Ballou Maturin Murray

The Pearl of India

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Содержание

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PREFACE

That many readers evince a growing satisfaction in contemplating foreign lands through the eyes of experienced travelers, the favor shown to previous books by the author of these pages abundantly testifies. Mutual profit is therefore the outcome of such a work; both the author and reader are gratified.

It is a pleasure to depict scenes which have afforded so much gratification to the writer, for enjoyment is redoubled by being shared, – "joy was born a twin." The undersigned has often been asked both personally and by letter, "Of all the places you have seen and written about, which do you consider of the most interest, and which do you recommend me to visit?" This is a very difficult question to answer, because individual tastes differ so widely. It is safe to say no point presents more varied attractions to the observant traveler, more thoroughly and picturesquely exhibits equatorial life, or addresses itself more directly to the delicate appreciation of the artist, botanist, antiquarian, general scientist, and sportsman, than does Ceylon, gem of the Orient. There are few attractive places in the East which are so accessible, or which may be said to offer more reasonable assurance of safety and good health to the stranger, than this fabled isle of Arabian story. The climate is equable and most delightful; though the temperature is exceptionally high, it is, in fact, perpetual summer, varied only by the rains of the monsoon months of May and June, October and November. The tropical heat near the coast is trying to northern visitors, but one can always find a refuge, within a day's journey, up in the hills of the central province, where it is so cool at most seasons of the year as to render a fire necessary after sunset. In the matter of expense, this route is as economical as the average of land and sea travel in any direction. The cost of living in Ceylon is quite as moderate as in Southern Europe, and now that the island is so generally traversed by railways and excellent government roads, there is very little hardship to be encountered in visiting its remotest districts.

M. M. B.

CHAPTER I

Introductory. – Coming from the Eastward. – Interesting Ocean Phenomena. – Denizens of the Sea. – Bird Travelers. – Delusive Mirage. – A Thrilling Adventure. – Prompt Seamanship. – A Struggle for Life. – Dust of the Sea. – A Dangerous Wreck. – Night Watches. – Sighting the Island of Ceylon. – Adam's Peak, among the Clouds. – A Beautiful Shore. – Steamers and Sailing Ships. – Curious Native Boats. – Singhalese Pedlers. – A Catamaran. – Tempting of Providence. – An Author's Position.

After a pleasant sojourn in China and Japan, with Ceylon as his objective point, the author came westward by way of the Malacca Straits, crossing the Indian Ocean on a line of about the eighth degree of north latitude. It is a lonely expanse of water, in traversing which plenty of time was found for meditation. The equatorial rains, though brief, were at times so profuse during the voyage as to suggest the possibility of a second universal flood, and also the advantage which might accrue from being web-footed; but the air was mostly soft and balmy, the nights were gloriously serene and bright. The transparency of the atmosphere magnified to dazzling proportions the constellations which looked down so serenely upon us, while the moon seemed to have taken a position vastly nearer to the earth than is its wont at the north. The phosphorescent waves tossed glowing gems, like fire-opals, about the ship's hull, while setting our long wake ablaze with flashing light, and producing a Milky Way as luminous as that above in the blue ether. All phosphorescent matter requires friction to infuse it with light, and so the thoroughly impregnated waters were churned into liquid fire by our vigorous and swift-revolving propeller. What millions upon millions of animalcules, and these again multiplied, must contribute to produce this aquatic illumination. During the day, large turtles, schools of dolphins, flying-fish, occasional water snakes, together with whole shoals of jelly-fish, were encountered on the widespread tropical sea. At times, myriads of the fairy-like nautilus floated past in gossamer frames, while in savage contrast, voracious man-eating sharks followed the ship close upon either quarter, in eager watchfulness for human prey. How terribly significant is the upright dorsal fin of this creature, seen just above the surface of the water, indicating the hideous, slate-colored body which glides swiftly and stealthily below!

Hovering over and about the tall masts upon untiring pinions, a score of white-winged, graceful marine birds persistently kept us company day after day. They joined the ship off the coast of Sumatra, as we left the entrance to the Malacca Straits, introducing themselves at first with noisy vehemence and piercing cries, as if to assert their presence and purpose, a proceeding which was not again repeated. What became of these handsome feathered creatures at night we never knew, and it was found that the oldest seaman was equally ignorant. If they slept upon the waves, they must have overtaken us with arrowy swiftness at the break of day. They were undoubtedly able to do this, as they outstripped us in speed at any moment when they chose to do so, sailing through the air far ahead and all around the rapid, steady-going ship. However early one came on deck, they were sure to be in sight, glancing hither and thither upon the invisible air currents without any apparent exertion. It was the very poetry of motion. We came finally to look upon these tireless fellow travelers with no small degree of interest, and should really have regretted their absence. It is always a pleasing diversion to watch them, to count and see that their full number is still present, and to delight in their free and graceful movements.

During the period of their presumed nightly rest upon the heaving bosom of the sea, our vessel must necessarily pass over a distance of many leagues, far, far beyond the power of human sight. How marvelous, therefore, must be the instinct which guides them unerringly to resume our company with the earliest rays of the morning light. When, in the arid desert, the exhausted camel sinks at last in its

tracks to die, and is finally left by the rest of the caravan, no other object is visible in the widespread expanse, even down to the very verge of the horizon. Scarcely is the poor creature unloaded, however, and left to perish upon the sand, before there will appear in the far-away sky a cloud of vultures, at first mere specks in the blue atmosphere, swooping with lightning speed towards the dying animal, whose bones they immediately strip with terrific voraciousness. One who has witnessed this scene can never forget it. The vultures strain and tear at the carcass, swallowing great pieces of hide and flesh, until at last, when they are completely gorged, they can only rise a few feet from the earth, to sink again exhausted upon their feet. Hours must transpire before they can again soar any distance upon the wing, after their gluttonous repast.

The sea in this region of the Indian Ocean teems with animal life, the curiously shaped finny tribe often exhibiting colors as gay and vivid as those of the birds and flowers in the low latitudes.

Some strange and puzzling phenomena of nature were occasionally witnessed. Now and again the whole ship's company were deluded by a mirage; we seemed to be approaching land, though it was never reached, and at the moment when we should fairly make out its bearings, it faded slowly into thin air. So realistic were these appearances, often repeated, that some passengers were curious enough to consult the captain's sailing-charts to see if certain islands or shoals were not laid down in or near the course we were steering. The nights were the most enjoyable, so full of a delicious sense of repose, the stillness broken only by the great heart-beats of the huge engine which formed our motive power. The soft and refulgent atmosphere invited one to linger on deck rather than to seek the close confinement of a stateroom below, and thus many hours were passed in a half-dreaming, half-conscious condition, while reviewing the varied experiences of the past few months of travel. Tableaux of Japanese life and scenery, bewitchingly attractive and enjoyable adventures in tea-houses, gay excursions in jinrikishas, together with unique temples and huge statues of Shinto deities, passed in endless procession before the mind's eye. The oddities and the local color in Shanghai, Hongkong, and Canton; the soothing motion of palanquins; the sloping-eyed, yellow complexioned and pig-tailed people of China; a devastating cyclone encountered in the Yellow Sea, and the wondrous sunset which followed it; the gyrating waterspout which was seen off the Gulf of Siam, a not infrequent experience where so many active currents of wind and water meet; the many living pictures well-remembered of the islands of the Malay Archipelago engraven upon the brain at Singapore, Borneo, Sumatra, Penang, and Java, the latter containing more active and extinct volcanoes than any other known region, – all these seemed very real, though only silently rehearsed in dreamland.

Soon after leaving the straits and gaining the broad ocean, a brief but heavy gale of wind was encountered, which created for some hours a most boisterous sea. On the morning after the storm, a foremast hand was sent over the starboard bow to make fast some gearing which had become loosened by the gale. Almost immediately afterward, the cry of "Man overboard!" rang fore and aft the ship. A wide-awake passenger who happened to be standing near the taffrail instantly took a knife from his pocket, and cutting loose a life-buoy which was fastened to the starboard quarter ratline, promptly threw it towards the man in the water as he floated away from the ship. The sailor saw it, and being a good swimmer struck out for and reached it. A moment later, it was seen that he had succeeded in thrusting his head and arms through the opening of the sustaining buoy. In the mean time, the captain at the sound of the ominous cry sprang up the ladder leading to the bridge, and took personal charge of the ship, sending the first officer, whose watch it happened to be, to superintend the lowering of a quarter-boat to rescue the unfortunate seaman if possible. There was no flurry, no confusion among the crew. Not a word was spoken except by the officers. The silence of discipline was supreme. A sailor was promptly ordered into the shrouds to keep run of the man, who was soon out of sight from the deck, so rough was the intervening water. The quarter-boat was lowered from the davits, and was afloat in less than three minutes after the order was issued, with six stout seamen at the oars and the first officer in the stern. What a mere cockle-shell it appeared in that angry sea, one moment low down in the trough, and the next upon the summit of the waves towering above the deck of the

ship. Nothing of less importance than the saving of a human life would have warranted the launching of a boat in such a wild condition of the waves. The sailor who had been sent into the shrouds was ordered to point constantly toward the man in the water, so that those in the boat might know in what direction to steer.

"Give way, men, give way with a will!" said the officer, and the oars bent to the muscular power of the crew.

The ship had been under a twelve-knot headway when the accident happened, and the man, supported by the buoy, was already a mile or more to leeward. Then occurred a singular and inopportune circumstance, which was for a moment the cause of dangerous delay. The sturdy seaman who pulled the stroke oar of the boat just launched was seen to falter, cease rowing, and suddenly to bend forward, as though he were paralyzed. The excitement of the moment completely unmanned him. His heart for an instant ceased to beat. The first officer comprehended the situation instantly. Seamen are trained to promptness; so off came his coat, the tiller was thrust into the half-fainting sailor's hand, accompanied by a brief command, – he could steer if he could not pull, – and the officer bent his own stout arms and body to the stroke oar. There was no time for words, – the stake was a human life. One or two of the anxious passengers whispered the word "Shark!" Where were those tiger-fish at this critical moment? The boat made slow but steady headway towards the distant seaman, while he at the tiller steered as was indicated by the man stationed high up in the ship's shrouds. Upon reaching the bridge and relieving the officer on duty, the captain, while issuing his other orders, had coolly rung down to the engine-room, – "Stand by! Slow down! Stop her! Back her!" with a brief interval between each signal. Then, stepping to the starboard end of the bridge, he waved his handkerchief to the fast disappearing seaman to let him know that his commander was at his post and would do his best to save him. The big hull, in response to her reversed propeller, after a few moments of tremulous indecision, began to move stern foremost. Several passengers ascended the rigging to keep the boat in view, for it too was lost to sight from the deck. It struggled stoutly with the angry sea, which seemed loath to give up its victim. Those in the shrouds gazed eagerly, and almost held their breath. The steamer drew very slowly nearer to the man in the water, as well as to the boat. By and by, after a period of terrible suspense, the man in the water was seen to be seized by his messmates and drawn into the boat, which was then turned toward the ship. It was a long and severe struggle still, to contend successfully with the high sea which was running, but the boat was finally brought on the lee side of the vessel, the stout ropes were made fast to the ring-bolts in its stem and stern, and with all on board it was quickly run up to the davits. The rescued man and his brave deliverers were received on board with three hearty cheers, and the big ship, once more under a full head of steam, took her course westward.

Prompt action, cool courage, and good seamanship saved the life of the imperiled sailor. There was more than one grateful heart on board which was relieved by a silent prayer of thanksgiving.

Some of our lady passengers complained of being seriously annoyed by sea-dust, which at first thought seems ridiculous. Dust at sea! But there is nevertheless an impalpable collection of salt matter or dry spray, so to speak, which rises at times from the ocean, especially in these latitudes, causing the eyes to smart, and giving a distinct saline flavor to the lips, while it is so penetrating as to thoroughly impregnate one's clothing. When the sun shines, this deposit seems to be less abundant, but like the dew, it affects those most who are exposed to the night air. The "dust" of the sea is very real, as any experienced sailor will testify.

Our voyage was not without several eventful occurrences. On the second day after the storm, the lookout reported some object ahead lying almost directly in our course. At first it looked like a huge whale, the dark body well out of water, or like the top of a sunken rock; but as we rapidly approached, it was made out to be the hull of a large ship, keel uppermost. It might have proved to be a fatal encounter, had we run upon it in the night. A sharp lookout, together with the sun shining upon the object, revealed it, but being so near the color of the sea and having no top-hamper in sight,

it could not have been discovered at any considerable distance at night. Probably half-sunken vessels have been ere this the cause of other and equally fatal wrecks. The size and character of the one we had encountered could only be surmised. The name, even, could not be made out. It appeared to be a sailing craft of eighteen hundred or two thousand tons, which had "turned turtle," as sailors term it, perhaps in the storm which we had so lately encountered. The air retained in the hull when it capsized evidently served to keep it afloat. Our steamer was stopped within a safe distance, and a boat was lowered and sent in charge of an officer to examine the hull, with orders to cut a hole in the bottom. This would naturally cause the very dangerous obstruction to sink. It was slow work to cut an opening in the stout bottom with an axe, but when it was finally accomplished and an aperture two feet square was made, the downward pressure of the huge structure forced out the air and water with tremendous power, like a monster whale spouting. It was now plain enough what had kept the hull afloat, for as this confined air rushed out, producing a noise like escaping steam, the dark mass began slowly to settle, so that before our boat had returned and was fairly secured at the davits, it had sunk below the surface of the waves, which washed over it for a few moments, as though it were a coral reef. Then it suddenly disappeared altogether. These treacherous seas have been well named the graveyard of commerce. The mystery of the wreck, so far as we know, was never solved. Doubtless all hands perished together when the vessel capsized.

Of course, such an experience sets one to speculating upon the possibilities which it involves. Sometimes a terrible sense of loneliness comes over the voyager upon the ocean, notwithstanding the ship and its immediate surroundings, when he realizes the immense space covered by the wilderness of the sea. It is not so much fear as it is awe inspiring.

The passengers watched the captain with great interest daily, as he went through the formula of recording the ship's course. Any incident at sea is eagerly seized upon to vary the monotony. As is well known, the commander of a ship corrects his time by the observation of the sun at meridian, thus specifying his position upon the waste of waters, and enabling him to mark upon the chart his exact latitude and longitude. The process is a mystery to the average traveler, but its simplicity will delight him, if he once takes the trouble to understand it.

It was a bright December morning when we made the island of Ceylon. Not a cloud was seen breaking the intense atmospheric blue that overhung the vast expanse. Many of the passengers, on retiring the night previous, left word with the steward to be called at an early hour in anticipation of our sighting the land. The sea had been quite calm for the last two days, and the nights sublime. A few of us found it sufficiently restful to remain on deck amid such surroundings, gazing idly among the clustering stars, so far away, and watching for the first view of the shore. Thus the night passed, and the big red globe of the sun came up out of the sea to the eastward, as though it had been sleeping submerged there since it bade us good-night in the west at twilight. Adam's Peak, in the shape of a perfect cone, had been in view from the deck since the break of day, half lost in the far-away sky. In clear weather, this famous elevation can be seen sixty miles off the shore of the island. The height of the mountain, and its looming form, at first produces the effect of a mountain rising abruptly from out of the perfect level of the waves, but we were now rapidly approaching the land, and just as the steward's bell summoned us to breakfast, the lighthouse on the end of the breakwater of Colombo came dimly into view. The first meal of the day, usually partaken of at sea with such hearty zest, was neglected by most of the passengers that morning. A welcome and absorbing sight was before us. We had last been on land at Penang, which was now left thirteen hundred miles astern. All were weary of the sea, and in a favorable mood to fully enjoy the gentle land breeze which came to us laden with the fragrance of flowers distilled from a wilderness of bloom. Tropical luxuriance and languor reigned supreme. What a summer world it was, beautiful beyond expression! The sunshine had not yet asserted its oppressive power, and the island was seen at its best. An artistic eye could not but delight in the lavish display of well-defined color which was presented in the azure sky, the deep green of the vegetation, the pale blue of the shoal water, and the snow-white feathery spray

combing over the stout granite coping of the breakwater. As we came nearer to the influence of the shore, the air was tinctured with rank odors, and the water was heavy with yellow seaweed, while the hoarse murmurs of the contentious waves sounded their mournful anthem. No matter how calm the outer sea may be, the large green rollers of the ocean break with great force when they meet with any abrupt impediment on the shore. One does not readily forget such an impressive moment. It remains a joy forever.

It is curious how sensitive the judgment is to external influences. Nothing is more likely to produce a fixed and unfavorable impression of a new place than to approach it beneath a cheerless, cloud-darkened sky, while bored by some personal annoyance. On the contrary, if one is introduced to a fresh locality under cheerful auspices, while Nature herself is in a happy mood, he unconsciously reflects a similar spirit, and is heartily prepossessed in its favor. It was only necessary to observe one's companions to see this fully illustrated. There were a few disaffected ones to whom the world seemed all awry, but the majority felt the inspiration and joyousness of the scene.

It was now clear enough that Adam's Peak ("Mount of the Holy Foot"), which had seemed a short time since to rise abruptly from the very bottom of the sea, was really situated far inland, dominating a whole family of lesser elevations, and having many miles of low, thick-wooded country lying between it and the ocean. As we rounded the lighthouse, half a dozen European steamships came into view, riding at their moorings, making a brief call here on their way east or west, together with a considerable fleet of small coasting crafts, and a long line of idle catamarans, drawn up upon the shelving beach. Besides these, there were a couple of full-rigged European sailing ships, presenting a strong contrast to the mammoth steamers with their invisible motive power. One of the ships was getting under weigh, bound for Australia. A number of her busy crew were aloft, engaged in setting sail after sail, and covering the ample yards with canvas wings, while the capstan bars were manned by others getting up the anchor, their hearty and melodious nautical refrain coming clearly to our ears across the intervening waters.

No sooner had our ship come to anchor than it was surrounded by a score and more of curious native boats, which are called on this coast catamarans (*katter maran*, "tied tree"). The true catamaran is to be seen all along the east coast of India, consisting of three or four trunks of trees bound together with thongs. These contrivances form the rude floats which are used by the Coromandel fishermen, and hence the name. A few of the boatmen who were permitted to come on board vociferously importuned the new-comers for a job, or pressed great bargains upon us in the shape of fresh fruit, Brummagem stones, curiously ornamented boxes of shells, and toy carvings in ivory and ebony, the latter mostly representing elephants and Chinese idols. Altogether there was a perfect babel of tongues adding to the confusion incident upon the landing of passengers and baggage. There was much handshaking, while many hasty but hearty farewells were spoken, for it must be remembered that the good ship, after leaving a few of the cabin passengers safely on shore and taking on board a supply of coals, would continue her voyage toward far-away England.

The queerly constructed boats to which we have referred consist of a rudely dug-out tree trunk, fifteen or twenty feet long, having planks of wood fastened to the sides lengthwise, to form gunwales and afford some protection from the water. No nails are used in their construction, the woodwork being securely lashed – we might say sewed – together with Ceylon cordage, made from the fibrous bark of the palm. An outrigger, consisting of a solid log of wood, is fastened alongside six or eight feet away, by means of two arched poles of stout, well-seasoned bamboo. The outrigger, which is about half the length of the boat, prevents the possibility of overturning it, but without this attachment so narrow a craft – less than twenty-four inches in width – would not remain in an upright position, if occupied, even in a perfectly calm sea. The outrigger is always kept to windward, and as these canoes have both ends constructed alike, they sail equally well either way. The mast and single sail, being portable, are easily shifted from one end to the other, or adjusted to suit. The similarity of these rude boats to those one sees throughout the Eastern Archipelago shows us whence the idea was probably

borrowed. Some of the larger canoes are over forty feet in length, but none are wide enough for two persons to sit abreast in them.

In these apparently frail floats the natives go fearlessly twenty miles to sea in almost any weather short of a gale, to catch deep-water fish, and it is a very rare occurrence to hear of any serious mishap befalling a catamaran, or its hardy navigators. A European, upon finding himself in one of these "floating scarecrows," according to the remark of a fellow passenger after reaching the shore, "feels as if he were recklessly tempting Providence; and though he may not be drowned, still he deserves to be." They are wretchedly uncomfortable, these awkward boats, for one not accustomed to them, but experience demonstrates that they are quite safe. As to the natives, they tumble recklessly about in a catamaran, holding on like monkeys, both with hands and feet.

Some of the passengers were observant enough to watch the handsome birds which followed us a thousand miles and more across the sea, even into the harbor of Colombo. There were others of the same species flying about near the shore, but we fancied it possible to select our special fellow travelers, as they still kept near to the ship's masts, though she was now at anchor. Food was thrown to them from the cook's galley, and that important functionary declared that when the ship resumed her voyage, on the following day, the flock of gulls would follow it as closely as heretofore, even through the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea, until the far-away English coast was reached.

Thus much we have said by way of introduction, and having now landed on this "utmost Indian isle," let us endeavor to intelligently depict its unique characteristics, together with its past and present story, for the entertainment and information of the patient reader.

The author who sits down to write upon a given subject is generally so full of his theme that he must constantly put on the brakes, as it were, to curb his fancy. He is never thanked for what he omits from his pages, though there is so much which he might but does not express, lest his readers should feel bored by a detailed account of that which, with the added charm of time and place, may have had unwonted interest for himself. It is to be feared that words rarely convey the real spirit of what most fascinates the eye, and whatever they do not help the reader to see, like glass, they darken.

CHAPTER II

A Classic Island. – Topographical Position. – Maldive Islands. – Lands rising out of the Sea. – Size of Ceylon. – Latitude and Longitude. – A Link of a Powerful Chain. – Important British Station. – "Mountain of the Holy Foot." – Remarkable Mountain View. – Queer Speculations. – Insect Life in the Island. – Acknowledged Gem of the Orient. – Wild Elephants. – In Olden Times. – Far-Reaching Historic Connections. – Arboreal and Floral Beauties. – Perennial Vegetation. – The Feathered Tribe.

Ceylon, the Lanka Dwipe, "resplendent island," of the Hindus, the fabled isle of the Arabian Nights, and appropriately called the "Pearl of India" by the English, who are its present masters, is separated from the southern extremity of the continent by the Gulf of Manaar. Were it not that a shallow watercourse of about fifty miles in width intervenes, the island would be a peninsula. As it is, a barrier to navigation known as Adam's Bridge, consisting of several ledges of parallel rocks, nearly forms a connection with the mainland. Aided by coral growth and the sand deposit of the ceaseless current setting into the Strait of Manaar from the long reach of the Coromandel coast, this may in the course of time be consummated. The tendency is certainly in that direction, notwithstanding a system of dredging which has been adopted by the English government, enabling vessels which do not draw over ten feet of water to pass through the strait, and thus avoid the necessity of doubling the island at its southern extremity. Ceylon, – the Serendib of the Arabs, – is the gem of the Indian Ocean, an intimate acquaintance with which fully sustains the delightful promise it suggests to the stranger who beholds it for the first time as he approaches the low-lying, palm-lined shore. Indeed, it might appropriately be called the Isle of Palms, so interminable is the array of cocoanut-trees which fringe the beach.

Judging solely from its present appearance and its geographical position, it would seem to have been a portion of the mainland at some former period, though there are many able writers who do not accept this idea, reminding us that animals, birds, insects, and reptiles which are quite unknown on the continent of India exist in this island. There are no hyenas, tigers, wolves, or foxes here, though there are plenty of these creatures just across the Strait of Manaar. As an argument this is not of so much importance, however, as might at first appear, since there are so many well-known instances of a like character. The dissimilitude of Sumatra and Java, separated by only a narrow channel, occurs to us, as well as that of Madagascar, but narrowly divided from the neighboring continent. So able a writer on physical geography as Sir J. E. Tennent believes that Ceylon is not a dismembered portion of India, but a distinct formation, perhaps part of a continent which has long since disappeared. In this suggestive opinion Professor Owen also agrees with him.

The Maldive Islands, situated five hundred miles west of Ceylon, are a group of seventeen coral islets containing a vast number of cocoanut palms, and are rich in varied tropical vegetation. They have a population of thirty thousand Mohammedans, ruled by an hereditary sultan, who pays yearly tribute to the present government of Ceylon in recognition of his dependency.

Legend informs us that two thousand years and more before Christ, multitudes of isles were attached to the kingdom of Lanka (Ceylon), which were suddenly overwhelmed by the sea. At the time of the great catastrophe, it is represented that the splendid capital city of Sri-Lanka-Pura, which stood to the westward of any part of the present island, was engulfed, and disappeared forever. The Portuguese, on their arrival in Ceylon in the sixteenth century, found the natives fully believing in the traditions of its former extent, and its partial submersion. This is duly recorded by the Portuguese writers of that period. The substance of this legend is also to be found in the Mahawanso, or native chronicles of the island.

So far as the flora and fauna of Ceylon are concerned, it resembles the islands of the Malay group lying far to the eastward, much more than it does the land which is situated so near to it at the north. Geologists tell us that the island has for ages past been slowly rising from the ocean level, and we know that well-preserved marine shells are found in masses at a considerable elevation, ten miles inland, both in the north and the south of Ceylon, and especially in the foot-hills of the central mountain, or Kandian range, as it is called, near Ratnapura. When we pause to consider for a moment the possible age of these marine deposits, preconceived and popular ideas of the time which has passed since the creation of the world are utterly nullified. That the process of rising above sea level has been progressing for ages is undoubtedly true, as in the instance of Norway and Sweden, where careful measurements have been recorded, from time to time, during a period of three hundred years, clearly demonstrating that the land of those countries is steadily rising, while the adjacent sea subsides. In some other instances the process is directly reversed, the land obviously, though slowly, sinking, and the ocean rising. This is a well-known operation, not confined to any one portion of the globe. At the ancient town of Pozzuoli, on the shore of the Bay of Naples, there is a solid marble pavement once belonging to a pagan temple, built between two and three thousand years ago. The temple was doubtless originally founded on the dry land, but this indestructible floor is between nine and ten feet below the level of the sea at this writing.

Ceylon is peculiar in its shape, resembling a cone, the smaller end nearest to the continent which lies so close to it. This northern portion of the island is a flat, narrow peninsula with a sandy soil, but which by proper management is made to yield certain crops fairly well. The western and southern coasts are low and densely wooded, having many small bays and picturesque indentations, while the eastern side is characterized by a bold and precipitous shore, quite inaccessible from the sea, yet affording one or two excellent harbors and several indifferent ones. The important and much-praised port of Trincomalee is on this side of the island, where several open roadsteads are commercially available for coasting vessels, so built, like most oriental water-craft, that they can be drawn up on the beach in rough weather. The coast is blockaded on the northwest by numberless rocks, shoals, and sandbanks, impeding navigation, though the island can be circumnavigated, as already indicated, by means of the Paumben Pass, between Ramisseram and the continent. The north and northwest coasts are especially low and flat, undoubtedly formed by ages of sand deposits brought down from the north by the ceaseless currents and lodged upon coral formations as a foundation. In area, Ceylon is more than three times the size of Massachusetts, containing twenty-five thousand square miles. The circuit of the island by water is calculated to be about seven hundred miles. In Pliny's time he made the circumference four times that distance. The latest statistics give it a population of three millions, which is a sparse occupancy for so extensive a territory, and one whose natural resources are sufficient for the support of that number of people many times multiplied. Taken as a whole, the island is perhaps the most thinly inhabited spot in the Orient, though it is the largest and most important of what are known as the crown colonies of the British Empire. Its number of people is annually on the increase, as shown by the English Colonial Blue Book, – an indisputable evidence of material prosperity. The extensive ruins of ancient cities existing in the interior show that there must have been in the past at least thrice the present number of people upon the island, while some authorities place the possible aggregate much higher than we have named, basing their calculation upon the extraordinary size and number of the "buried cities," one of which is reputed to have contained three million inhabitants, and over four hundred thousand organized fighting men, whose weapons were bows, arrows, and spears.

For the sake of completeness, it may be mentioned that the geographical situation of Ceylon is between the sixth and tenth degrees of north latitude, Point de Galle, in the extreme south, being six degrees from the equator, and Point Pedro, in the farthest north, a trifle less than ten. Dondra Head is a few miles farther southward, and actually forms the extreme point of the island in that direction, but Point de Galle, so much better known, is generally named to represent the position. In the olden

time, the former was a more popular resort than the latter, a fact which some grand ruins clearly establish; indeed, Dondra was the site of the Singhalese capital during a part of the seventh century. A substantial and costly lighthouse has lately been erected here by the English government.

By turning for a moment to any good modern map, the reader will greatly facilitate the ready understanding of these pages.

Lying thus just off the southern point of India, at the entrance of the Bay of Bengal, Ceylon stands, as we have intimated, in the same relation to it that Madagascar does to Africa, forming a link of the powerful chain of fortified outposts which England has shrewdly established to maintain an open route to her Indian possessions. This cordon, beginning at Gibraltar, extends to Malta, Aden, Ceylon, Penang, Singapore, and Hongkong, thus dominating the southern coast of Asia, and insuring the maintenance of British power in the East. Of those named, Ceylon is the most central British military garrison. Colombo, the capital, is situated nine hundred miles from Bombay, six hundred from Madras, fourteen hundred from Calcutta, and sixteen hundred from Singapore. With all these places it has constant steam communication. Sir Henry Ward, then governor of Ceylon, sent an entire infantry regiment to Calcutta at one day's notice, when the outbreak known as the Indian mutiny occurred in 1857. These troops were the first reinforcement to arrive on the scene at that critical period. Touching the matter of home connection, Colombo is nearly seven thousand miles from England by way of the Suez Canal, which is the most direct route. As we proceed with our story of Ceylon, the relevance of these statistics will become more apparent.

The surface of the island is picturesquely diversified by hills, valleys, and plains. Its highest mountain, Pidarutalagalla, exceeds eight thousand feet, while its most famous one, Adam's Peak, rises a little over seven thousand feet above sea level. This is a lonely elevation, springing abruptly into a sharp cone from the bosom of the low hills which surround it, and from out of a wilderness of tropical jungle. Few mountains of its height require more persistent effort to reach the apex. Serious and even fatal accidents have many times occurred among the pilgrim hosts, who have been drawn hither from great distances for the purpose of prostrating themselves before the alleged footprint. The ascent from the Maskeliya side is much easier than that known as the "Pilgrim's Path" from Ratnapura, but the latter is considered to be the proper one by which the truly devout should seek the holy spot. Upon its summit ceaseless prayers and praises have ascended for thousands of years. Is it an instinct of man, one pauses to ask, which leads him to ascend such a height that he may seem to be a little nearer to the God he worships? Besides the daily visitors in the month of April, crowds of pilgrims from thousands of miles away in northern India, Persia, and Arabia come hither annually to bow down before a crude indentation of the rocky summit. The natives have a legend that Buddha ascended to Heaven from this mountain, but other religionists substitute the name of Adam; hence the designation which it bears. There is an irregular cavity in the rock supposed to have been made by Buddha's or Adam's foot, whichever may best accord with the pilgrim's faith. But surely the foot of nothing less than a human giant or an elephant would be nearly so large as this misshapen, so-called footprint. It is curious how far zealous fanatics will go in the line of self-deception, and out of what flimsy material fictitious legends can be constructed. Dreamy orientals ascend this mountain solely for devotional purposes, but the western traveler comes up hither with infinite labor to enjoy the grand view from such an elevation, and to see the sun rise in all its glory. He comes also to witness a remarkable natural phenomenon, which once seen is never forgotten. As the sun rises in the east, there suddenly appears upon the western sky the vast reflex of the peak, as clearly defined as though a second and precisely similar mountain were actually there. Through the shadow, which seems to have some peculiar telescopic effect upon the atmosphere, one sees Colombo distinctly, though it is nearly fifty miles away. As the sun rises higher, the great mysterious shadow fades slowly away like a ghostly phantom, growing less and less distinct, until presently the west is also suffused with the waking and regal glow of the morning.

Then is spread out before the view a scene of inspiration, rich in contrasting effects and remarkable for its variety of lovely tints. One may search half a lifetime without discovering anything to equal its combined charms. The mountain stretching east and west, the verdant plains, the picturesque tea and coffee plantations, the groves of oranges, palms, bananas, and other tropical fruits, are as distinct to the view as though within an arrow's shot. What a charming picture to frame and hang within one's memory.

According to the priests, four Buddhas have visited the peak. The first was there b. c. 3001, the second b. c. 2099, the third b. c. 1014, and the fourth, Gautama, b. c. 577.

Adam's Peak is by actual measurement the fifth elevation in point of altitude among a list of one hundred and fifty mountains varying from three thousand to seven thousand feet in height. It is doubtful if the existence of so well-defined and extensive a mountain range in this equatorial island is generally realized. One would like to know what could have been the primary and real inducement for selecting this spot as a sanctuary. The Buddhists think that the miraculous impression of Buddha's foot has made the place sacred; the Hindus revere it as being marked by the foot of Siva; the Mohammedan considers it holy as bearing the footprint of Adam; and so on. How came Hindus, Buddhists, and Mohammedans alike to attribute special sanctity to this particular mountain? Such unanimity of sentiment among widely differing sects must have had its rise, it would seem, in some legitimate cause, and not in the mere chance selection of a shrine.

A late writer upon the subject of Adam's Peak refers to the fact that in the Septuagint, the word "Serendib" is found in Genesis viii. 4, instead of Ararat, as being the place where Noah's ark rested after the deluge! Serendib, it should be remembered, is the Arabian name of Ceylon. One thing is quite certain, Asiatics of all creeds join each other in a profound veneration for this bold and striking mountain. Marco Polo, the famous Venetian traveler who wrote seven centuries ago, spoke of the peak as containing the tomb, not the footmark, of Adam. The Mohammedans, ever ready with a poetical legend, still declare that when Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise, they were sent to Ceylon to console them for their banishment.

In order that a story or legend should touch the credulity of, and become current among, oriental people, there are two grand essentials: it must be sufficiently marvelous and ridiculously extravagant.

The author recommends the ascent of Adam's Peak to any member of the Alpine Club who is ambitious to achieve a laborious climb heavenward. There are few mountains only seven thousand four hundred feet in height which present such difficulties as this, when approached from Ratnapura.

The huge iron chains which aid the pilgrims to ascend the almost vertical path are relics of so great antiquity that in the legends of Mohammedans they are associated with the name of Alexander the Great. The marvel is, how even iron could so have withstood the wear of ages, thus exposed to atmospheric influences.

The mountains of Ceylon cover about one sixth of its area, rising in the centre of the middle province, and extending nearly across the island from coast to coast. The southern portion is in all respects the most attractive, though a thousand years ago the northern part of the island was the most populous and the most highly civilized. At the north, there are still to be seen the ruins of cities whose size and riches were once marvelous. Unknown agencies, together with civil wars and foreign invasions, have destroyed these ancient capitals and turned the neighboring highly cultivated lands into a wilderness. To-day it is the region south of the ancient Kingdom of Kandy – a kingdom no more – which most invites the stranger, rendered beautiful by an endless succession of musical streams, waterfalls, mirror-like lakes, palm groves, and flowery labyrinths, – the very realization of a tropical dream. This region, dense with forests of palms, rich in fruit trees, gorgeous in flowers, is the paradise of fireflies; phosphorescent clouds of these little fairy-like torch-bearers illumine the night at all seasons, reveling beneath the shadow of feathery bamboos and broad-leaved bread-fruit trees. Here they sport, contrasting their pyrotechnic display with the emerald lamps of the glow-worms. In the daytime, radiant, sun-loving butterflies on gossamer wings fill the atmosphere with flashing prismatic

hues, the harlequin-like parrot and the royal-plumed peacock completing the outdoor carnival of colors.

The great green-winged ornithoptera, prince of the butterfly tribe, rivaling the humming-bird in size, is nearly as abundant as at Singapore, a living gem, measuring six niches across the extended wings, – the giant of its species. Enthusiastic naturalists give fabulous sums for specimens of this beautiful creature, much to the amazement of the simple natives, who have been familiar with it all their lives. The appearance of this lovely insect tribe in Ceylon is gorgeous, in their yellow satin, black velvet, and steel-blue costumes of gossamer texture, daintily spotted with white, green, crimson, and ruby red. These frail beauties are as various in form as in hues, still a perfect harmony of order is always observed. At certain seasons of the year and at uniform intervals, migration of myriads of butterflies takes place in Ceylon, but whence they come in such countless numbers, or whither they go, no one seems to know. When on the wing, these delicate creatures make marvelous progress against the northeast monsoon, though they are of such frail construction that one would think the slightest puff of wind must dismember their bodies. Where there are so many blossoms and odorous flowers, Nature did not forget also to supply myriads of the delightful little humming-birds, which are seen, with breasts and throats of gold and purple, stealing their sweets all day long, yet leaving enough for the innumerable wild honey bees, and to flavor the air with exquisite odors. Ceylon has been called the happy hunting-ground of naturalists, for collectors are overwhelmed by the number, beauty, and variety of specimens which present themselves, and which are easily secured.

A resident told the author of a lady friend who was an enthusiastic naturalist and skillful preserver of specimens, and who visited the island solely to gather examples of this fairy-like creature. She was absent from England five months, three of which were passed in the neighborhood of and at Colombo, Point de Galle, and Kandy. Our informant said that the lady not only added vastly to her own priceless collection, but she realized from those she sold to others a sufficient sum to pay the expense of her visit to Ceylon. Every one might not expect to do this, but the person referred to was a professional in her line of occupation, and produced finished, artistic results.

It has been the author's privilege to visit nearly all parts of the world, not omitting the principal islands in both hemispheres, north and south of the equator. With this experience, he does not hesitate to place Ceylon in the first rank for natural riches and attractiveness, and, next to Malta, in the same relative position as regards its far-reaching and interesting historical associations. In the exuberance of its vegetation, the productiveness of its glorious palms, the abundance of its luscious fruits, – including that seductive apple of the East, the mangosteen, – and the fascinating beauty of its variegated flora, it is not surpassed by any island or continent on the globe. A spirit of romance is engendered by the very name of Ceylon, the chosen field of oriental fable, recalling its mighty ruins, its unique native gems, its tribes of peculiar people, its mysterious jungles, its array of brilliantly colored birds, and its huge wild animals inviting the spirited hunter to deeds of daring and adventure. A simple statement of statistical facts will emphasize this last reference. The printed records show that, during the five years ending in 1862, sixteen hundred wild elephants were ensnared, and sufficiently tamed to be exported to India. In accomplishing the capture of these, about two hundred are believed to have been killed by the bullets of the hunters, besides others which escaped while so seriously wounded that they must have died in their nearly inaccessible haunts. Since the date named, such wholesale slaughter has been prohibited by government. Comparatively few are now exported yearly, and the only market for them is India, if we except a limited demand from European zoölogical gardens, and American circuses and traveling menageries.

At one time, not many years ago, the English authorities paid a reward for the killing of elephants. The fact is, they had become so numerous and destructive, especially in the rice-fields at harvest time, that it was absolutely necessary to reduce the number of the wild ones. A reward of ten shillings was therefore offered and paid for each tail brought to the official headquarters. These animals, at that time, had long been undisturbed, and were consequently less shy; while now,

on the report of a gun, all the wild elephants within hearing, impelled by an intelligence bought by experience, rush for the depths of the jungle, which is quite inaccessible to human beings. They are mostly magnificent and wary creatures. No white ones are ever seen here, though they are so abundant in Siam. The elephants are measured, in Ceylon, at the shoulders, and a full-grown male stands usually about nine feet in height at this point, rather under than over. The largest elephants on the island are said to haunt the country about the ancient ruins of Pollanarua, where there are some almost impassable forests. The fever-haunted jungles have no terrors for these huge creatures, which seemingly enjoy entire immunity from all the ills attendant upon such surroundings. In its native wilds, no one ever saw an elephant ill from natural causes. When death threatens them from old age or the wounds of the huntsmen, they retire and hide themselves, to die.

The charms of this island were well known in past ages. It is no new discovery of our day, as the earliest writers celebrated the pearls and gems of "Taprobane," and ornaments composed of its precious stones decked Asiatic queens of beauty twice ten hundred years ago. Ancient thrones were beautified by its sparkling sapphires, and the products of its spice-fields rendered fragrant the fires which burned upon the altars of pagan gods. The Greeks called it the "land of the hyacinth and the ruby." Primitive nomenclature is not only poetically descriptive, but is nearly always appropriate.

The island is very ancient in its historical relations. Its most famous capital is supposed to have been in its prime five or six hundred years before the Christian era, while some of its crumbling monuments belong to a much earlier age. It is confidently believed by many students of history to be the Ophir of the Hebrews; and the fact that it still abounds in rubies, sapphires, amethysts, garnets, and other precious stones, seems, in a degree, to corroborate this supposition. An intelligent estimate as to the aggregate value of the gems exported from Ceylon during the long past places it at so enormous a figure that we decline to give it in this connection, though fully realizing that the yield has been going on uninterruptedly for a period of two or three thousand years. But aside from this very attractive feature, it is, as a whole, the most beautiful island of the East, producing many other gems besides those of a mineral nature. "It is truly impossible to exaggerate the natural beauty of Ceylon," says the author of "The Light of Asia," and adds: "The island is, in fact, one prodigious garden, where the forces of nature almost oppress and tyrannize the mind, so strong and lavish is the vegetation." Marco Polo, who visited it in the thirteenth century, said that it was the choicest island of its size on the earth; and though, in the dim light of such information as was obtainable in his day, he made some grotesquely incorrect statements relating to the country, he was most certainly right in this superlative praise. He adds that the territory of Ceylon was much larger in former times than in his day, a great part of it having crumbled away and sunk into the sea. This is an important conclusion, with which our modern geographers are very ready to agree, though conjecture only can say to what extent it may have occurred.

As already mentioned, the arboreal and floral display is glorious beyond expression, forming a very paradise for botanists. Nature seems in this latitude to revel in blossoms of novel and fascinating species. Moisture and heat seek here an outlet to expand their fructifying powers. Situated in the path of the two monsoons, the southwest from the Indian Ocean, and the northeast from the Bay of Bengal, there is hardly a month of the year without more or less rain in Ceylon; vegetation is therefore always green and leafage luxuriant. In the jungle, large and brilliant flowers are seen blooming upon tall trees, while the eye is attracted by others very sweet and tiny in the prolific undergrowth, nestling among creepers and climbing ferns. In fact, the flora is endless in variety and intoxicating in fragrance. Perfume and bloom run riot everywhere. It would be vain to attempt an enumeration of the myriad examples, but memory is quick to recall the charming pitcher plant, the lotus, – its flower eight inches in diameter, – the yellow jessamine, the gorgeous magnolia, with innumerable orchids in their perfection of form and color, not forgetting the orange-hued gloriosa, and the beautiful vine bearing the wild passion-flower. There is also the large pearl-hued convolvulus which blossoms only at night, known in Ceylon as "the moon flower," and conspicuous through the dimness by its radiant

whiteness. Many of the orchids exhibit a most singular similitude to animals and beautiful birds in their unspeakable and sweet variety. At first sight, a collection of them strikes one like a bevy of gorgeous butterflies and humming-birds, flitting among the green leaves. It seems as if Nature had created them in one of her happiest and most frolicsome moods, – "so true it is," says Macaulay, "that Nature has caprices which Art cannot imitate." Occasionally the senses are charmed by the fragrant, yellow-flowered champac, held sacred by the Hindus, from the wood of which the small images of Buddha are carved for the temples. Here, too, we have the odorous frangipane, the flower which Columbus found in such abundance on first landing in Cuba. Was it indigenous, one would like to know, in both of these tropical islands so very far apart? It is a tall plant, with few branches except at the top, but having fleshy shoots with a broad-spread, single leaf. The sensitive plant, which is such a delicate house ornament with us, fairly enamels the earth in this island, growing wild from Adam's Peak to Point de Galle, multiplying its dainty, bell-like pink blossoms, mingled with the delicate feathery acacia. Growing so exposed, and in weed-like abundance, it is natural to suppose that it would become hardened, as it were, to rough usage; but it is not so, as it retains all its native properties, in exaggerated form, if possible. Our puny little hothouse specimens are not more delicate or sensitive to the human touch than is this Ceylon mimosa. It is the most impressible of all known plants, and is appropriately named. Curious experiments prove this. If a person will fix his eyes upon a special branch and slowly approach it, the plant is seen gradually to wilt and shrink within itself, as it were, before it is touched by the observer's hand. It is endowed with an inexplicable intelligence or instinct, and what appears to be a dread as regards rude contact with human beings. A few years since, the author was at Cereto, in the island of Cuba, where he was the guest of an English physician who was also a coffee planter. While sitting with the family on the broad piazza which formed the front of the bungalow, a thrifty sensitive plant was recognized and made the subject of remark. The doctor called his young daughter of eleven years from the house.

"Lena," said he, "go and kiss the mimosa."

The child did so, laughing gleefully, and came away. The plant gave no token of shrinking from contact with the pretty child!

"Now," said our host, "will you touch the plant?"

Rising to do so, we approached it with one hand extended, and before it had come fairly in contact, the nearest spray and leaves wilted visibly.

"The plant knows the child," said the doctor, "but you are a stranger."

It was a puzzling experience, which seemed to endow the mimosa with human intelligence.

One brings away especially a vivid memory of the brilliant scarlet and golden bloom which covers the flamboyer so densely as almost to hide from view its foliage of velvet green. Only in far-away, mid-ocean Hawaii does the traveler see this gorgeous tree so perfectly developed.

The former superintendent of the Royal Botanical Gardens near Kandy, whither we shall take the reader in due time, is a scientific botanist, and an enthusiast in his profession. He tells us that he classified nearly three thousand indigenous plants, which is double the flora of Great Britain, and about one tenth of all the species in the world yet described. Thirty of these are declared to be found only upon this island. If correct, this is certainly a very remarkable fact, and forms an additional incentive for exploration on the part of naturalists.

Any reader of these pages who can conveniently visit Cambridge, Mass., should not fail to enjoy the unique and comprehensive collection of specimens representing the flora of Ceylon, now in the Agassiz Museum. The material is glass, although it seems to be wax, but so perfectly has the work been done, under direction of Professor George L. Goodale, of Harvard College, as to be indeed realistic. We have called this collection unique, and it is absolutely so. Bostonians can find no more charming local attraction with which to entertain appreciative visitors from abroad than this in the department of botany at the institution named.

There is a constant unvarying aspect of green pervading the scenery of Ceylon, owing to the perennial nature of the vegetation. The trees do not shed their leaves at any fixed period of the year. The ripe and withered foliage drops off, but it is promptly replaced by new and delicate leaves, whose exquisite hues when first expanding rival the blossoms themselves in beauty of color. If fruit is plucked, a flower quickly follows and another cluster ripens, – Nature is inexhaustible. There is no winter interval or sleep for the vegetation, no period of the sere and yellow leaf, as with us in the colder north. The fruits and flowers are ever present, yet there is a certain resemblance to spring and autumn, as we are accustomed to see them. The shrubs and trees are decked more or less with young fresh leaves at all times, while the ground is strewn with those in a state of decay which have ripened and faded out of life. The latter with us are the harbingers of winter, the former coming only with the opening spring. Thus it is that we call it the reign of eternal summer, for all out-of-doors seems like a conservatory of choice flowers and birds of dazzling hues. Although these highly colored creatures of the feathered tribe, like the butterflies, are almost innumerable, one is forced to admit that there are few sweet songsters among them. Paroquets in mottled green, practicing their dainty ways, present themselves in flocks, lighting upon the nearest bushes and branches with a winning fearlessness and confidence. They will slip quietly away if one attempts to catch them, but when taken young they are easily domesticated, accommodating themselves to human associations with the utmost facility, and though they are left free to seek the woods and jungle when they choose, they are sure to return voluntarily to the cabins of the natives, to be fed and petted by human hands.

One variety of the green paroquet has a curious rose-colored ring about its neck, like the turtle-dove, so delicate and uniform as to seem almost artificial. The natives call it the love-bird. The youthful Singhalese women, like those of Japan, take great pains in the arrangement of their ebon-black hair. It was a unique and very pretty sight observed one day in the native district of Colombo, when a pair of live paroquets' heads, forming the apex to a native woman's abundant coil, were seen coquettishly twisting and turning hither and thither. The little beauties were quite content, perched up there amid their mistress' wealth of tresses. They were hardly confined, though their bodies were laid cosily beneath the braids as though resting in their native nest. What a field this tropical isle would have been for Audubon!

One often sees hovering about the gardens and bungalows a little bird as large as an English sparrow, called the Ceylon bird of paradise, but which does not deserve that name. It has a black head, a neutral-tinted body, and a long tail, five times the length of its body, consisting of pure white feathers. Its only marked peculiarity, so far as is apparent, consists in its singular and disproportionate tail. It has a little fretful, discordant twitter, but no connected notes. The Singhalese name for the bird escapes us at this writing.

Ornithologists make out a list of over three hundred distinct species of birds in Ceylon, among which the largest variety is found in the parrot family, very nearly equaled by the wading and aquatic tribes.

CHAPTER III

The Wearisome Tropics. – Waterspouts. – Climatic Conditions. – Length of Days. – A Land Rich in Prehistoric Monuments. – History and Fable. – Last King of Ceylon. – Ancient Ruins. – Aged Cave Temples. – Gigantic Stone Statue of Buddha. – French Vandals. – A Native Chronicle. – Once the Seat of a Great Empire. – System of Irrigation. – Mysterious Disappearance of a Nation. – Ruins of a Vast City. – Departed Glory. – The Brazen Palace. – Asiatic Extravagance. – Ruined Monument.

The author had been expressing a sense of hearty appreciation, on a certain occasion, in a domestic circle at Colombo, as to the perennial character of the vegetation, together with the endless variety of fruits and flowers in this favored land, but it appeared that those who had adopted it as their home did not find it to be absolute perfection. There is no terrestrial paradise; there was never a golden age; both of these figures of speech are born of poetical license: but to the traveler who recalled for a moment the ice-bound aspect and chilling snow of his New England home which must have prevailed at that moment, the contrast which surrounded him here had a magic charm.

"It seems almost like heresy to say so," remarked the cultured and amiable wife of our host, an English official, "but one does sometimes weary of the sameness in the verdure of the tropics, lovely as it is, while remembering with a sigh the beautiful, varying autumn and the joyous springtime of more northern regions. Here we are always upon a dead level, so to speak; no contrasts present themselves. Eternal summer palls upon one. Perpetual youth in the vegetable kingdom," she added, "seems as unnatural and undesirable as it would be in human life. We have no winter, spring, or autumn in our Ceylon calendar."

The equable and fruitful climate of the island is not produced, as is the case upon the west coast of California, by the influence of the ocean. There the Kurosiwo or Japanese current, which closely follows the trend of the land like a mighty river, with a constant temperature resembling the Gulf Stream of the Atlantic, and a width of five hundred miles, makes a semi-tropical climate of a latitude which is often Arctic farther inland. Its equatorial situation alone endows Ceylon with endless summer.

It is curious to observe how the nature of some plants and trees is changed by transplanting them hither, and the same is also remarked of the average individual who has come from other less genial lands to settle in an equatorial climate. If it proves to be a healthy one, he takes very kindly to the delightful do-nothing of such a region, together with its lazy, sensuous enjoyments, losing in a large degree the energy and ambition naturally developed among the people of the north. The moral is obvious. He who runs may read. It requires a colder clime, with a soil not too willing, to awaken human energy, and to place man at his best. Luxury enervates; necessitous labor strengthens.

Fruit-bearing trees transplanted from the United States, such as peach, cherry, and pear trees, have in many instances ceased to produce fruit, and have become partial evergreens. Experiments with grapevines from northern climates have met with similar results. In nearly the same latitude, however, though in opposite hemispheres, the transplanting of some fruit trees, and especially of the vine, seems to impart fresh life and fruitfulness. Those brought from France and Italy put on new vigor when they are domesticated on the Pacific coast of this continent; while the mission grapevine and others native in California, exported thence to the countries named, flourish marvelously and produce abundantly. At this writing, news comes to us of the partial failure of the grape crop in some of the vineyards of southern France, and also that, following out the results of late experiences, the old vines are to be replaced by the introduction of California varieties. The grapevine does not seem adapted to tropical climes. It is not a perennial growth, but must enjoy its long winter rest in order

to thrive. Even in mild, equable southern California, its fruit-bearing branches are cut back annually to the main stalk, where the principal life is stored. The new branches of the mission grape, as it is called in this region, produce bunches of the luscious fruit yearly, which often weigh four and five pounds each; but as we have said, the new growth is cut away every year after fruiting.

Checking the vagrant inclination of pen and brain to travel afield, let us turn to matters more relative to the expressed purpose of these pages.

The island of Ceylon is favorably situated outside the region of the cyclones which so frequently prevail in the Bay of Bengal and the neighboring ocean, while it is also free from the hurricanes of the Mauritius Sea and the volcanic outbursts of the Eastern Archipelago. There is no evidence of seismic disturbance in this region, either past or present. One does not leave waterspouts entirely behind in the Gulf of Siam, on reaching the shore of this island. Just before the season of the monsoons, they appear sometimes off this coast. They are never, however, of a fierce, whirlwind character, so as to cause any serious harm.

As regards climatic conditions, the coolest season of the year is during the prevalence of the southwest monsoons, or from the end of April to the end of October. The northeast monsoon is of shorter duration, prevailing during November, December, January, and February. Both these periods are ushered in by heavy thunder-storms and a liberal downpour of rain. The reader who has never experienced an equatorial land-storm has no conception of the fury of the elements under such circumstances. The continued blaze of the fiery lightning and the deafening crash which echoes through the skies are beyond description. Timid people try to hide themselves in the dark corners of the bungalows, while even the natives and animals often become tremulous with fear. It must be admitted that fatal accidents are frequent enough during these thunder-storms to keep an apprehension of danger constantly alive. In the mountain regions about Kandy and Ratnapura, where the echoes supplement the grand electric discharges, the deafening noise and reverberation can only be compared to the quick, sharp, detonating reports of heavy artillery. The monsoons occur with the utmost regularity, both here and over a large portion of the neighboring continent, and they are so regular that their arrival can be calculated upon nearly to a day. Electrical phenomena, thunder and lightning, are, as just intimated, often very grand. So, also, is the prevalence of optical displays, such as rainbows and mirage. As to moonlight nights and their dazzling exhibitions, like those of the tropical regions generally, words are inadequate to express their splendor, at once so brilliant and so calm.

The climate is very much like that of Java, humid and hot, especially in the southern portion nearest to the coast; it is, however, considerably more moderate than that of the mainland of India. Although so very warm, it is equable; one is aware of what to expect and can prepare for it. Occasional frosts occur in the highlands, but snow is unknown even on the mountain tops. The length of days, owing to the proximity to the equator, does not vary more than one hour, the sun setting at Colombo at about six o'clock all the year round. At Dondra Head, the extreme southern point of Ceylon, the difference between the longest and shortest day of the year is only forty minutes.

This interesting island is rich in prehistoric monuments, Buddhist temples, and lofty dagobas, some of which were originally over three hundred feet in height, exceeding that of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, in Paris, by sixty feet. This, be it remembered, was representative of a civilization which existed upon an island of the Indian Ocean between two and three thousand years ago. The lofty, gorgeous colored, and eccentric temples which the traveler regards with such curious interest in India belong to a much more modern period. They are structures which have been raised oftentimes upon the site of former heathen shrines. So in Rome, many of the churches which we visit to-day and accredit with great antiquity are rebuilt upon edifices formerly dedicated to strange gods. Some remain intact, like the Temple of Hercules and the Pantheon. These Ceylon dagobas are only one class of monuments, and are to be considered in connection with other vestiges of vast public structures, the origin and purpose of which have been lost sight of in the lapse of ages. Slabs of granite engraven with half-effaced inscriptions in Pali, and in unknown characters, are still found,

mystifying the most learned antiquarians, while the significance of others has been made plain by means of commendable patience and scholarly acquirements. What an object lesson is here presented, attesting the evanescence of all mundane power and glory. Here are evidences of vast and costly enterprises, such as the rearing of grand monuments whose legitimate object can only be conjectured, and the names of whose builders are forgotten. The annals of the Singhalese, to whom we are not accustomed to give much credit as a literary people, yet afford consecutive historical data for twenty-four centuries back, though, as in most oriental countries, the records of their past combine truth and fable almost indiscriminately, so that it is often difficult to distinguish one from the other. These Eastern writers had a royal mode of assertion, much more impressive than convincing; as regards the general fidelity of these annals, however, there is no reasonable doubt, after allowing for what may be termed poetical license of expression. We may well ask ourselves how many lands can, like Ceylon, tell so much of their past history in authentic records verified by enduring monuments. As is well known, we in America go back only about four centuries before the trail of history is lost. To be sure, conjecture is abundant enough, but conjecture is not history.

Compared with the probable age of the globe, how quickly history fades into fable! Agassiz thought this to be the oldest country of which we have any reliable knowledge. The Western mound builders were undoubtedly a distinctive race, yet who can tell their story? The mysteries of Yucatan are unsolved. There was a civilization once existing in Peru whose history is to us a blank. Of the origin of the Sphinx, older than the Pyramids, what do we really know? On Easter Island, in the South Pacific, are indestructible evidences of an ancient people, who possessed a written language so old that no one can decipher its admirably graven characters. Where did that island come from, and what became of its people? Were they and their country submerged, like another Atlantis, and is this island the apex of a mountain range left above the devouring ocean to tell the tale? This is not a wild supposition. It has been suggested and declared possible by more than one astute and scholarly writer upon physical geography. As to antiquity, the monuments of Egypt enable us to trace back the history of civilized man only six thousand years, though all intelligent archæologists know that the earth must have been inhabited by human beings an infinite number of years prior to that period. Philology and geology are sufficient to prove this.

Singhalese annals record in detail the reign of one hundred and sixty sovereigns during a period extending from the conquest of the island, b. c. 543, by Wijaya, a prince from northern India, to the deposition of Wikram Raja Sinka by the English in 1815. This was the last king of Kandy, the then native capital of Ceylon. Sufficient is recorded of the personal character of Wijaya, the early conqueror of the island, to prove his utter barbarity, so that we are naturally led still more to wonder whence came the artists – for artists they were – who designed and built such cities as Anuradhapura and Pollonarua, the first of which was probably founded during his reign. Either the Singhalese as a race must have retrograded in a most marvelous manner, while other nationalities were in the line of progress, or foreign artists and builders must have been imported to rear such grand and beautiful capitals in this Indian isle. Does the reader realize that our best architects to-day go back for suggestions to the elaborate and elegant ornamentations which prevailed at this period in stone columns and lofty façades? Though scarred by warfare with the ages, these still form rare and choice object lessons to the appreciative artist.

Among the remarkable evidences of great antiquity in Ceylon, we recall the elaborate cave-temples of Dambula, hewn out of the primitive rock, and which have existed at least two thousand years, representing an infinite amount of patient labor, which must have been executed with tools admirably adapted to the purpose assigned. The principal temple – there are four of them – was dedicated to Buddha, whose creed is still the prevailing faith of Asia, – a doctrine ages older than our so-called Christian religion. The entrance to the principal cave-temple is elaborately carved in the solid stone, and is wonderfully well-preserved. The design is harmonious with the purpose, presenting a score or more of figures in bas-relief, with embellishments appropriate to the Buddhist faith. Two

mammoth figures, one on either side, represent, probably, guardian spirits or gods. Just within, there is an altar with a sitting figure of Buddha, opposite the entrance. It is interesting to note the ornamental entrance to the temple, as exhibiting the degree of artistic appreciation which existed here in Ceylon between two and three thousand years ago. This largest temple is one hundred and eighty feet long, eighty wide, and twenty-five high, a gloomy vault at best, containing a gigantic recumbent stone statue of Buddha, forty-seven feet in length, the head resting on the right hand, indicating repose, one of the favorite positions in which the prophet is usually represented in the temples of Ceylon. The chambers or halls, which are hollowed out of the rock, are reached by long flights of stone steps. Each temple is most grotesquely painted with scenes supposed to represent the past history of the island. In the first of the caves is the immense statue already spoken of. In the others are those of ancient kings in heroic size, but not nearly so large as that of Buddha. On the several walls are rudely-painted tournament scenes, elephant hunts, and half-effaced battle pictures. Some of the apartments have iron-grated windows, and were evidently places of confinement for political prisoners, some time in the far past. An old Buddhist priest is in charge, grumpy, reticent, and apparently dissatisfied with himself and the world generally. In the first and largest of the stone chambers of this huge rock at Dambula, besides the large recumbent figure of Buddha, there is a statue of Vishnu, held especially sacred, and before which solemn oaths in litigated cases were administered, without any other recourse for settlement. This was when one of the parties agreed to abide by the solemn oath of the other, to be given in specified form before this statue of Vishnu. It is a rudely executed figure in granite, as indeed are all the statues of the period. In the second chamber or temple there are half a hundred statues of Buddha, besides representatives in stone of various heathen gods, painted in yellow, blue, and white robes, but why the multiplicity of Buddhas it would be difficult to divine. In front of the cave-temples is a flourishing boo-tree, and a small grove of cocoanut palms which have grown to a great size. As usual, centuries of age are claimed for the first-named tree. Round about the plain, among the rude, wild vegetable growth, a peculiar cactus is seen, a familiar acquaintance, first met with on the plains of Mexico. Its thick leaves form also its branches, each leaf being attached to its neighbor endwise, like links of a chain, and being bordered by a bright yellow ruffle of profuse blossoms. These cave-temples of Dambula are cut in a solitary mass of rock, rising from the otherwise level plain to about five hundred feet in height and four times that in length. This is undoubtedly the most remarkable group of cave-temples upon the island.

One is vividly reminded by these peculiar and enduring structures of a similar famous place of Hindu worship cut out of the solid rock on the island of Elephanta in the outer harbor of Bombay, and also of those found at Ellora and Carlee, in India proper. These three Buddhist temples are known to have been in existence for about twenty centuries, and are very similar in design. The elaborate sculptures in bas-relief which decorate them are almost identical in character, but they have little or no artistic merit, being in fact as crude as Chinese or Japanese idols, mere caricatures as seen from a modern point of view, and yet they are clearly the result of a distinctive purpose. As to depicting the human figure with any regard to its anatomy, that was not understood by these artists, any more than are the laws of perspective by the Chinese or Japanese of to-day. So in ancient Egyptian sculpture, an approximation to the true outline of the human figure is all that is attempted. The stone pillars and figures at Elephanta, so venerable from age and association, were nearly destroyed by French cannon-balls, the guns being brought on shore at considerable trouble, and maliciously directed, for this purpose. It seemed to be a fixed principle with the soldiers of the first Napoleon to purloin everything of value which was portable in the countries they invaded, and what they could not steal and carry away, with true barbaric instinct they destroyed. Churches, charitable institutions, hospitals, were all alike looted by these French vandals. Even tombs were invaded by them in their rapacity, as at Granada, where the leaden coffins in the royal vaults were pried open with bayonets in search of treasures supposed to have been buried with the bodies. At Seville, they broke open the coffin of Murillo, wherein finding nothing of commercial value, they scattered the ashes of the great master in

art to the wind. It will also be remembered that Marshal Soult – to his lasting disgrace be it recorded – treated the ashes of Cervantes in a similar manner; a most petty and disgraceful meanness for a marshal of France to be guilty of.

The Mahawanso, "Genealogy of the Great," a native chronicle, contains a history of the several dynasties which have controlled the island from B. C. 543 down to a. d. 1758. This unique and remarkable Singhalese book is a metrical chronicle written in Pali verse, and forms what is universally received as an authentic and most invaluable record of the national history of Ceylon. A scholarly translation of the same is now extant in English. Pali, as the reader doubtless knows, is a dead language founded upon the Sanscrit, though Buddhists claim that it is the original of all tongues. This is an assumption easily disproved by Egyptian inscriptions dating back over six thousand years. The island, under its Sanskrit name of Lanka, is also the subject of a mythical poem of the Hindus, and its conquest by Rama is the theme of the Ramayana, doubtless one of the most ancient epics in existence. The Mahawanso, though the oldest, is by no means the only Singhalese chronicle of a historic character. It was designed by a priest named Mahanamo, who compiled the early portion, commencing five centuries and more before Christ, and bringing it down to the year 301 of our era. After this it was continued by able successors, who carried on the original plan of the beginner to the period when the English took forcible possession of Ceylon. There are several comprehensive manuscripts devoted to native history, written upon talipot palm-leaf, carefully preserved in the museum at Colombo.

Besides these important records there is abundant evidence of a tangible character to show that there once existed upon this island a great and powerful empire in a condition of advanced civilization. The gigantic remains of palaces and temples tell us this. There are also evidences of a system of irrigation which was remarkably perfect in conception and consummation, though it must have been achieved by the simplest means, that is, by the aid of no mechanical facilities such as we possess. This system covered the face of the country, north and south, like a network. Immense lakes were formed by damming the natural outlets of the mountain streams at the mouth of extensive valleys, and that was all that was artificial about them. Nature had prepared the way; still, the amount of labor involved in the practical application of the principle was enormous. The remains of these great reservoirs thus created are objects of admiration to our modern engineers, not only for the boldness and magnificence of their construction, but also for the beneficence of their purpose. The marvelous ruins of these reservoirs are the proudest and most significant monuments which remain of the former greatness of this country. No constructions for a similar purpose found in any part of the world have ever surpassed them. So long as they were in repair and fully operative, the people of Ceylon had no occasion to go abroad for rice upon which to subsist. The grand supply of water for the distributing tanks was conducted from the distant mountains, through dense forests, across broad ravines, and around the sides of intervening hills, by stout channel-ways miles and miles in length. No considerable population could have been supported in a country subject to prolonged droughts without the aid of some such fertilizing agency, and no other system would have been so well adapted to the raising of the staple grain of the island. Most of these artificial lakes are now in ruins, overgrown with jungle grass, and in some instances by heavy forests.

No one can truly say what caused the decadence of the several ancient capitals now lying in the dust, leaving only a blank memorial of their former existence. It is a puzzling question as to what could have swept a population of millions from the face of the globe and left no clearer record of their occupancy and departure. When there is pointed out to the traveler in Japan a location where a big and populous city once stood, but which is now only a series of thrifty grain-fields, no great surprise is felt. Japanese houses are only constructed, as a rule, of bamboo frames with tissue coverings, but the ruined cities of Ceylon were built of stone and brick, presumedly indestructible except by some great and general catastrophe. The ruins of Anuradhapura show that in mediæval times it must have been a city containing a vast concourse of people. We know that it was recognized as the capital of

Ceylon from three to four hundred years prior to the birth of Christ down to the year 770 of the present era. It has been justly called the Palmyra of Ceylon, and was contemporary with Babylon and Nineveh. It was a royal city, wherein ninety kings reigned in succession, and its dimensions exceeded the present area of London. What a grand and imperial metropolis it must have been in its pristine glory! At a time when England was still in a condition of barbarism, this capital of an island in the Indian Ocean was at the zenith of its prosperity, enjoying luxuries which argued a high condition of civilization. The reason for selecting this plain in the heart of the country as a suitable location for its capital is not obvious, except that from the earliest ages the spot has been sacred to the votaries of Buddha. Its site is near the centre of the great plain which occupies the northern portion of the island, about one hundred miles from Kandy, and three hundred feet above the level of the sea.

Here, amid tall trees and thick undergrowth, are scattered hundreds, nay, thousands of stone columns, huge monoliths, granite statues, fragments of grand palaces, and elaborate public buildings, which once adorned broad and level thoroughfares, while the surrounding country exhibited a wide expanse of rice-fields irrigated by numberless canals, together with all the beauty of cultivated tropical vegetation. The early chronicles tell us of the surprising loveliness of this region round about the ancient metropolis, the brilliancy of its native jewels, the fertility of its carefully nurtured soil, its magnificent palms, the abundance of its fruits, the sagacity of its elephants, and the constant fragrance of its spice-laden atmosphere.

Anuradhapura! how little we of the nineteenth century have even heard of its people, who built temples of stone and palaces of marble, – a nation which lived for twenty centuries in oriental splendor; a city which was rich, populous, and famous, long before Rome had risen to power; a capital which achieved such ambitious architectural results only to sink at last suddenly and mysteriously into oblivion. What the possible purpose could have been in creating such a singular page in the annals of history as the building and peopling of a giant metropolis on this Indian island, whose accomplished mission illustrates only the mutability of all terrestrial things, only that inscrutable Wisdom which rules the universe can answer.

Except the mountain range which so nearly divides the island at its centre, and the spurs which it throws out at intervals, there are few elevations worthy of notice in Ceylon. One, known as Mihintale, about a thousand feet in height, dominates the ruins of the ancient city just described, and is so perpendicular that to reach its summit one must avail himself of the artificial steps cut in the solid rock. These stones, smoothed and indented by centuries of use, are said to have been thus worn by thousands and thousands of pilgrims, who ascended to the shrine above upon their knees. This notable hill, which almost deserves the name of mountain, was fortified by the aborigines in the olden time, as shown by irregular lines of defensive works in stone, whose dismantled and disintegrated condition testifies to their antiquity. On the summit stands a shrine, showing that it was held to be a sacred spot from the earliest ages, probably long before the date when the now mouldering capital was founded. The view afforded on either hand from the apex of the mount embraces the far-away ocean, and the nearer sea of undulating forests and groves of palms, clad in the exquisite verdure of the tropics.

Anuradhapura was the largest city in the island, and is confidently asserted to have contained, in its prime, three million people, over four hundred thousand of whom were fighting-men. But there were others, considerable in size and importance, which existed during the period of its prosperity. The records show that this ancient metropolis was fifty-two miles in circumference, or sixteen miles across in a straight line from the north to the south gate, covering two hundred and fifty-six square miles! What have we in modern times to equal these ruins in spaciousness? Perhaps some deduction should be made from such remarkable figures. Of course, the reader will understand that the area here given was not actually covered by solid blocks of dwellings. Private residences were generally surrounded by small but elaborate gardens. There was ample air space about the temples, palaces, and public buildings, together with large open commons for military parades, for public baths, for elephant fights, for political forums, and market-places. Spaciousness and elegance were the characteristics of

this ancient Singhalese metropolis, this grand city of the plains, where one stands to-day surrounded by centuries of tangible history. The eye rests upon miles and miles of broken stone statues of bulls, elephants, sarcophagi, and heavy capitals of granite columns, many of whose delicate, artistic capitals and designs are still intact.

All oriental narrative is tinctured with exaggeration, but Sir James Emerson Tennent, so long officially connected with the island, and personally familiar with the ruins of Anuradhapura, says no one who visits the place to-day can doubt that Ceylon, in the zenith of its prosperity, contained ten times its present population; and as he wrote this in 1859, when the aggregate was about one million, he wished to signify that the number of inhabitants, at the period to which he referred, was probably ten millions. The same writer tells us that this density of population must have been preserved through many centuries, in spite of revolutions and invasions, in order to produce the results, the ruins of which are still visible to all observers.

That the people of Anuradhapura were early and skillful workers in brass, iron, and glass, articles unearthed among these ruins abundantly testify. Further explorations and excavations will doubtless result in valuable information. Five or six feet of earth, upon an average, must be removed before the process of uncovering can be said to have fairly commenced, so that the prospective labor of exhumation is simply immense. Still, almost every year brings some new enthusiast to the front, whose time and money are freely devoted to this object until his ardor is appeased, and he leaves the field to some one else. A steadily sustained effort, aided and directed by the government, might accomplish something worth recording, but such desultory and spasmodic attempts are of very little account. At Pompeii, where, by persistent effort, a whole city has been unearthed, we see what such exhumation signifies, though the circumstances are not precisely similar, the one having been suddenly covered by an eruption of the neighboring volcano, while the other yielded to the wear of time and the effect of foreign invasions. A score of cities, however, like Pompeii would not cover the area once occupied by this vanished metropolis.

The ancient capital was named in honor of a certain prince, Anuradha, by whom it was founded twenty-five centuries ago. A thousand years since, this city was still populous, gay, and beautiful, with fragrant gardens, thriving shops, proud dwellings, gilded palaces, lofty temples, religious processions, and frequent displays of royal pageants. The Singhalese chronicles are full of references to agricultural prosperity, to ample herds, the breeding of cattle, and the extensive culture of grain. They speak of women who were treated with great deference, and of priestesses and queens who held high places with honor. Rich furniture was used in the dwellings, and costly textures for dress, these of course imported from other countries. Though the inhabitants of Anuradhapura were not themselves a maritime people, they were constantly visited by others from afar, who brought with them rich goods to exchange for pearls and precious stones. We know that Ceylon was rich in these at that period, even as she is at the present time, and exported peacocks, apes, and ivory. In the ancient Hebrew records, the names of these were the same as those known at present to the natives in this island. To-day, mutability is written upon its scattered and neglected ruins in a language all can understand. Who can wonder that individuals perish and are forgotten, when the entire population of a great, imperial metropolis thus vanish, while their noblest and most enduring works crumble into dust? The significance of such instances should humble the proudest mortal who walks the earth. The spot where the Brazen Palace, so-called, once stood in the ancient capital still shows scores of granite columns in the shape of undressed monoliths, projecting about twelve feet above the level of the ground, upon some of which there exist the remains of elaborate capitals, closely resembling the Grecian Corinthian order. This edifice, dating about two hundred years before Christ, was not the royal residence, but a palace devoted to accommodation of the priesthood, and was originally nine stories in height, covering a square of ground measuring two hundred and thirty feet each way. "The roof," according to native chronicles, "was of brass, and its great hall, which was supported by golden

pillars, also contained a throne of solid ivory," though what the Buddhist priesthood required of a "throne" we are not informed.

This description of the great hall with its golden pillars sounds perhaps like an oriental exaggeration, but the people of those days came originally from India, where such examples of extravagance were by no means unknown during the Mogul dynasty. The probability is that the Brazen Palace was in reality the royal residence. Speaking of Indian extravagance, we all remember the peacock throne of the king of Delhi, – a throne of solid gold, six feet long and four feet broad, surmounted by a canopy of gold, and supported by twelve pillars composed of the same precious material. The back of this costly structure was made to represent a peacock with its tail-feathers expanded, hence the name. The natural colors of the feathers were closely imitated with rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and other precious stones. The total value of the whole exceeded thirty million dollars. The author has stood within this royal chamber at Delhi, but the gorgeous throne has long since disappeared. Enough, however, still remains to show what regal splendor must have existed in this marvelous palace. These Mogul rulers used costly gems, gold and silver, together with precious marbles and rarest stones, as freely as modern potentates employ granite, combined with bricks and mortar. The wealth of the then known world was in the possession of a very few individuals, and the poor were all the poorer in comparison; despotism was rampant, and royalty commanded at will the unpaid services of the million.

Near the site of the Brazen Palace of Anuradhapura are several dagobas, partially hidden by rank tropical verdure. One of these peculiar structures was originally over four hundred feet in height, antedating the Christian era by many years. Does the reader realize what an amount of solid masonry such a structure represents? When we say that this dagoba was nearly twice the height of Bunker Hill Monument, and that it was three hundred and sixty feet in diameter at the base, the comparison may aid the imagination. Verily, nothing but the Egyptian pyramids compare in magnitude with these shrines of Ceylon, while no modern engineering enterprise excels in immensity the artificial lakes which were created upon her surface. One writer has gone into a careful calculation regarding the structure, and says that it contained material enough originally to build a wall ten feet high from London to Edinburgh.

These peculiarly shaped dagobas are scattered all over the island, each being the receptacle of some saintly relic. Tradition says they are thus formed to resemble a bubble floating upon the water, but they are really bell-shaped, and most of them have a low, ornamental spire. Near the summit is the secret chamber wherein is deposited the sacred treasure. Time effaces all mundane things. With the exception of the Temple of the Tooth, at Kandy, no one can say what special relic any one of these remarkable structures was originally designed to shelter.

Let us quote for the reader's edification an ancient native description of this famous city of the plain when it was in its glory. It is a literal translation from the original: —

"The magnificent city of Anuradhapura is refulgent from the numerous temples and palaces whose golden pinnacles glitter in the sky. The sides of its streets are strewed with black sand; they are spanned with arches bearing flags of gold and silver; on either side are vessels of the same precious metals, containing flowers; and in niches are statues holding lamps of great value. In the streets are multitudes of people, armed with bows and arrows; also men powerful as gods, who with their huge swords could cut asunder a tusk elephant at one blow. Elephants, horses, carts, and myriads of people are constantly passing and repassing. There are jugglers, dancers, and musicians of various nations, whose chank shells and other musical instruments are ornamented with gold. The distance from the principal gate to the opposite gate is four gaws (sixteen miles); and from the north gate to the south gate four gaws. The principal streets are Moon Street, Great King Street, and Great Sandy Street. In Chandrawakkawidiya are eleven thousand houses, many of them being two stories in height; the smaller streets are innumerable. The palace has immense ranges of buildings, some of two, others of three stories in height; and its subterranean apartments are of great extent."

Sir J. E. Tennent gathers from various ancient sources, including the veritable Mahawanso, that Anuradhapura, between four and five centuries before Christ, contained the temples of various religions, – "temples and palaces whose golden pinnacles glittered in the sky," – besides spacious public gardens and free baths, together with almshouses and hospitals, in which animals as well as human beings were tenderly cared for.

One king gave the "corn of a thousand fields" for the support of the hospitals, another set aside a certain quantity of rice to feed the squirrels which frequented the city gardens, while a third monarch displayed his skill in treating the diseases of elephants, horses, and domestic cattle. The streets were lined with grand shops and bazaars. On festive occasions, barbers and dressers were stationed at each entrance to the capital for the convenience of strangers who visited the city. Public officials vied with each other in their patriotic deeds designed for the public good.

In one corner of the widespread ruins of Anuradhapura there is now a small village, with a Christian mission and school for the native children. There are also a few bazaars, a post-office, telegraph station, and a court house, which serve, by affording a strong contrast to the former splendor which reigned here, to emphasize the historic grandeur of the defunct capital.

CHAPTER IV

Oriental Dagobas. – Ancient City of Pollonarua. – Laid out like our Modern Capitals. – Unexplored Ruins. – Elaborate Stone Carvings. – Colossal Stone Figure. – The "Buried Cities." – The Singhalese not a Progressive People. – Modern History of Ceylon. – Captured by the English. – The "Resplendent Island." – Commercial Prosperity. – Increasing Foreign Population. – Under English Rule. – Native Soldiers. – Christian Sects and Churches. – Roman Catholic Church. – Expulsion of the Jesuits.

The very interesting and in many respects unique ruins of Anuradhapura, like those pertaining to the city of Pollonarua, with its curious and enormous mass of crumbling brick-work in the shape of a dagoba surmounted by a temple, are supposed to have been thus mouldering in the dust for more than six centuries. These dagobas, doting with age, as we have shown, are relic shrines, like in purpose to the pagodas of Burmah, which they somewhat resemble. Their substantial outside finish must have given them very much the appearance of being built of pure white marble. In dimensions they are exceeded only by the pyramids of Ghizeh, but there is no genius or architectural excellence evinced in the construction of either. Judged by the light of our day, there is no legitimate reason for their existence. Religious fanaticism gave birth to one, and personal pride to the other. They neither subserve the purpose of utility nor of beauty. As monuments of personal aggrandizement, or as individual memorials, what total failures they have proved! Think for a single moment of the vast contrast between either of the Egyptian pyramids, or these bell-shaped dagobas, with their plain stuccoed coverings, and that modern shrine and tomb combined, – the Taj Mahal of Agra. The pyramids and dagobas are crude, barbaric embodiments of bulk and imposing loftiness; the other is a realization in marble of a poetic dream. The former are remarkable only for magnitude; the latter, for its exquisite grace.

There is sufficient evidence still left us to show that the olden city of Pollonarua was laid out in a perfectly systematic way, and built up in the most regular manner. Its founders evidently started with a well-perfected purpose. It was not a chance settlement of a few cabins, which gradually increased hither and thither in various directions until it assumed the proportions of a metropolis. Notwithstanding the present confusion, the general features of its topography are clearly discernible amid the mounds of mouldering material. The main street from the principal entrance-gate continued perfectly straight for four miles between royal palms to the opposite extreme of the city, crossed at right angles in the centre by a similar thoroughfare, thus forming two main streets, which terminated at four great gates of entrance and exit to and from the town, – north, east, south, and west. From these main streets radiated lateral and smaller roadways, evidently occupied by humbler dwellings, together with an occasional temple or other public building. The ruins of what is known as the Treasure House of Pollonarua are unusually interesting, as exhibiting some of the finest and best preserved bas-reliefs to be found in Ceylon, and as showing also certain marked peculiarities of skill in architecture which prevailed in pre-Christian times. On either side of the principal thoroughfares of the city were handsome and substantial dwellings, palaces, and sacred temples. The latter, with their gorgeous gilded domes, were dedicated to various pagan gods. Other spacious buildings and open areas were devoted to pleasure entertainments for the masses of the people, not unlike the modern idea of public gardens and outdoor theatres.

Here and there labyrinths of unexplored ruins are entirely hidden by lofty, broad-limbed trees and a tangle of low, dense shrub, as though the big city had been originally built in a forest. We pause, and gaze thoughtfully at the desolation which speaks so emphatically in its dumb way. It is the language in which the decline and fall of great empires is written, – monuments of mutability.

"Tully was not so eloquent as thee,
Thou nameless column with the buried base."

It is not to be wondered at that learned European antiquarians make pilgrimages hither to see with their own eyes what others have graphically described, and to translate for themselves these black-letter records of by-gone ages. We met at Pollonarua one enthusiastic traveler who had neither eyes nor ears for anything else but that which related to the almost forgotten past. The mouldering ruins of Ceylon were food and drink to him, with which he gorged himself to repletion. Each new student of antiquity who comes hither, being informed of the progress of those who preceded him, takes up the thread of discovery where they left it, and adds something to illumine the darkness which enshrouds these sombre ruins.

It could not always have been peaceful in these populous cities of the past, where strange gods and strange customs prevailed. The imagination easily depicts dire tragedies and bloody conflicts which must have drenched their broad avenues with blood. Such has been the history of the world since the beginning of time.

The best-preserved construction amid all the ruins is a Buddhist rock-temple, which, having been hewn out of the native stone, is still intact, though supposed to date back three hundred years before our era. It is only a small chamber about twenty feet square, containing an altar and three stone figures of Buddha in different positions, sitting, reclining, and standing. The entrance to the chamber is an archway; on either side, inscriptions are engraven in the Pali language, but these, we were informed, had never been translated. The native rock, from which the small temple is cut, rises abruptly from the level plain.

Anuradhapura, as wonderful in its way as Pompeii or Herculaneum, is known as the ancient capital of Ceylon, and Pollonarua as the mediæval, but even the former is antedated by other half-buried cities in the island, that of Bintenne, for instance, which exhibits ruins of great interest and of admitted antiquity. There is a dagoba here which is spoken of by the former Dutch occupants of the island, in A. D. 1602, as being still in good preservation, surmounted by a gilded dome, while its smooth, white exterior was quite unblemished. The wear and tear of the centuries has not yet obliterated this monument.

These dagobas, shaped like half an eggshell, are very similar to the topes of India proper. The interior consists of earth and sun-dried clay, built about and rendered substantial with burned bricks and tiles, the whole being coated on the exterior with a stone-like mortar or chunam. The burned bricks which are found in the débris of the "buried cities" have their form quite perfect, and were so well fired when made that they still retain their sharpness and consistency. The best examples of brick-work are to be found among the ruins of Pollonarua, where the mortar that was originally used shows the remains of the burned pearl-oyster shells from which it was made. The principle of the true arch secured by its keystone does not seem to have been understood by the people of that period in this island, though what is called the false arch, produced by projecting one layer of bricks beyond another, is clearly shown. The carving in stone was carried to a high degree of excellence, and is still in good preservation, as shown upon slabs, risers to steps, and on octangular columns of graceful proportions. The entrance to some of the cave-temples also exhibits ability in the carving of stone which is of no mean quality, depicting innumerable single figures and many groups. None of the Indian topes are more than half as large as these Ceylon dagobas. The latter were solid, hemispherical masses, standing upon a raised square platform of granite six or eight feet high, and approached by broad stone steps. The incrustation of the dome-like edifice was after the fashion of our modern stucco process, except that it was very much more thickly laid on. The preparation consisted of lime, cocoanut water, and the glutinous juice of a fruit which grows upon the paragaha-tree. This compound was pure white when dried and hardened, receiving a polish like glass, and was remarkable for durability.

We were told of, but did not see, carved stone capitals and elaborately draped monoliths, found among the ruins of Bintenne, which represented early perfection in architecture as displayed in a region now indeed barbaric, but where a civilization flourished in the far past in all the pride and pomp of oriental grandeur. To-day, the jackal and the panther, unmolested by man, prowl about the spot in search of prey.

When the hosts who formed the population of these long-buried cities disappeared we may not know, nor what fate befell them. There are many intelligent theories about the matter, but very little positive evidence. The most plausible supposition would seem to be that a devastating famine must have been the fatal agent. Most of the works which these people left behind them, except the bell-shaped and nearly indestructible dagobas, are now covered with rank vegetation. The first structure of this character erected at Anuradhapura is still extant, and is believed by some writers to be one of the oldest architectural monuments in India. With this conclusion we certainly cannot agree, as the chronicles tell us it was raised by King Tissa, at the close of the third century before Christ, over the collar-bone of Buddha. The author has seen at Benares many sacred structures, some in ruins, which are much more ancient. After all, these milestones of the centuries afford us little data by which to unravel the mysteries of the past in Ceylon. They are only isolated mementos, forming disjointed links in the chain connecting us with by-gone ages, mute but eloquent witnesses of a former and high degree of civilization. The most erudite antiquarian finds no coherent or reliable history in such crumbling monuments; generalities only can be deduced from them, however suggestive and interesting they may prove.

Neither the ancient nor the modern Singhalese seem to have had any distinctive order of architecture, though the variety which they adopted was infinite. Here, among these half-defaced ruins, one detects Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Moorish inspirations, calculated to puzzle the scientist as to their probable origin. The singular conglomerates of our own day are not more confusing than some of the best-preserved specimens to be found in these ruined cities of ancient Ceylon.

Another notable object of antiquarian interest in the island is recalled in this connection. It is that of a colossal, upright figure of Buddha, a figure hewn out of the solid rock, to which it is still attached, though it is statuesque and not in bas-relief, the original material only furnishing its support at the back. This rude piece of sculpture is fifty feet in height and otherwise duly proportioned, vividly recalling the mammoth bronze statue of Dai-Butsu at Kamakura, in Japan, which is nearly sixty feet in height, though it is represented in a sitting position. Within this statue fifty people can stand together, the interior being fitted like a chapel. As regards antiquity, the Japanese figure is supposed to be but six centuries in age, while that of Ceylon is surely three times as old, and probably four. The great Singhalese statue is now in the jungle, which has grown up about it during centuries of neglect, near to the great Tank of Kalawera. The surrounding rocks were in ancient days turned into a cave-temple with infinite labor, by hewing and excavating them into chambers of suitable dimensions. Without excellent tools of steel and iron, very nearly approaching in efficiency those of our own time, this could not possibly have been accomplished.

The carved pillars, fluted, beveled, and spiral columns, mounds of ruined masonry, crumbling flights of stone steps, ornamental fragments of temples, and granite statues skillfully wrought which are scattered in all directions throughout the jungle, in some instances overgrown by tall trees, attest both departed greatness and far-reaching antiquity. Broken bricks, tiles, and sculpture are so knit together by snakelike tree-roots, while shaded by their lofty branches, as to form one solid mass for hundreds of rods together, dotted here and there by simple wild flowers which modestly rear their delicate petals and perfume the air. One represents the tomb of decayed magnificence and oriental luxury, the other is the sweet and simple emblem of Nature undefiled. Thus she covers up the wrinkles of age with blooming vegetation, screening the mouldering architecture of a forgotten race beneath fresh arboreal and floral beauties. There still remain, though partially buried beneath the earth, the suggestive memorials of a prosperous and energetic people, who were once the possessors

of this beautiful Indian isle. These decaying monuments are at the same time indisputable evidence of the high civilization which once existed here, and also, sad to realize, of the deterioration of the Singhalese as a people. However gradual may have been the decadence of the race from the proud condition of their ancestors who built the "buried cities," the contrast is so strong to-day as to seem singularly abrupt, notwithstanding the intervening centuries.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.