

CHAPTER IV.

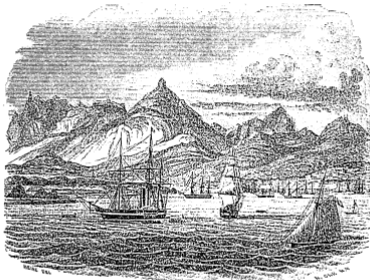
MAURITIUS, ITS DISCOVERY.—GEOLOGICAL FORMATION AND PHYSICAL ASPECT.—PRODUCTION OF SUGAR.—EFFECT ON AGRICULTURE OF THE ADDITION OF SLAVERY.—COOLIES.—POPULATION OF THE ISLAND.—STATE OF FEELING BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH RESIDENTS.—HOSPITABLE TREATMENT OF THE EXPEDITION.—DESCRIPTION OF PORT LOUIS.—GRAND PORT—PAUL AND VIRGINIA.—FACTS ON WHICH ST. PIERRE FOUNDED HIS STORE.—TOWNS OF PAUL AND VIRGINIA.—DELT BY AN ECCENTRIC FRENCHMAN.—COLONIES.—THEIR PROBABLE CAUSES.—INTEREST FELT IN THEM AT MAURITIUS.—DEPARTURE OF THE MISSISSIPPI FROM PORT LOUIS.—HEN COURNE THENCE TO POINT DE GALLE, ISLAND OF CEYLON.—REASONS FOR TAKING IT.—POINT DE GALLE, DESCRIPTION OF.—GREAT RENDEZVOUS OF STEAMERS.—DIFFICULTY OF PROCURING FUEL THERE.—AMERICAN CONSUL.—THOUGHTS ON CONSULAR SYSTEM.—EARLY KNOWLEDGE OF CEYLON.—ITS SEVERAL EUROPEAN POSSESSORS.—CLIMATE.—SALUBRITY.—CAUSES OF ITS DIMINISHED PROSPERITY.—PRODUCTIONS.—VALUE OF COCOA-NUT PALM.—PEARL FISHERY.—GROSS NUMBER OF ELEPHANTS.—GREAT SLAUGHTER OF THEM.—BOA CONSTRUCTOR.—POPULATION OF CEYLON.—PHISIQUE OF CINGALESE, MALABARS, AND MAHOMMEDANS IN THE ISLAND.—RELIGIOUS CONDITION.—BUDDHISM.—PILGRIMAGE TO THE TEMPLES.—INTERCOURSE WITH A HANKEE NAVAL OFFICER AT CEYLON.—COMMODORE'S LETTER TO THE SECOND KING OF SIAM.—DEPARTURE FROM CEYLON.—PASSAGE THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MALACCA.—ARRIVAL AT SINGAPORE.



MAURENAS, a Portuguese commander, discovered Mauritius, with its neighboring island of Bourbon, in 1505, and the whole group was then named the

Mascarene islands. The Portuguese took formal possession of Mauritius in 1545, but appear to have formed no settlement. In 1598, the Dutch surveyed it and gave to it its present name, in honor of Maurice, the Stadtholder of the Netherlands. They, however, did not settle the island until after they had formed an establishment at the Cape in 1640; and then they fixed themselves on the shore at Port Grand. In 1708, from causes not now known, they abandoned the island, and from this time up to 1715 its only inhabitants were a few negroes, who had been brought there by the Dutch as slaves, and who, having escaped from their masters, concealed themselves in the mountain forests. In the year last named (1715) the French took possession and formed a settlement at Port St. Louis, giving to the island the new name of the "Isle of France." They kept undisturbed possession until 1810, when it was taken from them by the British; and since the peace of 1814, these last have retained it.

The island is, without doubt, volcanic in its structure, and is surrounded by a coral reef, which generally runs parallel to the shores, at a short distance from them, and is mostly left dry at low water. There are, however, in this reef eleven breaks or openings, through most of which vessels of considerable burden may pass. The interior of the island consists of a great number of lofty hills, mostly isolated, though in one or two instances they form small chains. The Brabant mountains and the Bamboo ridge are the greatest elevations, and these are about three thousand feet above the sea level.



Port Lada, Haurissa.

The soil is generally shallow and not very productive. This is owing to its dryness. The mean annual heat is about 76° of Fahrenheit. It is true they have rains, and in June, July, and August showers are frequent, but of very short duration. The average fall of rain throughout the year would appear, from observation, to be about thirty-eight inches. The rainy season lasts from November to March or April, and then the water descends in torrents, accompanied with heavy gusts of wind, and not unfrequently with thunder and lightning. This region is subject also to hurricanes quite as violent as any encountered in the West Indies; there is, however, no regularity in these, though five years rarely elapse without their appearance. The island is traversed by numerous water courses, which diverge in all directions from the centre; these, however, are filled with water in the rainy season only, and then they form numerous cascades and cataracts. In the dry season the water rapidly evaporates.

The island was once well wooded, and a considerable part of the native forest still remains. The cocoa-nut palm, and sago, are common, as are also tamarind trees, mangroves, and bamboos.

Yams, cassava, Indian corn, plantains, bananas, and melons are all cultivated as articles of food, as well as some of our vegetables, as spinach, asparagus, artichokes, cabbage, and peas. Wheat and rice are also produced, but in small quantities. Of fruits there are mangoes, shaddocks, and pine apples; but oranges, grapes, peaches, and apples are inferior. The French introduced the spice trees of the Indian islands; none, however, succeeded but the clove. The chief article of cultivation, since the British obtained possession, is sugar; not more, however, than three-eighths of the island is cultivated at all. The sugar cane is planted in the usual manner, though the fields present one peculiarity. The surface of the ground, in its original state, was covered with loose rocks and stones. These have been formed into parallel ridges about three or four feet apart, and between these the cane is planted. The cultivators are of opinion that these ridges, instead of being injurious to the cane, are rather advantageous; they retard the growth of weeds, shade and protect the young cane from violent winds, and retain moisture which reaches the roots of the cane.

Before the introduction of guano as a fertilizer the product was from 2,000 to 2,500 French pounds of sugar to the arpent or French acre; but the increase since the application of the guano has been so extraordinary as to be scarcely credible. In ordinary seasons the product has been from six to seven thousand pounds, and, under peculiarly favorable circumstances, it has even reached eight thousand pounds to the acre. Official returns show a gradual increase in the amount of sugar exported from the year 1812 up to the present time. Thus, in that year, it was but 969,260 French pounds; in 1851 it amounted to 137,373,519 pounds, and the estimated crop of this year (1852) is 140,000,000 pounds. The land would produce cotton and tobacco, but the entire thoughts of the agriculturists of the island are directed to sugar. The proportion of guano used is about one-fourth of a pound to a cane, and the French arpent or acre is estimated to contain about two thousand plants.

The general abolition of slavery by the English government caused here, as it did in the other English slaveholding colonies, much agricultural distress; but after a time the introduction of laborers, chiefly from the Malabar coast, under certain prescribed regulations, enabled the planters not only to dispense with the services of the freed negroes, but to obtain labor on cheaper terms than before. The free blacks here, as elsewhere, seemed to think emancipation meant an exemption from all labor; they were consequently indisposed generally to work at all, even for fair wages, and capriciously left their labor just when they pleased. The imported laborers, known under the name of coolies, perform nearly all the agricultural work of the island, as well as load and unload all the ships. On the sugar estates large communities of them are to be found. Comfortable houses are provided for them and their families, and exclusive of house rent and provisions, which are furnished to them, they receive from two to three dollars a month as wages. This is cheaper to the planter than slave labor was. The municipal laws for the protection and government of the coolies are judicious and sufficiently minute, yet these people pay but little regard to any bargain they may make with their employers; they go and come very much as they please, and are tolerated in the exercise of a much larger liberty than is accorded to laboring men in either England or the United States. Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, however, the planter makes large profits from their labor.

The population of the whole island is about 180,000. Of these nearly 100,000 are negroes from Madagascar and the eastern coast of Africa, who were once slaves. Beside these, are Malays, fishermen from Malabar, Lascars and Chinese. Some of these latter have been

imported for agricultural labor. The white population is nine or ten thousand. Of these the larger part are creoles of French origin, and speak the French language. They also form the wealthier portion of the white population. The English in Mauritius having, for the most part, a connexion, direct or indirect, with the colonial government, are somewhat exclusive in



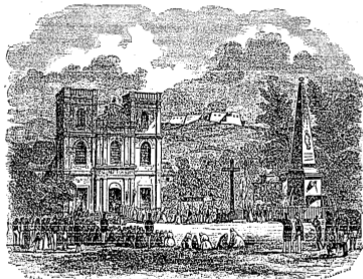
Customs, Mauritius.

their social relations. The French are not less tenacious, and hence, though there are no open dissonances between them, yet to the impartial stranger, who mingles freely with both, it is quite apparent that there is little real harmony between them, and a feeling of nationality exists which would probably induce the majority to hail with pleasure a return to the dominion of France. As in most countries which, like Mauritius, have involuntarily changed their nationality, the females indulge, in a greater degree than the other sex, the prejudices of country; perhaps because they mix less with the new comers.

Both classes of the population, however, English and French, were exceedingly kind and hospitable to the members of the expedition. On arriving in an armed United States vessel at any of the English colonial settlements, great hospitality is usually extended to our officers, and visits of ceremony, with a constant interchange of dinner parties and other courtesies, commonly leave to the commander but little opportunity for quiet observation of that which may characterize the people generally. In fact, he is for a time unavoidably subjected to the bondage of official restraint, and is sometimes made a prisoner even by the friendly tyranny of kindness and hospitality.

During the brief stay of the ship at Mauritius the English officials and merchants exhibited the most profuse hospitality toward the Commodore and his officers, while the French population were no whit behind them in the unostentatious display of their kindness. These last evinced the most friendly feelings and no small share of intelligence, and while both classes were equally hospitable, the only difference was that the Englishman was, perhaps, a little the more stately, and the Frenchman a little the less ceremonious. Nothing could be kinder than the treatment of both.

Port Louis, the capital of the island, is situated near its northwestern extremity, on a small bay, which is but a narrow inlet of the sea, somewhat more than a mile long, and about five hundred yards broad. At the extreme southwestern corner the town is built. The streets are straight, but not paved. The principal street runs parallel to the shore of the bay. The houses are chiefly of wood, and of but a single story. The population is, perhaps, from twenty-five to thirty thousand, of which from four to five thousand are white. The residue are for the most part *Nacks*. Grand Port, on the southeastern side of the island, is sufficiently capacious, and is more convenient for shipping the sugar, of which large quantities are grown in the neighborhood; but apart from the intricacies of its entrance, it is open to the southeast, from which quarter the hurricanes blow most furiously.



Public Square, Port Louis.

It is not to be supposed that among those who read at all there are many who are unacquainted with the beautiful story of Paul and Virginie, by Bernardin St. Pierre. The accomplished author was an officer of the garrison of Mauritius in 1744, and at that time a melancholy catas-

troupe which happened on one of the coral reefs surrounding the island furnished a basis of facts on which he reared his interesting fiction.

One is rather reluctant to destroy the illusion produced by the romantic narrative of St. Pierre; but, in sober truth, he was indebted to his imagination for the picture of the storm, and the brave and generous Paul is but a myth. The facts are these: On the night of the 18th of August, 1744, the French ship *St. Géran* was wrecked on one of the reefs on the northeastern coast of the island. On board the ship were two young ladies, by name Mallet and Caillon, (who were returning as passengers from France, whither they had been sent for education,) both of whom were lost. The depositions taken at the time by the French officials, and from which these facts are gathered, state that Mademoiselle Caillon was last seen upon the top-gallant fore-castle of the wrecked vessel, with a gentleman, Monsieur Longchamps de Montendre, who was at the time endeavoring to persuade her to trust herself to his efforts to save her. To enable him, however, to accomplish the object, it was necessary for her to disencumber herself of some portion of her clothing, and this, from a sense of modesty, she declined doing, and so perished with Monsieur Montendre and the larger part of the crew of the ill-fated vessel. It was conjectured that Monsieur Montendre was the lover of Mademoiselle Caillon, as, after lowering himself down the ship's side to throw himself into the sea, he returned and earnestly endeavored to prevail on the young lady to leave the vessel with him, and on her refusal would not again leave her.

Mademoiselle Mallet was on the quarter deck with Monsieur de Peramont, who never left her for a moment. On these facts as a basis St. Pierre framed his story. The celebrity given to it has always awakened the interest of strangers visiting the island, who have naturally desired to look upon scenes consecrated by the pen of genius, and associated in their minds with incidents which, if not literally true, have at least deeply touched their sensibilities. The officers of the ship were, therefore, glad to land, and among other objects visited, strange to say, they were conducted to what the islanders are pleased to call the graves of Paul and Virginia. The history of these resting places of the imaginary dead is this: An eccentric French gentleman having a country residence about eight miles from St. Louis, and possibly near the supposed graves of some of the lost, erected in his garden two monuments to the memory of the unfortunate fictitious Paul and Virginia, (Mademoiselle Caillon and Monsieur Montendre.) The object was simply to add the stimulus of curiosity to the other attractions of his residence, and thus draw around him a more numerous circle, to whom he might extend that hospitality for which he, in common with the French of his day, was famous, and thus enjoy the pleasures of society. This benevolent and eccentric being has been long dead, but the tombs are still standing, though in a state of dilapidation, and still attract strangers. Alas! no hospitable greeting now awaits the visitor. His money is demanded at the garden gate, all sentiment evaporates, and he walks in to see the show. This custom of demanding payment from visitors to places of public interest is almost peculiar to the English, and its existence is to many of the people of England themselves a source of mortification and annoyance. There are certain places in which payment is perfectly proper, but there are others in which, though regularly exacted, it should not be asked. The sight of Longwood and a glance at Napoleon's tomb were both paid for by the gentlemen of the expedition at St. Helena; but the custom alluded to is one which may be found throughout the extent of her Majesty's dominions.

So much was said at Mauritius of the hurricanes, or cyclones, common to this part of the



Indian ocean, that the Commodore scarcely entertained a hope of escaping from this region without encountering one. These hurricanes, at the season of their occurrence (from December to April,) form the great topic of interest and discussion to the Mauritians. In fact, they talk of little else at that period. Meteorological instruments of every kind are kept in use and under the most watchful observation. Nor is this great solicitude without reason, for these cyclones, when they do come, are but too apt to bring ruin and desolation to the merchant and planter.

The immediate cause of these atmospherical phenomena has been supposed to be a disturbance of the equilibrium in the air that takes place at the change of the monsoons. This period of strife lasts about a month, and then the hurricanes rage with terrific violence. Bedford and Reed, and others, have explained the laws by which they suppose them to be governed; and their hypothesis is perfectly well known and understood by the Mauritians. The islands of Mauritius, Bourbon, and Roderique, lie directly in their ordinary track, and if either of them happens to fall within the vortex of one of these hurricanes, the consequences to life and property are terrible indeed.

The natural interest felt in the subject, as well as its great practical importance, have given rise to many discussions as to the best means to be adopted, should a vessel unfortunately find herself within their sweeping influence or in their proximity; and though these discussions may, and doubtless will, result in a better understanding of the laws which govern these winds, yet it must be confessed that some of them have rather a tendency to confuse the simple minded and practical seaman, who, if caught in one of these storms, should undertake *them* to find rules for his guidance. He can spare no time from the handling of his vessel, and however plain abstract principles may be to him who is at leisure quietly to master them on shore, the cabin of a ship in a storm is a poor school of philosophy. This, however, only shows the necessity there is that the seaman who would understand his profession should study and master all that science has brought to light, when he can do so on shore, and before he is caught in a storm which demands its immediate application. However, the instructions given by the earlier writers on these hurricanes are now more generally understood than they were, by the well informed seaman, particularly since they have been further explained and simplified by the more recent publication of Piddington.

Of those residing at Mauritius who have earnestly studied and discussed the laws which govern these storms, may be mentioned Dr. Thom, whose writings are well known, Lieutenant Fryers, of the royal engineers, and Mr. Sedgewick, who has published a little work, which he calls "The True Principle," and which has been reviewed by Dr. Thom; and, lastly, a creole gentleman attached to the observatory at Mauritius, Mr. Bosquet.

This last named gentleman, who has translated into French Piddington's Horn book, with annotations of his own, claims to be able, by careful and constant meteorological observations, to foretell the existence of hurricanes in the Indian ocean, and to describe the course they will take. The day before the Mississippi left Mauritius, he informed the Commodore that a cyclone was then blowing in a direction E. by N. from the island, and that it would pass to the southward and eastward.

By reference to the chart in Piddington's Horn book it will be seen that these cyclones never extend to the northward of 10° or 12° south latitude, in the meridian of Mauritius. Therefore, vessels leaving the island in the hurricane season, for any part of India, should steer to the northward, passing well to the westward of the Cargules, a most dangerous group, thus

keeping a clear sea open to the westward that there may be nothing in the way should it be desirable to run to the northward and westward, which would be the true course to take in case of encountering the southwestern or northwestern quadrants of a cyclone, (which, in the hurricane season, a vessel from Mauritius is in danger of,) and this course she should keep until she is sufficiently far north to be beyond its influence. Steamers, of course, have superior means of avoiding these storms, as they have the power of steering the most judicious course to escape from their greatest fury.

Following the advice of several experienced seamen, when the *Mississippi* left, she took the circuitous route (the distance from Mauritius to Ceylon being thereby made 150 miles greater) and passed to the westward of the *Cargados* and between the island *Galega* and *Laya de Mahla* Bank; thence, doubling the northern extremity of that bank the ship was steered to the eastward for *Pena Moloque*, the southernmost of the *Mallives*; after passing this the course was direct for *Point de Galle* in Ceylon.

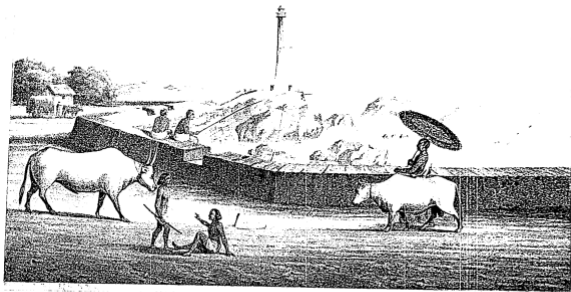
Before leaving the United States, Messrs. Howland & Aspinwall, of New York, at the suggestion of the Commodore, had dispatched two ships laden with coal, one to the Cape of Good Hope, and the other to Mauritius. The prudence of this precaution was proved by the result; but for these two cargoes the *Mississippi*, as well as the other steamers of the squadron which were to follow her—the *Powhatan* and *Alleghany*—would have had the greatest difficulty in procuring fuel. In the case of both cargoes, they arrived at their respective places of destination a few days before the *Mississippi*, so that both at the Cape and Mauritius the ship was enabled at once to take in fresh fuel, and leave a supply for the steamers that were to come after.*

Having taken on board about five hundred tons of this coal, with such other supplies as were needed, the *Mississippi* left St. Louis on the morning of the 28th of February, intending to touch for a further supply of fuel either at *Point de Galle* or *Singapore*, if it should appear possible to reach the latter named place with the coal taken on board at Mauritius. The course was that already indicated above, and on the evening of the 10th of March the light was made on *Point de Galle*, island of Ceylon, after a passage of thirteen days.

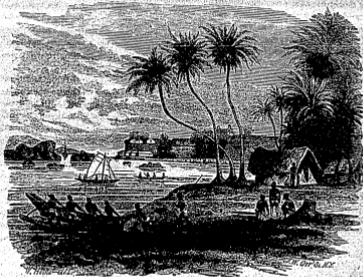
The port of *Point de Galle* is the general rendezvous of the English India mail steamers, not only of those which ply to and from the Red sea, but of those which double the Cape of Good Hope, bound to India or the China seas. Large quantities of coal and patent fuel are brought from England and deposited there; and though the quantity would seem to be enormous, yet so great is the consumption of the numerous steamers, of which there are about ten each month touching at the port, that there is sometimes an apprehension felt of the supply of fuel falling short. The Oriental Steam Navigation Company have consequently given positive orders not to supply a single ton to any foreign vessel-of-war, and consequently the *Mississippi* could obtain only a limited supply from the Bengal government.

The town of *Galle* is situated upon a peninsula, the inner curve of which forms the harbor. Thick walls of considerable height enclose the town within a space of about fifteen acres. The

* "To the zealous and energetic services of Messrs. Howland & Aspinwall, in the faithful fulfilment of their engagements with the Navy Department, I am greatly indebted; had it not been for their prompt and effectual agency, I should have found myself seriously embarrassed in controlling the movements of the steamers of my command. The ample provision thus placed at my disposal not only relieved me from care upon the score of fuel, without which side-wheel steamers are worse than useless, but enabled me to exercise a most gratifying courtesy in furnishing to several foreign war steamers supplies of this essential article, which could not be obtained at the time from any other source."—*Extract from the Commodore's Journal.*



inhabitants are thus shut up within a close fortress, from which the sea breezes are almost entirely excluded, and must suffer very much from the heat, which cannot be otherwise than excessive, in a latitude almost under the equator. The heat, however, is not so intense as on the neighboring coast of India. During the stay of the *Mississippi* the highest range of the thermometer (Fahrenheit) was 85° , and the lowest was 83° . The ordinary range at Point de Galle, however, is set down at from 70° to 87° .



Point de Galle, Ceylon.

Fresh supplies of food of almost every description can be readily obtained at this port; bullocks, pigs, fruit, and vegetables, abound. The fish are abundant and good. Wood is plentiful and tolerably good. Water can be obtained in reasonable quantities, but it is bad.

The population of the town is composed of English officials and merchants, and a motley collection of tradesmen and laborers of all varieties of color, from negro black to dingy brown.

The Commodore and his officers were not a little mortified, as well as somewhat embarrassed, by finding, on their arrival at Point de Galle, the United States commercial agent, a native of Scotland, confined to his premises under an execution for debt. Various accounts of the circumstances connected with this unfortunate position of affairs were communicated to the Commodore, but he studiously avoided any interference with the matter. It was no part of his business or duty to interpose; and humiliating as was this state of things, he could not but feel that the fault was in the former consular system of the United States. Our country had no right to export our consuls and commercial agents, many of whom were unfitted in every respect for their stations, either to represent or sustain the commercial interests of the nation so long as the

system then existing was followed. The fees at many of the places where our consular agents were accredited, it was notorious would scarce suffice to clothe them, and, accordingly, to eke out a scanty living, they were often obliged to resort to some sort of business, often not of the most dignified character. Of course, there were always honorable exceptions to this unfavorable state of things. Many of our consuls have been and are men of high position, who have not failed to exercise a strong influence upon the local governments within which they may have resided. But for this they have been less indebted to the consular office than to their deservedly high commercial standing; at the same time it may be true, that possessing such high personal characters as they do, in their cases, the consular office, worthily bestowed, may add somewhat to their influence. The recent action of Congress has shown the sense entertained by that body of the correctness of these views and of the need of reform; and it is hoped the measures adopted will guarantee for the future a dignified representative of our commercial interests wherever we have a consul.

Ceylon has been long known to Europe. The first accounts were received from two of the commanders of the fleet dispatched by Alexander the Great from the Indus to the Persian Gulf. A description of the island may be found recorded by ancient authors; both Pliny and Ptolemaeus have left accounts of its character and condition. It is supposed that the Persians had formed a Christian establishment on the coast before the sixth century; and in the thirteenth the celebrated traveller, Marco Polo, visited Ceylon, of which he has left a glowing description, having been so much struck with its beauty and richness that in his enthusiasm he has termed it the finest island in the world. Sir John Mandeville, the English traveller, also visited it some fifty years later.

The Portuguese, however, were the first among the Europeans to establish intimate relations with Ceylon. When they found their way to India, by the Cape of Good Hope, they were welcomed by the king, whose dominions at the time were a prey to intestine war. The Europeans taking advantage of the civil dissensions which prevailed, and offering themselves as mediators, succeeded in establishing a foothold in the country, which they took care to maintain. In 1520, the Portuguese strongly fortified themselves at Colombo, and held a controlling influence over the natives, until they were dispersed by the latter, aided by the Dutch, who, in their turn, changed their relation of friends to that of masters of the people. The war with the Portuguese lasted more than twenty years, and they were not finally expelled the island until 1656. The various fortified positions at Batticaloa, Point de Galle, Negombo, and Colombo fell into the hands of the Dutch, who thus controlled the maritime provinces.

During the European wars at the end of the eighteenth century, the French got possession of Trincomalee, but they were ejected by the British, who in their turn were forced to yield it up to the former possessors, and it finally was restored to the Dutch, who continued to hold it, together with the sea coast, until they were wrested from them, in 1796, by the British, who were formally acknowledged as the possessors by the treaty of Amiens. English history records that the whole island, by the invitation of the natives, was taken possession of, in 1815, by the British crown, under the sovereignty of which Ceylon still remains. It is difficult to say who, of the successive masters of the poor Cingalese, have been the most cruel and oppressive, and, in fact, it is feared that but little can be said in palliation of the fraud and perfidy of either of them.

In olden time, before its occupation by the Europeans, Ceylon was one of the richest and most productive of the kingdoms of the east. The natives, at a very early period, showed great skill in the development of the resources of the island, and increased the fertility of the soil by ingenious modes of artificial irrigation; and numerous vestiges of imposing works, constructed for this purpose, remain to this day.

The climate of Ceylon is very much influenced by the monsoons. The northeast prevails from November to February, and the southwest from April to September; but there are certain local causes which influence these winds and modify their temperature. There is a great difference between the climate of the northern and southern portions of the island, and a curious effect results therefrom; for not seldom on one side of a mountain the rain is falling abundantly, while on the other it is so dry that the herbage is parched and withered; and thus while the inhabitants of the former are doing their utmost to protect their lands from the flood, those of the latter are striving to obviate the consequences of the drought by availing themselves of the scant reservoirs of water which may have been left from previous rains.

The island is comparatively healthy, as is indicated by the rate of mortality, which, being less than three per cent., shows a remarkable salubrity for an eastern country. As the clearing of the jungles and the draining of the marshes proceed, a still higher degree of health may be reasonably expected.

Ceylon did not appear as flourishing a colony as the Mauritius, though it possesses superior geographical advantages. Lying, as it does, as a sort of outpost to the principal possessions of the English in the east, and offering, in its port of Galle, a point for the distribution of intelligence throughout India and China, it is much resorted to.

With all its natural advantages, however, the island at present is far less flourishing than might have been expected. The exports are limited in comparison with the acknowledged fertility of the island, to the productive power of which there would hardly seem to be any limit. Labor may be obtained, too, for twelve cents a day, and yet the agricultural interests are not as promising as, under such favorable circumstances, they should be. The natives, too, are said not to be wanting in industry, but their needs are so few, living, as they do, upon fish, rice, and cocoa-nuts, that they are never forced by necessity to labor hard for their subsistence.

Of the productions of the island the cocoa-nut is probably the most valuable to the natives. Everywhere in Ceylon, as far as the eye can reach, extensive plantations of this tree are to be seen, and the numerous roads throughout the island are bordered with it. The weary and heated traveller finds not only protection from the sun in its shade, but refreshment from the milk of the fruit, which is both agreeable to the taste and wholesome. The cocoa-nut palm has a great variety of uses. The green fruit, with its delicate albuminous meat and its refreshing milk, is a favorite article of food. When ripe, the kernel of the nut is dried, forming what the natives term copperal, and an oil of great value is expressed from it, while the residuum forms an excellent oil-cake for the fattening of animals. Even the husk of the nut is useful; its fibres are wrought into the coir rope, of which large quantities are annually exported, and the shells are manufactured into various domestic utensils. From the sap of the tree a drink is obtained which is called "toddy," and made into arrack by distillation. The leaves afford a good material for the thatching of the native huts, and are moreover given as food to the elephants. The Palmyra palm, which also abounds in the island, shares with the cocoa-nut tree in many of its advantages.

The other staples of Ceylon are cinnamon, coffee, sugar, rice, arica nut, precious stones, plumbago, (probably the best in the world,) and other vegetable and mineral productions. The pearl fisheries, for which the island was once famous, have very much diminished in their yield. The natives account for the diminution by declaring that the pearl-oyster has the power of locomotion, and has shifted its former quarters to some new ground not yet discovered. The scarcity is probably owing to the fact that the pearls have been disturbed before they have reached their full development, which is said to require a period of seven years. At one time the fishery was a source of handsome revenue to the government; in 1797 the sum of £140,000 was derived from it. Since that period the proceeds have gradually fallen off, until at present they amount to almost nothing. Diving for the pearl-oyster is a favorite occupation among the natives of Ceylon, as a skilful diver can earn ten times the wages of a farm laborer, and the employment is not, as has been stated, unfavorable to health, but, on the contrary, conducive to strength and vigor of body.

Ceylon abounds in a rich vegetation and many trees of a vigorous growth, among which, in addition to the coco-nut and Palmyra palm, there is the kettal tree, from the sap of which is produced a coarse sugar, and from its fruit, when dried and reduced to powder, a substitute for rice flour. The talipot, with its immense foliage, is one of the wonders of the island; a single leaf of this tree is sufficient to cover beneath its shade several persons, and it supplies, when softened by boiling, a substitute for paper, upon which the natives are in the habit of writing, and find in it a most durable material. The cinnamon, with its beautiful white blossom and its red tipped leaves, and other odoriferous trees, are among the native products of Ceylon: but the stories of the fragrance of the aroma exhaled from these trees and the plants, and which voyagers have described as sensible at a distance from the land, are gross exaggerations. No fragrance was observed equal to that of the magnolia or of the delightful perfume of the newly-mown grass of our own country, or in any degree approaching the delicious odor of the heliotrope and geranium hedges of Madeira. The cultivated flowers that were seen at Ceylon and at Mauritius were, in fact, remarkable for their want of fragrance. Rich woods of various kinds, as the rose, the ebony, the satin, and lime, grow in abundance on the island, and are used for many purposes of utility and ornament.

Within the forests and in the jungles of Ceylon are found a great variety of wild animals—the elephant, the hyena, tiger-cat, the bear, the deer, and the monkey, are among the most abundant. The number of elephants is incredibly great, and, issuing in troops from their lairs, they come crushing down the cultivated fields and plantations and devouring the crops, with great loss to the proprietors. They are found in all the uncultivated parts of the island, but their favorite haunts are near to the farms, to which they prove so destructive that the colonial government pays a reward of Rs. 85. (about \$1 85) for every tail of the animal which is brought to the authorities. Mr. Talbot, the government agent at Galle, stated, surprising as it may seem, that he had paid during the preceding year two hundred pounds sterling for tails, which would give six hundred as the number of elephants destroyed.

An army officer, as was stated to the Commodore, actually killed, during his residence on the island, no less than six hundred of these gigantic animals. Within a few months of the arrival of the *Mississippi*, two officers of the garrison, one of whom (Lieutenant Lenoix) became personally known to the Commodore, destroyed no less than forty elephants in the course of a sporting visit of six weeks to the jungle. They are ordinarily shot with a rifle:

the sportsman approaches his game in front, or perhaps, as the sailors would say, on the quarter, that he may aim at either of the only two vital parts upon which a rifle ball will have any effect, one being directly in the forehead, through which the brain is penetrated, and the other behind the ear. If the hunter chance to come up to his elephant in the rear, he raises a shout or makes a noise, by which the huge animal is attracted, and, throwing forward its ears, exposes the vital spot, at which his ruthless enemy aims the deadly ball and brings down his huge victim. The elephants of Ceylon are not so large as those of other parts of India, and but a small proportion of them have tusks.

Of serpents, there are but twenty species, four only of which are venomous, the cobra and tic prolango being the most deadly. The latter is said to be endowed with great cunning, and to lie in wait for the purpose of attacking the passing traveller. The stories which are told of the anaconda, boa constrictor or python, seizing upon cattle and horses, and even horsemen, must be received as fabulous. There is, however, a species of boa peculiar to the island, which is capable of swallowing a deer whole, and after they have indulged in venison to that degree, and become surfeited with so substantial a meal, they fall readily a prey to the captor. This is believed to be the extent of the powers of deglutition of the Ceylon boas; these enormous serpents, which are said to swallow an entire ox, horns and all, being unknown in that region. It may not be amiss to refer here to a remedy for venomous bites, for which popular opinion in the east claims considerable efficacy, this is a paste made by moistening the powder of ipecacuanha with water, and applying it to the external injury. Some wonderful effects have been reported from the use of this simple means in various cases, of not only bites from venomous serpents, but of stings by the scorpion and various poisonous fish.

The population of Ceylon is estimated at about 1,442,062, of whom 8,275 are whites, 1,413,486 colored persons, and 20,431 aliens and resident strangers. The inhabitants are composed of the natives, termed Cingalese, of a small proportion of Europeans, principally government officials, military officers and merchants with their families, and of negroes, Malays, and Chinese. The Cingalese were less ugly in appearance than was expected, many of the men, in fact, (as for the women few were seen, and none of the better class,) have expressive and even handsome faces, and their forms are not without symmetry. They seem to be amiable in disposition and are remarkable for their effeminate habits. So similar is the costume of the two sexes that it is difficult often for the casual observer to distinguish the man from the woman. The males allow their hair to grow to a great length, which they foster with much care, and fasten to the tops of their heads with large tortoise shell combs, such as our ladies at home might not be ashamed to wear.

The common dress of the better class of the Cingalese is a jacket, worn next to the skin, and from the waist downward a colored petticoat, wrapped in graceful folds round the limbs and falling to the feet. The head, well protected as it is with the superabundant hair, is generally bare of any artificial covering. Some of the common people, however, wrap a cloth turban-wise around their brows, which they shift to their body when mingling with the crowds, and thus tuck out their scanty drapery, which ordinarily consists only of a petticoat. Some of the aborigines, who live in a rude condition within the fastnesses of the great forests, confine themselves in dress to the simple wardrobe of nature.

In addition to the Cingalese, who are doubtless descendants of the aborigines of the island, there are the Malabars, whom tradition traces to the neighboring shores of India, and whose

religion and social characteristics would seem to connect them with that country. They are Hindoos and preserve their religion and system of caste, together with the costumes of their original country, as well as their language, somewhat modified, however, by their relation with the Cingalese. The neighboring islands and continents supply a population of Mahomedans or Moors to Ceylon, and they abound in several parts of the country, where, in the various orders into which their law of caste divides them, they carry on a prosperous business as weavers, fishermen, merchants, and bakers. They are among the most enterprising and thriving of the population, and their well known skill and industry have secured them much of the commercial wealth and influence of the island.

The native language of the aborigines is peculiar to themselves, but their writings are in Sanscrit or Pali. A provincial dialect of Portuguese is, however, generally spoken by those natives who have passed their lives in the European portions of the island.

The Christian religion was introduced at a very early period into Ceylon. It has been supposed that the apostle Saint Thomas preached there; however this may be, there is but little doubt that the Nestorians accompanied the Persian merchants, many years ago, to the island and made converts there and established Christianity. On the arrival, however, of the Portuguese navigators there were no remnants of those churches which are said to have existed in Ceylon in the sixth century. The zealous Francis Xavier, the Roman Catholic missionary, however, was the first, by his earnest preaching and proselyting energies, to establish the Christian religion permanently on the island, and most of that faith are, accordingly, Romanists. The Church of England is, of course, sustained in accordance with the religious opinions of the British authorities; and the various other Protestant churches have their members among the European residents. There are missionaries of various sects engaged in efforts to evangelize the native heathen, but with what success did not appear. Among these there are no less than eleven Americans; and the different churches are represented in the proportion of thirty-four Romanist missionaries, twenty Wesleyan, fourteen of the English church, and thirteen Baptists. The predominant religion among the Cingalese is the Buddhist, which was at one time maintained by the British government, a heathen inheritance derived from the succession to the native kings. The tooth of Buddha, the relic so highly revered by his followers, was taken under the especial protection of English orthodoxy, and the ecclesiastical patronage of the Buddhist establishment was exercised by England, in accordance with the not very scrupulous views of political expediency. The guardianship of the tooth of Buddha, and the dispensation of Buddhist church patronage, have been, of late years, properly delegated by a Christian nation to a heathen priesthood.

There are numerous Buddhist temples in Ceylon, some of which present an impressive aspect; and there is one of great antiquity and so much venerated as to attract votaries from various parts of India. On the arrival of the *Mississippi* there was a Siamese sloop-of-war in the harbor, which had brought a number of Buddhist priests on a pilgrimage to this temple.

An interesting incident occurred in connexion with the presence of the Siamese man-of-war. For many reasons the Commodore was desirous of showing some marked attention to the commander of this vessel, who, on acquaintance, was found to be a young man of much intelligence and possessing some knowledge of the English language. The Commodore, therefore, dispatched his aid, Lieutenant Contee, to offer to him his services and to invite him on board the *Mississippi*. The Siamese commander seemed pleased with the compliment and came on



board the Mississippi the following day, where he was received with due honors. He was accompanied by two of the Buddhist priests who had come from Siam in his vessel on a pilgrimage to the famous temple. It was learned, on inquiry, that Prince Phar-Pen-Clow-Chow-Yon-Hon, who was so civil to Mr. Roberts and the officers of the Peacock on the occasion



Buddhist Temple, near Point de Galle, Ceylon.

of their visit to Siam, in 1836, was the second in rank in his kingdom, or second king, as it is termed. The Commodore, therefore, being desirous of renewing the good understanding which formerly subsisted between him and our officers, which, however, had been somewhat disturbed by the visit of Mr. Ballastier, sent him a beautiful pistol, of Colt's patent, and addressed to him the following letter :

UNITED STATES SHIP MISSISSIPPI,

Point de Galle, Island of Ceylon, March 14, 1833.

MOST EXALTED PRINCE: I have been most happy to meet at this port a vessel-of-war belonging to the kingdom of Siam, one of beautiful form and construction, and commanded by an officer of skill and merit.

In remembrance of the kindness you extended to the late Mr. Roberts and the officers of the United States ship Peacock, in 1836, I beg your acceptance of a curious pistol which has been entrusted to my charge, to be presented to some high functionary who has sufficient acquaintance with the arts to understand its mechanism and use.

The renown which your Highness has acquired in America, for your attainments in every branch of science, induces me to place at your disposal this trifling gift of Mr. Colt.

I hope that you will send one of your ships of Siam to America, where I can promise the officers a friendly and honorable welcome.

It will, at all times, give me the greatest pleasure to render to all vessels under the Siamese flag whatever aid or assistance it may be in my power to command.

With profound respect I have the honor to be your most obedient servant,

M. C. PERRY, *Commander-in-chief*

of all the U. S. naval forces in the East India, China, and Japan seas.

To his Royal Highness PHAN-PEN-CLOW-CHOW-YOK-HOX.

The Commodore was induced thus to take the initiative in endeavoring to open communications with Siam, in the hope that he might possibly be able to revive the treaty between that kingdom and the United States, made on our part by Mr. Roberts. This had virtually become a dead letter and altogether inoperative, as had, indeed, also that made by England with the same people. Sir John Davis and Sir James Brooke, on behalf of England, and Mr. Ballastier, on the part of the United States, had made subsequent efforts and been politely repulsed; but the Commodore hoped that possibly another attempt might result more successfully; and as he had been entrusted by the government with several blank letters of credence, he was prepared to act on the authority of one of them should he find a favorable opening. Both the kings of Siam, and many of their officers, understand the English language, and one object of the Commodore was to induce the monarch to send one of his ships to the United States (they are all vessels, at once, both of war and commerce) to examine into our institutions, resources, &c., and thus lead to friendly commercial relations.

The Commodore subsequently received a courteous answer to his letter, and from that and private information which he had taken pains to get of his probable reception, he would have gone to Siam had not uncontrollable circumstances prevented.

The Commodore also presented to Mun-Clow-Sar-Com, captain of the Siamese sloop-of-war, a service sword and a copy of "Bowditch's Navigator."

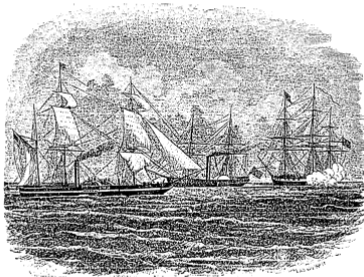
The Mississippi left Galle on the morning of the 15th of March, and after getting clear of the harbor, shaped her course for Great Nicobar Island, the southernmost of the group of that name, with the intention of passing between it and Paloway, a small island or rock lying off the northern extremity of Sumatra. On the 20th, Great Nicobar was made, and the proposed course having been taken, the steamer entered the straits of Malacca, steering for the Malay shore, on which side the weather is represented as being more settled and the sky less obscured.

Fortunately, the weather was favorable during the passage through the straits, and it was found necessary to anchor once only during the night, at the entrance between the North and South Sands, within sight of the Aron Islands. The navigation of the straits did not appear to the Commodore as dangerous as an examination of the chart had led him to expect; yet it is somewhat intricate and certainly not free from danger.

A vessel has, however, the advantage of being always able to anchor, though, in some parts of the channel, necessarily in rather deep water. The two most dangerous passages are those termed the East and West Channel; and the narrow one between Formosa bank and the Pyramids lying opposite, and the northern end of the middle bank. A light vessel recently anchored on "Two-and-a-half fathom bank" renders the former passage more safe; while the

latter is made more secure by the high land of Cape Formosa, the bearings of and distance from which will, in clear weather, indicate the mid-channel.

Pilots may be procured for vessels, when bound toward the China seas, at Penang, and at Singapore when their course is in an opposite direction. The *Mississippi* took no pilot, as time could not be spared for communicating with Penang; and, in fact, with good charts and a careful look out, together with proper precautions in anchoring when necessary, a pilot is of little further service than to identify the names of headlands and islands, and to explain the tides and currents. Indeed, by trusting too much to the pilots, who are mostly irresponsible natives, ships may fall into dangers which the experience and prudence of their captains, if left to their own judgments, would avoid. In passing through the straits, the *Mississippi* met H. B. M. ship *Cleopatra*, towed by a small war steamer, bound in an opposite direction. The senior English ship, on coming near, honored the broad pendant of the Commodore with a salute; which compliment was promptly responded to by an equal number of guns.



Mississippi towed by an English Frigate in the Straits of Malacca.

It is a fact worthy of remark, that the usual vertical rise and fall of the tides in the Straits of Malacca is from twelve to fourteen feet, while in other parts of the world, in the same latitude, there is scarcely any variation. The tides at Singapore correspond, in this respect, with those in the Straits.

On entering from the Straits of Malacca into what is called the Straits of Singapore, the islands became numerous and the passages consequently various and intricate; but the directions

given by Horsburgh are so full and explicit, that by a strict observance of them, together with proper vigilance and judgment, the lead being kept in constant use and the anchor always in readiness, there is no very great danger of touching.

With a judicious regard to these precautions, the *Mississippi* made her way securely through all the intricacies of the course, and finally, on the 25th of March, came to anchor in the port of Singapore.

