

ORANGES GALORE—AND FRUIT CULTURE
GENERALLY IN CEYLON.

We have long been aware of orange trees growing and producing fruit exceedingly well in certain of our planting districts—more especially in the comparatively dry Uva divisions. In Lower Hewaheta, too, in the olden days we have seen some splendid trees covered with golden fruit. But certainly never in the history of the island have we had such a revelation of luxuriance as that made by a Rangala planter elsewhere,—“25,000 mandarin oranges from two trees in one year!” The statement sounds incredible, and were it not attested to us by the name of a well-known planter, we should say there had been exaggeration. But it is absolute fact and it ought to set a good many practical men a-thinking that in certain of our hill districts, a very limited grove of orange trees might prove as reliable a source of income as a very much bigger acreage of coconuts. We have related how, in Florida, we found an ex-Udapussellawa coffee planter, content with his ten acres of oranges, assured that if they turned out well, they ought to give him a clear income of from £400 rising to £800 a year. Ten acres of the Rangala “mandarins” ought to beat this by a long way, even although we are far distant from such a market as Florida commands—in the season when foreign oranges are out of it—in New York and other big towns—with cheap transport from the groves to the American Covent Garden. Still, it is impossible to doubt that there is a very considerable market in Ceylon, including the port of Colombo, for good fruit and more especially oranges. We recall a month last year when, for invalids, no oranges worthy of the name, could be purchased under 25 cents each in Colombo. See what “North of Kandy” in a letter today says about fruit as well as vegetables. Oranges are getting a very high reputation among the faculty; and indeed we can recall the saying of worthy and clever Dr. Dickman of Kandy, twenty years ago, in bemoaning the quantity of medicine he was called on by his planting patients and others to prescribe:—“They will have ‘it you know; nothing but a big bottle and a ‘nauseous draft will assure them they get value ‘from their doctor; now if I myself feel ‘seedy,’ I ‘take an orange; if quite out of sorts, I take ‘two; and if very bad three or four—with the ‘best effect possible!’ There can be no doubt of the wholesomeness of the fruit, or of the fact that every man, woman and child in the Colony might probably, with great advantage to health, consume one hundred times the number of oranges they now do in the year. So, surely, we are safe in urging an extension of orange cultivation, among both Europeans and Ceylonese. There are other fruits, too, that might be far more freely planted; for instance, peaches and figs, in the Uva districts especially. Asking not long ago an experienced planter what a waste piece of land amidst the Happy Valley patawas could be made to grow,—“Why,” he said, “planted up with fig trees, that three acres would give tons of fruit for the supply of Nuwara Eliya, Nawalapitiya, Gampola, Kandy and Colombo markets.” Why then is there not far more done in fruit culture within the Principality? Are there none of our enterprising trained young planters (“creepers” even of some local experience) who can command a little capital and go to work to form 10 or 20 acre groves for oranges, peaches and figs?

THE BEGINNINGS OF COCONUT PLANTING
IN CEYLON.

HOW THE PALM GOT TO CEYLON.

The coconut palm is by no means indigenous to Ceylon. Though the most striking and ubiquitous of all plants over a great part of the lowcountry, the palm is nowhere found that its planting cannot be accounted for; and unlike the cinnamon bush, or rather tree, it can nowhere be discovered in a wild state. De Candolle, the greatest authority on the subject, places the original habitat of the coconut palm in the Eastern Archipelago somewhere in the neighbourhood of Sumatra and Java, and surmises that nuts floated thence both East and West. Eastwards to the islands of the Pacific and the coast of Central America, and Westward to Ceylon and the East Coast of Africa. The native tradition that locates the earliest specimen or grove of this palm in the neighbourhood of Weligama, on our Southern Coast, is in strict accordance with what might be expected under De Candolle's theory. The tradition is that a king of Ceylon was a leper, or afflicted with some skin disease, and that he (Kusta Raja) was cured by sea-bathing and the milk of the coconut, or the use of the expressed oil. Curiously enough the *Mahawansa* (the ancient Sinhalese history of Ceylon) does not contain nearly so many references to the coconut as it does to the palmyra palm, although the latter now, does not cover nearly the area occupied by coconut. One shrewd surmise why the *Mahawansa* has so little to say about the coconut, hazarded by Mr. H. Nevill, is that the practice of toddy-drawing after a time, and its distillation into spirit, would prejudice the priestly historians against the palm and its cultivation. Be this as it may, Mr. Nevill notices that the *Mahawansa* (XLII. chapter) records how King Aggrabodhi I. about A.D. 589 caused “a coconut plantation of three yojanas (about 36 English miles) in extent” to be formed, probably between Dendra and Weligama, and so it is surmised that his statue was cut out of the rock near the Weligama Vihara as a memorial of the King who introduced coconut planting into Ceylon!

* We are indebted for the next link in the chain of local coconut planting to the intelligent Atapattu Mudaliyar of the Colombo Kachcheri. Looking over his English copy of the *Mahawansa*, Mudaliyar Solomon Seneviratne came on the passage where it is related that the Minister of Prakarama Bahu the Great formed a coconut plantation between Bentota and Kalutara, one yojana or 12 English miles in width. The original passage bearing on the planting is worth transcribing as follows:—

Thence this great minister proceeded to the port of Bhimatittha. And there he built a bridge, eighty-six cubits' span, at the mouth of the Kalanadi* river; one of about one hundred yaththis† span at the village Kadalisena; † one of forty yaththis' span over the Salaggama river, § and one of fifty cubits' span over the Salapadapa river. || Thus did he build these and other bridges at divers places where it was difficult to cross over; and likewise also he made numerous gardens and halls for preaching and the like, and did even give away much alms and hold feasts (in connection therewith).

Afterwards this great minister of the king formed a large coconut garden, full of fruit and fine shade, and gave it the famous name of Parakkama Bahu;

* The Black river, Kalu-ganga.

† A yaththi is equal to seven cubits of two spans to the cubit.

‡ Kehelsen, Kehel-lenava?

§ Salgamu-ganga.

|| Salruk.

and it extended from the Bhimatittha Vihara (Bentota unto the ford of the Kalanadi, (Kaluganga), a space of about one yojana in width.

And when he had caused the great forest Mahalabujagaccha* to be cut down altogether and rooted up, he made a fine village thereon and planted a large grove of jak trees near it.

The Atapattu Mudaliyar, in calling our attention to the passage, writes:—

"It appears that coconut estates on a large scale were planted on the South Western Coast of Ceylon long before the arrival of the Portuguese. See 44th verse of the 86th chapter "Bhima-tittha" in modern Bentota "Kalanadi" is the Kaluganga. The whole of the coast line from Kalutara to Bentota formed one coconut garden, and was named after the King who caused it to be planted.

"It is very interesting to find that the Sinhalese of that date had found the best soil in the Island for coconuts to plant the Royal garden. It is possible as you mentioned to me that on the Southern part of the coast; the coconut first grew from nuts washed ashore from the Eastern Archipelago."

The strange part is, if there were extensive coconut groves in the South-west part of the island before the advent of the Portuguese, that there is little or no mention of the coconut by the Portuguese historian Ribeiro or his French editor. The areka and talipot palms are freely mentioned; but the coconut scarcely at all. It is only after the arrival of the Dutch that we hear of a stimulus to the extension of coconut planting being afforded. But even then, it will take most people by surprise to learn that so late as A.D. 1740 the coast line between Colombo and Kalutara—now a continuous coconut grove—remained unplanted and was described as "nine-tenths waste," and so Governor Van Imhoff in that year, proposed surveying and distributing this land in limited portions to "persons who are inclined to plant them with coconuts and to pay Government duties on them." So, by a system of "Rajakariya" right through, was all the coconut planting (as also all the tank building and canal digging) done in Ceylon previous to the advent of the British. And yet we have no hesitation in saying that the present century, and indeed, the past fifty years have seen more than ten times the area covered with the coconut palm that can be credited to all the Kings or Governors in the twelve hundred and sixty years between A.D. 589 and 1840!

BOUND TO THE DARK CONTINENT.

LETTER FROM MR. E. WOODHOUSE.

Zanzibar, Sept. 19, 1894.

HASTE IN GETTING ABOARD.

When you have been taking it easy in anticipation of getting away on Sunday night or Monday morning it rather puts one out to get a notice at 7 o'clock on Friday evening to be on board before 12 noon, the following day.

The tailor hasn't brought the clothes; the shoes haven't come; the buttons to be put on and the bits of things that were to have been sewn up next afternoon have to be left undone; whilst the dhoby hasn't turned up, &c.

And then having sat up the greater part of the night and spent the next morning in a whirlwind of packing and paying, and sending the old boy into a frenzy by bad language and irritation, you rush to the jetty and urging the boatmen to pull like mad, you get on board as the clock strikes 12 noon, to be coolly told "no chance of getting

* Madelgassanaya.

away till midnight, you had better sleep on board," is enough to turn a saint into a sinner all in a hurry. The fact after all is that

THE GOOD SHIP "MARQUIS BACHQUEHEM"

did not leave her moorings till 10 o'clock, the following morning—and one wonders where the Colombo agents of the Austrian Lloyd's Company expect to go when "all things mortal fade away." About the said Austrian Lloyd ships, I must confess to a good deal of prejudice born of previous experience in voyages to Madras and Penang—and so was agreeably surprised with the "Marquis." Boomy cabins and wide bunks well forward, away from the noise of the engines, excellent food, stewards who could speak English, as well as most of the officers, baths available at any time and but few passengers. One or two little details seemed strange of course, *no soap* nor any provision made for any in the washstands, a sheet given you for a bath towel, and eccentric forms of serving the food—not the least remarkable being a miniature mountain of real ice with a light inside. However, there was plenty of good food nicely cooked and abundance of vegetables. The Captain turned out to be an old acquaintance, having been on board the ss. "Orion" on one of my trips to the Straits. His English has improved somewhat, but he retains the same grim look and saturnine demeanour as of yore. A young Indian engineer returning from a trip to Australia, and a Bavarian botanist and his wife returning home from Sumatra and Java were the

OTHER SALOON PASSENGERS.

whilst in the 2nd class was a maid who had been in the Seychelles and knows our old friend Edwards and his family erst of Madulsima. The German doctor and the Bavarian Botanist supplied most of the conversation at table, a good deal of which was understandable even without more than the merest smattering of the German language. One day on being served with beefsteak and vegetables, the doctor would have it that meat was not good for human beings to eat, whereupon the botanist (in the opposition as usual) declared it was good. After an animated discussion for some minutes, in which the doctor quoted

CONFUCIUS AND MUHAMMAD

and other authorities on his side of the question, the botanist declared his opinion that Confucius and Mohammed knew nothing about modern beefsteaks or they would have never put their veto on eating meat, and advised the doctor to imitate the example of himself and his wife and take a piece—which he eventually did. Other days we had long dissertations on "bananas," again on grasses and citronella oil, and again on the different ships of the Austrian Lloyd's, and so on. We got on very well together, cocoa, cinchona, india rubber, the different botanical gardens, &c., &c., a word or two of Malay every now and again serving to explain each other's meaning.

THE WEATHER

was fine save a few showers and the water was smooth, four days (to almost a minute) taking us from our moorings in Colombo to the Victoria Dock in Bombay, and a more comfortable time I have never had in any vessel in the East.

THE GREAT WESTERN CAPITAL OF INDIA

was bathed in monsoon showers during the two days we remained there, and this naturally made