Scottish Geographical Magazine

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsgj19>

Ceylon

L. B. Clarence ^a

^a Late a Judge of the Ceylon Supreme Court ,
Published online: 27 Feb 2008.

To cite this article: L. B. Clarence (1897) Ceylon, Scottish Geographical Magazine, 13:4, 169-188, DOI: [10.1080/00369229708732948](https://doi.org/10.1080/00369229708732948)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00369229708732948>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is

expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE.

CEYLON.

By L. B. CLARENCE,

Late a Judge of the Ceylon Supreme Court

(Read at a Meeting of the Society in Edinburgh, on February 25th.)

I MUST confess that I feel some diffidence in addressing you to-night. It is true that I have spent many years in Ceylon, and travelled much about the island, very often on foot. But yours is a scientific society, and I am no scientist. Since, however, your Society has paid me the compliment of desiring me to address you, I will do my best to give you some account of the country.

ANCIENT COMMUNICATION WITH CEYLON.

The harbour of Galle, at the south-west corner of Ceylon, is one of the world's very oldest ports of eastern trade. Plausible reasons have been given for believing it to be the Tarshish of the Bible. However that may be, it was undoubtedly a port to which, in days of hoar antiquity, traders—Indian, Arabian, and perhaps Phœnician—came coasting down the western shores of India to receive the produce of the Farther East, and bring it back to meet traders from the West. Afterwards, in the dawn of the Christian era, a daring seaman, Hippalus, made a new departure in eastward navigation, which gave a startling impulse to Eastern trade. He noted how steadily the monsoon winds blew across the Indian Ocean, alternately from the east and west, and he conceived the idea of being wafted to and fro by their aid, instead of laboriously coasting round. He launched out from the Arabian coast, headed boldly across the open sea, and reached the shore of Southern India.

I think a parallel might be drawn between this old Hippalus and our Dr. Nansen. In very different climates they displayed similar qualities of calculation and daring. One reasoned about the currents of the air: the other about the currents of the sea. Each had the courage of his opinions, and each proved to be in the right.

Hippalus' discovery led to something like definite information reaching Southern Europe about Ceylon. Prior to that, only very vague hearsay about the island had reached the Greeks and Romans. Meanwhile, long before the Christian era, the Sinhalese in Ceylon had their towns, elaborate buildings, and great irrigation works. But they were never a seafaring people, and they paid little heed to foreign commerce.

Of course Northern Europe had no knowledge of these Eastern regions till a much later date. So far as our own nation is concerned, Ceylon for a very long time lay far outside our track of Eastward travel. The first of our countrymen who adventured Eastward made their way to the Levant, thence overland to the Persian Gulf, and so on to India and the Farther East. Our Indian Empire had risen high above its foundations when Ceylon was still an Ultima Thule, of which little was known in Britain.

The world's highways have changed; and now the current of Eastward traffic strikes full upon the island. More than 30,000 passengers pass through the port of Colombo every year. Ceylon has become the half-way house between Europe and the Far East and Australia—a highly important item in the British Empire. Her harbours offer invaluable "opportunities of port" in relation to India. Moreover, a large import and export trade has developed between Ceylon and Britain, and the island is the seat of a large planting enterprise.

CEYLON NEVER PART OF THE INDIAN CONTINENT.

You see how close Ceylon lies to India, with the interval almost bridged over by a line of reefs and sandbanks known as Adam's Bridge. It looks on the map as if the island had once been joined to India—as if Adam's Bridge were the remnant of a solid connection. The earliest scientific writer about Ceylon (a brother of Sir Humphrey Davy) said that no one could look at the map and not see that that must have been so. Now, scientific opinion is the other way: there are further materials to go upon. It is thought that Ceylon and India never were united—that Adam's Bridge and the Northern peninsula of Ceylon are of recent formation, the result of coral reefs and alluvial and sandy drift. I believe, opinion now is, that long ages ago, when the plains of India were still ocean bed, the high lands of Ceylon formed part of a great Southerly continent, the rest of which has been long since submerged. There are variances between the fauna and flora of Ceylon and India, which are considered to support this opinion.

Adam's Bridge ends in a sandy islet about eight miles long, called Ramisseram, between which and the Indian shore is a passage by which small shipping can pass through from east to west. Now and again a

scheme has been mooted for enabling larger shipping to get across, by cutting a ship-canal through Ramisseram; but the cost would be large, and it is very doubtful whether the canal could effect a saving of time which would make up for the canal dues. Moreover, by this route ships would forego the call at the important port of Colombo. A more likely scheme is that for an Indo-Ceylon railway, which is now seriously taken up.

CLIMATE.

Now, as to the climate. The intense heats of the hot season in the plains of India are not known in Ceylon; but, on the other hand, there is no cold season, no winter. There is a word for ice in Hindustani, but none in Sinhalese or Tamil. Still, the island having a mountain roof, up which a railway now climbs, Europeans who have time and money may command a climate where, if the sun smites fiercely at noon-tide, the nights are cool, or even cold. You may leave the sweltering heat of Colombo in the morning, and at night be glad of a blazing wood-fire and a pair of blankets. The climate compares favourably with other tropical climates, and the opening up of the country has improved many malarious places. With care and discretion, a European may live a healthy and vigorous life in the island, especially if he has access to the hills and comes home occasionally. The planters in the hills are a decidedly healthy and vigorous set.

Yet we miss our own climate. There is a wearisome monotony in nearly equal day and night all the year round, and trees perpetually in leaf. We miss the changing seasons of home—the fall of the leaf, and the winter when the earth sleeps, till budding spring ushers in the glory of summer. Surely for us there is no climate like our own. And when all is said, in a tropical climate, even of the best, we live, as it were, on sufferance; and the climate tells on the next generation. For every one of us who has his livelihood in Ceylon, there comes the inevitable day when he must part from his children, and send them home. This stern necessity has been styled a price which we pay for our Eastern possessions: and a heavy price it is.

In spite of the small size of Ceylon—only four-fifths as large as Ireland—the annual rainfall varies in different parts from 200 inches down to 33. This is because the island lies right in the track of the monsoons, and has a high mountain roof, which condenses the watery vapours, and so produces periodic rains. Of course, vegetation and scenery vary signally in the dry and the moist regions, the hills and the low country. The driest parts are in the north-west and south-east, where the moist winds sweep across without encountering any hills. These parts exhibit a good deal of scorching sand and dry, thorny scrub. The wettest parts are to the south and south-west of the hills. Their steamy atmosphere is trying to European constitutions—you feel as if you were in a perpetual poultice.

The mountain roof which so affects the rainfall is a central tract about fifty miles square, walled in on three sides by a loftier mountain rampart. The highest summit in the enclosing rampart, Pedurutalagala,

is 8296 feet, and the country inside attains 7000 feet. A map published in 1844, under the auspices of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, marks a large tract north of the central region as "unknown mountainous" country. But that is really a level tract. Nowadays old maps are often found to have been somewhat imaginary.

GEOLOGY AND SCENERY.

As to geology:—the island consists largely of old sedimentary rock and gneiss, with occasional granite and some basalt. Huge upheavals must have taken place at some remote periods. Layers of shells several feet above the sea at places along the south coast indicate that those parts were submerged down to a much later date. The land is still slowly rising, especially along the west coast.

The gneiss varies in texture. In some places it is hard and weathering slowly: elsewhere with an excess of felspar, and decomposing quickly under water. Perhaps to this latter incident may be due the frequent occurrence on some of the highest rocks of holes resembling the pot-holes found in torrent-beds. Dolomite, yielding good lime, exists in some parts of the Kandyan country, and secondary limestone beds underlie the red soil of the Jaffna peninsula; but in general limestone is rare, and the lime used in building is burned from the coral on the coast.

Laterite, a product of the disintegrated gneiss, known in Ceylon as *cabuk*, overlies the gneiss in many places, and is used in building. Plumbago, mined in several districts, is exported largely.

Iron-ore exists of several kinds, some exceedingly pure, and the iron-slag of old Sinhalese smeltings is largely strewn about the country. This industry has almost died out. British iron is now so cheap, and fuel for smelting less easy to command.

Nitre may be got in many places, but attracts little or no attention.

The late Sir Samuel Baker believed that gold would be found in the hills in paying quantities, and the Sinhalese word for it occurs in many names of places. Prospecting, so far, has never resulted in more than slight indications of the metal.

Ceylon from very early times has been noted for the gems found in the granite *detritus*. The main seat of this somewhat speculative industry is near Ratnapura, below Adam's Peak; but old gem-pits exist high up in the mountains, and elsewhere. The most valuable stones are sapphires and cats'-eyes; the rubies have less value, but some of the cheaper stones—amethysts, garnets, and particularly the cinnamon stones—are very pretty. The opalescent stones, styled moonstones, are quarried out of the rock in the neighbourhood of Kandy. These gems are cut somewhat rudely with the aid of the corundum found in the country.

The soil of the island is in general shallow and very poor; the best is in the hills, and between them and the west coast, and there the coffee and tea planting developed. The soil of the Jaffna peninsula, overlying limestone, is more fertile. There, as on the Indian coast, the Palmyra palm is largely cultivated. A rather rank tobacco is also grown there, and in a few other places.

In the Low country the gneiss often crops out in bare slabs of large extent, tufted with euphorbias and other rock-haunting vegetation; and a very striking feature is the torrid, precipitous masses of rock, towering abruptly for hundreds of feet above the plains. Some of these great rocks were fortified in old days; great boulders were hewn and scooped into floors and baths, and large fissures converted into temples, whose gloomy vaults are plastered with historical paintings of great age.

The south-west coast is fringed with coco-palms, stooping in endless vista over the sandy bays and rocky headlands, past which fly the brown-sailed fishing-canoes, hollowed out of a single log, and steadied by a heavy outrigger-beam lashed alongside.

At Dondra, the southernmost point of the island, beneath the fringe of feathery palms, and almost in the roar of the sea, stands a lone group of stone pillars, the forlorn remnant of a great temple destroyed by the Portuguese in 1587; and here, as you look southward across the tumbling waters, there is no land between you and the Antarctic ice-fields. In these days Dondra is a populous fishing-village; and I remember it as noted for the large manufacture of forged deeds.

High up in the mountains there is a lovely savagery of rock and precipice, shaggy forest, torrent, and waterfall; also tracts of open grass land, which the Sinhalese call *Patanas*, studded with great rhododendron trees—not bushes, but great trees—amidst whose glossy, dark-green foliage blaze large clusters of crimson blossoms, through which the sun gleams wine-red.

The Government now reserves, as a climatic reserve, all forest above 5000 feet: below that line most of the mountain forest has disappeared, converted into planting estates—a singular combination of trim cultivation, precipice, and torrent, huge rock boulders and the skeletons of the big timber lying tossed about in wild confusion.

ADAM'S PEAK.

I cannot pass without a word the grand mountain which we call by its Portuguese name of Adam's Peak—only the fourth in height (7352 feet), but far the grandest. Its Matterhorn-shaped pinnacle stands up like a sentinel on the south-west bastion of the hills, visible at Colombo, forty-five miles away, and far out at sea. During the north-east monsoon, from November to April, its needle stands uplifted in the brightness of the dawn, suffused with a clear flush of faint rose, like the incandescence of molten metal. In the other months Colombo beholds the Peak towards evening, outlined in grey behind the inland horizon of feathery coco-palms. Away inland it suddenly towers upon you as you rise to some pass in the lower hills, and find yourself face to face with its hoary majesty, in lone watch on its mountain rampart. Whether sharply defined in still, clear air, or mysteriously veiled in cloud, it is ever an awe-inspiring vision, and we cannot wonder that the imagination of mankind has invested it with the sanctity of religion.

For over fifteen hundred years the Sinhalese have flocked in pilgrimage to the summit, because they believe that two thousand four

hundred years ago the founder of their religion, Gotama Buddha, left his footprint on the topmost crag. Tamils and Hindus associate the mountain with Siva, and Mohammedans with Adam.

The easiest ascent of the Peak is from the planting district of Maskeliya, where you may start from some hospitable bungalow, only a few miles from the last steep bit of the climb, called by the Sinhalese the *Aukana-gow*—the Sky-league. That way, also, you get a start of 3000 feet, or more, in elevation.

I myself prefer the track which mounts on the other side, direct from the low country, by a Sinhalese path, twenty-six miles from Ratnapura, the last twelve miles winding upward through the forest in a succession of steep gullies, rugged staircases of rocks and tree-roots, worn deep by water and the feet of millions of pilgrims. Near the top the path emerges on to an open, rocky slope, not unlike the dome of St. Paul's, in full view of the sheer depths below. Here the climbers are assisted by iron chains and stanchions let into the rock. On the very top, protected by a little shrine, is the Holy Footprint, the *Sri-pada*. In the rainy months the *Sri-pada* is deserted, but in the dry season a few yellow-robed monks abide there, and thousands of pilgrims—men, women, and children—toil up the steep. They lay their little offerings before the Footprint, and strew sweet flowers, and then the children kneel and receive their parents' blessing.

At early dawn the Peak casts its shadow clear across the visible world and high into the very sky—a spectacle of indescribable grandeur. When I first saw it we had passed the night close to the top, and moved up a few minutes before daybreak. As the swift tropical dawn advanced, and there began to be light, we seemed to be standing on the shore of a wide sea rippling to our feet, with here and there a little rock rising above the surface. The seeming sea was the clouds stretched out below, and the little rocks were the tops of the lower mountains. Then, as the sun's rays broke from beneath the eastern horizon, the awful shadow of the Peak streamed out westward, intensely black, like a lingering slice of the night projected across cloud and plain and distant sea, its point resting high up in the æther of the sky. For a few moments the mighty shadow rested so, athwart the visible world, in unspeakable majesty, and then, as the sun's orb mounted the horizon, it faded gradually away.

HISTORY.

Two native languages are spoken in Ceylon, Sinhalese and Tamil.

The ancestors of the Sinhalese were an offshoot from a wave of Aryan emigration, which in prehistoric times flowed southwards from Central Asia, and settled in Bengal. Thence, about 600 B.C., they swarmed into Ceylon, and speedily settled the island, supplanting the aboriginal inhabitants, of whom a few fast disappearing remnants linger in the south-east wilds, under the name of Veddahs. About that time the Buddhist religion arose in India, and about 300 B.C. an apostle of Buddhism converted the Sinhalese. Buddhism, though long vanished

from its Indian birthplace, is still the religion of the Sinhalese. The great ruins of their cities, palaces, temples, and irrigation works, attest the large population of those days. The centre of their activity was in the north central country.

The palmy days of the Sinhalese lasted till about the fourteenth century A.D. Meanwhile they were more or less in constant collision with the ancestors of the Tamils, now settled in the north of the island—a Dravidian people, hailing from the Dekkan and thereabouts, whom the original southward Aryan wave had failed to exterminate or absorb. At last the Tamils had the upper hand. The Sinhalese abandoned one after another their royal cities in the north central country, and shifted their capital hither and thither in the south. When the Portuguese appeared on the coast, early in the sixteenth century, the two races were dwelling apart, the Tamils up in the north, and the Sinhalese more to the south.

Tennent, the historian of Ceylon, remarks that everything which tended to civilise or embellish was the work of the Sinhalese, while the Tamils, with all the power which they exercised, contributed only to ruin and debase.

The great Mohammedan invasion of India never reached Ceylon; but when the Portuguese came, a race of Mohammedan traders of mixed Indian and Arab blood, akin to the Moplahs of the Madras Presidency, had possession of the seaports, and were acquiring considerable influence. The Portuguese styled them "Moors." They now number about 300,000, and are keen traders. The Moormen's shops are in every village, and the Moorman pedlar, with his smart jacket, and his high woven cap of gaudy colours, marvellously adhering to his shaven skull, and his assortment of gems and curiosities, is the first to greet the passenger on arrival.

The Portuguese established a chain of forts and factories round the coast, especially on the south-west, held them for about 150 years, and then were ousted by the Dutch, who in their turn, after nearly another 150 years, were dispossessed by Great Britain.

The Portuguese came for spice, especially cinnamon, and also sought to propagate their own religion. They built churches up and down the west coast, and baptized many of the coast folk. The Dutch were centred on their endeavour to wring from the country a profitable export. They also strove to efface all traces of the Portuguese and their religion, regarding both with an aversion hardly to be wondered at in men whose forefathers had gone through blood and fire in the days of Philip II. and Alva.

Yet the Dutch form of Christianity made no way among the people, while many of the natives on the west coast still profess the Roman Catholic religion, and bear Portuguese names. If the Portuguese had been fierce and cruel, the Dutch were hard and griping. Each people jealously restricted trade to its own monopoly, and each administered the settlements at a heavy loss. Neither succeeded in subduing the interior.

It was in the Portuguese times that the first recorded traveller from Britain visited Ceylon. This was one Ralph Fitch, who touched at Colombo in 1589, on his way home from the Far East. He was one of

four adventurers sent out by the Levant Company to prospect for eastern trade, and the only one who ever returned. Probably this expedition had something to do with the founding of the East India Company a few years later. There is a curious circumstance as to Fitch's journey. Macbeth's first witch knew a sailor, whose husband was "to Aleppo gone, master o' the *Tiger*." There really was a *Tiger* trading to the Levant in those days, and Fitch actually sailed in her for Aleppo. He did not sail to Aleppo, because, as you know, Aleppo is not a seaport, but he landed on the coast, and so made his way to Aleppo, and thence on to the Persian Gulf and to India and the Far East.

The Dutch forts, grey and grass-grown, still remain in many places round the coast. On the west coast the Dutch made about a hundred miles of inland navigation, by canals connecting the rivers and lagoons.

The Roman-Dutch law, which they introduced into their settlements, though much intrenched upon by British legislation, has never been actually repealed, and still survives, in a decayed and semi-obsolete condition. Its confused remains have even been allowed to creep into the interior, even into places where no Dutchman ever set foot. All this is very unfortunate. These confused remnants of Dutch law are not in harmony with the great British development which has taken place since the Dutch cleared out of the island. This law suits neither the native inhabitants nor the British traders and planters. It merely adds an element of uncertainty and confusion; and nothing in law is so disastrous as uncertainty. Far better were it repealed absolutely.

BRITISH RULE.

When we took possession of the Dutch settlements in 1796 the interior was unsubdued, and contained nothing like a road, and hardly anything that could fairly be styled a town. There was no really orderly native government. The Sinhalese capital for the past two hundred years had been at Kandy, in the lower hills, about seventy miles from Colombo. Between it and the coast the Kandyan kings maintained a belt of dense forest, with the passes guarded. In the north central region, where in the old days the Sinhalese population had been most dense, there was then a silent waste of forest, thinly inhabited, in which lay buried the remains of towns, temples, and great irrigation works. This great depopulation was doubtless due to the incursions of the Tamils and the decay of the ancient irrigation works.

At first our new possession was placed under the East India Company, but that arrangement did not work smoothly. The Company's service was not then what it became afterwards. The Madras officials intrusted with the administration were neither discreet nor honest. The Sinhalese rose in revolt, and when the revolt had been suppressed, the Settlements were withdrawn from the Company and placed under the Colonial Office as a Crown colony.

If our coming had been delayed till the East India Company's service had become what it has since become, all might have worked

smoothly, and in that case Ceylon would probably at this day be administered as part of our Indian empire.

I think that the development of commerce, and especially the European planting enterprise, has been as successful as it could have been under the Indian Government: perhaps in the case of the planting even more so, for the planters have probably commanded more influence under the Colonial administration than they would have had under the Indian.

But legislation in general, and particularly the adjustment of the administration to the needs and traditions of the people, would probably have fared better under the Indian Government. Legislation in India has been more skilful. A government on a greater scale commands a higher order of skill and talents. What is of more importance, these difficult tasks have been advised in India by men armed with knowledge and experience of the people, acquired in working lives spent among them. Ceylon, sharing the cares of the Colonial Department with a host of "Colonial" dependencies all over the world, most of them very unlike herself, has been less fortunate. The administration has been less in touch with the people, and less cognisant of their needs.

In 1815 we annexed the interior of the island, which as yet had known no European ruler. A determined revolt of the Kandians took place in 1817, and a much less serious one in 1848. Since then the country has been tranquil. Even when India was shaken by the Mutiny there was no corresponding manifestation in Ceylon.

Early in the twenties, under Governor Sir Edward Barnes, a veteran of the Peninsular war, the work of opening up the island by roads and bridges was begun, and pushed forward with marvellous despatch and success. The people highly valued this work. It is recorded that when, years afterwards, a statue of Sir Edward Barnes was erected in Colombo, a railing had to be placed round it, to prevent its receiving inconvenient attention as an idol.

It would have been well if all our work in the island had been as good as this, but our legislative work has been less happy. The forces of nature are easier to reckon with than the habits and idiosyncrasies of mankind; and few tasks are so difficult as that of adjusting law and government for an Eastern people.

There is no time, and no need, for me to attempt a description of all that followed in the wake of the roads. The country was "opened up," as the phrase is, and its resources developed. Hospitals and medical aid came into being, and all sorts of things which you will easily imagine. Of the Planting enterprise I shall speak presently. The first railway was engineered up into the mountains, for the accommodation of the planters. Afterwards low country extensions were made, and more are in contemplation. Since then some experts have thought that the railway might have taken a better route, that it was unnecessarily and ill-advisedly engineered by a costly route across high mountains. As to that, I do not presume to offer an opinion.

HARBOURS.

Colombo, successively the headquarters of the Portuguese and the

Dutch, is our seat of government. The Portuguese occupied it, and the Dutch retained it, because it lay close to the cinnamon country; but till the day of our great and successful breakwater, begun in 1875, finished in 1883, and now being supplemented with a north arm, Colombo had no merits as a seaport, for it possessed only an open roadstead, where no shipping could enter or lie during the fury of the south-west monsoon.

I have already spoken of the antiquity of Galle as a resort for shipping. Ships could enter and lie there all the year round. It was a convenient port when eastward traffic came round the Cape, and up to less than thirty years ago it was still the principal port of call. But Galle harbour is rocky, and the attractions of Colombo prevailed.

Trincomali, on the east coast, has a natural harbour possessing every advantage—deep water, complete shelter, ample space, and easy access at all times. Sir Emerson Tennent, in his *Account of Ceylon*, published in 1859, earnestly advocated the transfer of the capital to Trincomali, and predicted that the change would one day be forced on the Government by the planting body. But the desire of the planters has not moved that way. On the contrary, since Tennent's day, their agitation has been for railway communication between the hill planting districts and Colombo. The attainment of that desire, *plus* the Colombo breakwater and the convenience of a west coast port, has probably dissipated all chance of Colombo ever ceasing to be the capital.

THE PEOPLE.

The population of the island is now about 3,300,000. Europeans number barely 6000; most of them, excepting the civil servants, being connected directly or indirectly with the planting interest. This unofficial European element in the population is relatively much larger and more influential with the administration than anything of the kind in India. The Mohammedans already mentioned—the “Moormen”—number about 300,000. There are about 10,000 Malays, mostly in Colombo or in the south, or employed in the police, and about 22,000 Eurasians of mixed native and European blood. The Sinhalese outnumber the Tamils by about two to one.

The Tamil population includes about 250,000 immigrant coolies from South India, working in the planting districts. The Jaffna Tamils, resident in the north of the island, the descendants of the invaders who followed the Sinhalese into the island, never come as coolies to the planting districts. They are densely crowded in the Jaffna peninsula, and have spread some way down the coast, especially on the east. Where they come the Sinhalese retreat inland.

The Sinhalese are less enterprising and astute than the Jaffna Tamils, but possess more kindly qualities, and are less persistent and cynically adroit in falsehood and chicanery. Their religious buildings are not befouled with the licentiousness of the Tamil temples. Caste distinctions are observed by the Sinhalese, but with less of quasi-religious sanction than among Tamils or Hindus.

It must be admitted that the people of Ceylon, like other Eastern races, are addicted to untruth, to the use of the law courts, civil and criminal, as instruments of fraud and oppression. These failings, born of racial character, are largely fostered by defects in our legal system. The people are more untruthful in our courts than in their villages. Life would be unbearable if in daily village intercourse there were such an anarchy of untruth as the law-courts witness.

Outery is sometimes made for some summary procedure to punish and check native perjury and fraud. But these practices are best checked by strengthening the administration of justice so as to deprive them of success. Unfortunately the Government endeavoured to discourage litigation by the expedient of high stamp-duties on law proceedings. This visits the fraudulent and the innocent with one common penalty, and tends to increase crime, as the people, unable to obtain justice in the courts, attempt to take the law into their own hands.

The Sinhalese of the maritime districts have gradually diverged in various respects from the Kandians. The two seldom intermarry, and the Kandians, as might be expected, retain more of ancient usages, which once, no doubt, were common to the whole nation.

The Kandians are strongly attached to what are called "associated marriages"—that is, Polyandry—two or more brothers living with the same wife. This is a usage known also in other parts of Asia, and, according to Cæsar, it obtained among the ancient inhabitants of Britain. Some years ago the Government of Ceylon passed an enactment expressly forbidding these associated marriages. This was well meant, but ill judged. The practice is revolting to our ideas; but deep-rooted national usage cannot be broken through merely by prohibitory legislation. The associated unions continue, though deprived of legal sanction, and the legislation merely results in quarrelling and litigation.

The Kandians recognise two kinds of marriage—marriage in *binna* and marriage in *diga*. In the *binna* marriage the husband comes to live with the wife in her home, and may be turned out at her pleasure. In the *diga* marriage the wife follows her husband to his home, and loses her share of her father's land.

Rather from ignorance than intentional disregard, the Government has too little regarded the traditions of joint family ownership which exist, though in a less elaborate form than in India, where they have been wisely and humanely recognised. The people, the Sinhalese especially, are devotedly attached to their family lands; but, unhappily, the Ceylon Government, unlike the Government of India, has dealt with the land on the modern English principle of individual ownership and free trade in land, causing the land to be sold under civil writs for enforcement of fines, and even for maintenance of prisoners in gaol. No one who has not known the country can realise the unhappy results of this—heart-burning, litigation, violent crime, and misery. The man who has become landless very frequently ends by being a thief.

An interesting incident of ancient Sinhalese land-tenure is the manorial village, termed *Ninde-gama*, with its mansion-house, called the *Walanve*, its demesne lands, and its tenants, holding lands by tenure of

service,—the whole bearing a striking resemblance to the English manor, and passing even more rapidly to extinction.

Unhappily our Government for many years held aloof from the native gentry, and with unfortunate results. Their influence, if properly encouraged and controlled, would have been an invaluable aid to order and well-informed administration.

The expressions in daily use among the Sinhalese folk for the measurement of distance or time might sound strange in your ears.

A long distance is the *gow*,—the distance an active man may be expected to walk in an hour.

Ask a man, "How far is So-and-so's house from yours?" He may reply, "It is within a talk,"—i.e. so near that the people can talk backwards and forwards to each other. If a little further off he will say, "It is within a loud talk." If further yet, it may be, "Within a 'hoo-call.'"

If a man be asked in the witness-box, "What time was it when so-and-so happened?" he very likely raises his arm skyward and says, "The sun was so high before (or after) sun-turn." Or he may say, "There were so many feet of human shadow before (or after) sun-turn." Or perhaps he may say, "This happened about the time when priests eat." (The Buddhist priest, or rather monk, is supposed to take but one "square meal" *per diem*, viz., about 11 A.M.) Or he may say, "About the time when bees play" (about 4 or 5 P.M.); or "About the time parrots fly home to roost."

His tillage he measures by the amount of seed required to sow the plot. He may describe a plot of ground as of three *seers* sowing extent, which is much the same as saying three quarts.

You may sometimes hear expressions used which are almost poetic. A girl who had been forcibly abducted from her home described her feelings, when she found herself hurried away to a lonely place in the jungle, by saying, "I felt like a bird that has fallen into the sea."

Many of the ancient irrigation works, by means of which the Sinhalese cultivated paddy, are now in ruins; but under our rule some of the abandoned tanks have been restored. The Sinhalese are also clever in cultivating paddy on very steep hillsides by a process of terracing, termed *aswedduma*. Very many of the people get very little rice, and make their staple food of corocan (*Eleusine corocana*) and other very small grains, dry-grown, eked out with yams and other vegetables. It is centuries since the island can have produced rice enough for its inhabitants. The rice supply for the planters' coolies is all imported.

Quite lately the tax on paddy cultivation has been abolished—a measure as to which the advisers of the Government differed in opinion. The truth is, that the hardship which the people felt was not so much the tax itself—for they had been accustomed to an impost under their own sovereigns—as the oppressive incidents of its collection by the renters to whom it was farmed out, and the forced sales of the land itself over the villagers' heads, sometimes even when the crop had failed for lack of water.

The people now enjoy useful European products to which their fore-

fathers were strangers; yet, step by step with this, ancient industries seem to be dying out. I have already mentioned the iron-smelting. The people used to wear cloths woven and dyed in the country—cloths which absolutely would not wear out. Now they get less durable fabrics from Europe. The silversmith, too, is abandoning his old patterns and imitating cheap European trinkets. 'Tis pity that the old native arts and crafts should die out; and may we not wonder how the people reconcile missionary teaching with some of the wares that reach them from Christian Britain? Knives made to sell but not to cut; bottles and pots that hold scarce the half of what they ought to hold, and so on.

There are no native troops in the island. The Sinhalese and Tamils are not soldier material, like the Sikhs, Gurkhas, and other fighting races of India. A few years ago a volunteer battalion was enrolled, consisting mainly of town-bred natives and Eurasians. I believe Lord Wolseley has expressed in pretty round terms his opinion of a Eurasian battalion. Lord Roberts also has seen reason to rate rather low the fighting value of the peoples of Southern India. I once commanded a company of these Ceylon volunteers, and am disposed to describe them in the words of Dryden—

“ . . . maintained at great expense,
In peace a charge, in war a weak defence.”

The village folk have courage in their own way, as those can testify who have seen them in the presence of big game; but the people of the towns lead another sort of life, and the Eurasian has not in him the makings of a soldier. This volunteer battalion would be a very broken reed to lean upon in emergency. There are also some European artillery volunteers and mounted planters, who are metal of another sort, and these would, no doubt, give good account of themselves.

FORESTS.

The whole area of the island is rather less than 25,000 square miles—a little under 16,000,000 acres—of which by far the greater part is uncultivated. Allowing for land unsuitable for forest, and sundry other deductions, there ought to be nearly 4,000,000 acres of good timber forest; and the island grows many kinds of useful timber, besides valuable ornamental woods, such as ebony, satin-wood, and calamander. But a few years ago Mr. Vincent, an able forest officer, was borrowed from the Indian Government to report on the Ceylon forests, and this gentleman, in a most valuable report, had to announce the unwelcome discovery, that much of the good timber, and indeed a great deal of the forest itself, no longer exists. For want of a good forest system much of the timber had been poached away, but the wholesale disappearance of the forest itself was due to the native practice of *chena* cultivation, a practice followed under other names in India and Burmah.

The villager clears and burns off a block of forest, raises a crop or two, and then abandons the plot, and perhaps proceeds to clear another. By operations of this sort, repeated at intervals, the soil becomes

impoverished, or even quite exhausted, and at best the character of the vegetation is changed and the forest replaced by a poor, stunted growth. The practice is no new one. It no doubt increased after the Sinhalese Government had fallen to pieces; but the worst of the mischief was probably done after we came. Mr. Vincent's Report (which incidentally included a terse and excellent summary of the physical geography of the island, to which I am much indebted) led to the inauguration of a Forest Department on the Indian model.

In most of the existing forest the undergrowth is well-nigh impenetrable, save along a beaten path or a game-track. It consists largely of a plant which the Sinhalese call *Nillu* (*Strobilanthes*), of which there are thirty-two varieties, all peculiar to Ceylon. It grows to eight or ten feet high, flowers every seven or eight years, and then dies down, leaving the ground strewn with a litter of dry, pipe-like stems. When it flowers, the rocks and trees in the high jungles are hung with nests of bees, from which large quantities of honey are brought away.

VEGETABLE PRODUCTS.

Ceylon has 172 orchids—some ground orchids and some epiphytal. Though not so gorgeous as the South American, some are very handsome, and some delicately scented. I fear that a few of the handsomest run risk of extinction from the wholesale manner in which the plants are torn up and carried away, generally to perish after removal.

I should have liked to describe some of these Ceylon orchids to you, but time forbids. I believe that no *Cattleyas* exist in Asia, and no *Dendrobiums* in America. The *Dendrobiums* are well represented in Ceylon. The *Dendrobium MacCarthiae*, called by the Sinhalese *Wesak-mal*, because it flowers in the month *Wesak*, is peculiar to Ceylon, and not common even there. It throws a pretty frond of lilac and white blossom which lasts for some weeks; but repeated experience shows that it absolutely refuses to live in Britain.

Ceylon has now, for many years, possessed a most admirable Botanic Garden at Peradeniya, near Kandy, with branches in the mountains and in the low country. The late Dr. Thwaites and the late Dr. Trimen, its curators, were botanists of European reputation.

A tropical island seems specially liable to be invaded—or, shall I say, reinforced—by foreign vegetation. In Ceylon it is not always easy to say what is indigenous and what exotic. A remarkable instance of an exotic which recently has made itself thoroughly at home, even to the overpowering of native vegetation, is the *Lantana*, which is steadily spreading eastwards from the west coast, covering old clearings with an impenetrable tangle eight or ten feet high.

The cinnamon is probably not really indigenous; the coffee and tea and cacao certainly not. Indigo was introduced and failed. Sugar also is a failure. The cane grows freely, but, owing perhaps to the poor soil, its juice is deficient in saccharine matter. Citronella oil, extracted from a coarse grass in the south, used to pay, but for many years low prices have discouraged this industry. Cotton grows, and cotton mills have been started near Colombo.

ANCIENT REMAINS.

Ceylon has no ancient inhabited cities such as may be seen in India. The ancient works of the Sinhalese lie in ruins, buried in forest. You may mount some steep, forest-covered slope and find it to be the embankment of a great forgotten tank, dry these hundreds of years, and long overgrown with heavy timber.

Some of the old works of the Sinhalese palmy days have been uncovered in our time. At Anuradhapura the clearings have laid bare much of the ancient royal city, and now a trim, provincial station, with its *kachcheri*, and hospital, and other offices, stands amid the ruins of long streets, palaces, and *dagobas*—wildernesses of carved stone. These *dagobas* were huge domes of solid brick, enriched with stone pillars and carvings, built to enshrine relics. The oldest was built about 300 B.C. They were very lofty—some said to have been 400 feet high; the ruins of some are still over 200 feet.

At Anuradhapura may be seen the oldest authenticated tree in the world, the sacred Bo-tree of the Sinhalese (*Ficus religiosa*), a species of banyan, grown from a branch, brought from India in 288 B.C., of a tree associated with the founder of the Buddhist religion.

ANIMAL LIFE.

I have no time to say much about animal life. The Indian tiger, hyæna, wolf, cheetah, and the great gaur are not found in Ceylon; but there are elephants, panthers, bears, buffalo, several kinds of deer (including the tiny *Miminiya*, no larger than a cat), pig, jackals, monkeys, etc., and there are some monkeys, squirrels, and other animals peculiar to the island. The jungle-cock of Ceylon is distinct from the Indian.

Of course the great opening up of the country has much diminished the amount of game. Peacock, for instance, are very much scarcer than they used to be. The native practice of water-hole shooting in the dry season involves a great slaughter of deer. Close times are now enacted, but not much observed by the people in the wilder regions.

Many years ago there were sportsmen who had killed their hundreds of elephants. Sir Samuel Baker speaks of three guns killing 104 in three days. There used to be a Government reward of 10s. a tail. Now, restriction is placed upon the slaughter of elephants. There are still plenty in the wilder parts of the low country, but with the clearing of the mountain slopes for planting they have almost disappeared from the hills.

Now and then a herd of elephants is *corralled*, sometimes when distinguished strangers visit the island. The *corral* is a large and strong enclosure built of great logs in the deep forest, and having one entrance, opening from a long, funnel-shaped approach. The herd is driven perhaps for weeks by some hundreds of beaters. If the drive is successful, the herd at last enters the corral, then the gate is made fast, and the captives are noosed and secured at leisure by the aid of trained tame elephants.

Pig-sticking, as practised in India, would be barely practicable in such a country as Ceylon, which is less rideable than India; but the planters up in the higher hills have good sport hunting Sambhur-deer (locally termed "elk") afoot with dogs and knife.

It is curious to find some of our British birds reappearing in Ceylon in precisely their European form, but with their colours changed. For instance, Ceylon has two robins—unmistakable robins, but not red-breasts—for one is sooty black, and the other magpie black-and-white. The starling's plumage is plum-purple, with a yellow streak across the eye.

In a few places are found the edible birds'-nests which the Chinese so prize. The bird, I believe, is really a swift. The nests which I have seen were in the very centre of the island, rather small, and but moderately furnished with the gelatinous substance.

The sea and the low-country streams and waters teem with fish. The mountain torrents look as if they must harbour trout, yet they contain only a few loach. Within the last few years a well-arranged attempt has been made to stock some of the higher streams with trout, and the attempt is thought to be succeeding. I hear of two-pound and three-pound fish being taken in streams where the fry was turned out not very long ago. Still, it remains to be seen whether the trout will really breed and multiply. The previous absence of fish must have had some cause—perhaps the dearth of insect food—which may prevent the fish from multiplying. Let us hope, however, that the venture will succeed.

I must say a word about the pearl fishery, which takes place every now and then at the pearl-banks on the north-west coast. It dates from very ancient times indeed. When the Portuguese began to build their fort at Colombo in 1520 they at first resorted to the enormous deposits of pearl-oyster shells on the north-west coast. The fishery is in the hands of the Government, and brings in an occasional windfall. The divers come from the Malabar coast, and receive a stated share of the pearl-oysters. They are really mussels and not oysters. The fishery lasts several weeks, and the Crown share of each day's take is sold by auction at prices varying from fifteen up to seventy or eighty rupees per 1000 oysters. There is a gambling element in the speculation which seems attractive, especially to the Moors, and many thousands of people flock to the desolate, sandy shore off which the fishery takes place. The actual fishery is only part of the undertaking. A temporary town is laid out, with Government offices, *kachcheri*, post and telegraph office, hospital, and even a gaol, all built of sticks.

PLANTING.

Now I come to the great Planting enterprise, which began with coffee, and has been continued with tea.

Coffee was growing in Ceylon before the Portuguese came. We hear of it first in Yemen, and thence Arabs brought the shrub to the Malabar coast and to Ceylon. It is doubtful whether in its Arabian home or anywhere else the use of the coffee-berry as a stimulating drink was

known before the beginning of the fourteenth century. The Sinhalese seem merely to have used its leaves in curries, and strewed the white, perfumed blossoms in their temples. The Dutch found coffee growing when they came, and began to ship small quantities, but the export was never large, and about 1741 it was allowed to decline, Java yielding as much as they cared to throw on the European market. But the Sinhalese had learned its value, and they cultivated a little. After we came small quantities were collected by the Moormen, and brought to Colombo and Galle. Soon after we annexed the Kandyan country coffee began to attract the attention of some of our countrymen who had capital to invest, and in 1824 the first European coffee-estate was opened in the lower hills. About 1837-40 there was a great rush into coffee. The Government sold large tracts of forest to the planters, and the enterprise grew and prospered, though not without its vicissitudes. Mistakes were made sometimes, and capital sunk irrecoverably, in the opening of unsuitable land. There were districts of which it was said that they were like Westminster Abbey—"the grave of many a British sovereign." But in the main the planting did well, and the clearings climbed higher and higher up the mountains. Very many of the planters were hard-working Scotchmen, and numbers of the estates bear the names of towns or properties in Scotland. I believe that a large number of these pioneers of planting hailed from the neighbourhood of Aberdeen and Elgin. The railway up into the mountains, begun in the sixties, and afterwards extended, materially aided the enterprise.

Sinhalese villagers, who are expert axemen, cleared the jungle, but did not care to engage in permanent coolie work, and the supply of coolie labour was drawn from the Tamil districts of South India. Without this singularly convenient labour supply, cheap, docile, and ready to hand, the enterprise could never have succeeded as it did.

About 1873 coffee-planting attained its zenith. The yield was generous, and prices ruled high. Then followed a period of unnatural inflation. It sometimes happens, that when a useful industrial or commercial enterprise has prospered signally, an over-speculative spirit makes its appearance. So in Ceylon, a gambling speculative element engrafted itself on the enterprise of the hard-working *bona fide* planters. Then disease attacked the bushes, and the artificial inflation rendered the downfall all the more disastrous. About 1879 the fall was headlong. In 1882 the export had fallen from over 1,000,000 cwt. to about a quarter of that quantity. The planters and their creditors were at their wits' end. Estates were sold for a mere song. Owners and mortgagees lost their money, superintendents their salaries, and even coolies at eightpence and ninepence a day lost arrears of wages. There were estates on which (excepting weekly advances of rice for food) the coolies' wages had not been settled up for a couple of years.

Yet the mass of the planters never lost heart. Liberian coffee was tried without much success. Cinchona prospered for a while, saving many from sinking. Then disease and a fall in the price of quinine attacked that product.

Even then the planters were not to be beaten. They turned their

attention to tea. They had to cut out dead or dying coffee, plant up the land anew, and wait for crop. They had to provide an entirely new class of expensive machinery; and they had to learn, and to teach their employés, a new industry.

All this was successfully accomplished, and now for many years the tea has been thriving and paying handsomely, not only in the old coffee districts, but in new ones, some of them in the low country.

Success has seldom been better deserved. This recovery was a marvellous achievement—a success won in the face of obstacles apparently insurmountable, by stubborn perseverance, combined with alert and adroit enterprise in installing a new industry, and aided by the cordial and resolute manner in which the planters made common cause and worked together.

Sinhalese villagers now come in and take coolie work on the low country estates; but their labour is more intermittent, and therefore less valuable, than that of the Indian coolie.

There are now more than 300,000 acres of land under tea, and the annual export has reached close on 100,000,000 lbs. Teas grown high up in the mountains fetch the highest prices, but the low-country estates give most leaf: thus, between the two, the question, Which pays best? is a problem in *maxima* and *minima*.

Cacao thrives and pays within a limited area in the lower hills; and quite lately coffee, which was becoming forgotten, has had somewhat of a revival.

It is unlikely that the acreage under planting can be much further extended, for want of suitable and purchaseable forest land to plant. Ceylon planters are now overflowing into Nyassaland and the Straits Settlements.

Tea, so far, has been a persistent success in Ceylon. The question is sometimes mooted—and of course it is an important one—whether this success is likely to be permanent, or whether tea may one day fail as coffee failed. Experts acquainted with tea in China and Japan have been heard to predict a falling off in the yield at the end of about thirty years. The horizon is not without presage of difficulty in the way of labour supply, and of wood fuel for the coolies and the apparatus; but so far there have been absolutely no signs of any diminution in the yield. It may be that the poor soil and forcing climate are better suited to a leaf product than to a berry, such as coffee.

Excellent as this planting success has been, its value, so far as the native inhabitants of the island are concerned, may be, and often is, overrated. It has raised the administration to a high financial scale, and has provided employment for some of the native inhabitants, fewer however than is generally supposed. The bulk of the returns go elsewhere—the planters' well-earned profit to Europe, and most of the wages expenditure to the Indian coolie. I do not undervalue the planting; on the contrary, I value it highly, only it is not correct to say that the interest of the planter is necessarily that of the sons of the soil.

FOOD SUPPLY AND HEALTH.

There are districts in which the people have been straitened for food,

such as the Wanny, towards the north-east; but for the reasons already mentioned, it is unlikely—perhaps impossible—that Ceylon should ever experience those extensive failures of rain which have produced famine in India.

The opening up of the country has been a powerful agent in favour of public health. As to European health, the contrast between now and eighty or ninety years ago is marvellous. It is curious to compare the conditions under which our troops now undertake tropical expeditions, with what our men underwent in those early Ceylon days, not from the enemy, but from disease. Ill fed, ill clothed, exposed to tropical sun and tropical rain, the wonder is that any survived at all. In 1817 the loss from disease was twenty per cent. One detachment of 250 lost 200 men from fever in three months.

CONCLUSION.

I fear I have already detained you too long, yet I should like to add a few words in conclusion.

There is no need to insist on the value of Ceylon to Great Britain at this day. Its situation and its harbours are invaluable to us—close to India and on the high road to the Far East and our Australian colonies. The possession of Ceylon is indispensable to our Indian Empire, and her harbours, Colombo especially, are of the utmost value in relation to other parts of the world. And then there is the planting, and the great commercial success, the great import and export trade which has developed under our rule.

And how far has our rule proved a boon or otherwise to the native inhabitants, the sons of the soil? Doubtless, if we had not taken the country when we did, some other foreign Power would have had it; and without vanity we may believe that the people are better off with us than they would have been under any other Power. I am sure that no Power governs its subject races with such humane and disinterested intentions as Great Britain.

The question, how far our administration has been really successful in promoting the welfare of the people, is not one to be answered in a few cheap phrases about the blessings of British civilisation. Nor is the commercial success of our government necessarily a correct measure of its value to them. Side by side with all that we have done, three unhappy mischiefs have grown up in the country—Drinking, Gambling, and False Litigation. Our Government has been sincerely wishful to benefit the native races. Its shortcomings have been unintentional, due to lack of touch with the people, and insufficient knowledge of their needs.

I have mentioned certain matters in which our wheels revolve awry. It is unfortunate that the native languages are too little used in public business—far less than in India. In the law courts, for instance, everything takes place in the English language. The mischief of this is twofold. The people, much to their disadvantage, are left in the hands of intermediaries, Eurasian or other, and the administration, being less in contact with them, is the less alive to their needs.

Our shortcomings have been greatest where most of you would least expect to find them—in the administration of justice. The people believe, and rightly, in our will to do justice without fear or favour. In the criminal courts native prisoners continually entreat to be tried by English gentlemen. The failure is, because our legal machinery is not adjusted to the country. When the law fails to do justice, crime increases. I have known cases in which an influential man has oppressed the people round him, in defiance of law, till at last in despair they murdered him; and that not in remote, wild parts of the country, but quite the contrary. The law needs to be simpler and cheaper, and justice more accessible.

Lord Roberts, writing of the Indian administration, has set down with his keen insight, and in his terse and lucid manner, much that the Ceylon Government might well take to heart.

It is a very difficult task to contrive laws and institutions for an Eastern population; and there is a strong and plausible temptation to cut the knot by borrowing something from our own country, which may be, after all, unfitted for transplanting. Thus trial by jury was introduced in criminal trials—an excellent thing in our own country, where it was born of our national character, but disastrous in Ceylon, where it simply means injustice. The European and the native press agree in desiring to be rid of it, as unsuited to the country.

Excellent as our rule is in many ways, the very strength of our Executive, coupled as it is with so much miscarriage of justice, creates for the people a horror which did not exist in the less orderly days before we came, viz., injustice by the strong arm of the law when misdirected. For now no native, however blameless his life, can reckon himself as secure from the success of some false and malicious criminal accusation.

But I hope we may take courage. Having achieved so much in other departments, it is possible for us to succeed in this also. I dwell on these shortcomings, not in any way as a pessimist, but because, while our successes need no advertisement, mistakes need to be pointed out in order that they may be remedied. The success in some departments has been so great that there is risk of its overshadowing departments which are less successful, and distracting attention from what remains to be achieved. I gladly recognise that late years have witnessed improvement, and hope that it may be further extended.