

AHAMADEWU
(Turtle Cove) 1794
1826

Tortoise shell / TAG
P. 273-276

P. 111

KATTREGAM TO HAMBANTOTTE

FACSIMILE EDITION

CEYLON AND ITS CAPABILITIES;

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By
J. W. Bennett

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C E Y L O N
AND ITS CAPABILITIES;

AN ACCOUNT

OF ITS

NATURAL RESOURCES, INDIGENOUS PRODUCTIONS,
AND COMMERCIAL FACILITIES;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

DETAILS OF ITS STATISTICS, PILOTAGE AND SAILING DIRECTIONS,

AND

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING THE ROYAL CHARTER OF JUSTICE, THE KANDYAN CONVENTION OF 1815, ORDINANCES OF THE
COLONIAL GOVERNMENT ON VARIOUS MATTERS CONNECTED WITH THE COMMERCE
OF THAT ISLAND, ETC. ETC.

WITH PLAIN AND COLORED ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY

J. W. BENNETT, ESQ., F. L. S.,

LATE CEYLON CIVIL ESTABLISHMENT.

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CHAP. XXXIV.

Hell upon earth—Route from Kattregam to Hambantotte—Route resumed from Yalle—Ahamadewe, or Turtle Cove—Hawk's-bill turtles eggs wholesome, notwithstanding the noxious properties of the flesh—Method of taking the turtle, and divesting it of the Tortoise-shell of commerce—Dutch method of solving the hypothesis of the periodical visits of the turtle to the scene of its original despoliation—Turtling season—Choice of Tortoise-shell—Exported in a raw and manufactured state—Successful experiment of hatching turtles eggs—Paltoopanè—Wild tea—Its uses—Assistant Staff Surgeon (ruuford—Tea plant (Thea Bohea, L.) indigenous—Mahagammè—Kirindé Oya—Mahagammè rest-house—The son of the Malay Moodliar presents the Author with a couple of elephant tusks, and a specimen of the supposed Gaulama, or Demon Bird—Great dread of it manifested by the palankin bearers—Insuperable impediments to its preservation—Description of the specimen of the supposed Gaulama—Major General Thomas Hardwicke F. R. S., F. L. S.—His opinion of the Gaulama—Supposed to be a species of the Aluco owl, the U'lula of the Romans, and Nycticorax of the Greeks—A superstitious M. D.—A Buddhist priest's anecdote of the demon bird—Wallewe Aratchy—Fatal effects of eating Hawk's-bill turtle—Devil ceremonies for a remedy—Aratchy's death and funeral obsequies.

LEAVING that "hell upon earth," Kattregam, the tourist, if he intend to proceed direct to Hambantotté, after having crossed the Parapa-Oya at the ford, will take the road through the villages of Mahagammé and (crossing the Kirindé-Oya) Boondellé, to Hambantotté, a distance altogether of about 30 miles;—but, as by so doing, the opportunity of visiting Ahamadewé, or Turtle Cove, would be lost, let it be supposed, that he does not diverge from the sea coast, but, after having crossed the Yallé river at the ferry, resumes his original and direct route to Ahamadewé, which is about 10 miles from Yallé.

When the turtle season approaches, the fish renter of the district assembles his people at Ahamadewé, where they construct huts, and a sort of temporary bazaar, for the sale of the usual articles of their simple diet, which are daily brought in by the villagers residing within eight or ten miles of the Cove.

As the turtles land only at night, the fishers (who are ever on the *qui vive* for the sport) begin to look out for their expected prey soon after sunset; and, as much depends on the state of the night, they distribute themselves, early or late, as those best accustomed to the habits of the animals may determine, along the edge of the low jungle bordering the Cove, where they lie ambushed until the signal be passed for them to act.

If the night be fine, and very little wind stirring, the turtles are generally observed to land just as

“ The pale moon, from out her cloudy cave,
Drops her still anchor in the twilight wave,” *

and soon commence the flapping noise, most agreeable to the ears of the expectant “ turtling gang;” by which they know that the “ Hawk’s-bills” are busily engaged in preparing holes in the sands, for the reception of their numerous *ova*, which often amount to a hundred at one time, and are very wholesome, notwithstanding the noxious properties of the flesh.

Although these reptiles are undisturbed during the process of incubation, the experienced Headman knows so well when sufficient grace has been allowed for that purpose, that he seldom omits giving the signal at the proper moment; this is done by whisper along the whole line of the ambuscade; from whence, a simultaneous onset is made by the whole gang, each carrying a stout Bamboo pole, and ligatures of the twisted bark of certain jungle trees, for the purpose of securing the turtles, as they are turned upon their backs, by tying the opposite fins, or rather *feet*, together; without which precaution, this species, (the Hawk’s-bill, *Testudo imbricata*, L., *Chelonia caretta*, C., and *Lili-kas-bewa* of the Singhalese,) from its feet being longer, and back, or *shield*, more convex than those of the other varieties, would easily regain its natural position, and probably escape: for it defends itself with great fury, and bites severely, as many a Singhalese fisherman knows to his cost.

The fishers having secured as many turtles as they can, fires are lighted upon the spot; a bamboo pole is then passed longitudinally between the tied feet and breastplate of each turtle, by which it is suspended over the blazing fire, until the dorsal plates (or scales, as they are usually called) become heated and start from their horizontal position, when they are rapidly stripped off, beginning with the plate nearest the head, which is the largest, until the whole thirteen plates that cover the disk, are removed; but the marginal plates, of which there are twenty five, are seldom taken, unless unusually large; and as soon as the stripping is over, the despoiled animal is liberated, and allowed a free egress to the sea.

Although one would naturally infer, from all the circumstances of so apparently cruel a process, that instinct would prevent the same turtles from re-visiting the place of their former despoliation, the fact is otherwise; for those that survive the inter-

* Rev John Mitford, A. M

mediate dangers which everywhere beset them, return to the Cove at the same season (viz. from the middle of April to the end of May) in the ensuing year.

This fact was fully ascertained by a Dutch gentleman, who had charge of the district in 1794; who, to satisfy his doubts upon the point, caused brass rings, marked with the dates of the capture of the turtles, in Dutch and Malay, to be attached to a fin of a certain number selected for the purpose; and, in 1826, the fish renter of the district brought me one of these rings, which he had removed from a turtle of 400lbs weight. The ring was about two-thirds of an inch in width at the largest part, and had been rivetted on, but the characters were obliterated by the action of the water; and the renter positively affirmed, that the same turtle had, to his knowledge, revisited the Cove for thirty two successive years. As soon as the ring had been engraven with my initials, in Singhalese, and dated 1826, by the second Moodliar's *Liené Aratchy*, or *Ola* writer, (who did it as deeply as he could with his iron style,) it was replaced upon the turtle, which was allowed to depart without further molestation.

The turtle season may be said to continue till the end of June; and any quantity of "tortoise shell" of the harvest may be purchased of the fish renter, upon the spot, at 100 per cent. less than the cost of the same article at Galle. The brown and black shell, which is invariably the thickest, is most valued; and the foremost plate of the disk, which is the largest in point of size, of quadrangular shape, and the anterior part convex, is considered the best.

Ceylon exports tortoise-shell, both in a raw and manufactured state, the natives being very expert at making betel and snuff boxes, cigar cases, combs of every description, tea caddies, and writing desks; for which latter purposes, they flatten the shell, by means of steam, into thin veneers. Betel boxes are always made of the best shell, (the largest and thickest plates being requisite for that purpose,) and are superbly ornamented with gold and silver filigree work.

A Portuguese lady at Point de Galle, the wife of an officer of the late 3rd Ceylon regiment, (Nicholas Austin, Esq., of the colonial staff,) by way of experiment, placed some Hawk's-bill turtles' eggs in a bason of sea-sand and small dead shells, and exposed them to the sun, until the young turtles were hatched; these were then transferred to a bason of sea water, where they continued until a larger vessel was requisite by their increased size; and ultimately they were removed to a place that had been constructed for them around the margin of the well, in the court yard, where they were supplied with salt water every day, and, in less than two years, had attained from two to three feet in length. The shields having been kept clean, were very beautiful,

from the variety of transparent tints they displayed (but more particularly when salt water was thrown over them) in the sunshine.

From Ahamadewé to Paltoopané, the distance is 5 miles; the face of the country, as between Yallé and the former place, jungle and sand, sand and jungle, with an occasional glimpse of the sea.

At Paltoopané there is a small but well-built and modern fort, garrisoned by a non-commissioned officer's detachment of the invalid company of the Ceylon rifle corps, which affords an agreeable change to the traveller, as something approaching to civilization; for he will find very comfortable quarters during his stay, and every attention from the clerk (of the Hambantotté catchery) in charge of the salt stores.

The fortification having been originally intended for a sea defence, is low, but strongly built, and capable of mounting several heavy guns; nature has, however, providently defended this part of the coast by a fortification of madrepora, more effectual against an invading enemy than all that the art of man could oppose.

This district is particularly subject to long drought, sometimes for ten or eleven months together, and the burnt state of the herbage displays a melancholy contrast to every other part of the island.

The jungles adjoining this place, and throughout the Mahagampattoo district, abound with the "wild tea tree," as it is called, but which, I am informed, is a species of *Orchis*. It bears yellow flowers; and the poorest people are accustomed to use the leaf both for food and drink; for the former, boiled and mixed with *Tyre*, and for the latter, an infusion of the green leaf. It is called *Gal-Kuroo* by the Singha-lese; who also employ the leaf of another plant, which greatly resembles that of the *Thea Bohea*, L., and is called by them *Rata-Thé-Kola*, (or Red-Tea leaf,) in a similar manner.

Although the infusion of the green leaf is a very bitter drink, it is an excellent tonic, and its taste may be greatly improved by the addition of the indigenous lemon grass (*Andropogon Schænanthus*, L.) and sugar; but that made with the dried leaf, is a tolerable substitute for Bohea tea.

The late Assistant Staff Surgeon Crawford, at the time he superintended the hospital duties at Batticaloa, in 1826, sent me, by a native *Dhoney* bound to Hambantotté, a collection* of insects and plants; and, among the latter, a very fine specimen of what he considered the real tea, in flower. It fully answered the generic description of the *Thea Bohea* of Linnæus; and, as it both flowered and seeded freely, I made a sketch

* This included the *Buprestis chrysis*, C., noticed in page 252.

of it, of which an engraving is annexed, but I was altogether unsuccessful in my own researches for the plant in the jungles of the Mahagampattoo.

Mr. Crawford did not assume any merit to himself as having made a new discovery, and it is very clear that the Dutch were well aware of the tea plant being indigenous in the eastern province; but it is to be wondered at, that the government has not, long ere this, directed its attention to so important an object of commerce; for if it be worth while to cultivate tea in so distant a country as Assam, with all its inconveniences and dangers, surely it would be a more lucrative speculation, in a colony so much nearer home, and with increased facilities of export. But this, like the bread fruit tree, is another *chance* discovery; and a better acquaintance with Ceylon in 1787—1789, would have rendered the two expensive trips to Otaheite, for supplying the West Indies with bread fruit plants, inexpedient; for they could have been obtained in any quantity from this island, and have obviated all the disastrous consequences of the mutiny on board His Majesty's ship "Bounty."

Captain Percival, in his "Account of Ceylon," published in 1805, informs us, "that the tea plant has also been discovered native in the forests of the island. It grows spontaneously in the neighbourhood of Trincomalé, and other northern parts of Ceylon. General Champagné informed me that the soldiers of the garrison frequently use it. They cut the branches and twigs, and hang them in the sun to dry; they then take off the leaves, and boil them to extract the juice, which has all the properties of that of the China leaf. I have in my pocket a letter from an officer in the 80th regiment, in which he states that he had found the real tea plant, in the woods of Ceylon, of a quality equal to any that ever grew in China, and that it was in his power to point out to government the means of cultivating it in a proper manner."

From Paltoopané to Mahagammé, where the Kirindé-Oya is forded, the distance is $9\frac{1}{4}$ miles; the rest-house lies in the midst of low jungle, where mosquitos, ants, and sand-flies are extremely troublesome, and snakes* occasionally obtrusive.

Whilst halting at this place, in 1826, on my way to the ruins of the ancient and once splendid city of Mahagammé, or Mahagam, but which I was prevented from accomplishing, by a severe attack of jungle fever, that compelled me to retrace my steps to Hambantotté, the son of the Malay Moodliar, who had tracked a tusked elephant from the Kirindé-Oya to the jungle in which these celebrated ruins stand, brought me, in addition to a very large tusk, and the half of another which had been broken and become quite carious, a most extraordinary bird, which was neither owl nor raven, but in some respects resembled both.

* See page 111.

He called it the "Devil's Bird," and two of my bearers pretended to know it as the *Gaulama*, or Demon Bird; but the others shook their heads doubtingly, and one of them remarked to my interpreter, that "no man can kill *him*, for that arrow or ball would come back (rebound) as from a washerman's stone!" Such is the effect of superstition! The arguments to which this gave rise, among the coolies, each of whom had something to say about the *Gaulama*, but I could not get any one of them to touch "*him*," seemed interminable; and,

"Who shall decide, when *doctors* disagree?"

I had reason to regret, that in my very feverish state at the time, and the incipient putrefaction of the bird, which rapidly increased to a most offensive degree, I could not have taken off and preserved the skin, however anxious to have so done, even if I had had every necessary material; and, not being able to procure arrack in which to immerse it for future examination, all that remained in my power was to make a note of the circumstance; of itself, at such a time, an arduous task.

The bird, when held as nearly as possible in its natural position, by the son of the Malay Moodliar, (Nouredin,) was about eighteen inches from the point of the beak to the claws; head very round, and sunk within a cavity formed by its feathers; eyes also sunk, and surrounded with small iron-grey feathers, the iris of a brownish black; bill of a greenish hue; the upper part of the body a rufous black, intermixed with lighter and dark grey spots; wings three feet six inches between the extremities; tail about five or six inches; legs black, covered with black and white feathers, and breast a greyish white, with transverse bars.

My lamented friend the late Major General Thomas Hardwicke, of the Bengal artillery, to whom, soon after my arrival from Ceylon, I had offered my notes upon the indigenous productions of that island, and who then had it in contemplation to publish a *Fauna Indica*, having inquired very particularly respecting the *Ulama* or *Gaulama*, I referred him to the note I had made at Mahagammé respecting the supposed Demon Bird. The General subsequently informed me, that by my description of its size and plumage, and of its horrid screams, which resemble those that one might imagine to proceed from some conscience-stricken wretch, in an extremity of pain and despair, and subsequently change into a howling moan, but of a deeper and more gloomy tone than that of a dog baying the moon, that it is a species of *Aluco*,* or black owl,

* *La Hulotte* of Buffon.—*Ustula* of Brisson; so called by the Romans, from its cry resembling the howling of wolves (*Ululare*).

or the night raven (*Nycticorax*) of the Greeks, hitherto known only in Europe and the north of Asia; which, according to Salerne, howls "with so gloomy a moan as to terrify women and children."

Although I never heard the *Gaulama* but once, it is impossible ever to forget it; and that was at Wanderopé, in 1826, about midnight. The bird had taken post upon a branch of the ancient *Bogaha* tree in the temple grounds, which were merely separated from my compound by the high road. Dr. Casement, at that time the assistant surgeon in charge of the hospital duties at Hambantotté, was with me, and I never saw any one more strangely affected than he was; for, being both timid and superstitious, he insisted upon its being a prognosticator of more deaths, (of which we had just experienced several awful instances,) and he commenced firing his double-barrelled gun, in order "to frighten the devil away," as he called it; which he continued to do, at intervals, for the greater part of the night, much to my amusement, although it deprived me of sleep.—And therefore, as there are superstitious people amongst educated Europeans, one cannot much wonder at the effects of similar notions upon untutored Indians.—So much for the *Gaulama*!

"For ravens, though as birds of omen,
They teach both conjurors and old women
To tell us what is to befall,
Can't prophecy themselves at all."—COWPER.

I may mention another instance of superstition, connected with this extraordinary bird.—The *Oonansé*, or Buddhist priest of the *Pansala** at Wanderopé, who positively vouched for the fact, "that the *Gaulama* had been heard for three successive nights antecedent to the death of the Aratchy of the district," seriously expressed his belief to me, that, after such an omen, "his recovery was impossible, for that neither medicinal remedies nor Devil dancing (of which last he spoke most contemptuously) could have any effect against fate."

The Aratchy, who was one of the finest specimens of the human figure, literally of "Herculean mould," that I ever saw in any part of the world, fell a victim to his superstition, when it is very probable, that a dose of tincture of rhubarb and laudanum might have saved his life.

This Headman had been down to Paltoopané, on duty; where, from eating curry made of the hawk's-bill turtle, a violent diarrhæa ensued, which so greatly reduced his strength in the short space of forty hours, as to render it necessary to convey him in a *Dooley* to his house at Pybocké, a distance of nineteen miles, where I visited him the

* Synonymous with the *Pandal* of the Hindoos,—literally "a house made of leaves."

day after his arrival, for I felt much interested in the fate of so indefatigable and honest a Singhalese Headman, (as he really was,) and had hoped to have prevailed upon him to accept the services of the native medical assistant, Mr. Heyn, (for, at that period, there was no European medical officer nearer than Galle, a distance of seventy miles from Pybocké,) or such remedies as I could offer him from my portable medicine case.

Upon approaching within a mile or two of the village, I heard the sound of *Tam-a-tams*, as if some native marriage or rejoicing was taking place, but which, upon entering the house, I found to proceed from a "devil ceremony" going on in the inner room, where lay the poor Aratchy, stretched at full length upon a mat, with merely his *Sarong* about his loins, and another rolled up under his head by way of pillow. Immediately facing him, were three gigantic figures of Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu, formed of sticks and clay, plastered over with chunam, and painted, in their order, yellow, white, and blue. In the middle of each figure was a small staple, to which a string, made of the fibre of the *Pandanus odoratissimus*, and neatly platted of the size of a small fishing line, was fastened, and the three lines having been brought to an apex upon the patient's exposed abdomen, (the seat of pain,) were joined to another string, which was passed round the body.

On the right of the Aratchy, sat a Kapuralé of Pattiné, with the copper bangles of the Dewalé passed over each great toe, which he kept in a revolving motion, to the horrid din of "native music;" whilst another Devil priest, masked and habited, as represented in the annexed engraving from a native drawing, kept up a clatter from the several cylindrical copper spheres about his person, as he clanked his chains and whirled about!

In this state, the poor Aratchy had passed the whole night; and I felt glad that I had visited him at so early an hour, (just before sunrise,) for he had not even the assistance of a native doctor, and trusted entirely to the "God of Kattregam" to restore him!! After remaining with him nearly two hours, during the whole of which time the devil dance continued without intermission, and having merely succeeded in obtaining a promise, that, "if the devil did not cure him in another day and night, he would take English medicine," I took leave of this most infatuated man, and gave over all hope of seeing him alive at the expiration of the time he had mentioned.

My fears were but too true; that very evening, the dying Aratchy was removed to the compound by his children, (in order to save the house, which was an excellent Singhalese farm house, with tiled roof, from being pulled down, in the event of their parent dying within it,) where, about midnight, he ceased from pain and life together; and, two days after, on passing over the plains about a mile from his house, I saw the *ola*-ornamented bamboo arch, (where the body had been burnt, just in the style described by Knox,) that marked the obsequies of the Vidahn Aratchy of the Mahagampattoo!

CHAP. XIII.

Specimens of Singhalese proverbs—Dutch language but little known among the natives—C. A. Prins, Esq.—Prevalence of the Hindo-Portuguese language—Singhalese generally acquainted with the properties of their indigenous plants—Madung Appo, a native botanist and doctor—Instance of extraordinary cure of blindness—Native doctor's objections to name the composition of the salts employed—Obligations to him—Major General Thomas Hardwicke, Bengal artillery—Pariar dog nuisance—Government precautions against hydrophobia—John Tranchell, Esq.—Sudden entry of a rabid pariar dog during dinner—The host's coolness, and assurance of curing his guests if bitten—Death of the dog from the effect of rain—Singhalese cattle—Swine—Improvements suggested—Rabbits—Poultry—Seir fish—Shell fish—Turtle—Establishment of farms and agricultural prizes suggested—Singhalese a litigious nation—Pointed knives illegal—Caste—A beautiful girl nearly murdered for covering her bosom with a kerchief—Nothing to be dreaded in Ceylon by protecting all as British subjects should be protected.

THE Singhalese have several books of proverbs; and an acquaintance with these "wise sayings" is considered to display great knowledge. A few are here given, as specimens of the native phrases, and their meaning.

"Do not wear a *Wallah** in your native place, nor carry a large stick in another."—That is, Be not too proud at home, nor display more power than belongs to you elsewhere.

"Although a man with large teeth dies, no one will believe it."—No one will believe a man, who is known to be rich, when he talks of his poverty.

"Scraps of chunan are found in every one's betel box."—The best of men have faults.

"Buying a house for five hundred dollars, and selling it at half-price."—A person reduced from riches to comparative poverty.

"Although the *Ambalama*† be unroofed, will it shorten the journey?"—A good reputation survives poverty.

Another proverb of synonymous interpretation is, "Although an elephant may become lean, he cannot wash in a barrel."

"The horn, which came last, has more power than the ear which preceded it."—The lowest in his own village has become head in another.

* *Wallah*,—A cloth worn by the Singhalese, of which one end hangs lower than the other—a mark of ostentation.

† *Ambalama*,—A rest-house for natives upon high roads.

“ Even in *Gilimala** there are people with white teeth.”—Amongst the best people, some are bad.

“ Even in the salt *Leeways*† people live without salt.”—There are affluent persons who derive no enjoyment from their fortunes.

“ A foreigner and a parasite plant are synonymous.”—One is as ruinous to the place he inhabits, as the other to the tree it embraces.

“ Tanks do not fill with the night dew, but with rain.”—Men become rich by honesty, and not by roguery.

“ Where is the honor of being born at *Totaganawa*, if you cannot read and understand *Bana*?”—*Totaganawa* is famous for literature and learned men, and *Bana*‡ signifies the history of the god Buddha.

“ First look at the lime,§ and then open the mouth.”—Bribe the judge well, and success is certain, whether the cause be right or wrong.

It is a subject of general remark, that but few of the Singhalese, and those of the higher castes only, understand the Dutch language. A very intelligent Dutch gentleman, the late Carolus Arnoldus Prins, Esq., informed me, that his countrymen would not employ any domestics that were acquainted with that language, that they might not know the subjects of conversation at their masters' tables. The very different policy of their predecessors, whilst in the possession of the maritime provinces, may be inferred, from the prevalence of the Hindo-Portuguese language, and the extension of the Roman Catholic religion throughout the whole track of their original conquests; than which, no greater proof need be adduced of the original power of the Lusitanians of the sixteenth century, or of the spirit of adventure by which they distinguished themselves.

The generality of Singhalese have a considerable knowledge of their indigenous plants, and some of their doctors are very clever in medical botany. As oculists, they may be said to excel; and this is the more extraordinary, because they know nothing of the anatomical structure of the eye or head.

Madung Appo, a native doctor of Galpiaddé, near Galle, from whose skill in botany I derived much useful information, gave it as his opinion, that “ *Ceylon produces such*

* *Gilimala*, a place famous for the cultivation of the betel plant, or *Bulack*, which blackens the teeth.

† *Leeway* or *Leawawa*, natural salt pans.

‡ The place where *Bana* is read, is called *Bana Madewa*.

§ It was the custom formerly for bribes to be inclosed in limes, (the small variety of the *Citrus medicus* or lemon,) which generally consisted of as many gold star pagodas, value about eight shillings each, as it could be made to contain. To this day, limes are offered, upon all occasions of ceremony, by the Singhalese.

an infinite variety of medicinal plants, that if a botanist were to devote a long life to their investigation, he would still leave an ample field for the labours of very many equally zealous successors."

This culler of simples was extremely well acquainted with the nature and properties of all plants included in the native *Materia Medica*. As an oculist, he was justly celebrated; and one of his cures was regarded with admiration by many who had heard four English medical gentlemen, including two physicians, previously declare the case *altogether incurable and hopeless*. In the case alluded to, his proposition to cure a little Portuguese girl, about seven years of age, after she had been declared incurable by four of the European faculty, appeared so preposterous, and indeed ridiculous, that it was only upon his positive and repeated assurances that "he could and would cure her, if permitted to try his own remedies, even were a hundred European doctors of the same opinion as those who had already declared the case hopeless;" and this too after the child had been for several weeks under the care of an English surgeon, that the mother consented to allow him a trial of his skill.

The proposition, on Madung Appo's part, was, that if the girl recovered her sight, he was to be paid thirty rix dollars, or 2*l.* 5*s.* sterling; but if otherwise, that he was to have nothing for his attendance and medicines. This preliminary having been assented to, he began by ordering the child a milk diet; and during the six weeks that she was his patient, he employed no other medicine than a fine white powder, having all the appearance of quinine; this he gave in doses at stated periods, and occasionally blew a similar powder, by means of a quill having a piece of clear muslin at the end, into the child's eye. At the expiration of six weeks, to the surprise of every one, and to the delight of many, who were interested for this amiable little creature, her vision was perfectly restored. A continuation of the same diet was prescribed for some time, and then gradually changed; and the only particular care this native doctor recommended, was, that light should be excluded as much as possible from the room until the child's sight could bear it without inconvenience.

I could not obtain from him the name of either medicine; but to my questions, why he would not inform me, and whether the same was employed externally and internally, his answer to the first, was, "I dare not give you the name, (as if he was under some superstitious fear or obligation,) but I will say thus far, it is a *salt* obtained from the bark of various trees;" and, as to the second, "The medicines were altogether different, but both were *vegetable salts*."

I acknowledge great obligations to Madung Appo, for the native names of a variety of plants, and for a copious description of their medicinal properties, notwithstanding

his great and insuperable objection to make his eye remedy known. By his aid I obtained a great variety of medicinal plants, which I dried and sent to my respected friend, the late Major General Thomas Hardwicke, of the Bengal artillery.

The *Pettahs*, or, vulgarly speaking, black towns and native villages, swarm with pariar dogs; and it is only in such places as are occupied by Mahomedans, who detest the whole canine genus, that these mangy curs are not to be met with; for the Singhalese will not destroy any of the progeny of these mongrels, and the government is necessitated to adopt measures for the general safety, during the hottest season of the year; viz. the months of January, February, and March, when a body of Malays is employed, under the superintendence of police *Peons*,* to destroy all dogs found in the streets that have not collars by way of passport.

When the immense and daily increasing numbers of these animals are considered, one may well wonder at the comparative paucity of cases of hydrophobia that occur. Many native doctors pretend to have certain cures in indigenous roots and vegetables; but if ever there was a known remedy in the possession of an European, it may be believed, from the following extraordinary occurrence, to have belonged to the late Mr. John Tranchell of Belligam.

On the 12th of June, 1827, whilst we were at dinner with Mr. Tranchell and his family, a rabid pariar dog, which had been chased from a neighbouring village, through the sacred grounds of the Moorish mosque adjoining Mr. Tranchell's estate, ran into the room. My first impulse was to seize a loaded gun that stood in a corner, and present it at the animal; but my host intreated me not to fire, "*because* (said he very coolly, and without rising from his chair or altering a muscle of his countenance) *if the poor devil bites you, I can cure you.*"

But no one present wished to be made the subject of such an experiment; and I drove the dog from under the sofa, where he had taken refuge, into the compound, when a sudden shower of rain saved me from the expenditure of powder and shot; for the moment the animal felt its deadly influence, it was seized with convulsions, and expired upon the spot.

The stoical indifference of Mr. Tranchell was not assumed, and arose from a thorough confidence in his means of cure; but whether he relied upon the same nostrum in hydrophobia, with which I had seen him perform most extraordinary cures of snake bites, (as I have related elsewhere in these pages,) or not, it is to be hoped that the papers he left behind him will explain. For the latter, he employed, in addition

* Literally, running footmen or messengers.

to Eau de Luce, given internally, a mixture of nitric and muriatic acid, which was labelled upon a bottle always at hand in his dressing room; but I am ignorant of their relative proportions.

The breed of Singhalese cattle is very inferior; the small black bullock of the country being rather more than a third, and occasionally about half the size of an English bullock; the native Jaffna sheep are long legged, and may well be called goat-sheep, the best name I have for the breed; the swine are also long legged, and allowed to feed where food of any kind can be picked up, it matters not what, nor where, to the native owners. Notwithstanding that the Singhalese are as much attached to hogs' flesh as ever Otaheitans were in the time of the celebrated Captain Cook, (for they never have a feast or festival without a hog being served at it,) yet I never saw swine penned for feeding at any native cottage or farm.

The doubtful reputation of Bazaar pork and ducks is the same at Ceylon as it is throughout India; and whenever the one or the other appears on the dinner table, it is absolutely necessary for the host to vouch for its "education," for otherwise, notwithstanding that silver dishes contained the suspicious food, neither would be tasted.

The Ceylon buffalo (*Bos bubulus* of Shaw) is a large and valuable animal for agricultural purposes, and the flesh is by no means despicable, although rarely, if ever, seen at the tables of Europeans. The milk of the cow buffalo is much richer than that of the common island cow, (a species of *Zebu*,) and the butter made from it, and clarified, is known by the general name of *Ghee* throughout India.

Ceylon bullocks may be purchased for about thirty or forty shillings a head; cows for less; Jaffna sheep at three, four, and five shillings; a sow and litter of pigs from twelve to fifteen shillings, and occasionally for less; but Bengal sheep (which, after being well fed, afford delicious mutton) and kids vary in price, according to the demand for them—the latter, depends upon the caprice of the Moormen and Hindoos, who are the principal feeders. That these animals are in the greatest abundance, one may be fully convinced, by merely riding through the quarters of the towns and villages occupied by these people, for their verandahs teem with goats and their kids: these, when about to be fattened for sale, are previously castrated.

Cape sheep (*Ovis Steatopyga* of Shaw) thrive remarkably well; but Bengal sheep require a great deal more care, when first landed in the island, owing to their sudden transition from dry to green fodder; the reason there is occasionally such great mortality among Ceylon sheep on board ship, arises from their being shipped without previous preparation for the dry food usually provided for sea stock; for their general

fodder is green jack leaves (*Artocarpus integrifolia*, L.), grass, and other vegetables ; and they are often fattened for the table entirely upon the former, which possess very mucilaginous and nutritious properties. Bengal sheep are usually fed on dhol (*Cytisus Cajan*, L.) and paddee, and are consequently better for sea stock.

An importation of domestic animals of each kind from England and the Cape of Good Hope would soon improve the native breed. The camel is never to be seen at Ceylon, and but very few mules and asses.

The wild rabbit is not indigenous, and tame rabbits are scarce.

Every sort of poultry is extremely cheap, except turkies ; for even at Matura, in the southern province, which is a noted place for breeding them, these birds are seldom purchased for less than 72s. to 80s. per dozen ; and a sovereign is not an uncommon price for a fat cock turkey at Colombo.

There is occasionally a very great mortality amongst turkies during the rains, which makes that species of poultry so much dearer than any other. The owner considers himself fortunate, if fifty out of a hundred arrive at maturity for sale. But all this loss is to be obviated by care ; for turkies require an elevated and dry roosting place to retire from wet, and black pepper is indispensable with their food.

Geese are smaller than those of Europe, and remarkable for their brownish color and black bills, having the upper part surmounted with a black bony protuberance or knob ; their usual prices are from 2s. to 3s.

Ducks are considered dear at 6d. or 8d. each.

Chickens may be purchased in some places for 1s., at others for 1s. 6d. and 2s. per dozen ; and 100 eggs at the same price.

Reddish brown widgeon, erroneously called teal, are abundant, and easily domesticated. The guinea fowl, pea fowl, Malay fowl (*Gallus giganteus*), common fowl, European, Persian, and Indian pigeons, and Brahminy and Muscovy ducks, complete the list of domestic poultry.

Ceylon poultry, when fed by natives, invariably tastes of *Poonac*, or coco-nut oil cake, which imparts an oily flavor to whatever is fed on it ; this, they give, as being cheaper than paddee, which is a favorite food of poultry, and of most domestic animals. But even the *Poonac* would be very different, if pressed whilst the nut is fresh, which should be the case when intended for feeding cattle or poultry.

Too much cannot be said in favor of the fishes of Ceylon, particularly of the *Seir* fish, called by the Singhalese *Tora-malu*, for the female has the same flavor as the salmon (*Salmo Salar*) of Europe ; many varieties are elsewhere noticed in these pages ; and the *Crustacea* include a small but delicious crab, prawns from six

to eight inches in length, cray-fish, oysters, and shrimps; all which are excellent of their kinds.

As to the Ceylon Turtle, great caution is requisite, because it is not generally known that the *Testudo Imbricata*, called by the Singhalese *Lili-kas-bewa*, which produces the transparent shell, is not only unwholesome, but, at certain seasons, absolutely poisonous. Several natives died from eating its flesh at Ahamadewé, or Turtle Cove, in the Mahagampatto district, in 1826. Their illness exhibited every symptom of Asiatic cholera.

The edible turtle is the *Testudo Mydas*, the *Gal-kas-bewa* of the Singhalese; and the small fresh water turtle is also wholesome and nutritious. The Singhalese call it *Kiri-ba*, from *Kiri*, milk; because, when boiled, the flesh is milk white. This last is given by the native doctors to cure the abdominal obesity to which children are subject from the effects of rice diet.

Notwithstanding the island has been in our possession for a period of forty five years, no general and but very little partial improvement has taken place in the breed of the more useful animals, horses alone excepted!!

To obviate all the apparent difficulties to the improvement of the breed of the domestic animals, no plan appears to me more feasible, or more likely to insure a productive result, than the establishment of five large farms; viz. one in the best situation for grazing lands in the central province; and a farm at each of the towns of Colombo, Galle, Jaffna, and Trincomalé; or in the best locality near them that can be fixed upon for the purpose.

The object being the general benefit of the island, and of great importance in whichever light it may be viewed, will no doubt receive the support of the government, in so far as the grant of lands belonging to the crown may be required for the purpose, at a low rate, to such joint-stock company or individual capitalists as may be most forward in this national as well as private object of improvement and profit.

Prizes for the best specimens of the several animals might be held out by the government, as well as by an agricultural society,—of medals for Europeans, but in cash to the natives, as the surest *ad captandum modus* that can be held out to the Singhalese, and the only one that never fails.

The Singhalese are naturally a litigious nation; and it is not uncommon for a plaintiff and defendant, each accompanied by a number of suborned witnesses, to walk together from their village to the district court, perhaps a distance of fifteen or twenty miles, the former to prosecute a claim, and very probably an unjust one, to the eighth share of a jack or coco-nut tree. Then is the time for hard swearing! but the

witnesses are generally so perfect in their lessons, as to baffle the cleverest of the native proctors in their cross examinations.

Some cases of murder have displayed a ferocity that one would scarcely have supposed such an effeminate race to be capable of; and their proneness, upon sudden quarrels, to resort to the knife, rendered it necessary for the government to pass an ordinance, in the year 1816, by which it was made unlawful to carry any pointed knife, except that called *Ulkatoo-peheyé*, or knife fixed to the same handle as the iron-pointed style with which the natives write upon strips of the leaves of the talipat and palmyra.

As regards the observance of caste, the abolition of all degrading distinctions as to dress, during Lord Viscount Goderich's last administration of the colonies, in conjunction with the extension of Christianity, will hasten its abandonment. A woman of low caste may now cover her shoulders with a cloth or kerchief, or wear a waistcloth below the knees, which she dared not have done some twenty years ago.

I was once passing through the Bazaar at Barberyn, in the western province, when an unusual mob had collected in the street; and I learned that a woman of the *Paduu* caste* had been nearly killed by some indignant *Wellales* and *Chandoos*, for "*having presumed so far to forget her degraded lot in life as to throw a kerchief over her neck and shoulders!!*" She was a girl of about sixteen years of age, and the prettiest native that I ever beheld; her beauty, however, seemed to excite, instead of allay, the brutality of these sticklers for the strict observance of the *rights* (?) of caste.

The European eye cannot well be accused of fastidiousness in such matters; custom soon reconciles even our modest countrywomen to the all but naked coolies, whose "fine sleek backs," were particularly noticed in the travels of a fair authoress.†

It is said that nothing can be more conducive to British interests, than to consult the feelings and humour the prejudices of our unenlightened sable fellow subjects, until education (to which, if an estimate may be formed by the rapid strides it is now making in the island, under the auspices of the government and the zealous missionaries of the various establishments, every one, in the course of a few years, will have free access) shall have paved the way for a voluntary relinquishment of them.—This may be all very fine, and near the truth; but there is nothing to be dreaded, in Ceylon, from protecting *all*, by the strong arm of the law, and preventing individuals from taking the law into *their own hands*, whether they be called *Europeans*, or *high caste* natives.

* One of the subdivisions of the *Shudra Wanse* caste.

† Maria Graham.