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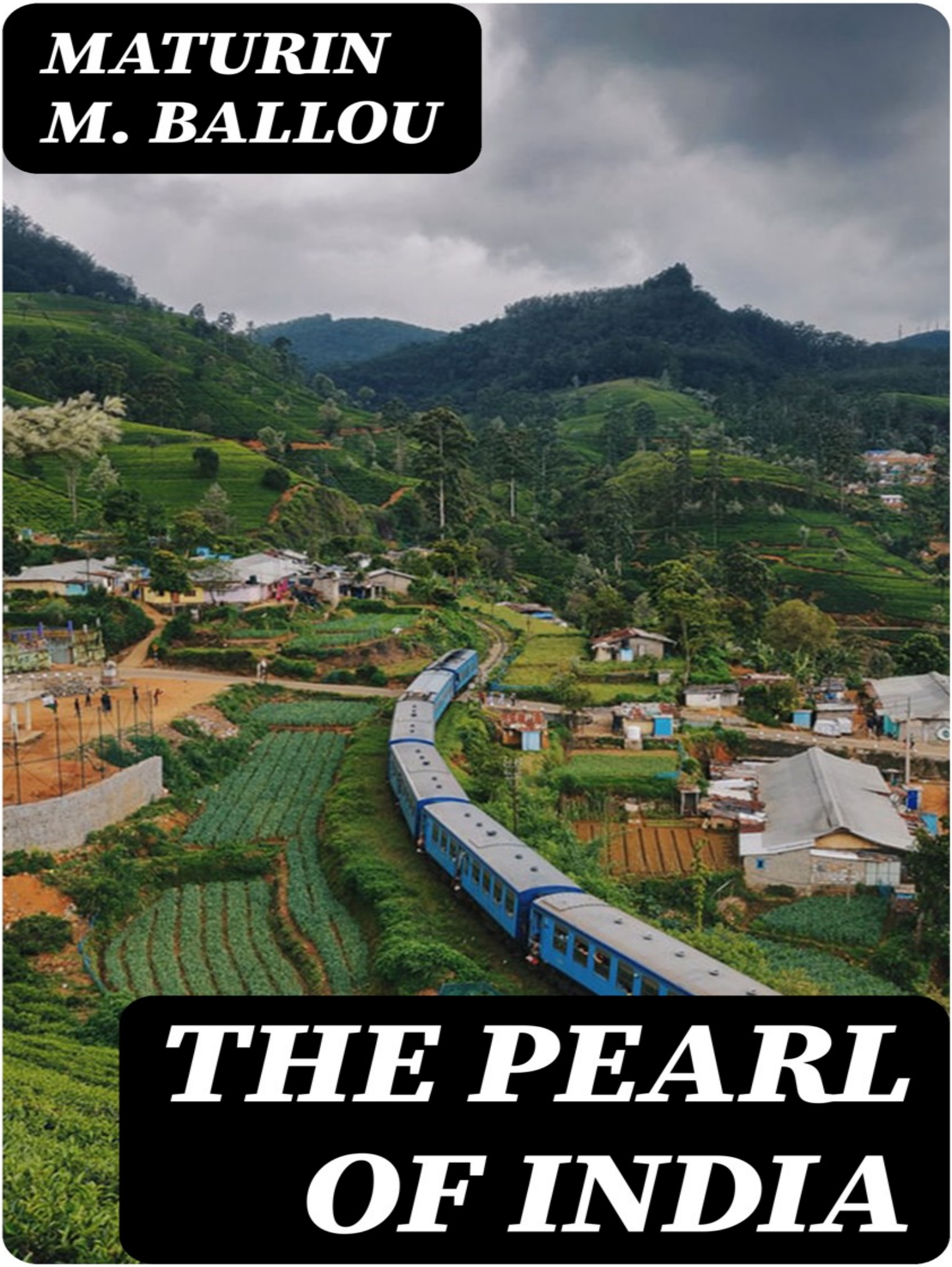

THE PEARL OF INDIA


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The Pearl of India

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PREFACE.

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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.

THE PEARL OF INDIA.

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CHAPTER I.

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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.

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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