily against the river-bank, and forth from it sprang the fiscal of the district, attended closely by a half-dozen of sturdy, grim-looking Malay peons, armed with swords and pikes. The officer of the Crown knew Janzs well; and, though inclined to be friendly towards him, had no alternative but to tell him, in a few words, the purport of his visit, and the cause,—those bright-leaved trees waving to the breeze, and alive with merry blossoms. The poor clerk could be with difficulty persuaded of the reality of the sad news. A sight of the Governor's warrant however settled all doubts, and Janzs shortly afterwards staggered to the boat, between two peons, like a drunken man. Katrina saw him to the water's edge, and bade him be of good cheer, for all should yet be well; though her sinking heart gave the lie to her lips.

The work of destruction did not occupy much time. Four peons, with sharp axes, made but a small matter of those young and delicate trees;

and, in about half the time that was usually spent in watering them, they were all laid prostrate on the ground. The clicking of those bright axes fell sadly enough on Katrina's ear; each blow seemed to her to be a deadly wound aimed at herself, and as the last of the long-tended and much-loved trees fell heavily to the ground, her courage and spirits fled, and she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of tears.

Next morning she left that once loved spot, sad and spiritless; and taking her little ones with her, placed them in safety with her father. She then sought her husband in his prison, to comfort and console him as best she might. None knew from whence the blow came; so little indeed did the sufferers dream of how matters stood, that a few days after the catastrophe, Katrina waited on the Collector, and besought him, for the sake of Janzs' long service, to intercede for him, and obtain a remission of the cruel sentence.

Weeks passed away, and it appeared that there was small chance of any pardon from the Governor, who viewed with the greatest displeasure any contravention of the Imperial laws. Janzs abandoned himself to despair: his friends considered him a lost man. All but Katrina gave up hoping for him. She never for a moment lost sight of any chance which seemed to promise success. Night and day she sought some friendly aid to carry out her plan. That scheme was to present a petition

to the Governor in person: he was reported to be a just man, though despotic in the administration of the laws. Katrina felt certain that he knew not all the facts of their little history, though the Collector had assured her everything had been told him. Amongst others whom she sought for advice and aid, was the Minister of their little church, who listened to her with the patience of a child. He knew a good deal of their history, though not aware of the facts connected with the fatal nutmegs. He heard Katrina tell her sad story, pitied her, condoled with her, bade her be of good cheer, and finally sent her away full of faith and hope.

The good old Minister saw at once the wickedness of the Collector, for he knew who had laid the charge against Janzs. He went boldly, though carefully, to work; satisfied himself of the fact of Van Dort having planted nutmegs on a larger scale than his clerk, though unsuccessfully; drew up a petition to the Governor, obtained the signature of Janzs, and then proceeded with it to Colombo, and laid it with his own hands at the feet of their ruler. The good man was heard patiently, and in twenty-four hours after perusal of the petition, instructions were sent off to Galle to the Commandant to institute the most searching inquiry into the whole case.

It only remains to relate how the wicked Collector was detected, and dismissed the service. Janzs was not only restored to the possession of

his lands, but received the appointment of Collector of Galle, as compensation for his imprisonment. And so all went well. None was more delighted than Katrina, who however would not be satisfied until they were once more quietly settled on their pretty farm by the river-side. There, for long years afterwards, they lived in the enjoyment of health and ample means, which were, after all, brought them indirectly by their nutmeg plantation; and though none of those ominous trees were any longer growing, there were hundreds of others, which yielded ample stores of luscious, grateful fruit, and flung a cool and balmy shade over streams and flowers, in many a quiet nook of that sweet garden by the river.

CHAPTER II.

CATCHING ELEPHANTS.

The elephant is associated with our earliest recollections of schoolboyhood. Well do I remember the huge black picture of the unwieldy animal in Mavor's Spelling-book, the letter-press describing the creature as "not only the largest, but the strongest of all quadrupeds," which is beyond all question; and furthermore, that "in a state of nature it is neither fierce nor mischievous," which is the very reverse of fact, as hundreds of sugar and coffee planters, as well as many a traveller, could testify. In later years I enjoyed a peep at the sleepy-looking creature, cooped up in a sort of magnified horse-stall, at the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park, and well I remember wondering how so much sagacity and thoughtfulness could be attributed to so apathetic and cumbrous an animal.

The reader of Roman and Grecian history may gather how Pyrrhus for a time mastered the hardy

veterans of Rome, by means of these then little-known and terrible creatures; and how Alexander found hundreds of them opposed to him in the army of the Indian monarch. Readers of more recent history may learn how these animals formed a portion of the vast armies of most of the Indian Nabobs, with which the British forces came in contact. But twelve short months ago the elephant graced the civic triumph of the newly-elected Lord Mayor of London, to the unmitigated astonishment and delight of thousands of little boys and elderly females.

Much however as I had heard and read of the elephant, I never properly appreciated this animal until I had been a dweller in Eastern climes. During a long residence in Ceylon, I was witness of such performances by these huge creatures, that my feeling towards them was raised from that of mere wonder, to something more akin to respect and admiration.

In the course of my early morning rides about the vicinity of Colombo, I frequently reined in my steed to watch the quiet labours of a couple of elephants in the service of the Government. These huge animals were generally employed in the Commissariat timber-yard, or the Civil Engineer's department, either in removing and stowing logs and planks, or in rolling about heavy masses of stone for building purposes. I could not but admire the precision with which they performed their allotted

task, unaided, save by their own sagacity. They were one morning hard at work, though slowly, piling up a quantity of heavy pieces of ebony; the lower row of the pile had been already laid down, with mathematical precision, six logs side by side. These they had first rolled in from the adjoining wharf; and when I rode up they were engaged in bringing forward the next six for the second row in the pile. It was curious to observe those uncouth animals seize one of the heavy logs at each end, and, by means of their trunks, lift it on the logs already placed, and then arrange it crosswise upon them with the most perfect skill. I waited whilst they thus placed the third row, feeling a curiosity to know how they would proceed when the timber had to be lifted to a greater height. Some of the logs weighed nearly twenty hundredweight. There was a short pause before the fourth row was touched; but the difficulty was no sooner perceived than it was overcome. The sagacious animals selected two straight pieces of timber, placed one end of each piece on the ground, with the other resting on the top of the pile so as to form a sliding way for the next logs; and having seen that they were perfectly steady and in a straight line, the four-legged labourers rolled up the slope they had thus formed the six pieces of ebony for the fourth layer on the pile. Not the least amusing part of the performance was the careful survey of the pile made by one of the ele-

phants, after placing each log, to ascertain if it were laid perfectly square with the rest.

The sagacity of these creatures in detecting weakness in the jungle bridges thrown across some of the streams in Ceylon, is not less remarkable. I have been assured that, when carrying a load, they invariably press one of their fore-feet upon the earth-covering of the bridge to try its strength, and that if it feels too weak to carry them across, they will refuse to proceed until lightened of their load. On one such occasion a driver persisted in compelling his elephant to cross a bridge against the evident wish of the animal; and, as was expected by his comrades, the rotten structure gave way, elephant and rider were precipitated into the river, and the latter was drowned.

Having thus been much prepossessed in favour of these docile creatures, I learnt with considerable interest in the latter part of the year 1849, that an elephant kraal was in preparation in the Western Province of Ceylon, not many miles from Colombo.

The word "kraal" signifies simply a trap; inasmuch as the wild elephants are caught by partly driving, and partly enticing them within a large enclosed space, or trap. It is assuredly much safer sport than elephant shooting, and generally attracts a large number of spectators. I may here mention that, in spite of the scholastic authority of Mavor's Spelling-book, the wild elephants of Ceylon are far from being "neither fierce nor mis-

chievous." At times they descend upon the low country from their mountain fastnesses in such numbers and with such ferocity, as to carry with them destruction, and often death. Elephant kraals are therefore resorted to for the double purpose of ridding a neighbourhood of these dangerous visitors, and supplying the Government with fresh beasts of labour for their timber-yards and building establishments. On these occasions the natives of the district turn out *en masse*—from the rich Modelier to the poorest cooly—to assist, without remuneration; all being interested in the success of the affair.

The whole province was alive with excitement: nothing was talked of at mess-table, or at Government-house, but the approaching kraal. Half Colombo, it was said, would be there; and as the weather promised to be fair, I could not resist the temptation to witness the trapping of a score or two of those unruly monsters of the forest.

Such excursions are always undertaken by parties of three or more, for the sake of comfort. I joined four friends for the occasion: two gentlemen and two ladies, mother and daughter. They were well acquainted with the Government agent of the locality, who had promised them shelter, and good accommodation for witnessing the kraal. All arrangements having been completed, our servants, gaily turbaned, accompanied by a swarm of coolies bearing provisions, bedding, and other comforts,

started off one fine moonlight night; and at a little before day-break on the following morning, we followed them on the road: the ladies in a small pony-chaise, and myself and friend on our nags. Long before nightfall we reached the village adjoining the scene of sport. We needed no guide to the locality, for the narrow road was crowded with travellers hastening in one direction. Every description of vehicle lined the way; from the colonel's light tandem, to the native bullock hackery, with its ungreased squeaking wheels.

The scene at the village was singularly strange and exciting. It was close to the banks of the Calany, a river of some size and rapidity. Along the palm-shaded shore were moored numberless boats; many of them large flat country barges, or Padé boats, containing parties of visitors from Colombo, who had prudently determined to take up their abode in those floating residences for the night. The village huts had been thrown open to the English visitors, after having been well cleaned and whitewashed. Their doors were gaily ornamented with strips of red and white cloth, flowers, and the fresh pale-green leaves of the cocoa-palm. When the little cottages were lit up for the evening, they looked extremely pretty.

It was at once evident that there was not nearly sufficient accommodation for all the guests. One of our party started in search of his friend, the Government agent, but in vain; he had gone off

in quest of the elephants, reported as being rapidly driven in from the neighbouring country. Consequently we were left to our own resources. After some delay, we succeeded in obtaining the use of one small room for the ladies, whilst for ourselves we sought shelter for the night beneath the friendly and capacious roof of one of the Padé boats, where we found a hearty welcome from a party of young rollicking coffee-planters.

Day had not appeared next morning when we were afoot; and having sipped a cup of vile half-boiled coffee, we started to explore the wonders of the kraal, followed of course by our servants, with sundry tin boxes and a hamper.

The neighbourhood in which the kraal was formed consisted of rugged undulating ground, pretty thickly covered with stout jungle. Heavy, low forest-trees studded the stony land, interwoven with thorny brambles, cacti, bamboos, and a species of gigantic creeping plant, called appropriately, jungle-rope; for it is strong enough to bind the stoutest buffalo that ever roared. A number of narrow paths had been cut through the jungle, leading to the kraal from the village. Through one of these winding, prickly tracks, we bent our slow way, seeing little around us save hugely-branched trees and thickly matted underwood. Half-an-hour's walk brought us to a halt. We were at the kraal. I looked around, but the only indications of the industry of man in that wild spot were sundry

covered platforms, raised among the leafy branches of trees, some twelve feet from the ground. These places contained seats, and were already filling with visitors; we followed the example, and mounting the rude staircase, obtained a good view of what was going on. Before us lay a large open space, in extent about an acre, irregular in shape and of very uneven surface. A few stout trees were standing at intervals within it; beside which were to be seen groups of natives carrying long white wands, for all the world like so many black stewards of some public dinner or ball. Around this plot of ground grew a wall of dense jungle; and on looking into this, I perceived that it had been made artificially strong by intertwining among it the supple branches of trees, long bamboos, and jungle-rope of enormous thickness. At first sight this natural wall did not appear to be anything more than ordinary jungle, such as might easily be forced by any ordinary village buffalo; we were however assured by the native master of the ceremonies, the head *Corale*, that this jungle wall would resist the fiercest attacks of the strongest Kandian elephant. At one end of the enclosure I perceived a narrow opening, partly covered with light brambles and branches of trees. This was the entrance to the kraal; so arranged as to wear a natural appearance. Beside this carefully concealed gateway were hidden a number of active villagers, ready prepared with huge trunks

of trees and jungle-rope, with which they were to secure the passage against any attempts at return, so soon as the elephants were trapped.

The novelty of our situation, the wild solitude of jungle around us, the picturesque appearance of the many groups of natives within and about the kraal, the stories of elephant shooting and trapping, and narrow escapes, with sundry references to portly baskets and boxes of provisions,—all helped to make the day pass away rapidly and comfortably enough. Evening, however, brought with it a general debate as to what should be done, for there were still no signs of game being near; and few of us desired to spend the night in that open spot, unless under a strong inducement. The discussion ended by an adjournment to the village and the Padé boat, where we slept soundly.

The following day was spent pretty much as had been the first. Some of the visitors gave strong signs of impatience; and towards evening a few of worse temper than the rest declared the whole affair a complete hoax, and took their departure for Colombo. Just then intelligence was received, by means of scouts, that the elephants, to the number of forty, were in full march towards the kraal. This set us all on the tip-toe of expectation. Every one betook himself to his appointed place. Ladies shrank away from the front seats, and I detected one or two of my own sex casting anxious glances towards the stairs. An equal bustle was visible

within the kraal. The head Corale rushed about full of importance; the black stewards, with their white wands, grouped themselves into parties of three or four, at irregular intervals amongst the jungle surrounding the open space, and especially about the entrance; but what duty was to be performed by these gentry was more than I could divine. It is true I was told by a native chief, that it would devolve on them to drive back any of the elephants, when caught in the kraal, in the event of their attempting to force the surrounding defences. But the idea of these poor creatures—some of them mere boys—being of any service, with their little white sticks, appeared so insane and altogether ridiculous, that I felt I was being hoaxed by the Corale.

The shades of evening descended, and scouts continued to arrive from the "driving party," with injunctions to hold everything in readiness, for the herd was coming on. The few torches that had been left to dispel the gloom were put out, or removed from sight. The moon had not risen. Every tongue was silent, save a few low whispers at intervals. Eyes were eagerly strained towards the opening through which the herd were expected to rush. Every ear was on the stretch to catch the most remote sounds in that direction. One might have fancied, from the death-like stillness of the place, that we were there awaiting our own fate, instead of the fate of elephants.

We did not wait long in this suspense. A distant shouting burst suddenly upon our startled ears. It drew rapidly nearer, and soon we could distinguish the violent cracking and snapping of branches of trees and low jungle. Then we heard the quick tramp of many ponderous and huge feet. There was no doubt but that the animals were close upon us, for torches were visible in the direction from which they were coming: indeed the distant jungle appeared to be alive with lights. Every native stood to his arms, such as they were. I could see the white wands glimmering about in the black forest at our feet; some score or two of rifle-barrels, long and ugly-looking instruments, of native make, were protruded from various points. Several of the ladies of our party fainted; and I verily believe that some of the males wished inwardly that they were of the other sex, to have the privilege of fainting and being carried out of reach of danger. But there was small time for attention even to fainting ladies. Our eyes were fixed upon the moving and rapidly approaching lights. They appeared to burn less brightly as they came nearer; then some disappeared, and soon the whole were extinguished, and all was plunged in darkness. Still on came the furious monsters: bamboos crashed; the thick jungle flew about in splinters. A heavy tramping, and tearing, and snapping asunder of branches,—and there they were safely within the kraal. Then arose a shout as though

the clouds and earth were about to meet, or to do something out of the common way. I bent forward to catch a peep at the enemy. The native body-guard waved their white wands. The entrance was barred up in a twinkling, and the torches brought forward to enable us to witness the proceedings, when a volley of loud uproarious laughter fell upon our ears, blended with exclamations of angry disappointment. All eyes were strained towards the clump of trees in the centre of the enclosure, where we beheld a dozen or two of flaming *chules* or torches, waved to and fro by some score of half-frantic villagers; and there, as the glare of torchlight burst through the dense gloom, we beheld, crouching together, in place of forty huge elephants, a knot of village buffaloes, panting, and trembling, and tossing their heads. A survey of these creatures told us how the matter stood. There had been torches fastened to their horns, and one or two of them had the remains of *chules* hanging to their tails. There could not be a shadow of a doubt that the affair had been a cruel hoax, and we were not long in ascribing the origin of it to the real perpetrators—the party of young coffee-planters with whom I had slept in the Padé boat.

The laughter of the evening however was not yet at an end. The light of innumerable *chules*, now moving about, discovered to us three nervous gentlemen snugly perched high among the branches

of a tree close by our stand. They had made a rush up, in the first alarm of the onset; but however easy fear had made the ascent, they evidently found it a somewhat difficult task to descend. All eyes were at once fixed upon the unlucky climbers, whose struggles to reach the lower branches were hailed with roars of furious laughter. Elephants, and buffaloes, and hoaxers were for the moment forgotten. One of them was the District Judge, a somewhat cumbrous personage, another was a Collector of Customs, and the third a Commissioner of the Court of Requests, a thin wiry fellow, with a remarkably red face. There they were, kicking, and straining, and struggling, in as pretty a fix as any of the Civil Service had ever found themselves; and it was not until some bamboos and ropes had been handed up to them, that they were able to reach the stand, and thence wend their way off the scene.

By the time the kraal was cleared, the night was far advanced, and the moon high in the horizon. Advice then reached us that the elephants had made a detour from the line, and had taken it into their unruly heads to treat themselves to a gambol across some score or two of acres of prairie land, where they were amusing themselves with a good round game, despite the coaxing of a decoy consisting of two tame elephants. It was clear that nothing would be done on that night, and our merry parties betook themselves back to the village.

Our numbers were evidently on the decline next day. The patience of many had been exhausted. Towards evening intelligence was brought in that twenty-five elephants, of all sizes, were in full march towards us; and shortly afterwards the Government agent of the district, and the native chief of the district, came in from "the driving" to see that the proper reception of the jungle visitors had been arranged. Again all was hurry and bustle. Provision-baskets and nervous ladies were sent to the rear, wine-bottles were placed in reserve, and sundry parting salutes were made with packets of nsadwiches. Once more silence reigned over the kraal; torches were removed, the guards and watchers were doubled, and an extra supply of the little white wands brought to the front.

It was an hour past midnight when we heard the first distinct shouts of the drivers, who were slowly forcing the elephants towards the kraal, —the two tame ones leading the way, and pointing out the advantages of that particular path to their jungle friends. The sounds seemed to approach us at irregular intervals. Sometimes it appeared as though the animals were not to be moved on any account, and the shouting died away; again they drew rapidly near; then paused; then forward, until we fancied we could distinguish the fall of the elephants' huge feet amongst the thick underwood. At last there was no mistake about it; they were close upon us. Our anxiety

and curiosity became intense. The tearing and trampling amongst the jungle was deafening. Giant bamboos and branches of trees appeared to be snapped asunder by the on-coming herd, like so many walking-sticks,—in a way, in short, which made me tremble for the strength of the kraal, and of our own elevated platform.

But there was little time for reflection of any kind. A shot or two was fired in the rear of the advancing herd, followed by a trampling of the leading elephant. The moon at that moment began to peep over the distant range of low hills, and by its faint light I could distinguish the low jungle bending, and giving way on every side, and amongst it sundry huge black forms rushing about in savage disorder, like mountain masses upheaved by some convulsion of nature. The two decoys entered the enclosure at a brisk but steady trot, and stationed themselves under the clump of trees, without any notice being taken of them; indeed one of them nodded knowingly to the Corale near him, as much as to say, "It's all right, old fellow!" On came the wild elephants at a thundering pace, tearing and bending, and smashing everything before them; trumpeting and roaring at full pitch. In another moment they were within the boundaries of our fortress.

Never shall I forget the wild, strange beauty of that uproarious moment. The moon was now shining sufficiently on the kraal to light up the more

open parts of it; away under the deep shade on one side could be seen a dense, moving mass of living creatures: huge, misshapen, and infuriated, trembling with rage and fatigue. Lighted torches were gleaming thickly, like fire-flies, amidst the neighbouring jungle. Felled trees and rope barred up the narrow way, forming one monster gate; whilst busy groups of villagers, white wands in hand, moved to and fro, and watched the furious herd. More lights were brought to the front, and a blazing fire was kindled outside the entrance, which, whilst it served to light up the whole of the kraal, deterred the savage strangers from attempting anything in that direction.

It was soon evident that the prisoners were not going to take matters very quietly. Two of the stoutest of their number slowly advanced and examined the walls, to see where an opening might most easily be forced. And now we were not less astonished than delighted at the use made of those tiny white wands, which had before served only to raise our contempt. Wherever the two elephant spies approached the jungle-walls of their prison, they were met by one or two villagers, who gently waved before them little snow-white switches; and, lo! as if by some spell of potent forest magic, the beasts turned back, shrinking from contact with the little wands. Point after point was thus tried, but all in vain; the snowy magic sticks were thick within the jungle, and silently beat back the advancing foe.

While the two scouts were thus engaged on their exploring expedition, the tame elephants approached the remainder of the herd, and walked slowly round them, shaking their shaggy ears, and waving high in air their curling trunks, as though they would say, "Move at your peril." One of the captives, a somewhat juvenile and unsophisticated elephant, ventured to move from the side of its maternal parent, to take a survey of our stand, when tame elephant Number One went up to the offender, and sent him back with an enormous flea in his ear; tame elephant Number Two bestowing at the same moment a smart tap on the skull.

Busier work was at hand. The scouts, evidently disgusted with the result of their operations upon the outworks, appeared to be preparing for a *sortie*, and treated with the most reckless levity the admonitory taps of the elephant policemen, which however seemed to be far less unpleasant to them than a tickle on the snout from one of the pigmy white wands. It was plain that they intended to carry their object by a *coup de* trunk; but a score of rifles peered forth. The ladies shut their eyes, and stopped their ears; an elderly gentleman at my elbow asked, in a tremulous whisper, "what the guns were for." The inquiry was replied to by a loud trumpeting from one of the pair of rebels,—a harsh screaming roar, like the hollow sound of a strained railway whistle, very much out of repair. We had scarcely time to look at the poor brute

creating this disturbance, when we heard the sharp crack of a dozen rifles around us,—so sharp indeed that our eyes blinked again. Down tumbled one of the monsters, with thick torrents of hot, savage blood pouring from many a wound about his head and neck. His companion was not so easily disposed of, though badly wounded. Lifting his enormous trunk in the air, and bellowing forth a scream of defiance, he made a rush at the jungle-wall. The two elephantine policemen, who had been narrowly observing his proceedings, then cut in between him and the ramparts, and succeeded in turning him from his purpose, but only to cause him to renew his fierce attack upon another part of the defences. He rushed at full speed upon the part where our stand was erected, screaming and tearing up the earth, and lashing his great trunk about him, as a schoolboy would a piece of whipcord. I felt alarmed: it seemed as though our frail tenement must yield at the first touch from the mighty on-coming mass of flesh, bone, and muscle. Ladies shrieked and fainted by the dozen; gentlemen scrambled over each other towards the stairs, where a decidedly downward tendency was exhibited. I would have given a trifle, just then, to have taken the seat occupied the day before by the Judge or the Collector, high amongst the branches. But in much less time than I take to relate it, the furious animal, smarting under many bullet wounds, had reached the verge of our stand,

heedless of the cracking of rifles, whose leaden messengers flew round his head and poured down his shoulders, harmless as peas. One last crack, and down the monster fell, close to our feet. That shot was the work of a mere lad, the little son of a Kandian Chief, who, coolly biding his time, had fired his piece close at the creature's ear. Leaping from his place, the urchin flung aside his long tapering rifle, and drawing forth his girdle-knife, severed the elephant's tail from the carcase, as his just trophy.

These two having been disposed of, and a degree of calm restored, the general attention was directed towards the herd, which still remained in their original position. For a time fear seemed to hold them motionless; but when the extremity of their danger rose before them, a number of the boldest made a desperate rush at the entrance, but were easily turned back, when the watchers stirred up the great guard-fire, whilst from other parts of the kraal they were soon repelled by an application of white wands. In this way a good hour was spent, at the end of which time the creatures appeared to give up the idea of any further aggressive proceedings, and remained subdued and calm.

A dangerous task had still to be performed—that of securing the best of the herd for taming. Half-a-dozen of the most active and skilful of the villagers crept slowly and carefully towards the frightened group, each having a long stout cord of

jungle-rope in his hand, with a running noose at the end of it. With stealthy, cat-like steps, these daring fellows went amongst the herd, making some of us tremble for their safety. Each of them selected one of the largest and strongest of the group, behind which they crept; and, having arranged the "lasso" for action, they applied a finger gently to the right heel of their beast, who, feeling the touch as though that of some insect, slowly raised the leg, shook it, and replaced it on the ground. The men, as the legs were lifted, placed the running nooses beneath them, so that the elephants were quietly trapped unknown to themselves, and with the utmost ease. The men now stole rapidly away with the ends of the ropes, and immediately made them fast to the ends of the nearest trees. These ropes however were far from being sufficiently strong to hold an elephant who might put out his strength. It was therefore necessary to secure them still further, but by gentle means. The two tame elephants were then placed on active service: they were evidently perfectly at home, and required no directions for their work. Walking slowly up to the nearest of the six captured animals, they began to urge him towards the tree to which he was fastened. At first the creature was stubborn; but a few taps on his great skull, and a mighty push on his carcase, sent him a yard or two nearer his destination. As he proceeded, the man in charge of the rope gathered in the slack of it;

and so matters went on between this party—a tap, a push, and a pull—until at length three of the elephants were close to the tree. Two other villagers then came forward with a stout iron chain. The tame animals placed themselves one on each side of their prisoner, pressing him between them so tightly as to prevent the possibility of his moving. In a minute or two the great chain was passed several times round the hind legs and the tree, and in this way the captive was left, helpless and faint with struggling; the other five were similarly treated. After this our party dispersed, pretty well tired, and quite prepared for bed.

Early next morning I paid a last visit to the kraal alone: my friends were fairly worn out. The remainder of the elephants had been either shot or had forced their way out in one or two places. The six captured animals were quiet—as well they might be, after their long fast and incessant struggling. Towards the end of that day a very small portion of food was supplied to them, just sufficient to keep them alive. In this way they were to remain for a week or two, when, if found sufficiently reduced in strength and temper, they were to be walked about, fastened between two tame companions, who assisted very effectually in their daily education—not perhaps in the most gentle and polite manner, but still much to the purpose.

At the end of two or three months, these wild

and most dangerous monsters of the jungle might be seen quietly and submissively piling logs of ebony in the Government timber-yards, with a purpose-like intelligence little short of that of man.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW YEAR'S DAY.

THERE is a class of our fellow-subjects in the East which appears to have been somewhat unfairly dealt with by writers of Indian books, and colonial historians, inasmuch as no notice has been taken of them, save in some of the official returns of the population issued by the Colonial Office, in which, by the way, they figure rather prominently as regards number. I allude to the burgher inhabitants of our large colonial towns within the tropics.

In Europe the term "Burgher" was applied, in olden days, to all citizens, or dwellers in principal towns, carrying on trades or professions therein. In the East, or rather within the tropics, it is used to designate the descendants of the old Portuguese and Dutch colonists—a class at once numerous and respectable. At the Cape Colony they form the majority of settlers; but in the tropical

settlements of Ceylon, Singapore, etc., they are greatly outnumbered by other races. When the former island was taken possession of by the British forces, many of the Dutch civil servants returned to Holland or went on to Java; but very many were too poor to travel, or preferred remaining where they had been born. Their descendants have continued to fill many leading posts in the colonial establishments, and nearly all the minor apointments in the Judicial and Revenue departments are bestowed upon these and the Portuguese burghers. The Dutch have been, and are to this day, very careful not to intermarry with any Cingalese; thus their habits and their characters have undergone but little change. The Portuguese, on the other hand, have been far less scrupulous on this point; and their descendants of the present day are to be seen of every shade and grade—from the well-clad medical student, to the half-starved, half-naked street-sweeper, or the bazaar-keeper.

Until very recently there was little, if any, social intercourse between the European and burgher classes: a line of demarcation had been drawn between the two races, which very few dared to pass. This extended to such of the proscribed colonists as held important posts under Government, who, while their abilities and characters were owned and respected by their European fellow-civilians, found no admittance within the threshold of their homes.

If however, the English colonists contrive to

monopolize the best berths in the service, the burghers have managed to secure to themselves the most comfortable dwellings, with the best gardens. The same jealous exclusiveness which has so completely separated these two classes, impels the European to take up his residence in a quarter as far removed as possible from the suburbs usually occupied by the burghers. The English merchants and civil servants will be found located along the edge of some high road, within a very small patch of burnt-up paddock, once green. Their tenements are of no particular order, being mostly long rambling whitewashed places, very like huge rabbit-hutches. A few palms occasionally make an attempt at shading the dusty hot verandah in front; while the small tufts of cinnamon-bushes are to be seen withering away in parched sand, evidently disgusted with their circumstances. How different the dwellings of the burghers! Some of these, it is true, are in the midst of the *pettah*, or native town, but most of them will be found scattered about in quiet shady lanes. Many are quite hidden from the passer-by, amidst a dense little forest of fruit-trees, rose-bushes, and evergreens—concealed amidst leaves and flowers as snugly as though they were so many huge, red-bricked, birds' nests.

It is seldom, indeed, that anything occurs to break the dull monotony of life in the East. With no public amusements, no public promenades, colonists seldom meet each other save at the churches.

There are however a few days in the year when a little change in this clock-work existence takes place amongst the burgher population; when grim-looking Dutchmen relax the stern rigidity of their bronzed features, and put on some gay suit of many colours. When portly, sleepy dames rouse up for the emergency, startle the quiet family halls with their busy tongues, and scare the old watch-dog with the vivid brilliancy of new ribands and clean lace. One of these very few and much-prized occasions is New Year's Day.

In the afternoon of the first day in January, 1850, I strolled out from the old, rambling, crumbling fort of Colombo, over a very shaky wooden drawbridge, through the broad prim-looking streets of the native town. The weather was fine; that is to say, parchingly hot: the sky was undimmed by a single cloud. The bland sea-breeze played coyly with the feathery foliage of the tall palms and arekas, and waved against the azure sky many a tope of broad-leaved, bright-green bananas. The native bazaar, at the corner of the town, with one end jutting out upon the sea, was for once clean and gay. The dealers in fish, fruit, and curry-stuffs, appeared to have put on new clothes with the New Year. The huge white turbans, and gilt-edged muslin scarfs, glistened in the noonday sun; and gorgeous, many-coloured vests and wrappers vied, in the brilliancy of their tints, with the many-hued piles of fruits and balmy flowers. The very fish and vegetables

appeared cleaner than usual; while spices, condiments, and sweetmeats looked down from many a loaded shelf upon the passer-by.

Leaving this motley scene, where the song of the Hindoo dancers blended in wild harmony with the Cingalese tomtom, or drum, I passed on to the heart of the dwelling-place of the middle-class of burghers.

Before every house was an ample verandah, partly veiled by an open bamboo-curtain. In these lofty, cool retreats were seated the many families of the place, receiving or paying the good wishes of the season. Once upon a time the streets were graced by rows, on either side, of shady spreading *souriya*-trees, bending over the footways, and peeping in at the verandahs, to see how the inmates were getting on; winking the large eyes of their yellow tulip flowers at the daughters, and enticing pretty birds to come and sing amongst the leafy branches. But this was in the good old days of sleepy Holland. Now all are gone—green boughs, winking flowers, and singing-birds: more's the pity!

As I passed along, I met many groups of old, young, and middle-aged, evidently families, in full burgher holiday costume. They were in each case followed by two or more turbaned, fierce-looking domestics, bearing enormous trays, piled up with something hidden from vulgar gaze by flowing veils of muslin. I could not help calling to mind the

processions of slaves, in the Arabian Nights, which we are informed followed the steps of caliphs and sorcerers, bearing with them huge presents of precious things from subterranean worlds. I watched some of these domestic embassies, and perceived that they entered the houses of some of the neighbours; there was a great fluster and bustle, and no end to the talking and laughing in the long verandahs. I entered the dwelling of a Dutchman to whom I was known, and found one of these family groups within. A rare merry scene it was: the deputation had just arrived; friends were shaking hands; the great black slave of the Arabian Nights uncovered the hidden treasures on the tray, and, lo! there were discovered—not piles of glittering sequins, and emeralds, and rubies, as I had expected, but a few bunches of yellow plantains, some green oranges, a handful of limes, half-a-dozen pine-apples, and a homely-looking cake frosted with sugar. These were the universal New Year offerings amongst that simple community, given as tokens of good-fellowship and neighbourly feeling; and as such, welcomed and cheerfully responded to. Little corpulent glasses of cordials, or schiedam, were handed round amongst all arrivals, rich or poor; good wishes were exchanged; a few stale jokes were cracked; inquiries were made for the grandmother who was too infirm to join the party; and away went the neighbours with another slave and another heap of hidden gifts,

to the next acquaintance. These presents are not confined to mere equals; the most humble menial scrapes a few *challies* together for the occasion, and lays at his master's feet an oblation of fruits and flowers.

The very "grass-cutter," the miserable hanger-on of stables, contrives somehow to get a few pines and plantains on a blue-and-white dish; and poverty-stricken though she be, pours out her simple gifts before her master with gentle dignity.

Group after group went through the town. Gay parties continued to amuse themselves in many a dusty verandah. Scores of meerschaums sent forth circling clouds of fragrant white smoke; while many a dreamy Dutchman nodded in his high-backed, richly-carved chair of ebony. The hour of vespers approached. There were heard dozens of tinkling little bells; and forth came scores of damsels clad in pure white. Again the dusty streets were busy and alive, and many of the good Catholic verandahs lost their chief charmers.

Straying onward from this bustling neighbourhood, I reached the outskirts of the town, where are to be seen some of the prettiest and most retired of the burghers' dwellings. These are mostly fine old mansions of red brick, with solid, grim-looking gable-ends frowning down upon the old rusty gates, and the great round well by the forest of plantain-trees. I found myself standing before one of these, in a sweet green lane lined with lofty

palms, spreading gorekas, and huge India-rubber trees. The heavy wall in front hid the sturdy mansion from my view; but the gates being open, I obtained a peep of the Oriental paradise within. Rare old fruit-trees on the grass-plot were well laden with clustering, many-coloured fruit! They must have been in bearing when the old gentleman in the easy chair, and the pink cotton trousers, and black skull-cap, was a mere child. How cool the place looked amidst all that dense green foliage! One might almost have caught a cold in the head by merely looking in at the gate. The sun evidently never troubled the little children playing on the grass under the thick clusters of mangoes, sour-sops, and plantains; except perhaps for a few minutes at noon. What a jolly old house it was, to be sure, with verandahs as large as the Burlington Arcade in London; and such windows! They looked like so many roofs of hot-houses let sideways into the walls; and as to the doors, one might have fancied, from their size, that the family were in the habit of keeping their carriage in the back parlour, or setting out the dinner-table in the doorway: there would have been abundance of room in either case, and a little to spare too!

There were nice beds of flowers on each side of the large grass-plot, and orange-trees; and the passer-by peeping in far enough, as I did, might have caught a glimpse of one or two pairs of small pretty feet, and faces to match, hidden away cosily

among the roses and oleanders. Well, those are nice, quiet, enjoyable places, and much better than the hot, dusty, dignified rabbit-hutches of the English on the other side of the fort!

I passed on, as my fancy led me, until I came to another stout Dutch residence, which pleased me, though not so much as the other had done. It was altogether another description of house, though doubtless pleasant enough in its way. It stood close upon the road, with all the garden behind it, so that one saw nothing but red bricks and little Dutch tiles. There was no peeping in there, through any open gates; no catching the daughters quietly among the flowers.

The owner of the house chanced to be enjoying his evening pipe in the capacious doorway; and seeing me surveying the premises, he at once rose from his quiet seat and bade me welcome. When he learnt my desire to examine his mansion, he gladly conducted me through the great rooms to the garden. The principal room or hall was of enormous magnitude. I believe you might have driven a stage-coach, with very frisky leaders, round the dinner-table, without fear of touching the army of chairs ranged along the walls. I could almost fancy the builder had made a mistake, and roofed in a good part of the road. I looked up and thought I should never get a sight of the roofing, and wondered whether the sparrows building their nests so high there, ever felt giddy and fell down

upon the dinner-table. The other rooms were smaller, but all spacious enough, and well filled with ebony and calamander furniture. On the whole, the mansion was elegant and refined. There was a degree of polish about the windows, and a sort of rakishness in the couch-covers and ottoman drapery, which struck me, while the very screen in the doorway had a jaunty air which there was no resisting.

Right and left from the large house, extended backward two ranges of sleeping apartments and stores, with long stone terraces, filled with flowering shrubs in gigantic pots. At the farther end were rows of huge, suspiciously-shaped jars, looking as though they belonged to Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. At the termination of this pottery were wide flights of steps leading to a neatly laid-out garden, full of the richest flowers, and greenest shrubs, and most tempting fruit-trees the eye ever saw, or fancy pictured. There was a small fountain in the midst, with a seat by the side, and round it lay scattered children's toys. On the whole, this was a pretty place, but not so natural and home-like as the other; besides the stiff terrace and the jars of the Forty Thieves rather marred its beauty.

Such houses are mostly the dwelling-places of old Dutch families, the heads of which may be lawyers, or deputy registrars, or chief-clerks in a Government office, and are none the worse for that. But when I mention Dutchmen, by the bye, do

not let any one for a moment picture to himself the burly, bright-visaged, many-breeched gentry of friend Knickerbocker: that race has died out long since, within the tropics. Nankeen trousers, a white jacket and waistcoat—all fitting pretty closely on a rather slim-built figure—with a modern London beaver, make up the externals of the Dutch burghers of the East.

Determined to see all that related to the day among the burghers, I had accepted an invitation from a Dutchman, a worthy book-keeper grown grey in the service of one of the leading merchants, to join an evening party at his house. I arrived there between eight and nine o'clock, and found old Samuel Kuyper at the door, anxiously awaiting me. I was at once introduced to Mrs. Kuyper, a portly dame, whom I found seated in solemn silence, on a huge ottoman, at one end of the long room. In vain I uttered innumerable speeches, full of compliment; equally useless were my inquiries after her family. The lady, I found, understood not one word of English; and this is the case with most of the female members of these families.

The room we were assembled in, was one of the huge warehouse-looking places I have already described. There were acres of glass in the walls. You could see all that was going on in the supper-room, everything in the garden, and not a little in the bed-rooms. In front of these fields of windows, were long rows of seats nearly all occupied by

Dutch and Portuguese ladies of every age. They presented a strange contrast to the merry parties I had beheld in the day-time. All the fun and jollity were gone. It was not etiquette to laugh or to speak aloud before the dancing began, and so all sat stiff and silent, like so many mummies. Had our assembling been for a funeral, or for reading a will, the solemnity of the company could scarcely have been greater. It was painful. Our host however possessed good-humour enough for half the party; he was all smiles, from the heel o his shoe to the tips of his grey hair. More than o ce, I caught him rushing out into the garden to have a laugh all to himself. The wife was quite another sort of person: happy enough, no doubt, if she could but have felt quite sure about the supper; but I could see the cares of fifty years of mullagatawny written on her brow. Half a century of obstinate butlers, bad cooks, and impertinent maid-servants, to say nothing of generations of hooping-cough, small-pox, and measles, is surely trial enough for any ordinary woman. It had had its effects upon Mrs. Kuyper.

The young men grouped themselves about as we see soldiers on parade-ground: some were forming into squares, a few into single line, others again were leading off in columns. A few of the knowing shots were thrown out in advance as sharpshooters, and made attacks on the female forces, entrenched on the sofas and ottomans: but without any visible effect.

The monotony of this curious scene was at length broken by the entrance of a swarm of fierce-looking domestics, swathed and turbaned in rich profusion, bearing before them little square stands—a sort of card-tables in reduced circumstances—which they placed with all due solemnity before the dumb ladies on the sofas.

Other gay-looking servants followed, with—what would the reader imagine? Nectar or sherbet? No; with huge tureens of reeking hot *soup!* The gentlemen proceeded to pour out libations of n lagatawny into divers soup-plates on the little ca tables. It was curious to see how animated ladies became, and how very kindly they took the smoking beverage; evidently as hot as capsicums and a good fire could make it. I could but wonder of what material their throats were constructed; and when I perceived that the soup was followed by hecatombs of cake and goblets of hot-spiced wine, I felt as if on fire. The thermometer in the large open verandah outside, stood at somewhere about ninety degrees; yet these scalding potations were swallowed as though freezing from an ice-house. The honest, warm-hearted burghers feeling, no doubt, the soothing influence of the feast, prepared to add to their enjoyments by a dance.

The squeaking notes of an old violin, accompanied by a brace of tomtoms, diffused activity into the hitherto dull assembly. The dance was led off by—I perspire freely as I think of it—the hostess

and myself. It was none of your sleepy, walking affairs, such as may be met with in English society, but a regular hard-working quadrille, such a one as you might fancy Laplanders would enjoy during one of their severe winters. I need not relate my sufferings during that time of trial. Suffice it to say, that when I staggered out into the cool shrubbery, I found myself in a condition which could scarcely have been worse if I had spent a morning with the Fire-king, in one of his favourite ovens.

Dancing was followed by some very indifferent native theatricals, performed on the lawn behind the house; of which dancing girls, snakes, and a concert of tomtoms, formed a portion, much to the enjoyment of the guests, who seemed not difficult to please.

I felt no inclination for more dancing, or to partake of the enormous supper which I perceived to be in course of preparation, and accordingly, left unperceived, flung myself into my palanquin carriage, and bade the driver go home. The night was then magnificent. A bright and lovely moon flung many a new charm among the gorgeous foliage that waved and lightly danced in the cool sea-breeze. The vast Indian Ocean broke peacefully in phosphorescent curling waves along a pebbly shore. The air was soft and still, broken only by fitful echoes from some merry-making party in the distance.

My drive took me by the sea-shore, and as I

lay gazing out upon the far ocean, I noticed a little black shadow on the horizon, like a ship, or like the shadow of some monstrous winged thing. I was tired of looking, and sleepy withal; so I lay back and dozed. I looked out again, and started to find how dark it had become. The horse-keeper too was urging the animal to its utmost speed. The little black speck on the horizon had swollen to a mighty, hideous mass of thunder-cloud. Already half the heavens were shrouded in pitchy darkness. I opened my carriage windows and looked out. The storm was coming up with giant strides; some distance out at sea, a wall of smoking, hissing, bubbling rain joined the clouds and waters, and shut out all beyond. I could hear that mighty cataract of tempest fall with a roaring sound, nearer and nearer. Before me, all was dark and stormy: behind, the many groves of waving palms still slept in moonlit beauty. The distant hills were clear and bold, and seemed so near, as though my voice could reach them.

It was in vain my horse was urged onward: the storm was swifter than any living thing. The great black smoking wall came hissing on; and from its darkened crest, loud peals of thunder burst. I have been in many a storm in my day, but this was the most magnificent I ever saw. To go onward became absolutely impossible; so fierce was the tempest. The driver therefore turned the horse's head away from the sea, and patiently sat

it out. Peal after peal of thunder rent the air. It seemed as though all the powder-magazines in the world were being blown up. First there was a cracking and splitting, as of gigantic sheets of metal torn asunder; then a heavy rumbling, like ten thousand loaded wagons being galloped across an iron bridge. The air was no longer darkened; every foot of atmosphere seemed alive with lightning-life. By the glare, I could see some of the noble palms—at least seventy feet high—bending to the gale like willow-wands, and literally sweeping the ground with their feathery leaves. More than one, upon that terrible night, was shivered into splinters by the lightning; and many a stubborn one that would not bend, lay crushed and helpless on its sandy grave.

The howling of the wind, the thunder-peals, the heavy pattering of the huge rain-drops, had well-nigh stunned me. In nature however, as with man, the fiercest outbreaks are the soonest quelled. In half an hour the moon shone out again in undimmed beauty. The air was calm and hushed; and the parched earth and herbs, grateful for such a copious draught, sent many a fragrant blessing on the breeze, to tell their thanks.

CHAPTER IV.

COFFEE PLANTING.

In the month of September, 1840, I started from Kandy, the ancient capital of Ceylon, to visit a friend who was in charge of one of the many new coffee-clearings then in progress. I was accompanied by a young planter well acquainted with the country and the natives, and who had offered to act as my guide. The clearing was distant about twenty-five miles. The route we took has since become famous. Rebellion and martial law have stalked over it; and concerning it, the largest blue books of last session have been concocted.

We mounted our horses a good hour before day-break, so as to ensure getting over the most exposed part of our journey before the sun should have risen very high, an important matter for man and beast in tropical countries. Towards noon, we pulled up at a little bazaar, or native shop, and called for

"*Hoppers and Coffee.*" I felt that I could have eaten almost anything, and truly one needs such an appetite to get down the dreadful black-draught which the Cingalese remorselessly administer to travellers, under the name of coffee.

The sun was high in the horizon when we found ourselves suddenly, at a turn of the road, in the midst of a "clearing." This was quite a novelty to me; so unlike anything one meets with in the low country, or about the vicinity of Kandy. The present clearing lay at an elevation of fully three thousand feet above the sea-level, whilst the altitude of Kandy is not more than sixteen hundred feet. I had never been on a Hill Estate, and the only notions formed by me respecting a plantation of coffee, were of continuous, undulating fields, and gentle slopes. Here it was not difficult to imagine myself among the recesses of the Black Forest. Pile on pile of heavy, dark jungle, rose before my astonished sight, looking like grim fortresses defending some hidden city of giants. The spot we had opened upon was at the entrance of a long valley of great width, on one side of which lay the young estate we were bound to. Before us were, as near as I could judge, fifty acres of felled jungle in thickest disorder; just as the monsters of the forest had fallen, so they lay, heap on heap, crushed and splintered into ten thousand fragments. Fine brawny old fellows some of them; trees that had stood many a storm and thunder-peal; trees that

had sheltered the wild elephant, the deer, and the buffalo, lay there prostrated by a few inches of sharp steel. The "fall" had taken place a good week before, and the trees would be left in this state until the end of October, by which time they would be sufficiently dry for a good "burn." Struggling from trunk to trunk, and leading our horses slowly over the huge rocks that lay thickly around, we at last got through the "fall," and came to a part of the forest where the heavy, quick click of many axes told us there was a working-party busily employed. Before us, a short distance in the jungle, were the swarthy, compact figures of some score or two of Kandian villagers, plying their small axes with a rapidity and precision that was truly marvellous. It made my eyes wink again, to see how quickly their sharp tools flew about, and how near some of them went to their neighbours' heads.

In the midst of these busy people I found my planting friend, superintending operations, in full jungle costume. A sort of wicker helmet was on his head, covered with a long padded white cloth, which hung far down his back, like a baby's quilt. A shooting-jacket and trousers of checked country cloth, immense leech-gaiters fitting close inside the roomy canvas boots, and a Chinese-paper umbrella, made up his curious outfit.

To me it was a pretty, as well as a novel sight, to watch the felling-work in progress. Two axemen to small trees; three, and sometimes four, to

larger ones: their little bright tools flung far back over their shoulders with a proud flourish, and then, with a "whirr," dug deep in the heart of the tree, with such exactitude and in such excellent time, that the scores of axes flying about me seemed impelled by some mechanical contrivance, and sounding but as one or two instruments. I observed that in no instance were the trees cut through, but each one was left with just sufficient of the heart to keep it upright; on looking around, I saw that there were hundreds of them similarly treated. The ground on which we were standing was extremely steep and full of rocks, between which lay embedded rich veins of alluvial soil. Where this is the case, the masses of stone are not an objection; on the contrary, they serve to keep the roots of the young coffee-plants cool during the long dry season, and in like manner prevent the light soil from being washed down the hill-side by heavy rains. My planter-friend assured me that, if the trees were to be at once cut down, a few at a time, they would so encumber the place as to render it impossible for the workmen to get access to the adjoining trees, so thickly do they stand together, and so cumbersome are their heavy branches. In reply to my inquiry as to the method of bringing all these cut trees to the ground, I was desired to wait until the cutting on the hill-side was completed, and then I should see the operation finished.

The little axes rang out a merry chime—merrily

to the planter's ear, but the death-knell of many a fine old forest-tree. In half an hour the signal was made to halt, by blowing a conch-shell; obeying the signal of the superintendent, I hastened up the hill as fast as my legs would carry me, over rocks and streams, halting at the top, as I saw the whole party do. Then they were ranged in order, axes in hand, on the upper side of the topmost row of cut trees. I got out of their way, watching anxiously every movement. All being ready, the manager sounded the conch sharply: two score voices raised a shout that made me start again; forty bright axes gleamed high in air, then sank deeply into as many trees, which at once yielded to the sharp steel, groaned heavily, waved their huge branches to and fro, like drowning giants, then toppled over, and fell with a stunning crash upon the trees below them. These having been cut through previously, offered no resistance, but followed the example of their upper neighbours, and fell booming on those beneath. In this way the work of destruction went rapidly on from row to row. Nothing was heard but groaning, crackling, crashing, and splintering; it was some little time before I got the sounds well out of my ears. At the time it appeared as though the whole of the forest-world about me was tumbling to pieces; only those fell however which had been cut, and of such not one was left standing. There they would lie until sufficiently dry for the torch that would

blacken their massive trunks, and calcine their many branches into dusty heaps of alkali.

By the time this was completed, and the men put on to a fresh "cut," we were ready for our mid-day meal, the planter's breakfast. Away we toiled towards the *Bungalow*. Passing through a few acres of standing forest, and over a stream, we came to a small cleared space well sheltered from wind, and quite snug in every respect. It was thickly sown with what I imagined to be young lettuces, or perhaps very juvenile cabbage-plants, but I was told this was the "Nursery," and those tiny green things were intended to form the future "Sooloo-kande Estate." On learning that we had reached the "Bungalow," I looked about me to discover its locality, but in vain; there was no building to be seen; but presently my host pointed out to me what I had not noticed before—a small, low-roofed, thatched place, close under a projecting rock, and half-hid by thorny creepers. I imagined this to be his fowl-house, or perhaps a receptacle for tools; but was not a little astonished when I saw my friend beckon me on, and enter at the low, dark door. This miserable little cabin could not have been more than twelve feet long by about six feet wide, and as high at the walls. This small space was lessened by heaps of tools, coils of string for "lining" the ground before planting, sundry boxes and baskets, an old rickety table, and one chair. At the further end—if anything could be

far in that hole—was a jungle bedstead, formed by driving green stakes in the floor and walls, and stretching rope across them. I could not help expressing astonishment at the miserable quarters provided for one who had so important a charge, and such costly outlay to make. My host however treated the matter very philosophically. Everything, he observed, is good or bad by comparison, and wretched as the accommodation appeared to me, who had been accustomed to the large, airy houses of Colombo, he seemed to be quite satisfied; indeed he told me, that when he had finished putting up this little crib, had moved in his one table and chair, and was seated, cigar in mouth, inside the still damp mud walls, he thought himself the happiest of mortals. I felt somewhat curious to know where he had dwelt previous to the erection of this unique building,—whether he had perched up in the forest trees, or in holes in the rocks, like the wild Veddahs of Bintenne.

I was told that his first habitation, when commencing work up there, was then suspended over my head. I looked up to the dark, dusty roof, and perceived a bundle of what I conceived to be old dirty, brown paper, or parchment-skin. Perceiving my utter ignorance of the arrangement, he took down the roll, and spread it open outside the door. It turned out to be a huge *Talipot-leaf*, which he assured me was the only shelter he had possessed for nearly two months, and that too

during the rainy season. It might have measured ten feet in length, and possibly four in width—pretty well for a leaf. It was used by fastening a stout pole lengthways to two stakes driven in the ground; the leaf was hung across this ridge-pole, midway, and the corners of it made fast by cords; common mats being hung at each end, and under the leaf.

The "Lines," a long row of mud huts for the coolies, appeared to be much more comfortable than their master's dwelling. But this is necessarily the case, for unless they be well cared for they will not remain on a remote estate, such as this one was then considered. The first thing a good planter sees to is a roomy and dry set of "Lines" for the people, then the "Nursery" of coffee-plants, and thirdly, a hut for himself.

The superintendent assured me that none but those who had opened an estate in a remote district, could form any idea of the difficulties and privations encountered by the planter. "Folks may grumble as they like, down in Colombo, or in England," said my friend, "about the high salaries paid to managers; but if some of them had only a month of it up here, in the rains, I suspect they'd change their notions."

He had had the greatest difficulty at first in keeping but a dozen men on the place to clear ground for lines and nurseries: so strong is the objection felt by Malabars to new and distant plan-

tations. On one occasion he had been quite deserted; even his old cook ran away, and he found himself with only a little Cingalese boy, and his rice, biscuit, and dried fish all but exhausted. As for meat, he had not tasted any for many days. There was no help for it, he saw, but to send off the little boy to the nearest village, with a rupee, to buy some food, and try to persuade some of the village people to come up and assist him. When evening came on there was no boy back, and the lonely planter had no fire to boil his rice. Night came on, and still he was alone,—hungry, cold, and desolate. It was a Sabbath evening; and he pointed out to me the large stone on which he had sat down to think of his friends in the old country; the recollection of his distance from them, and of his then desolate, Crusoe-like position, came so sadly upon him, that he wept like a child. I almost fancied I saw a tear start to his large eye as he related the circumstance.

Ceylon planters are proverbially hospitable; the utmost stranger is at all times sure of a hearty welcome for himself and his horse. On this occasion my jungle friend turned out the best cheer his small store afforded. It is true we had but one chair amongst us, but that only served to give us amusement in making seats of baskets, boxes, and old books. A dish of rice, and curry, made of dry salt fish, two red-herrings, and the only fowl on the estate, formed our meal; and poor as the re-

past may appear to those who have never done a good day's journey in the jungles of Ceylon, I can vouch for the keen relish with which we all partook of it.

In the afternoon we strolled out to inspect the first piece of planting on the Soolookande Estate. It was in extent about sixty acres, divided into fields of ten acres by narrow belts of tall trees. This precaution was adopted, I learnt, with a view to protect the young plants from the violence of the wind, which at times rushes over the mountains with terrific fury. Unless thus sheltered by belts or "staking," the young plants get loosened, or are whirled round until the outer bark becomes worn away, and then they sicken and die, or if they live, yield no fruit. "Staking" is simply driving a stout peg in the ground, and fastening the plant steadily to it; but it is an expensive process. The young trees in these fields had been put out during the previous rains of July, and though still very small, looked fresh and healthy. I had always imagined planting out to be a very easy and rough operation; but I now learnt that exceeding care and skill are required in the operation. The holes to receive the young coffee-plant must be wide and deep; they can scarcely be too large; the earth must be kept well about the roots of the seedling in removing it, and care must be taken that the *tap-root* be neither bent, nor planted over any stone or other hard substance,—neglect of these important

points is fatal to the prosperity of the estate. The yellow drooping leaves, and stunted growth, soon tell the proprietor that his superintendent has done his work carelessly; but alas! it is then too late to apply any remedy, save that of re-planting the ground.

I left this estate impressed with very different notions concerning the life and trials of a planter in the far jungle, from those I had contracted below from mere Colombo gossip; and I felt that superintendents were not so much overpaid for their skill, patience, privations, and hard work.

Having thus seen the commencement of the Soolookande Coffee Estate, I felt a strong desire towards the end of the year 1846, to pay it a second visit, while in its full vigour. I wished to satisfy myself as to the correctness of the many reports I had heard of its heavy crops, of its fine condition, its excellent works, and, not least, of the good management during crop-time. My old acquaintance was no longer in charge; he had been supplanted by a stranger. However, I went armed with a letter from the Colombo agents, which would ensure more attention than a bed and a meal.

I journeyed this time by another and rather shorter route. Instead of taking the Matelle road, I struck off to the right, past Davy's Tree, celebrated as the scene of the massacre of a large body

of British officers and troops by the treacherous Kandians, and crossing the Mahavilla Ganga at Davy's Ferry, made the best of my way across the beautiful vale of Dombera, and thence towards the long range of mountains forming one flank of the Kallibokke Valley. At the period of my former excursion this long tract of fertile country was one unbroken mass of heavy jungle; now a dozen large estates, with bungalows and extensive works, were to be seen, enlivening the journey, and affording a much readier passage for the horseman; for wherever plantations are formed, good jungle-paths are sure to be made. The ride was a most interesting one; mile upon mile of coffee lay before and around me, in various stages of growth, from the young seedling just put out, to the full-bearing bush, as heavily laden with red ripe coffee-berries as any currant-bush in England with its fruit.

It was then the middle of November, and the very height of the planter's harvest. All appeared busy as I rode along, gathering on the old properties; weeding and "supplying" or filling up failures on the young estates. I halted but once for a cup of good, wholesome coffee, and gladly pushed on, so as to reach my destination in good time for breakfast.

The many lovely prospects opening before me caused some little delay in admiration; and by the time I had ridden through the last piece of jungle, and pulled up at the upper boundary of "Sooloo-

kande," it was not far from midday. The sun was blazing high above me, but its rays were tempered by a cool breeze that swept over from the neighbouring mountain-tops. The prospect from that lofty eminence was lovely in the extreme: steep ridges of coffee extended in all directions, bounded by piles of mossy forest; white spots, here and there, told of bungalows and stores; a tiny cataract rushed down some cleft rock, on one side: on the other, a rippling stream ran gently along, thickly studded with watercresses. Before me, in the far distance, lay outstretched, like a picture-scroll, the Matelle district, with its paddy-fields, its villages, and its Vihares, skirted by a ridge of mountains and terminated by the Cave Rocks of Dambool. At my feet, far below, lay the estate, bungalow, and works, and to them I bent my way by a narrow and very steep bridle-path. So precipitous was the land just here that I felt rather nervous on looking down at the white buildings. The pathway, for a great length, was bordered by rose-bushes, or trees, in fullest blossom, perfuming the air most fragrantly; as I approached the bungalow, other flowering shrubs and plants were mingled with them, and in such excellent order was everything there, that the place appeared to me more like a magnified garden than an estate. How changed since my former visit! I could scarcely recognize it as the same property. The bungalow was an imposing-looking building, the very picture of neatness and comfort.

How different to the old Talipot-leaf, and the dirty little mud hut! The box of a place I had slept in six years before would have stood easily on the dining-table in this bungalow. A wide verandah surrounded the building, the white pillars of which were polished like marble. The windows were more like doors; and as for the doors, one may speak of them as lawyers do of Acts of Parliament,—it would be easy to drive a coach-and-six through them.

The superintendent was a most gentlemanly person, and so was his Bengalee servant. The curry was delightfully hot, the water was deliciously cool. The chairs were like sofas, and so exquisitely comfortable, after my long ride, that when my host rose and suggested a walk down to the works, I regretted that I had said anything about them, and had half a mind to pretend to be poorly.

The store was a zinc-roofed building, one hundred feet in length, by twenty-five wide; it was boarded below, but the sides upwards were merely stout rails, for ensuring a thorough circulation of air through the interior. It presented a most busy appearance. Long strings of Malabar coolies were flocking in, along narrow paths, from all sides, carrying bags and baskets on their heads, filled with the ripe coffee. These had to pass in at one particular door of the store into the receiving-floor, in the upper part of the building. A Canghany was stationed there to see each man's gathering fairly

measured, and to give a little tin ticket for every bushel, on the production of which the coolies were paid, at the end of the month. Many coolies who had their wives and children to assist them in the field, brought home very heavy parcels of coffee.

Passing on to the floor where the measuring was in progress, I saw immense heaps of ripe, cherry-looking fruit, waiting to be passed below to the pulpers. All this enormous pile must be disposed of before the morning, or it will not be fit for operating on, and might be damaged. I saw quantities of it already gliding downwards, through little openings in the floor, under which I could hear the noise of some machinery in rapid motion, but giving out sounds like sausage-machines in full "chop." Following my guide, I descended a ladder, between some ugly-looking wheels and shafting, and landed safely on the floor of the pulping-room. "Pulping" is the operation of removing the outer husk, or "cherry," which encloses the parchment-looking husk containing the pair of coffee-beans. This is performed by a machine called a "pulper." It is a stout wooden or iron frame, supporting a fly-wheel and barrel of wood, covered with sheet copper, perforated coarsely outwards, very like a huge nutmeg-grater. This barrel is made to revolve rapidly, nearly in contact with two chocks of wood. The coffee in the cherry being fed on to this by a hopper, is forced between the perforated barrel and the

chocks; the projecting copper points tear off the soft cherry, whilst the coffee-beans, in their parchment case, fall through the chocks into a large box. These pulpers (four in number) were worked by a water-wheel of great power, and turned out in six hours as much coffee as was gathered by three hundred men during the whole day.

From the pulper-box the parchment coffee is shovelled to the "cisterns"—enormous square wooden vats. In these the new coffee is placed, just covered with water, in which state it is left for periods varying from twelve to eighteen hours, according to the judgment of the manager. The object of this soaking is to produce a slight fermentation of the mucilaginous matter adhering to the "parchment," in order to facilitate its removal, as otherwise it would harden the skin, and render the coffee very difficult to peel or clean. When I inspected the works on Soolookande, several cisterns of fermented coffee were being turned out, to admit other parcels from the pulper, and also to enable the soaked coffee to be washed. Coolies were busily employed shovelling the berries from one cistern to another; others were letting in clean water. Some were busy stirring the contents of the cisterns briskly about; whilst others again were letting off the foul water; and a few were engaged in raking the thoroughly washed coffee from the washing platforms to the barbecues.

The barbecues on this property were very ex-

tensive,—about twenty thousand square feet, all gently sloped away from their centres, and smooth as glass. They were of stone, coated over with lime, well polished, and so white, that it was with difficulty I could look at them with the sun shining full upon their bright surfaces. Over these drying grounds the coffee, when quite clean and white, is spread at first thickly, but gradually more thinly, until on the last day it is placed only one bean thick. Four days' sunning are usually required, though occasionally many more are necessary before the coffee can be heaped away in the store without risk of spoiling. All that is required is to dry it sufficiently for transport to Kandy, and thence to Colombo, where it undergoes a final curing, previous to having its parchment skin removed, and the faulty and broken berries picked out. Very few estates are enabled to effectually dry their crops, owing to the long continuance of wet weather on the hills.

The "dry floor" of this store resembled very much the inside of a malting-house. It was nicely boarded, and nearly half full of coffee, white and in various stages of dryness. Some of it, at one end, was being measured into two bushel bags, tied up, marked and entered in the "packed" book, ready for despatch to Kandy. Everything was done on a system; the bags were piled up in tens; and the loose coffee was kept in heaps of fixed quantities as a check on the measuring. Bags,

rakes, measures, twine, all had their proper places allotted them. Each day's work must be finished off-hand at once; no putting off until to-morrow can be allowed, or confusion and loss will be the consequence. Any heaps of half dried coffee, permitted to remain unturned in the store, or not exposed on the "barbecue," will heat, and become discoloured, and in that condition is known amongst commercial men as "Country Damaged."

The constant ventilation of a coffee-store is of primary importance in checking any tendency to fermentation in the uncured beans; an ingenious planter has recently availed himself of this fact, and invented an apparatus which forces an unbroken current of dry, warm air through the piles of damp coffee, thus continuing the curing process in the midst of the most rainy weather.

When a considerable portion of the gathering is completed, the manager has to see to his means of transport, before his store is too crowded. A well conducted plantation will have its own cattle to assist in conveying the crop to Kandy; it will have roomy and dry cattle-pens, fields of guinea-grass, and pasture grounds attached, as well as a manure-pit, into which all refuse and husks of the coffee are thrown, to be afterwards turned to valuable account.

The carriage of coffee into Kandy is performed by pack-bullocks, and sometimes by the coolies, who carry it on their heads, but these latter can

seldom be employed away from picking during the crop-time. By either means however transport forms a serious item in the expenses of a good many estates. From some of the distant hill-estates possessing no cattle, and with indifferent jungle-paths, the conveyance of their crops to Kandy will often cost fully six shillings the hundredweight of clean coffee, equal to about threepence per mile. From Kandy to Colombo, by the common bullock-cart of the country, the cost will amount to two or three shillings the clean hundredweight, in all, eight or nine shillings the hundredweight from the plantation to the port of shipment, being twice as much for conveying it less than a hundred miles, as it costs for freight to England, about sixteen thousand miles. One would imagine that it would not require much sagacity to discern that, in such a country as this, a railroad would be an incalculable benefit to the whole community. To make this apparent even to the meanest Cingalese capacity, I may mention that, even at the present time, transit is required from the interior of the island to its seaports, for enough coffee for shipment to Great Britain alone, to cause a railroad to be remunerative. The quantity of coffee imported from British possessions abroad in 1850, was upwards of forty millions of pounds avoirdupois; and a very large proportion of this came from Ceylon. What additional quantities are required for the especially coffee-bibbing nations

which lie between Ceylon and this country, surpasses all present calculation.

It may be as well to remark in this place, that, in addition to the plantation-grown coffee of Ceylon, nearly as much more is produced by the Kandyan villagers in a half-wild, half-cultivated state. It is far inferior in quality, and is known in the commercial world under the name of "Native Ceylon."

CHAPTER V.

A WEDDING PARTY.

In some parts of the East, and especially in the Island of Ceylon, there are many old customs which the progress of civilization has not as yet cast away; and happily so, for they serve to keep a kind and friendly feeling between the different classes and races of those countries. One of these time-honoured customs is the presence of European or burgher employers at the weddings or family festivals of their Cingalese servants, who never omit inviting their masters and families on such occasions. Being a guest of an old resident of Colombo, I received an invitation to be present at the nuptials of his head cook, a Cingalese of good ancestry, who it appeared was to be united to the ayah or waiting-maid of a neighbour. They were both Catholics; and as such, were to be married at one of the churches with which the native section of the town abounds. From some cause, my

host could not attend on the eventful day. I was therefore left to make my way alone to the happy scene, which I learnt lay at some distance from our bungalow, at the further end of the long straggling outskirts.

Noon was the appointed time; the Church of St. Nicholas the place; and in order that I might examine the locality I was about to visit, and which was entirely new to me, I left my quarters soon after our breakfast of rice and curry. It was a truly tropical day: the sea-breeze had not commenced to blow, and the cool land-wind had been fairly done an hour since. In mercy to the horse and the runner by his side, I ordered the man to drive slowly. The sky seemed hot and coppery—too warm to look blue; and the great orb of light and heat had a sort of lacquered hue that was oppressive in the extreme. Round the Great Lake, past the dry, stagnant, putrid fort-ditch, into that part of the Black Town known at Sea Street. How different from the quiet, broad Dutch streets, or the cool shady lanes and their fine old burgher mansions! Here all was dust, and dirt, and heat. A dense crowd of people, of almost all the nations of the East, was passing to and fro, not, as with us, along the pavement—for there was no footway—but horses, bullocks, carriages, donkeys, and human beings all hurried along pell-mell: Arabs, Moormen, Chinese, Parawas, Cingalese, Kandyans, Malays, Chitties, Parsees, and many others, were

jostling each other in strange confusion. I shuddered as I beheld a brace of overheated bullocks in an empty cart, rush madly past me into the midst of a whole host of men, women, and children; but, strange to tell, no one seemed any the worse: there was, to be sure, a little rubbing of shins, and a good deal of Oriental swearing on the occasion, but no more. A vicious horse broke away from his Arab leader, and dashed across the street, and down a narrow turning, where women and children seemed to be literally paving the way: the furious animal bounded over and amongst the living pavement, knocking down children of tender years, and scattering elderly females right and left, but still harmlessly. I felt puzzled at this, but concluded that they were "used to it."

The thronged street, along which I was slowly travelling, appeared to be the only thoroughfare of any length, shape, or breadth. From it diverged, on all sides, hundreds of dwarf carriage-ways—turnings that had been lanes in their younger days. They were like the Maze at Hampton Court, done in mud and masonry. I have often heard of cruel skaters cutting out their names upon the frozen Serpentine; and as I peeped up some of these curious zigzag places, it seemed as though the builders had been actuated by a similar desire, and had managed to work their names and pedigrees in the huts, and verandahs, and dwarf walls. Into these strange quarters few, if any, Europeans ever can

to venture; the sights and the effluvia are such as they prefer avoiding, with the thermometer standing at boiling-point in the sun. Curiosity however got the better of my caution; and descending from my vehicle, I leisurely strolled up one of those densely-packed neighbourhoods, much to the annoyance of my horsekeeper, who tried hard, in broken English, to dissuade me from the excursion. Whether it be that the native families multiply here more rapidly, in dark and foul places, I know not; but never had I seen so many thrown together in so small a space. Boys and girls abounded in every corner. As I passed up this hot, dusty, crooked lane of huts, the first burst of the cool sea-breeze came up from the beach, glowing with health and life. I looked to see how many doors and windows would be gladly flung open to catch the first of the morning wind, and chase away the hot, damp, sickly air within; but I looked in vain. Not a door creaked on its rusty hinges, not a window relaxed its close hold of the frame; the glorious light of day was not to be thrown in upon the foul walls and floors of those wretched hovels.

There was business however going on here and there. The fisher and his boy were patching up an old worm-eaten canoe, ready for the morrow's toil; another son was hard at work upon the net that lay piled up in the little dirty verandah. Next door was a very small shoemaker, sharing the little

front courtyard with a cooper, who did not appear to be working at anything in particular, but was rather disposed to soliloquize upon buckets and tubs in general, and to envy the hearty meal which a couple of crows were making of a dead rat in the street. Farther on was a larger building, but clearly on its last legs, for it was held up by numberless crutches. It was not considered safe to hold merchandise of any description; and as the owner did not desire the trouble and expense of pulling it down, he had let it out to a Malay, who allowed strangers to sleep in it on payment of a small nightly fee. As I passed by, a crowd of poor Malabars, just arrived from the opposite coast of India, were haggling for terms for a night's lodging for the party, and not without sundry misgivings; for some looked wistfully at the tottering walls, and pointed, with violent gestures, to the many props.

Wending my slow way back towards the main street, I came upon a busy carpenter's shop—a perfect model of the kind. In that country carpenters are likewise carriage-builders, and the place I then stopped to examine was one of that description. It was a long, low, rambling shed, such as we might consider good enough to hold cinders or firewood: the turf-thatched roof had been patched in many places with tattered matting; the crazy posts were undermined by the pigs in the next yard, where they shared the mud and the sun with

a heap of wretched children, and a score of starving dogs. Every kind of conveyance that had been invented since the flood, appeared to have a damaged representative in that strange place. Children's shattered donkey-carriages, spavined old breaks, a rickety triacle of the Portuguese period, hackeries of the early Malabar dynasty, palanquins of Cingalese descent, Dutch governors' curricles, English gigs, were all pent up, with irrecoverable cart-wheels, distorted carriage-poles, and consumptive springs. Had I possessed any antiquarian experience, I doubt not I should have discovered amongst the mass an Assyrian chariot or two, with a few Carthaginian howdahs. The master-mind of this coach-factory was a genuine Cingalese, who, in company with a slender youth, was seated on his haunches upon the ground, chisel in hand, contemplating, but not working at, a felly for some embryo vehicle. After one or two chips at the round block of wood between his feet, Jusey Appoo paused, arranged the circular comb in his hair, and took another mouthful of betel; then another chip at the wood; and then he rose, sauntered to the door, and looked very hard up the little lane and down it, as though he momentarily expected some dreadful accident to happen to somebody's carriage in the next street.

Once more in my carriage, I threaded the entire length of Sea Street, with its little dirty shops; the sickly-smelling arrack-taverns; the quaint old

Hindu temple, bedecked with flowers and flags inside, and with dirt outside; and the whitewashed Catholic churches. Little bells were tinkling at these churches; huge gongs were booming forth their brazen thunder from the heathen temples; there was a devil-dance in one house to charm away some sickness, and a Jesuit in the next hovel confessing a dying man. There was a chorus of many tiny lungs at a Tamil school, chanting out their daily lessons in dreary verse, and a wilder, older chorus at the arrack-shop just over the way, without any pretence to time or tune. The screams of bullock-drivers; the shouts of horse-keepers; the vociferations of loaded coolies; the screeching of rusty cart-wheels, begging to be greased; the din of the discordant checkoe or oil-mill; all blended in one violent storm of sound, made me glad to hasten on my way, and leave the maddening chorus far behind. The open beach, with its tall fringe of graceful cocoa-palms, and its cool breeze, was doubly welcome. I was sorry when we left it, and drove slowly up a steep hill: on the summit of which stood the Church of St. Nicholas, my destination.

A busy scene was there. Long strings of curious-looking vehicles were ranged outside the tall white church,—so white and shiny in the sun, that the bullocks in the hackeries dared not look up at it. I felt quite strange amongst all the motley throng, and when I stared about and beheld those

many carts, and palanquins, and hackeries, I fancied myself back again in Jusey Appoo's coach-factory. But then these were all gaily painted, and some were actually varnished, and had red staring curtains, and clean white cushions. Nearer the church were some half-a-dozen carriages, with horses, poor enough of their kind, but still horses. I glided in amongst the crowd, unnoticed, as I too fondly believed, and was about to take up a very humble position just inside one of the great folding-doors, when I was accosted by a Cingalese, in a flowing white robe, and a gigantic comb in his hair, and politely led away captive, I knew not whither. Down one side-aisle, and across a number of seats, and then up another long aisle; and to my utter discomfiture, I found myself installed on the spot, in the unenviable post of "Lion" of the day's proceedings. To a person of modest temperament, this was a most trying moment. There was not another white face there. "Cookey" had been disappointed, it seemed, in his other patrons, and knowing of my intended visit, they had waited for my appearance to capture me, and thus make me add to the brilliancy of the scene.

I bowed to the bride with as little appearance of uneasiness as I could manage; but when I turned to the bridegoom, I had nearly forgotten my mortification in a burst of laughter. The tall uncouth fellow had exchanged his wonted not ungraceful drapery for a sort of long frock-coat of blue cloth,

thickly bedecked with gay gilt buttons and sham gold-lace; some kind of a broad belt of many colours hung across his shoulders; he wore boots, evidently far too short for him, which made him walk in pain; and, to complete the absurdity of his attire, huge glittering rings covered half of his hands. The lady was oppressed with jewellery, which, on these occasions, is let out on hire: she seemed unable to bend or turn for the mass of ornaments about her. White satin shoes and silk stockings gave a finish to her bridal attire.

As the party marched up to the priest, I felt as a captive in chains gracing a Roman triumph. No one of all that crowd looked at the bride; they had evidently agreed among themselves to stare only at *me*. I felt that I was the bride, and the father, and the best man. I looked round once; and what a strange scene it was in that long white church! There were hundreds of black faces, all looking one way—at *me*—but I did not see their faces; I saw only their white eyes glistening in the bright noonday sun, that came streaming through the great open windows, as though purposely to show me off. I wished it had been midnight. I hoped fervently that some of the hackery bullocks would break loose, and rush into the church, and clear me a way out. I know nothing of how the marriage was performed, or whether it was performed at all; I was thinking too much of making my escape. But in a very short time by the clock,

though terrifically long to me, I found myself gracing the Roman triumph on my way out. The fresh air rather recovered me; and what with the drollery of handing the cook's wife into the cook's carriage, and the excitement of the busy scene, and the scrambling for hackeries, and the galloping about of unruly bullocks, I felt determined to finish the day's proceedings. I knew the worst.

I followed the happy couple in my vehicle, succeeded by a long line of miscellaneous conveyances, drawn by all sorts of animals. Away we went, at a splitting pace, knocking up the hot dust, and knocking down whole regiments of pigs and children. Up one hill, and down another, and round two or three rather sharp corners, as best our animals could carry us. At last there was a halt. I peeped out of my carriage, and found that we were before a gaily-decorated and flower-festooned bungalow, of humble build: the house of the conjugal cook. Up drove all the bullock hackeries, and the gigs, and the carts, but no one offered to alight. Suddenly a host of people rushed out of the little house in the greatest possible haste. They brought out a long strip of white cloth, and at once placed it between the bride's carriage and the house, for her to walk upon. Still there was no move made from any of the carriages, and I began to feel rather warm. At length a native came forward from the verandah, gun in hand, I supposed to give

the signal to alight. The man held it at arm's length, turned away his head, as though admiring some of our carriages, and "snap" went the flint; but in vain. Fresh priming was placed in the pan: the warrior once more admired our carriages, and again the "snap" was impotent. Somebody volunteered a pin for the touch-hole, another suggested more powder to the charge, whilst a third brought out a lighted stick. The pin and extra charge were duly acted upon. The weapon was grasped; the carriages were admired more ardently than before; the fire-stick was applied to the priming, and an explosion of undoubted reality followed. The warrior was stretched on his back. Half the hackery bullocks started and plunged out of their harness, while the other half bolted. To add to the dire confusion, my villanous steed began to back very rapidly towards a steep bank, on the edge of which stood a quiet old-fashioned pony, in a gig, with two spruce natives seated in it. Before they could move away, my horse had backed into the pony-chaise: and the last I saw of them, at that time, was an indistinct and rather mixed view of the two white-robed youths and the old-fashioned pony and chaise, performing various summersets into the rice-field at the base of the bank.

Glad to escape from the contemplation of my misdeeds, I followed the bridal party into the little house. Slowly alighting from her vehicle, the lady was received by a host of busy relations; some of

whom commenced salaaming to her, some scattered showers of curiously cut fragments of coloured and gilt paper over her and her better half—probably intended to represent the seeds of their future chequered happiness and troubles; and then, by way of inducing the said seeds to germinate, somebody sprinkled over the couple a copious downpouring of rose-water. The little front verandah of the dwelling was completely hidden beneath the mass of decorations of flowers, fruits, and leaves, giving it at first sight the appearance of some place between a fairy bower and a Covent Garden fruit-stall. The living dark stream poured into the fairy bower, and rather threatened the floral arrangements outside: the door-way was quickly jammed up with the cook's nearest and dearest relations of both sexes; while the second cousins and half-uncles and aunts blocked up the little trap-door of a window with their grizzly grim visages. The room we were in was not many feet square: calculated to hold, perhaps, a dozen persons in ordinary comfort, but on this occasion compelled to welcome within its festive mud-walls at least forty. A small oval table was in the centre; a dozen or so of curiously-shaped chairs were ranged about the sides, in the largest of which the bride was seated. The poor creature was evidently but ill at ease: so stiff and heavily-laden with ornaments. The bridegroom was invisible, and I felt bound to wait upon the lady in his absence. The

little darkened cell was becoming fearfully hot: indistinct ideas of the Black Hole at Calcutta rose to my heated imagination. A feverish feeling crept over me, not a little enhanced by the Oriental odours from things and persons about me. The breeze, when it did manage to squeeze itself in, brought with it the sickly perfume of the myriads of flowers and herbs outside. Upon the whole, the half hour or so which elapsed between our arrival and the repast was a period of intense misery to me, and vast enjoyment to the cook's family circle. There was nothing to while away the hot minutes: I had to look alternately at the bride, the company, and the ceiling; while the company stared at myself and the lady; and while she, in her turn, looked hard enough at the floor, to penetrate through the bricks to the foundation below. In the first instance, I had foolishly pictured the breakfast, or whatever the meal was to be, set forth upon some grassy spot, in the rear of the premises, under the pleasant shade of palms and mangoe-trees.

But the vulgar crowd must be kept off by walls; and the little oval table in the centre of the cabin was to receive the privileged few, and to shut out the unprivileged many.

Dishes reeking hot, and soup-tureens in a state of vapour, were passed into the room, over the heads of the mob: for there was no forcing a way through them. A long pause, and then some more

steaming dishes, and then another pause, and some rice-plates; and at last, struggling and battling amidst the army of relations, the bridegroom made his appearance—very hot, and very shiny, evidently reeking from the kitchen. He had slipped on his blue cloth, many-buttoned coat, and now smiled at his wife and the assembled company as though he would have us believe he was quite cool and comfortable.

It devolved upon me to hand, or rather drag the bride to one end of the table; opposite to whom sat her culinary lord and master, as dignified and important as though his income had been ten guineas instead of ten rix-dollars. I seated myself next to the lady of the hut, and resigned myself to my fate; escape was out of the question. Nothing short of fire, or the falling in of the roof, could have saved me. Our rickety chairs were rendered firm and secure as the best London-made mahogany-seats, by the continuous unrelenting pressure of the dense mob behind and around us. The little room seemed built of faces; you might have danced a polka or a waltz on the heads of the company with perfect security. As for the window-trap, I could see nothing but bright shining eyes in that direction.

The covers were removed, as covers are intended to be; but instead of curiously-arranged and many-coloured dishes of pure and unadulterated Cingalese cookery, as I had, in the early part of the day,

fondly hoped for, there appeared upon them a few over-done, dried-up joints, *à l'Anglaise;* a skinny, consumptive baked shoulder of mutton; a hard-looking boiled leg of a goat; a shrivelled spare-rib of beef; a turkey, that might have died of jungle fever; a wooden kind of dry lean ham, with sundry vegetables; made up this sad and melancholy show. All my gastronomic hopes, so long cherished amidst that heated assemblage, vanished with the dish-covers, and left me a miserable and dejected visitor. Ten minutes previously I had felt the pangs of wholesome hunger, and was prepared to do my utmost; at that moment, I only felt empty and sick. Could I have reached the many-buttoned cook, I might have been tempted to have done him some serious bodily harm; but I could not move.

The host had the wretch of a turkey before him. Well up to the knife-and-fork exercise, he whipped, from the breast of the skinny bird, two slices of the finest meat—the only really decent cuts about it—and then, pushing the dish on to his next neighbour, begged him to help himself. Of course I had to attend to the hostess. I gave her a slice of the sinewy ham before me, with two legs of a native fowl, and began to think of an attempt upon the boiled mutton for myself; but there was no peace for me. The bride had never before used a knife and fork, and, in her desperate attempts to insert the latter into one of the fowl's legs, sent it with a bound

into my waistcoat, accompanied by a shower of gravy, and a drizzling rain of melted butter and garlic. Feeling resigned to my martyrdom, I proceeded to cut up her ham and chicken, and then fancied the task was done; but not so. Her dress was so tight, the ornaments so encompassed her as with a suit of armour, that all her attempts to reach her mouth with her fork were abortive. To bend her hand was evidently impossible. Once she managed to get a piece of ham as high as her chin; but it cost her violent fractures in several parts of her dress, so that I became alarmed for what might possibly follow, and begged her not to think of doing it again: offering to feed her myself. Feverish, thirsty, and weary as I felt at that table, I could scarcely suppress a smile when I found myself, spoon in hand, administering portions of food to the newly-made wife. Never having had, at that period of my existence, any experience in feeding babies, or other living creatures, I felt at first much embarrassed, somewhat as a man might feel who, only accustomed to shave himself, tries for the first time in his life to remove the beard of some friend in a public assembly. Fortunately for me, the lady was blessed with a rather capacious mouth, and as I raised, tremblingly and in doubt, a pyramid of fowl, ham, and onions, upon the bowl of the Britannia-metal spoon, my patient distended her jaws in a friendly and hopeful manner.

During my spoon performances I was much startled at hearing, close to our door, the loud report of several guns fired in quick succession. I imagined at first that the military had been called out to disperse the mob, but as nobody gave signs of any alarm or uneasiness, that could not have been the case; so I settled in my mind that the friends of the family were shooting some game for the evening's supper. All that I partook of at that bridal party was a small portion of very lean, dry beef, and some badly boiled potatoes, washed down by a draught of hard, sour beer. I essayed some of the pastry, for it had a bright and cheerful look, and was evidently very light. I took a mouthful of some description of sugared puff, light to the feel and pleasant to look at, but in reality a most heartless deception, a sickly piece of deceit: it was evidently a composition of bean-flour, brown sugar, stale eggs, and cocoa-nut oil; the latter, although burning very brilliantly in lamps, and serviceable as a dressing to hair, not being quite equal to good Lucca oil, when fried or baked. To swallow such an abomination was impossible, and watching my opportunity, I contrived at length to convey my savoury mouthful beneath the table. This vile pastry was succeeded by a plentiful crop of fruit of all kinds, from pine-apples to dates. Hecatombs of oranges, pyramids of plantains, shoals of sour-sops, mounds of mangoes, to say nothing of alligator-pears, rhambatams, custard-apples, guavas, jumboes, and other fruits,

as varied in name and taste as in hue and form, graced that hitherto graceless board. I had marked for immediate destruction a brace of custard-apples and a glowing, corpulent alligator-pear, and was even on the point of securing them before attending on my dark neighbour, when a loud shout, followed by a confused hubbub, was heard outside in front. There was a cracking of whips, and a rattling of carriage-wheels, and altogether a huge commotion in the street, which at once put a stop to our dessert, and attracted attention from the inside to the exterior of the house. My spirits revived from zero to summer-heat, and thence up to blood-heat, when I learnt that the arrivals were a batch of "Europe gentlemen," friends of the cook's master, who had come just to have a passing peep at the bride and the fun. Their approach was made known by sundry exclamations in the English language, and a noise as of scuffling at the door. How our new friends were to get in, was a mystery to me; nor did the host appear to have any very distinct ideas upon the subject. He rose from his seat, and, with his mouth full of juicy pine-apple, ordered a way to be cleared for the "great masters;" but he might as well have requested his auditory to become suddenly invisible, or to pass out through the key-hole. There was no such thing as giving way: a few of the first-cousins grinned, and one or two maternal uncles coughed audibly, while the eyes of the distant relations at

the window glistened more intensely, and in greater numbers than ever. The stock of British patience, as I rather expected, was quickly exhausted near the door, and in a minute or two I perceived some white-faces that were rather familiar to me at a certain regimental mess-table. Uncles and brothers-in-law were rapidly at a discount, and there appeared every prospect of mere connections by marriage becoming relations by blood. Some giant of a native ventured upon the hazardous speculation of collaring an officer who was squeezing past him, and received a friendly and admonitory tap in return, which at once put him *hors de combat*. The cook, enraged at the rudeness of his countryman, dealt a shower of knocks amongst his family circle; the visitors stormed the approaches, and at last carried the covered way; Cingalese gentry struggled and pushed, and tried in vain to repel the invaders; the *fair sex* screamed and tried to escape; the *mêlée* became general and furious.

I gave my whole attention to the bride, who kept her seat in the utmost alarm; her husband was the centre of attraction to the combatants, and in the midst of a sort of "forlorn hope" of the native forces, the heavily loaded table was forced from its centre of gravity. Staggering and groaning beneath the united pressure from fruit and fighting, the wooden fabric reeled and tottered, and at last went toppling over, amidst a thunder-

storm of vegetable productions. It was in vain I pulled at the unhappy bride to save her; she was a doomed woman, and was swept away with the fruity flood. When I sought her amidst the wreck and confusion, I could only discover heaps of damaged oranges, sour-sops, and custard-apples, her white satin shoes, and Chinese fan, and the four silver meat-skewers. By dint of sundry excavations, the lady was fairly dug out of the ruins, and carried off by her female friends; the room was cleared of the rebellious Cingalese, and a resolution carried unanimously, that the meeting be adjourned to the compound, or garden at the back. Under the pleasant shade of a tope of beautiful palms, we sat and partook of the remains of the feast. The relations, once more restored to good humour, amused themselves in their own fashion: preparing for the dancing, and festivity, and illuminations that were to take place in the evening. Our own little party sat there until some time after sunset; and when we had seen the great cocoa-nut shells, with their flaring wicks, lighted up, and the tomtoms begin to assemble, we deemed it prudent to retire and seek a wholesome meal amongst our friends.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COCOA-NUT PALM.

To a town-bred Englishman, the sight of the *Cocos nucifera* growing in its native luxuriance, would suggest little more than untidy orange shops, in which the nut is dealt out to retailers; apple-stalls upon which the kernel is displayed, to tempt amateurs, at a penny a slice; coir-matting woven from the fibre of the shell, and patent candles made from the oil expressed from the nut. He might also, possibly, suppose that to be the same tree he is indebted to for an excellent breakfast beverage: but in that he would be mistaken, for the cocoa of which chocolate is manufactured is the seed of the *Theobroma cacao.*

To a native of Ceylon, the cocoa-nut palm calls up a far wider range of ideas; it associates itself with nearly every want and convenience of his life. It might tempt him to assert that if he was placed upon the earth with nothing else whatever to mi-

nister to his necessities than the cocoa-nut tree, he could pass his existence in happiness and content.

When the Cingalese villager has felled one of these trees after it has ceased bearing (say in its seventieth year), with its trunk he builds his hut and his bullock-stall, which he thatches with its leaves. His bolts and bars are slips of the bark; by which he also suspends the small shelf which holds his stock of home-made utensils and vessels. He fences his little plot of chillies, tobacco, and fine grain, with the leaf-stalks. The infant is swung to sleep in a rude net of coir-string made from the husk of the fruit; its meal of rice and scraped cocoa-nut is boiled over a fire of cocoa-nut shells and husks, and is eaten off a dish formed of the plaited green leaves of the tree, with a spoon cut out of the nut-shell. When he goes a-fishing by torch-light his net is of cocoa-nut fibre; the torch, or *chule*, is a bundle of dried cocoa-nut leaves and flower-stalks: the little canoe is a trunk of the cocoa palm-tree, hollowed by his own hands. He carries home his net and string of fish on a yoke, or *pingo*, formed of a cocoa-nut stalk. When he is thirsty, he drinks of the fresh juice of the young nut; when he is hungry, he eats its soft kernel. If he has a mind to be merry, he sips a glass of arrack, distilled from the fermented juice of the palm; if he be weary, he quaffs "toddy," or the unfermented juice, and he flavours his curry with vinegar made from this toddy. Should he be sick,

his body will be rubbed with cocoa-nut oil; he sweetens his coffee with *jaggery*, or cocoa-nut sugar, and softens it with cocoa-nut milk; it is sipped by the light of a lamp, constructed from a cocoa-nut shell, and fed by cocoa-nut oil. His doors, his windows, his shelves, his chairs, the water-gutter under the eaves, all are made from the wood of the tree. His spoons, his forks, his basins, his mugs, his salt-cellars, his jars, his child's money-box, are all constructed from the shell of the nut. Over his couch when first born, and over his grave when buried, a bunch of cocoa-nut blossoms is hung, to charm away evil spirits.

This palm is assiduously cultivated in Ceylon, in *topes*, or plantations; and it was long believed that the rude native system of culture was the best: but experience has shown the fallacy of this opinion. Hence the Cingalese continue to find the manual labour, but the Englishman provides skill and implements.

There is a good road to within a couple of miles of the plantation I am about to describe; so that the visitor has little difficulty in performing this much of the journey. The remaining two miles lies through a sandy track of very flat and rather uninteresting country. Here and there, amidst a maze of paddy fields, areca-nut topes, and patches of low thorny jungle, are dotted little white-walled huts. They are much cleaner than any such near the towns of Ceylon; attached to each is a small slip

of ground, rudely fenced, and half cultivated, with a few sweet potatoes, some chillies, and a little tobacco and fine grain. It was midday when I started, on foot, to this estate. The sun was blazing above in unclouded glory. Under the shade of a breadfruit-tree, the owner of the first hut I got to was dozing and chewing betel-nut, evidently tasting, in anticipation, the bliss of Buddha's paradise. The wife was pounding up something for curry; the children were by her side—the boys smoking tiny cheroots, the girls twisting mats. It was fortunate for me that the sandy path was overshadowed by jungle trees, or my progress would have been impossible. Not a breath of air was stirring amidst that dense mass of vegetation; not a twig or a leaf could be persuaded to move; the long paddy (young rice) stalks glittered and sparkled in their watery resting places, as though they were made of the purest burnished silver. The buffaloes had taken to their noon-day watering places. The birds were evidently done up, and were nowhere to be seen; the beetles crawled feebly over the cooler shrubs, but they could not get up a single hum or a buzz amongst them all; even the busy little ants perspired, and dropped their lilliputian loads. Well, the dry ditch and thorny fence that form the boundary and protection of the estate were at least reached, and the little gate and watch-hut were passed. The watcher, or *lascoryn*, was a Malay, moustachioed

and fierce; for the natives of the country can rarely be depended on as protectors of property against their fellow-villagers. A narrow belt of jungle, trees, and shrubs had been left quite round the plantation, to assist in keeping out cattle and wild animals, which are frequently very destructive to a young cocoa-nut estate, in spite of armed watchers, ditches, and fences. Passing through this belt, I found, on entering, an entirely new scene: before and around me waved gracefully the long shining leaves of three hundred acres of cocoa-nut palms, each acre containing, on a average, eighty trees. It was indeed a beautiful and interesting sight. Two-thirds of these trees were yielding ample crops, though only in their tenth year; in two years more they will, generally, be in full bearing. Unlike the rudely planted native garden, this estate had been most carefully laid down; the young plants had all been placed out at regular intervals and in perfectly straight lines, so that, looking over the estate in either direction, the long avenues presented one unbroken figure, at once pleasing to the eye and easy of access. But if these interminable masses of palms appeared a lovely picture, when regarded at some little distance, how much was their beauty heightened on a nearer inspection! Walking close under the shadow of their long and ribbon-like leaves, I could see how thickly they were studded with golden green fruit, in every stage of growth. The sight was absolutely marvellous: were

such trees, so laden, painted by an artist, his production would, in all probability, be pronounced unnatural. They appeared more like some fairy creations, got up for my special amusement; resembling nearly those gorgeous trees which, in my youth, I delighted to read about in the Arabian Nights, growing in subterranean gardens, and yielding precious stones. They hung in grape-like clusters around the crest of the tree; the large golden ripe nuts below, smaller and greener fruit just above them, followed by scores of others in all stages, from the blossom-seed to the half-grown; it was impossible to catch a glimpse of the stem, so thickly did the fruit hang on all sides. I made an attempt to count them:—"thirty—fifty—eighty—one hundred"—I could go on further; those little fellows near the top, peeping up like so many tiny dolls' heads, defied my most careful numeration; but I feel confident there must have been quite two hundred nuts on that one palm. Above the clusters of rich fruit were two feather-like flowers, white as snow, and smooth and glossy as polished marble; they had just burst from their sheaths; and a more delicate, lovely picture could scarcely be imagined.

A cocoa-nut tree in a native Cingalese tope, will sometimes yield fifty nuts in twelve months; but the average of them seldom give more than twenty-five in the year. It is therefore very evident that European skill may be employed beneficially on this cultivation, as well as on any other.

I was at first rather startled at perceiving a tall, half-naked Cingalese away in the distance, with a gun at least half as long again as himself, long black hair over his shoulders, and bunches of something hanging at his girdle. He was watching some game amongst the trees; at last he fired, ran, picked up something, and stuck it in his girdle. What could it be? Parrot, pigeon, or jungle-fowl? It was only a poor little squirrel; and there were at least two scores of these pretty creatures hanging at the waist of the mighty hunter! Fortunately I could speak the native language, and was not long in learning the cause of this slaughter. It appeared that in addition to their pretty bushy tails, glossy coats, and playful gambols, the squirrels have very sharp and active teeth, and an uncommon relish for the sweet tender buds of the cocoa-nut flower, which they nip off and destroy by scores, and of course lessen by so much the future crop of fruit. Handfuls of the buds lay half-eaten around each tree, and I no longer felt astonished at this species of sporting.

The ground had evidently been well cleared from jungle plants, not one of which was to be seen in all this track: a stout and healthy-looking grass was springing up along the avenues; whilst at intervals, patches of Indian corn, sweet potatoes, guinea-grass, and other products—intended for cattle-fodder during dry weather when the wild grasses fail—gave tints of varied luxuriance to the scene.

The ground at this part of the estate sloped a

little, and I came to an open space, somewhat marshy in appearance. A number of cattle, young and old, were browsing about on the long grass, or sipping a draught from the clear stream which ran through the low ground. They were confined within a rude but stout fence, and on one side was a range of low sheds for their shelter. The cattle appeared in good condition; they were purchased, when very young, from the drovers who bring them in hundreds from the Malabar coast; and many were then fit for the cart, the carriage, or the knife. At the end was a manure shed, and outside stood a keeper's hut, with a store attached, in which were piled up dried guinea-grass, maize, etc.

The manure-pit was deep and large, and in it lay the true secret of the magical productiveness of the trees I had just seen. Good seed planted in light free soil, well cleared and drained, will produce a fine healthy tree in a few years; and if to this be added occasional supplies of manure and a few waterings during the dry season, an abundant yield of fruit will most assuredly reward the toil and outlay of the cocoa-nut cultivator.

Leaving this spot, I strolled through the next field, to see what a number of little boys were so busy about. There were a dozen black urchins, running about from tree to tree; sometimes they stopped, clambered up, and appeared to have very particular business to transact at the stems of the

leaves; but oftener they passed contented with a mere glance upwards at the fruit. They had a sharp-pointed instrument in the hand: whilst at the wrist of each was hung a cocoa-nut shell. I paused to see what one of these children was searching for, half hid as the little fellow was amongst the gigantic leaves. Intently scrutinizing his motions, I observed that he forced the little sharp instrument into the very body of the tree: down it went to the inmost core of the giant stem: all his strength was employed; he strained and struggled amongst the huge leaves as though he were engaged in deadly strife with some terrible boa or cheetah. At last he secured his antagonist, and descended with something alive, small and black, and impaled on the barbed point of his little weapon. A few questions elicited the whole secret. The cocoa-nut tree, it seems, has many enemies besides squirrels: the elephant, the wild hog, the rat, the white ant, the porcupine, the monkey, and a large white worm, either attack it when young, or rob it of its fruit when mature. But the most numerous and persevering enemy which it has to encounter from the age of three years until long after it produces fruit, is the *cooroominya*, or cocoa-nut beetle; a black hard-coated creature, with beautiful wings, and a most powerful little tusk, which it employs with fatal activity to open a way into the stems of the palms. Its labours commence in the evening, and by early morning it will be buried half-a-

dozen inches deep in the very centre of the tree, where, if not detected and removed, it feeds on the soft pithy fibres, deposits its eggs, and does not depart in less than two or three days. These holes are always made in the softest and sweetest part of the tree, near the crown; and in young plants they prove seriously hurtful; checking the growth, and impairing the health of the future tree. In a morning's walk an active lad will frequently secure as many as a score of these *cooroominyas*, which, after being killed, are strung upon lilliputian gibbets about the estate, as a warning to their live friends.

Farther on I perceived, gathered in anxious consultation, three of the lads around a tree that was loaded with fruit; they looked up at the leaves, then at the root, then at the trunk. At last one little fellow started off, swift-footed as a hare, and was soon out of sight. The others began scraping the earth from the root as fast as possible; and all the information they would impart was "*leddie gaha*," or sick tree; so that there was nothing for it but to imagine that the little messenger had been despatched for the doctor. He soon came back, not with the medicine-man, but a *mamootie*, or Dutch hoe, and a *cattie*, or sharp bill-hook. And then the busy work went on again. In little more time than I take to tell the story, the soil was removed from about the root, a hole was discovered in the trunk, and its course upwards as-

certained by means of a cane probe. With the *cattie*, one of the boys commenced cutting an opening midway in the trunk of the tree. On looking up, I perceived that the patient gave unmistakeable symptoms of ill-health. The long leaves were drooping at the end, and tinged with a sickly yellow; many of the nuts had fallen off, and others had evidently half a mind to follow the example. The flower, which had just burst above, hung down its sickly head, weeping away the germs of what had else been nuts. The hole was now complete; it was large enough for the smallest boy to force his hand in; and it soon brought away a basketfull of pith and powdered wood from the body of the tree. There, amidst the ruin, was the enemy that had caused so much mischief and labour. It was an unsightly worm, about four inches in length, and as thick as one's small finger, having a dull white body and black head. I then began to wonder what had next to be done, whether the tree would die after all this hacking and maiming. Would the medicine-man now be sent for? No. The interior of the wounded tree, as well as the aperture, was thoroughly freed from dirt and decomposed fibre—which might have aided in hatching any eggs left by the worm—and finally the root was covered up, and the opening and inside of the palm tightly filled with clay. I was assured that not more than one of ten trees, thus treated, ever fails to recover its health.

The nocturnal attacks of elephants are checked by means of lighted fires, and an occasional shot or two during the night. Wild hogs and porcupines are caught in traps, and hunted by dogs. The monkeys are shot down like the squirrels, and the white ants are poisoned. In spite of all these measures however an estate often suffers very severely, and its productiveness is much interfered with by these many depredators.

The soil over which I had as yet passed had been of one uniform description—a light sandy earth, containing a little vegetable matter, and but a little. Afterwards I arrived at a tract of planted land, quite different in its nature and mode of cultivation. It was of a far stiffer character, deeper in colour, and more weedy. This portion of the estate was in former days a swamp, in which the porcupine, the wild hog, and the jackal, delighted to dwell, sheltered from the encroachment of man by a dense mass of low jungle, thorns, and reeds. To drive away these destructive creatures from the vicinity of the young palms, the jungle was fired, during dry weather. It was then perceived that the soil of this morass, although wet and rank from its position, was of a most luxuriant character; a few deep drains were opened through the centre, cross drains were cut, and after one season's exposure to the purifying action of the atmosphere and rain, the whole of it was planted, and it now gives fair promise of being one day the finest field in the plantation.

From this low ground I strolled through some long avenues of trees on the right; their long leaves protected me from the heat of the afternoon sun, which was still considerable. The trees on this side were evidently older: they had a greater number of ripe fruit; and further away in the distance might be seen a multitude of men and boys busily engaged in bearing away the huge nuts in pairs, to a path or rude cart track, where a *cangany*, or native overseer, was occupied in counting them as they were tossed into the bullock cart. The expertness of the boys in climbing these smooth, broken, and branchless trees, by the aid of a small band formed by twisting a portion of a cocoa-nut leaf, was truly astonishing. In a moment their small feet grasped the trunk, aided by the twisted leaf, whilst their hands were employed above; they glided upwards, and with a quick eye detected the riper fruit, which, rapidly twisted from their stalks, were flung to the ground. Their companions below were busy in removing the nuts, which for young children is no easy task; the nuts frequently weighing fifteen or twenty pounds each, with the husk or outer skin on them. The natives have a simple but ingenious method of tying them together in pairs, by which means the boys can carry two of them with ease, when otherwise one would be a task of difficulty. The nuts have little, if any, stalk: the practice therefore is to slit up a portion of the husk (which is the coir fibre in its natural

state), pull out a sufficient length without breaking it, and thus tie two together; in this way the little urchins scamper along with the nuts slung across their shoulders, scarcely feeling the weight.

I followed the loaded carts. They were halted at a large enclosure, inside of which were huge pens formed of jungle sticks, about ten feet in height; into these the nuts were stored and recounted; a certain number only being kept in each, as the pens are all of the same dimensions. Adjoining, was another and still larger space, lying lower, with some deep ditches and pits in the midst. Here the outer husk is stripped off, preparatory to breaking the nut itself in order to obtain the kernel, which has to be dried before the oil can be expressed. Into the pits or ditches the husk is flung, and left in water ten or fourteen days, when it is removed and beaten out on stones, to free the elastic fibre from dirt and useless vegetable matter. This is a most disagreeable operation, for the stench from the half-putrid husks is very strong. The fibre, after being well dried on the sandy ground, undergoes a rude assortment into three qualities, in reference chiefly to colour, and is then delivered over to the rope maker, who works it up into yarn, rope, or junk, as required. Freed from their outer covering, the nuts are either sold for making curries, in which they form a prominent feature, or they are kept for drying ready for the oil-mill.

Having learned this much, I strolled through the small green field and along a patch of guinea-grass, to see what was going on in that direction. The neat-looking building adjoining was the superintendent's bungalow, and the long sheds and open spaces in their front and rear were for drying the nuts into what is termed *copperah*, in which state they are ground up for pressure. It was a busy scene indeed, and the operations require constant vigilance on the part of the manager: yet all the work is carried on in the rudest way, and with the most simple implements. Half-a-dozen stout lads were seated cross-legged on the ground, each with a heap of nuts by his side. The rapidity with which they seized these, and, with one sharp blow of a heavy knife, split them precisely in half, and flung them away into other heaps, was remarkable. It seemed to be done with scarcely an effort: yet on handling the broken nut, one could not help being struck with its thickness and strength. Smaller boys were busily employed in removing these heaps of split fruit to the large open spaces, where others, assisted by a few women, were occupied in placing them in rows close together, with the open part upwards, so that the kernels may be fully exposed to the direct rays of the sun. In this way they remain for two days, when the fruit, partly dried, shrinks from the shell, and is removed. Two more days' exposure to the sun in fine weather will generally complete the drying process. The

kernels are then called *copperah*, and are brittle and unctuous in the hand.

To convert this material into oil, the natives employ a very primitive mill, worked by bullocks, and called a *checkoo*; this process is very slow, and the oil never clean. Europeans have however obviated these objections, and manufacture the cocoa-nut oil by means of granite crushers and hydraulic presses, worked by steam power. This is only done in Colombo, to which place of course the *copperah* has to be conveyed. The refuse of the oil-presses, the dry cake or *poonac*, is very useful as food for cattle or poultry, and not less so as a manure for the palm-trees, when moistened, and applied in a partially decomposed state.

Not a particle of this valuable tree is lost. The fresh juice of the blossom, which is broken off to allow it to flow freely, is termed, as we have said, toddy, and is drunk, when quite new, as a cool and pleasantly refreshing beverage; when fermented, it is distilled, and yields the less harmless liquor known as arrack.

All these operations are not carried on with ease and regularity. The Cingalese are an idle race; like many better men, their chief pleasure is to perform as little work as possible. This necessitates a never-ending round of inspection by the European manager, who, mounted on a small pony, paper umbrella in hand, visits every corner of the property at least once in the day, often twice. Neither is it unusual for him to make "a round"

during the night. On the whole therefore he enjoys no sinecure.

The manufacture of arrack is entirely in the hands of the natives, who employ stills of the rudest construction; the permission to retail arrack and toddy is annually farmed out by the Ceylon Government: the renters are natives, who frequently pay as much as sixty thousand pounds for the monopoly,—about one-eighth part of the entire revenue of the island.

If we consider the very light and poor nature of the soil in which cocoa-nut cultivation is carried on, it cannot but be matter for wonder that those trees attain so large a size, and yield such bulky and continuous crops during so many years. Not unfrequently they reach a height of sixty feet, and yield fully fifty nuts each tree per annum, gathered in alternate months, and continue in bearing for seventy, and sometimes for ninety years. A calculation based on these data, shows that one acre of yellow sandy soil will produce, without the aid of manure, a weight of fourteen and a quarter tons in green fruit, and seven tons of leaves annually. To yield this once or twice may not seem deserving of much wonder; but that this production should continue for half a century, without any renovation of the soil, and only accidental supplies of manure, cannot but be considered a remarkable instance of the unaided fertilizing powers of nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GARDEN OF FLOWERS.

THE Coffee Estate on which I resided was situated in one of the wildest and most beautiful districts of the island of Ceylon, elevated far above the burning lowlands, where fragrant spices and waving palms told of rich soils and balmy winds. The plantation was on a broad table-land, fully three thousand five hundred feet above the sea-level, thirty miles removed from the only European town in the interior, and at least five miles from any other white man's dwelling. Within a short walk of the lower boundary of my property was a small Kandyan village, containing within itself the very pith and marrow of Cingalese society—a true type of the entire community of the island. As I mixed so unreservedly and frequently with the people, and saw so much of their every-day life, it may be interesting to some to see a faint outline drawn of this place.

Malwattie, which was its name, signifies literally a "garden of flowers," and such in truth it was when I first visited it. The reader must not suppose it a place bearing the most remote resemblance to any collection of houses in this country. There is not such a thing as a row of cottages to be seen: shops are unknown in that primitive place; and until later years no such incubus as a tavern-keeper or arrack-renter was known there. Every little hut or cottage was carefully shaded from the view of its neighbour; fairly established on its own account—as much so as though the inmates had written up, in barbarous Cingalèse characters, "No connection with the house next door." I never could learn that there was any superstition among Cingalese hut-builders as to the variation in the aspects of their domiciles; but certain it was that no two dwellings faced precisely the same points of the compass. One would be north-east, and the nearest to it would be north-east and by east: you might fancy you had found another facing a similar point, but on careful observation you would see that you could not make it any better than north-east and by east-half-east. I tried the experiment for a long time, but was compelled at length to give it up. I had regularly "boxed the compass" round the entire village.

Partly from long established custom, and partly from a desire of shading their dwellings from the heat of the sun, the Kandyans bury their isolated

huts beneath a dense mass of the rankest vegetation. At a short distance not a sign of human habitation could be traced, were it not for the thickly growing topes of bananas, areca palms, and breadfruit trees, which are ever found around and above their quiet abodes.

Malwattie formed no exception to the general rule in this respect; it was as snugly hedged and fenced, and grown over, as was Robinson Crusoe's dwelling after the visits of the savages. Every tiny hut appeared to possess a perfect maize of its own for the express purpose of perplexing all newcomers, especially white men. The entire village did not cover more than a quarter of a square mile, yet it would have puzzled any living thing but a bird to have visited all the cottages in less time than half a day, and very giddy, tiring work it would have been.

Small as was this primitive community, it had its superiors. The leading men were the priest of the little Buddhist Vihara, or shrine, and the Korale, or headman. I will not distress the reader by putting the names of these men in print, as they would be perfectly unpronounceable, and moreover as lengthy as the approaches to their own dwellings. The entire names of the Cingalese community would fill a moderately-sized volume. I will therefore only speak of these men as the Priest and the Korale.

The latter was a rather respectable man, as

things go in Ceylon; he was negatively irreproachable in character. He had certainly never committed murder or theft on the Queen's highway. Perjury had not been charged against him; and as for the faithful discharge of his few official duties, no one had ever called that in question, though there were some rather curious tales afloat on the subject of the last assessment of the rice-lands. At the office of the Government agent of the district he was believed to be as active and honest as nine-tenths of the native headmen, though to be sure that was not saying much for him. The villagers looked up to him with the utmost veneration and respect; and no wonder, for on his fiat depended the amount of rice-tax their lands were to pay. He was a venerable-looking old gentleman, with a flowing white beard, a keen quiet eye, and an easy-going habit that might have been either dignity or laziness. It was his duty to render to the Government officers a just account of the industry, if such a term can be applied to anything Cingalese, of his village; to furnish returns of the increase or decrease of the population; to give notice of all crimes and offences committed, and in short to represent the local government in minor details. For all this, no salary was paid him. He was satisfied with the honour of the office; and yet, strange to tell, this Korale had so far increased his property by gaining nothing, that he was a man of some substance when I left the

place,—owning some hundreds of cattle, and rich in pasture lands. Education was unknown to him; he could scratch a little Cingalese on the dried leaves used in place of paper, and I believe could count as far as ten. His most complicated accounts were all on a decimal system; and by the aid of numerous symbols known but to himself, and the erudition of the friendly priest, he contrived to transact a multitude of statistical business with the authorities.

The abode of this old patriarch would have furnished a study for a lover of the antique. Everything seemed in keeping with his long white beard. The doors and windows, the couches and three-legged table, all were hoary with years. Even the atmosphere had a musty smell about it, as though it had been keeping him company ever since he was a little boy.

In the midst of thick foliage, as bright and green as the cottage was dark and cankery, it seemed at a distance like a huge wart on the rich vegetation. The coffee, the banana, the cotton, the jambo, the pawpaw, besides an infinity of other useful things, grew in wild profusion. Of what we should call garden he had none, nor did he need any, for the friendly villagers kept his daily wants amply supplied from their own little scanty patches. At early dawn, the little narrow pathway leading circuitously to his door, might be seen tracked by men, women, and children, laden with fruits, vegetables,

and eggs, for the Korale's larder: he might well grow stout and glossy, and contented with his lot. There was such a supply of vegetable diet introduced through his crazy old doorway each morning, as might have fully satisfied the vegetarians of Great Britain, with something to spare for the pigs. But the old gentleman disposed of it all; for he had a little colony of feudal dependants hanging about his heels, living, or rather existing, in low cattle-sheds behind his own barn of a place. These serfs tracked him wherever he went; one held a paper umbrella or a talipot-leaf over him in his walks; another carried his stick of office; one beat off the musquitoes; another fanned him to sleep with a *punkah*. In short, they did everything for him, save eat and sleep, and these functions he performed for himself to perfection.

The old Korale was generally pleased with my visits, for they added to his importance in the eyes of the little community. He lived quite alone; his wife had been dead some years, and he had lost his only child by fever. His days were mostly passed in sleeping, smoking, and eating, varied occasionally with a stroll round his rice-fields, or those of his neighbours. It was seldom that he visited Kandy, the ancient capital: as for Colombo, or any part of the sea-coast, the wildest freaks of his imagination would never have induced him to contemplate a journey so far from the spot of his birth.

It was a curious sight to behold this ancient being leading such a hedgehog existence: rolling himself up in indolence, after every meal of rice and curry, in his little, darkened, cavern-like verandah; and there, if no guest arrived, falling asleep until the next meal aroused him from his torpor. I have found him thus, clad in semi-barbaric pomp, reeking with dirt, and swelled with importance, in a balloon-shaped Kandyan hat, a flowing robe and loose jacket, with shoulder-of-mutton sleeves fastened by silver bangles; an enormous mass of white muslin, wrapped, fold upon fold, around his waist. A pretty little mountain stream fell trickling and bubbling past the door, over stones and sticks, and flowers and herbs, until it was lost in the rice-fields below, playing and gambolling as though each tiny wave had been some frolicsome wood-nymph. Little could be seen from that shady portal, and not much more heard beyond the hum of myriad insects and the distant cry of birds of the jungle.

Often have I sat with the Korale chatting on local and other matters, for he was a man of gossip, though of limited ideas. I tried in vain to make him understand the position and importance of other countries: of their great superiority to his island, and of the peculiarities which distinguished us people of the west from Orientals. He could not be persuaded that Europe was larger or a better place than Ceylon; that better corn and vege-

tables were grown in England than on the Kandyan hills; or that a modern drawing-room was a more comfortable sort of place than a Cingalese Korale's reception-room with earthen floor and leafy ceiling. Of some description of politics he had gleaned a faint idea from the reported contents of one of the local newspapers, very democratic in its principles. He had an inkling that things were not going on as they should do, and that a republic must be the sort of government suited to the present wants of man. Yet, strange to say, he connected with his ideas of reform a return to those things which the liberality of the British Government had abolished,—forced labour and flogging at the discretion of the headmen!

The Priest was of a far different stamp: not an educated man in an European sense of the word, but still with some glimmering of mind within—just serving to render internal darkness visible. He of course could read fluently, for it was a portion of his duties to recite verses of their Pitakas or sacred writings, morning and evening, in the Vihara. He possessed a fair share of curiosity, and a desire to know something of other places and things. Nay, more, he frequently heard me read a whole chapter of the Scriptures, with which he was much pleased, and frankly admitted that Christianity was the best religion next to Buddhism.

His Vihara and dwelling were at one end of the range of little hills, on the slopes of which the

village of Malwattie was situated, though above them considerably. It was the only roof covered by tiles; and, unlike the rest, might be seen at some distance peeping out from amidst a whole bunch of foliage. To arrive at it the traveller had to wend his way along a weary length of loose stones that led over low swampy ground, round the edges of rice-fields, and up the sides of rather steep hills—a slip from which bid fair to plunge the wayfarer down some very ugly places. It was a path that should be trodden by none but a tight-rope dancer, or a native of the country.

The view from the door of the shrine was highly picturesque, commanding a survey of many miles of mountain, forest, and prairie country, through which herds of cattle were dotted like so many very small mice. His abode was mean in the extreme, with scarce sufficient to make life supportable. The rules of his order forbad him to acquire any property, and he subsisted from day to day on charity,—just as did his friend the Korale, though needing it much more.

The Priest often visited me on the plantation, and examined with much curiosity the various books and pictures about the bungalow. On one of these occasions an incident occurred which threatened at first to cut short our intimacy, but was eventually forgotten or laughed at. I had frequently pressed my yellow-robed friend to partake of my meat and taste a little port wine, of

which I knew most of these people are very fond—but in vain; he professed the utmost dislike to any strong drink, independently of the restriction laid on them by their rules. One day, while conversing with him, I was called away to the coffee-store by one of the labourers, and left him alone, sitting by my little jungle sideboard. As I was returning immediately afterwards, and when near the door, I heard a great coughing and spluttering, and strange choking noises. Upon entering, I found the priest almost dead with a fit of coughing. He had staggered against the wall; his eyes were streaming with water, his hands clenched together, while down his long golden robes a jet-black stream had found its sable way. A bottle lay at his feet. The truth flashed across me in a moment. The wary priest had gone to my sideboard to steal a taste of the forbidden wine, and had, unfortunately, taken a good draught from a quart bottle of *ink*.

Next in village importance to the characters already named was one Ranghamy, the head constable, deputy-sheriff, tax-collector, and there is no saying what besides. He was right-hand man to the Korale, not quite so stout, but more thick-headed, save when his own interest was concerned, and then it was remarkable how his faculties brightened up, and illumined the social atmosphere of Malwattie. Ranghamy was not a native of the village, nor of the district; nobody seemed to know whence he came, except the Korale, and he had

long since forgotten. The hydra-headed official had a numerous progeny of Ranghamies of both sexes, besides a large herd of sleek, well-favoured cattle; yet, oddly enough, he had neither lands whereon to pasture the one, nor salary wherewith to feed and clothe the other. Still they were all fed, and clothed, and pastured. The junior head constable, and the little female deputy-sheriffs, and the tax-collectors in arms, were clad in whiter robes than any other young villagers. As for the cattle, they might have been exhibited at the Smithfield show, and won all the prizes by several stones of fat. Whether they grew thus corpulent from any miraculous interference of Buddha, or were fattened by some scientific process upon constables' broken staves and collectors' decayed tax-books, or whether they were daily driven upon other people's lands, who dared not complain to the Korale, and if they did, could not expect the head constable to impound his own bullocks;—which of these might have been the case I never learnt, though I had my suspicions in the matter. Ranghamy was said to have realized considerable sums by hiring out his cattle to the moormen, who convey rice and salt from the sea-coast on pack-bullocks to the interior. Of this prosperity his dwelling gave abundant proof, for he had not only English crockery and cutlery, but a decanter mysteriously covered up with a floor mat, in which it was whispered wine was once seen. Two pictures in frames, in glaring

colours, graced the walls, while on a kind of shelf was placed, by way of ornament, a chemist's white ointment jar with a faded gilt label.

Not far removed from the constable in locality and dignity of office, was the village peon and post-holder, as graceless and lazy as any within the central province of the island, and that is saying a good deal. It would have been a difficult thing to have shown that Puncheyrallie, the post-holder, did anything to entitle him to the name beyond bestowing an occasional kick on the letter-carriers or runners as they passed through the village; yet the man grumbled at receiving no more than five rix-dollars, or seven shillings and sixpence a month, for the discharge of these onerous duties. Puncheyrallie had a rather bustling little wife, who did all the heavy work for him, except the kicking: the pigs, the garden, the fowls, all were in her charge; and while she and the very small children cooked the meals, and kept the house in order, their lord and master lay on his back, beat the tomtom or native drum, or perhaps gambled with a neighbour for a few copper challies.

The remainder of the village was made up of families generally poor enough, who derived their sole support from the produce of their patrimonial lands. In many instances the domestic arrangements of these people, with a view of keeping their property from dwindling away by frequent subdivisions, were singular enough to an English mind.

There were two or three households in which several brothers had but one wife amongst them, and more singular still, they appeared to dwell together most harmoniously.

A picture of one of these groups is a portrait of them all. Poor to abject misery in all but rice and a few coarse grains, these people are invariably landholders, some of them on an infinitesimally small scale. At times the family will be large, swelled by the addition of an aged grandfather or grandmother, or some such relation, and with generally a numerous progeny of all ages. Beyond the culture of their rice, of primary importance, the space that produces their few additional necessaries, such as chillies, tobacco, and fine-grain, is little enough. A few possessed one or two buffaloes; most of them had a caricature of a pig and a few scarecrows of fowls; but there was only one milch-cow in the entire range of Malwattie.

It was truly astonishing to see how early the early the young children were put to tasks of strength. The boys were made to look after the buffaloes and the rice-fields, while the girls were set to weave mats, pound the rice from the husk, fetch water, and such work. Often have I seen a little delicate child, six or seven years of age, staggering up a tolerably steep path, with an infant astride across its little hip, and a huge earthen chattie of water on its head. Such early toil as this, equally early marriage, and generally poor

and scanty diet, lead to one inevitable result,—premature old-age and hastened death.

There was but one exception to the sameness of the population of Malwattie; it consisted of a small household, not far from the foot of the hill near the Vihara, and closely adjoining the bullock-track or bridle-path leading past my estate from the high-road. Here, beneath a pretty tope of never-fading trees, where blossom, and fruit, and sweetest perfumes played their part all through the year, dwelt a blind old man and his pretty granddaughter. Of their history I had gleaned but little, just sufficient to make me feel an interest in their welfare. The tiny hut they dwelt in was not more diminutive than neat; so clean and white, and fresh within; without, all was beauty and order. Had a whole legion of mountain-sylphs and wood nymphs been busily employed about the place all night long and every night, it could not have been kept in more perfect and picturesque neatness. The little fence around the cottage was so nicely trimmed; the garden in front so well swept and watered; the orange and lemon trees so carefully tended, and always so delighted to bear plenty of fruit for dear little Dochie to gather, that they did not bend and droop with the heavy clusters of golden wealth as some trees would have done, but actually danced and leaped about in the morning and evening breezes, as though their burden were no burden at all, but a capital joke.

Pretty little Dochie, gentle little Dochie, was not more than ten years of age when I first made her acquaintance, one hot morning in the dry season. I caught her gathering some oleander blossoms and roses, and country jessamine, and thought I had never seen anything half so lovely, barring her colour. I reined in my pony and asked her for a draught of water; instead of looking alarmed, as most of her class do when thus accosted, she smiled good-naturedly, and tripped into the little cottage. I was off my nag and in the pretty flower-garden when she came out with a cocoa-nut shell of, not water, but, bless the dear child, foaming rich white goats' milk. I am not quite sure, but I rather think I must have kissed her as I returned her the homely flagon; at any rate, we became the best of friends, and it ended in Dochie taking me to see her blind old grandfather, who was busily working at a net of some sort, and then to inspect one of the neatest little farm-yards I had ever seen out of dear England. The whole place was a perfect miracle of industry and neatness, and I could not help asking how she managed to keep it so. It appeared that their neighbours assisted, at certain seasons, in working the garden and bringing it into good order, and that the old man helped her to carry the water from the little bamboo spout, which the villagers had fixed for them to convey a supply from the hill stream at some distance, to the extremity of their property.

They appeared to be in want of nothing that could make them comfortable; as to money, they had little enough, their sole earnings being from the sale of her goats' milk, flowers, and fruit, to wayside travellers. She assured me, that when the pilgrims passed on their way to the sacred footprint on Adam's Peak, she sold as many flowers and as much fruit as the garden could produce, and enabled them to be quite extravagant in white cloths and handkerchiefs.

From that time forward, I never passed through Malwattie without a draught of fresh milk, and a little bouquet gathered by Dochie's pretty hand. At length it came to my dismounting regularly, and in course of time, amongst other things we talked of, were books and knowledge. Her dark bright eyes sparkled as I told her what wonders she might learn if she could but read English books. This strange art was now her sole thought, and one day she found courage to ask me how she could learn it. I hesitated, for I did not quite see how to help her; but when I offered to send her a book with the English alphabet, and moreover to teach her to read the letters, her joy was unbounded. In a few months my pupil had not only mastered the alphabet, but could spell small words, and knew several short sentences. Not content with this, I talked to her of religion, and explained the nature and history of Christianity, as well as my ability allowed me. I was not quite so suc-

cessful here, but I was content to pave the way for future labourers, and rejoiced to find her always anxious for truth.

It was, I think, quite a year after my first acquaintance with Dochie, that one morning I alighted as usual, and was surprised to find my pupil absent, and in her place a young Cingalese man, evidently of the low country. My surprise was equalled by his own. In a minute after, Dochie came bounding in with eggs and milk, and some little light cakes just prepared for the stranger, who, I then perceived, had his arm bandaged, and altogether looked fatigued and ill. I did not remain long that day, but learned, on retiring to mount my pony, that the stranger had sought refuge there very early that morning, having in vain begged through the village for a resting-place; he had been robbed and beaten during the previous night on some lonely track, and Dochie hesitated not one moment in welcoming him within their little dwelling, and, in her own singleness and purity of heart, acting the good Samaritan. I could but admire her kindness; and yet, mixed with admiration, was a feeling akin to jealousy. I wished that it had been my fate to have been robbed and beaten, if only for the pleasure of being tended by the gentle Dochie.

Again months rolled on, and the low-country stranger, and the robbers, were all forgotten. Changes had been meanwhile creeping over the

face of the hitherto changeless Malwattie, and those not for the better. The worst of all innovations was the establishment of an arrack tavern in the very heart of the village. The Government, in its anxiety to add to its revenue and increase its means of developing the resources of the country (I think that was what they termed it), had granted permission to the renter of the arrack licenses for the Kandyan country to establish a few score additional taverns, one of which novelties was located in Malwattie; and soon, where before had been quiet contentment, was nothing but brawling riot. It is true the executive presented an antidote with the poison, by establishing a free-school opposite the noisy tavern; but education stood small chance in competition with arrack, and for every new pupil at the desk, there was a brace of fresh drunkards. This led to an increase in the duties of the police, and soon after to a salary to the head constable; crime was on the increase; law-suits were instituted, families at peace for several generations became deadly enemies, and ere a year had elapsed since the introduction of the tavern, the whole social fabric of Malwattie was rent and disrupted into ugly masses.

I continued to visit my friends the Korale and the Priest, both of whom, especially the latter, spoke bitterly of the arrack nuisance, and looked upon the establishment of the school as a direct attack upon Buddhism. I saw plainly however

that there was another and deeper feeling, antagonistic to the educational scheme, in the bosoms of these leading men of the place. They felt that by diffusing enlightenment amongst the poorest of the villagers, the British Government would in time raise the masses of the people above the level of the headmen, in which case their influence would at once disappear. Their unflinching opposition was but little needed, for the native peasants could not be made to appreciate that knowledge which their immediate superiors did not possess. Too prone to take as their models those above them, the villagers were content to remain as they knew their fathers had been, and as they saw their Korales and Dessaves were. Unfortunately those in charge of Government schools have yet to learn that they have been toiling with the broad end of the educational wedge foremost; that in Eastern countries enlightenment can only flow downwards, never upwards; that to elevate the Indian serfs, you must first improve the intellectual capacities of those whom they ever have, and ever will regard as their patterns.

My progress with the flower-girl's schooling was satisfactory, and I had, besides, the pleasure of finding her inclined to cast aside the superstitions of Buddha. In these tasks I was at this time aided by the teacher of the Government school, a Portuguese burgher, who seconded my efforts most zealously. The months flew

rapidly past, and twice a week found me and Dochie seated beneath the shady foliage of a young orange-tree deep in our studies.

It was quite the end of the hot season, that I was compelled to leave my plantation and journey across the country, to the opposite coast of the Indian peninsula, in search of Malabar labourers to secure the coming crop. I was absent nearly four months, and found myself, one cool pleasant day in September, riding homewards across the broad open prairie-lands adjoining Malwattie. The rich foliage of the jungle and the gardens shone as brightly as ever in the afternoon sun. The hill-streams rippled as pleasantly down their stony courses. Yet the village was no longer the spot I once knew it: brawling and angry words were easily met with: its old patriarchal peace and simplicity had departed from it. I rode on musingly, and at length pulled up in front of Dochie's little garden; I started in my saddle at observing that it also was changed, and so sadly changed. The friendly orange-tree, with its yellow fruit and its pleasant shade, was not there. The oleanders were drooping to the ground; some of the fence was torn down, and a vile black bullock, that I could have massacred on the spot, was cruelly browsing over the flower-beds. The door was closed; the shutters were fastened. I imagined all sorts of calamities to have happened, everything, in short, but what was actually the case. I made one brief in-

spection of the now neglected place; then mounted my pony, and rode homewards, fearing lest some villager should break to me the tale of sorrow.

It was nearly evening when I rode up the winding path leading to my bungalow, oppressed with a feeling of I know not what. The old building stood, as it ever had done, quietly and humbly in the midst of the coffee-fields, but I saw at once there were some changes. I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw, in the centre of the little grass-plot facing my front verandah, some small flowering shrubs, and an orange-tree, so like the one I had missed from Dochie's garden, that I began to fancy I was still down in the village, and that the little flower-girl was peeping at me from behind some of the coffee-bushes.

As I stood looking at the orange-tree, my servant placed in my hand a letter, traced in true native style on a dry leaf, in Cingalese characters. It was from my pupil herself, and told me in a few simple sentences all that had occurred. I breathed more freely to find her alive. She was married, she said, to a young and rich Cingalese trader, a Christian and inhabitant of Colombo. She hoped shortly to be admitted a member of our church, and thanked me deeply for what I had done for her. The old blind man, her grandfather, was with them, and they were all happy. They trusted I should always be so. In my garden she said she had caused to be planted the orange-tree I had so often admired and sat under, with a few flowers from her

garden. She prayed that, for many years to come, the tree would yield me plentiful crops of cool refreshing fruit.

The reader will perhaps smile when I say that after reading this note, I shed many tears of real sorrow and pain. Heaven knows I wished the poor girl well and happy; but though I never could have looked on her other than as a gentle, innocent acquaintance, loveable for her simple purity, I felt her departure keenly. To the many dwellers in the thronged cities of the west, the loss of such a companion of my wild, lonely, jungle life, may appear trivial enough; yet to me it was an event.

My servant told me what the little note had omitted. Dochie had been wooed and won with true Cingalese brevity, by the same young low-countryman who had been so kindly sheltered and tended by her, when robbed and beaten, as I have before told. He had been successful in trade, and had now a large store in Colombo.

It was long before I ventured again near Malwattie. To me it was no more a "garden of flowers," and least of all did I care to pass by the green fence and gate, where Dochie's pretty, smiling face had so often welcomed me. At last I persuaded the old Korale to set some of the villagers to work, and open a new path for me nearer his own bungalow, by which means I ever after avoided a spot, the sight of which served but to fill me with regret.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HAPPY VALLEY.

It was in the Christmas vacation of the year 1849, that I started on a journey to explore one of the wildest and least-known districts of Ceylon. The Veddah country—which is the name of that forbidding tract of jungle, rocks, and swamps,—is situated toward the east coast of the island, and stretches from the Bintenne hills of the interior to the salt-marshes of Batticaloa on the sea-shore. I had often heard strange and rather contradictory reports concerning the inhabitants of this district, and determined to satisfy myself as to their foundation. I knew there were missionaries and Dutch families scattered about the skirts of the *terra incognita*, and from them no Englishman need fear meeting other than a kindly hospitable reception.

Having despatched my pony a day's journey in advance, I left Batticaloa on the 23rd December,

by the ordinary, I may say the very ordinary conveyance of the country—a bullock-hackery. It was a dreadful vehicle, that hackery! A huckster's flat with an umbrella over it would have been preferable to it. The springs had not the ghost of a spring about them; they might as well, for all that, have been built of solid masonry. And the huge palm-leaf hood kept staggering from side to side, as though it were somewhat addicted to strong drinks.

As for the scenery, it was of the most monotonous description. Every mile of the way was an exact duplicate of the previous mile, made up of salt-marshes, stunted jungle, and miserable huts. The day was fearfully hot: the sky seemed to be of burnished copper, and the air was so close and stifling, that when the breeze did come, it seemed all the hotter for it, as though it had been the parched breath of some glowing furnace. I closed my eyes, to shut out the strong glare from the salt-marshes, and tried to think of friends at home, of frosty skies, of hard crisp ground, and warm firesides and warmer hearts, of merry red-eyed holly, and dear old misseltoe.

The next day I was happy to find myself on different ground, seated on my own little pony, and out of sight of those horrid salt-swamps. I was travelling upwards too, and the air came down from the high land beyond, quite cool and refreshing. The earth became more fertile, and groups of palms and plantains, and breadfruit-trees, at intervals,

lent their friendly shade to travellers. With almost every mile of my journey the country wore a more varied aspect. It was far wilder than any I had previously seen, and I had travelled a good deal too. Steep crags, beetling, surly-looking rocks, clumps of dark frowning forest, deep dells, so cold and ugly that I felt no desire to peep down them,—made up the picture; whilst on every side was a profusion of huge massive boulders of granite quartz-rock, scattered thickly about, as if, long ages since, a numerous party of juvenile giants had been playing at marbles and had gone away in a hurry, leaving their toys behind them.

At high noon I pulled up under the shade of a wide-spreading ebony-tree, and was in the act of dismounting when I was accosted by a dapper little man in a threadbare brown coat, leech-gaiters, and straw hat. He was seated on one of the moss-covered stones, with his buffalo-skin wallet beside him. I knew him well by sight: he was Daniel, the missionary. Everybody knew Daniel, the apostle of Ceylon,—everybody, from the Governor down to the wild men of the woods. I was rejoiced to meet him thus, for I could not have found any one better able to assist me in the object of my journey.

As we sat eating our cakes and plantains on the mossy ground, I gathered that his journey lay entirely in the direction I wished to go. He told me moreover that what I had heard concerning the

Veddahs was substantially correct: they were truly a race of wild men. Their ancestors were originally sole masters of Ceylon; but upon its conquest by Raman and his Malabar followers, they retired to the innermost recesses of the jungle, just as our Saxon ancestors on a like emergency withdrew among the mountains of Wales. In that wild inaccessible region this race of voluntary outcasts have since dwelt, not in human habitation, for they scorn any such, but in hollow trees and stony caverns, like the birds and beasts of the woods. Their food is chiefly wild roots and herbs, with a little grain, and sometimes the flesh of a deer or a jackal, which they kill with their only weapons, the bow and arrow.

Misery and division have greatly thinned the number of the Veddahs, yet they still count some hundreds of their tribe. They own no authority, pay no taxes, and until quite recently had resisted all attempts made to induce them to enter a village, or to change their mode of living. Within the last few years, however, one enthusiastic Dutch family located in the immediate vicinity had succeeded in collecting about them a dozen or two of this savage tribe, and entirely changed their habits. Daniel had converted most of them, and had even become familiar, during his many journeys, with their still uncivilized fellows.

I gladly accepted his offer to show me some of the "Rock Veddahs," as they are called, and with

this view we journeyed on for a good hour, when the road became more rugged and difficult than before. Here my pony was sent on in another direction, by my native groom, under orders from Daniel, and we passed on our way through the most desolate, gloomy-looking country I ever remember to have seen. The damp dreary solitudes looked as though they had been untrodden by human foot: I could fancy Siberia or Norfolk Island to be quite cheerful places after this.

Clambering over rocks and gnarled trunks of trees, we halted at length in a sort of stony amphitheatre. My companion gave a long shrill whistle, which was taken up, as I first thought, by mere echoes, but they were human echoes, and sounded nearer and nearer, until the whistlers made their appearance. In a few minutes, to my astonishment, and indeed I may add, to my terror, the trees and rocks and nooks of that wild spot swarmed with what seemed to be a species of man-monkey. They were the Rock Veddahs—absolute monkeys without tails. Dwarfy, misshapen, with long arms, grizzly heads, and thick lips, they in fact seemed like no other living things than apes.

They were rather disconcerted at my presence, and kept at a very respectful distance, which, by the bye, I decidedly preferred. The strange creatures kept swinging themselves to and fro on the thick branches, or peeping and winking and grinning at me from behind ugly pieces of rock, as

though they rather wished me to believe they really were monkeys. Daniel conversed with one or two of the oldest of them, in a language that might have been Otaheitean, or Chinese, or monkey dialect; but he did not succeed in persuading any of them to descend from their rookeries; and we at length took our departure, the Veddahs scampering away amongst the trees and stones and crevices like an army of magnified rats, making the wild solitudes echo again with the creaking of bamboos and their own creaking gibberish.

Leaving these savages to the enjoyment of their own society, we turned in another direction, and made our way out of the wildest part of that tract. After tracking our way slowly through some miles of rough ground, more or less covered by jungle or boulders, we found ourselves upon a better path, with the country opening upon prairie ground, somewhat uneven and broken up, but still green and cheerful. Before us rose at some distance the high mountain forests of Bintenne, while far away towards the horizon stretched many a league of broken plain, low jungle, and lofty rock.

The day was now far spent. The sun was sinking over the distant forest-clad ranges, and the scenery began to take that softened hue of golden pink so peculiar to lands within the tropics, when, as we turned suddenly round the shoulder of a huge rock, a scene burst upon my view which riveted me to the spot. "This place," said Daniel,

who observed my astonishment, "is called, and truly so, the Happy Valley. Here may be seen the rose blossoming in the wilderness. One simple-minded, single-hearted couple have raised up this garden in the desert."

It was indeed a garden, and, contrasted with all the uncouth desolation we had just passed through, it seemed an absolute fairy-land. Surely, I thought, some legion of busy angels must have scooped out this valley from the rough mountain-side, and made it what it is. From the summits of the surrounding hills, down to the rippling silvery stream that meandered through the heart of the valley, all was green and fresh. In the midst, at some distance below us, was the chief homestead of this little colony,—a good-sized, leaf-thatched, white-washed cottage, with jessamine porch, and such a delicious-looking garden, full of pleasant shady walks, and grass-plots, and noble trees! At different distances were other two smaller cottages; while around, on every side, arose topes of tender palms, half-grown with broad clumps of sweet plantains and tufts of yellow bamboo, studding about the fields so prettily, like daisies on a grass-plot. Not a single foot of all that bright-looking valley was barren: every inch was made to yield its share of food for man or beast; even the steepest hill-sides were terraced out in little narrow slips, where tall and waving rice told of the industry of man.

I could have remained there, gazing on that

sweet corner of the earth until dark, but my companion, pointing to the setting sun, bade me follow him. A pleasant little winding path led us through quiet dells, and patches of grass-land, on which sleek buffaloes and well-kept bullocks were grazing; and in a quarter of an hour we found ourselves skirting the garden of the homestead. I could hear some merry voice within,—a right merry, honest voice too. The hardest-hearted jury in the world would have instantly acquitted any prisoner with such a laugh as I heard echoing amongst the tamarinds and the mangoes in that sweet green spot. We stole along, the missionary leading the way; and winding among some thickset shrubs, and round a corner in the garden, we came full upon the owner of the happy laugh.

A wide smooth lawn was spread out before us, shaded by lofty trees, loaded with love-apples, tamarinds, and mangoes; and on the greensward was a collection of children of all ages, sizes, and colours, from the rosy-faced little Dutch infant to the swarthy child of the forest. In the midst of them, and in the very act of rolling head over heels, was a great burly figure, as round and as glowing in the face as any red-leather cricket-ball

The rubicund ball was on its feet in something less than a moment. I was at once introduced to Jacob Post—that was his name—and he was so delighted to see us both, and gave me such a terrific squeeze of the hand, that I felt it up my arm, and down my

back, and completely into my shoes. The children were dispersed in all directions; and we strolled over the beautiful lawn, under a magnificent banyan-tree, with its thousand downward-stretching branches, and then through a little rosery, and up to the flower-covered porch of the cottage.

A soft voice amongst the jessamine there, a pretty pair of little feet on the Jaffna mat, and, dear me, a couple of such radiant, lovable eyes! Could they belong to Mrs. Post? Yes, indeed; but I rejoiced to find that her Christian name was Winnifred: that relieved me, for it was a set-off against the Post. Well, Mrs.—no, Winnifred was more delighted to see us, if that had been possible, than her husband. It was so kind of us to come out to them, and on Christmas-eve too! Of course we would remain with them over the following day? I felt that if Winnifred had a sister in that Happy Valley, I could have remained a long while over the next day—in fact, that I could have lived and died there; but as she had no such relation, I contented myself with saying how much pleasure it would afford me to stay.

I was immediately at home with good Jacob and his pretty, quiet wife: I seemed to have known them both since my earliest childhood. There was not the least nonsense about them: still, I wished his name had not been Post. We all strolled out to the vegetable-garden, and then into the farmyard. There was a real farmyard, with live ducks

and fowls and actual pigs, and a matter-of-fact donkey with four legs. Jacob and the two eldest children had so many things to show me, so many beautiful plants and extraordinary trees, that I felt quite giddy with turning round to look at them all. Then there were the Veddahs' cottages to show me: I must see them too. What! thought I, Veddahs in cottages! Ay, real Veddahs, all alive. And there they were, sure enough. Some were busy in the gardens, others were sitting at the doors, whilst a swarm of little children came scampering towards us from all sides; some of them had been amongst the rollicking party on the grass-plot. Jacob, I was told, had been the means of these poor creatures giving up their wild miserable life for their present happiness. He had been a dweller in the Happy Valley some seven years, and had collected around him about twenty families, chiefly about three years previously. Each cottage had its tract of rice-ground, its vegetable garden, and its tope of palms and other fruit-bearing trees. Here and there was a patch of tobacco or cotton, the produce of which they bartered for salt, dried fish, and other necessaries, at the neighbouring villages.

It was quite delightful to see, as I saw on our return to the homestead, how smoothly and quietly all went on within that dwelling. Everybody seemed to be so busy preparing supper. The children ran about with earthen chatties of milk, and

baskets of fruit quite as large as themselves. Jacob, with his radiant Dutch-clock of a face, moved the table and couches into the front verandah, that we might have more of the cool evening breeze, and catch a glimpse of the pure, bright moonlight; while Winnifred tripped about so busily, and yet so softly, fearful of disturbing the little baby asleep on the mat in the corner—bless her gentle heart!—as though that fairy footstep could have aroused a mosquito from its evening slumbers!

In the wide verandah, twined round by many flowers, we sat down to a supper of fruit, hoppers or cakes, and milk. The cool breeze from the mountain-tops came to us loaded with the fragrance of roses, jessamine, and citron-blossom. The lofty arecas and cocoa-palms waved their long feathery arms in the bright moonbeams, and flung down upon the soft greensward their sparkling gifts of light. All around seemed at peace and happy; and I scarcely knew where could be seen the most perfect picture of calm, pure enjoyment, —in the glorious radiant scene outside, or in the countenances of the happy family about me.

There was one sharer in our evening meal whom I had not before observed—an aged, white-haired native woman. She was quite blind; and by the care that was taken to place her near Jacob, a more than ordinary attachment would seem to have existed between them. I learned that Archie had

been his nurse; and there was attached to her a little story so touching, that I will relate it, especially as it vindicates the Cingalese character from the charge of cold-heartedness.

Jacob's father, when very young, had served in one of the Dutch regiments during the last years of the rule of Holland in the colony. In some engagement with the Kandyan troops, who were laying waste the Cingalese villages attached to the Europeans, he had been the means of saving Archie's life. The village-girl felt grateful to her young preserver, and followed him to quarters, which she refused to leave. Lieutenant Post was shortly after married to a countrywoman, but Archie still resolved to remain with the family, and was content to serve her friend as a menial. From that time she became a part of the household, and tended their only child, Jacob, with the affectionate care of a mother. Years afterwards, and when the island had changed masters, little Jacob was left an orphan, without any one who cared for him save the devoted nurse; she however sought out friends for him amongst the burgher families and English officials, and by their aid obtained the means of providing for him, as well as giving him a fair education. They had, in fact, never been separated for a day, and were not likely to be so now.

It was from Jacob too that I learned how he had contrived to work such a revolution in that

valley. I gathered the tale from him, in his own simple way, in that cool, pleasant verandah, when Winnifred and the children had retired for the night.

After finishing his education, Jacob had given his attention to agriculture, and spent some years with different landholders, mastering the details of rice-fields, tobacco-ground, and cotton-gardens. Fortunately, when he was wishing to make a start in life for himself, some distant Dutch cousin died at Jaffna, and bequeathed to him sufficient to enable him to carry out his plans. And now another and larger idea took possession of his mind—a thought which haunted him in all his occupations, and weighed so strongly upon him, that he determined, in some way or other, to carry it into execution. This was the civilizing of the outcast Rock Veddahs—a strange scheme for one so simple, so solitary in the world as he was. But he felt, that to that poor race he might repay some of the debt he owed to the devoted village-girl: they were of one blood with her, and who more needed help than they?

He received some encouragement from the missionaries in the neighbourhood, but from none else save old Archie. Not to be easily discouraged, he at length obtained a free grant of that valley, then a poor barren spot, from a native chieftain, and quietly, but resolutely, planted himself and a few low-country Cingalese on the spot.

Unceasing toil, kindness to the roving Veddahs, and a happy, cheerful disposition, soon carried him over many difficulties; and before the end of the second year, not only had he obtained the labour of many of the wild people about him, but several had consented, with their families, to occupy the small cottages he had prepared for them.

But now Jacob began to find he had more upon his hands than he could well manage, and, besides, he stood in need of many things for his rising colony. He started off to Batticaloa, and there consulted some of his friends as to his plans for the future. Amongst others, he spoke to old Van Pleyden, the deputy-fiscal; but eloquently as he dwelt upon the subject of the Veddahs, and his valley of labour, the cautious Dutchman remained unmoved, and could not see what was to be done. There was one in that family, however, who lent a willing, attentive ear to every word that fell from Jacob's honest, simple lips. Little gentle Winnifred, the fiscal's daughter, sympathized with the heroism of the speaker; and when after tea they walked in the quiet old garden, that was washed by the waves of the Indian Ocean, and were seated on the sea-beach, she asked him to tell her more about his valley, and his old nurse, and the poor Veddahs: and she listened to his tale until the tears dimmed her bright eyes.

What was he to do with all these multiplying cares upon him—with old Archie, so blind and so

helpless? Winnifred asked him, in her own simple childlike way, if he had ever thought of taking a wife. A wife! No. It was a most capital idea: the very thing he wanted—and yet, strange to say, it was the very thing that had never entered his mind. He had been so busy about other people, that he had had no time to think of himself. But where was he to find a wife? Who would follow him, and leave burgher society for rice-fields and wild Veddahs, and poor simple Jacob? No, no; it was too good a thing to be realized. His large heart sighed, and he began to give it up as a regular desperate and incurable case.

Winnifred suggested that there might, for all that, be some one found willing to follow him for the mere love of himself and his good honest heart. She was not sure, mind,—she only thought so; and then she stammered and blushed, until Jacob, good soul! felt a new light bursting suddenly upon him, and he became for the time an inspired being, and said something to her about making that bleak place of his what it has been ever since, but what it never could have been without her—a Happy Valley. Jacob does not at all remember saying anything of the sort: in fact, he believes he was in a trance all the time; and when he feels very particularly hilarious, which is very often, he insists that Winnifred did all the talking, at which she of course is much shocked, and tries to look angry.

It was in vain that parents and relatives, and young burgher gentlemen, protested against the exile of pretty Winnifred. She became Mrs. Post while the family were quarrelling about it; and as Jacob very properly and forcibly remarked, "There they were!"

Early the next morning, the missionary left us to visit a neighbouring village, promising to return to dinner. The day, I learned, was to be marked by a general assemblage of the colony at one table; and for this it was soon evident the most extensive preparations were going on. The verandahs appeared to be boiling over with fruit and vegetables; heaps of red rice, and pyramids of curry-stuff and dried fish, abounded, as though there had been a heavy shower of those articles during the night, and the coolies had just swept them off the lawn to be out of the way.

Was there to be a plum-pudding? I asked. No one had ever heard of such a dish. In a moment of devotedness to the general service, I volunteered to concoct one, much to the hilariousness of Jacob and the whole troop of children and servants. To prevent any faintheartedness on my part, I was at once installed into office in the little earthen-floored kitchen at the rear of the cottage—a dark cellar of a place, with, in one corner, a number of bricks grouped about in parties of three, with smoking sticks between them, looking as though a number of gipsies had been cooking their stolen meal there.

This was the kitchen-range. The plum-pudding would be boiled over three of those melancholy bricks in an earthen chattie. I felt sick at the very idea of it, and instantly declined the responsibility of the boiling process.

Accoutred in one of little Winnifred's smartest little aprons, with pretty little strings to it, I seized a huge earthen chattie and a gigantic wooden ladle, without any very distinct ideas of how I was to commence operations. I had a faint glimmering recollection of having once seen my mother mix a Christmas pudding when I was clad in a tight nankeen suit, and I saw indistinct visions of suet and flour—I was positive about the flour—and rivers of milk and basins of eggs beaten up to a froth; and then the raisins—I remembered them most distinctly. But whether the flour, or the suet, or the milk, or the eggs, went in first, I had not the most remote idea.

I wanted all sorts of things. I believe I asked for pepper and mustard and vinegar in the excitement of the moment, much to the astonishment of the black crowd about me. Jacob, simple man! believed the vinegar was all right. I am sure some of the coolies, and the fat old cook, imagined I was making a very complicated set of Chinese fireworks. Why, dear me, there was not such a thing as a raisin in the whole valley. A plum-pudding without plums! such a thing had never occurred to me. Fortunately, I found some fine dates; and having

them stoned and cut small, they answered the purpose remarkably well: if any one doubts me, let him try, that's all.

The little kitchen was becoming so fearfully hot with the crowds of coolies and Veddahs, who flocked in to see the "Europe master make cookery," that there appeared every prospect of the pudding being parboiled before going into the pot. At a word from me, Jacob seized a handful of flour, and scattering it right and left in the eyes of the enemy, quickly cleared the ground. They fancied he was using some magical incantation, and did not venture near the spot until they heard the "Chinese fireworks" were safely tied up in a cloth.

An enormous load seemed off my mind as I tied the string. The thermometer stood at 96 degrees in the coolest part of that kitchen. My coat was on the floor, my sleeves were tucked up, and I felt red-hot; the perspiration trickled down my face; my clothes seemed to be singed at the edges. But when pretty little Winnifred peeped over my shoulder, and said, in her own quiet, gentle way, how nicely I had done it, and how kind it was of me, I felt suddenly quite cool and comfortable.

I passed the remainder of the day in wandering about the valley with the children, gathering wild-flowers, and admiring the lovely scenery. On my return, I met the old missionary, and we found that the dinner hour was at hand. Some forty Veddahs, old and young, were assembled about the cottage;

and giving Winnifred my arm, I led her towards the great banyan-tree on the lawn, where we were to dine. A novel and pleasing scene awaited me there. The myriad giant arms of the tree, reaching to the ground, had been made to support long rows of bamboos, that served for benches, on either side of a table composed of as rude materials. We, the privileged, had chairs. So thickly did that noble tree spread out its foliage above us, that not a single ray of sunshine found its way within; and as for space, we might have dined four times our number beneath its ample shade.

What a glorious dinner that was, to be sure! Jacob asked me confidentially, if I thought there had ever been a dinner to equal it in England; and I said, I rather thought not. I am sure they felt as delighted to see the poor Veddahs seated round that well-filled table, as though they had all been members of the Dutch and English aristocracy. Such a profusion of red-hot curry, such catacombs of pillau, such deserts of rice, and forests of salt fish, had not been known since that valley had been a valley. I thought some of the simple Veddahs would rather have dispensed with the knives and forks, and have fallen to with their fingers; but by grasping their spoons with both hands, they managed to force a good deal of hot rice into their mouths.

Nobody dared go for *the* pudding save Jacob: he would have annihilated any one who had attempted

the task. As he strode along the ground with the huge dish reeking, steaming up before his jolly, glorious face, there seemed to be two puddings—one on the dish, and another on his shoulders. Everybody tasted that pudding, and everybody admired it. As for our host, it was his firm belief that kings and queens were fed upon such food as that.

When the dinner was over, and the dishes piled in a heap on the grass, old Daniel, after filling Winnifred's glass, rose, and in his quiet, simple, earnest tones, proposed a toast for us. He gave—"The good work, and God bless the workers." I repeated it, and little Winnifred echoed—"The good work, and God strengthen the workers." As for Jacob, he said nothing—his honest heart was too full, but he nodded to us, and as his gaze met that of Winnifred, the tears filled his eyes. He drank the toast silently; but I could see by his happy face, that he was enjoying three hearty inward cheers, three mental hip-hip-hurrahs all to himself, at the other end of the table.

If the dinner passed off happily, not less so did the amusements after it. When the sun had sunk far behind the hills, and the air was cool and soft, and filled with sweetest perfumes, we proceeded to the ball-room—and such a ball-room! Upon another lawn, at one end of the dwelling, were three or four large clustering vines, trained for many yards over bamboos, and intertwined with

the fruit-bearing grenadilla, the moon-flower, the passion-flower, and a dozen other gorgeous creeping plants, forming together a roof of richest beauty, and lofty enough for a company of life-guardsmen to have walked in with their caps on. From the sides of this natural assembly-room were hung festoons and garlands of flowers, leaves, and blossoms, twined into devices, and interwoven with coloured cloth and ribbons as only natives of the East can fashion; whilst outside, at intervals, were fastened in the ground tall poles, bound round with flowers, and crowned by huge pumpkins and cocoa-nut shells, filled with oil, performing the duties of lanterns—and very fairy-like lanterns they looked too. This hall of flowers eclipsed the banyan-tree by millions of degrees: indeed, when I looked about me, I saw nothing but brilliant lights and gaudy flowers, and rich green leaves and sweet buds, and swarthy forms, and Winnifred's pretty sparkling eyes. I felt myself wafted away from earth to fairy bowers in mid-air, and began to think that if a strong breeze were to blow, we might all come down by the run.

But where was the music? and who were to dance? Only Winnifred and the missionary, and Jacob and myself? Oh dear no! There were the grown-up Veddahs all ready, and in ball-room costume too. The dark ladies, with all the predilections of the sex, had found means, though simple ones, of adorning their swarthy forms. Some were content

with twining the round white buds of the Indian jessamine amongst their dark clustering hair; others added the blossoms of the sacred bo-tree, or the rich buds of the passion-flowers; whilst one tall aspiring beauty had encircled her brows with a coronet cut dexterously from the green shell of the shaddock. Others wore necklaces of small limes and lilliputian oranges, and the crimson fruit of the lovey-lovey, and long sashes of plantain and palm-leaves. A few of the men had garlands of areca-leaves and the pink sheu-flower, and altogether the party wore a most picturesque appearance as they ranged themselves in true dancing order, clad in their pure white robes.

There was a band too. The old missionary commenced an air upon an antiquated flute, and the cook and one of the housekeepers beat time of some sort upon tomtoms, or native drums. I led off with little Winnifred, while Jacob stood up with the coroneted damsel, and away we went to some extraordinary tune, for the missionary was evidently trying his fingers at the 'Old Hundredth,' while the flute was as obstinately bent upon making it 'Drops of Brandy;' and the tomtoms floundered about between the two melodies.

You would have laughed to see how we worked away at that dance. Winnifred and the rest seemed quite at home at it: to me, we appeared to be going through the signs of the zodiac, or working our names and addresses on the grass, with an occasional

rush down the middle, by way of note of admiration. The Veddahs seemed to be moving by galvanism; the lovey-loveys set beautifully to one of the palm-leaves; the limes gave hands across to the arecas and sheu-flowers; and as for the jessamines and passion-flowers, they rushed up the middle and down again with the plantains, in a way that evidently quite astonished the latter. Jacob danced alternately with everybody. He would have had a waltz with the missionary if he had not been so hard at work with that dreary, wheezy old reed of a flute; and I am not sure I didn't once see him having a short turn with the assistant-cook, away up in a corner.

But pleasure, like all other things in this world, must have an end, and even the indefatigable Jacob at last found he was rather tired and warm. I was in a high fever, and could scarcely realize the idea that that was indeed Christmas-day. Winnifred led me to a little garden-seat on the green grass-plot outside, away from the tall trees and the thick shrubs, and where the bright starry canopy of heaven formed the only roof: the rest of our friends followed: and there, on that sweet still spot, with the beautiful moon gazing calmly upon us, and lighting up every corner of the pretty garden, the missionary raised his voice, and commenced some fine old Dutch hymn in the Veddah dialect. Winnifred's soft, gentle notes blending with the fine tones of Jacob's deep voice, and the

rich echoes of the Cingalese choristers, floated through the calm still air, finding an echo in every shrub and flower and waving tree, and passing on from the greensward to fields and dells afar, melted away in distance, and died upon the hill-tops of the Happy Valley.

THE END.

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