

THE LADY'S GEOGRAPHY.

[Kelly Plante](#) August 30, 2021

DESCRIPTION of the Island of CEYLON. [Continued from Page 720.]

ALL the kinds of fruits which the Indies in general produce, are found in this island; it has however some peculiar to itself; among which one of the most particular is the Jacks, a fruit which is of very great service in food; it grows on a very high tree, is of a greenish colour, covered over with prickles, and is about the size of a loaf of eighteen pounds weight. Its seeds, or what they call its eggs, are disposed in the inside of it, like the seeds of a gourd. They eat the jacks as we eat cabbage, and its taste is not extremely unlike it. When it is ripe it may be eaten raw, and one of them is sufficient for six or seven people. The grain or eggs resemble chesnuts very much, both in colour and taste; they may be eaten either boiled, or roasted in ashes: one jacks produces two or three quarts of them, and the inhabitants always keep store of them by them.

The Jombs is another fruit which is peculiar to the island: it has the taste of an apple, is very full of juice, and is no less wholesome than agreeable. Its colour is white, mixed with red, in a manner that appears to be the work of an elegant

pencil. There are also several wild fruits which are to be met with in their woods, as, the Mucroes, which are round, of the size of a cherry, and of a very agreeable taste. The Dongs, which resemble black cherries; the Ambellos, which may be compared to our gooseberries; the Carollas, Cabellas, Tookes, and Jollas, which may pass for so many sorts of very good plumbs, and the Paragiddes, which are not unlike our pears.

The island of Ceylon produces three trees, which, though their fruits are not indeed fit to eat, are no less remarkable for other conveniencies: the first, which is named Tallipot, is very strait, and in height and thickness nearly resembles the mast of a ship; its leaves are so large, that a single one will cover fifteen or twenty men, and shelter them from the rain. They grow stronger as they dry, without becoming less pliable or manageable. Nature could scarcely have bestowed any gift on the inhabitants more valueable than this; although the leaves are so very extensive when open, they can be folded up like a fan, and being then not thicker than one's arm, weigh very little in the hand. Their shape is round, but the Ceylonese cut them into triangular pieces, wherewith they cover themselves when they travel, taking care to place the pointed end before them, which therefore makes its way the easier through the shrubs. The soldiers make tents of them.

These leaves grow at the top of the tree, like those of the cocoa; but, what is very extraordinary, it bears no fruit till the year of its death, at which time alone, it puts forth large branches, laden with very beautiful yellow flowers, but of a very strong and offensive smell, which changes into a round, hard fruit, of the size of our largest cherries, but which are good for nothing but to sow. Thus the Tillipot bears but once, but then it is so loaded with fruit at that time, that one tree is sufficient for the sowing of a whole province. Yet the smell of the flowers is so insufferable near houses, that they seldom fail to cut down the tree so soon as it begins to put forth buds, especially as at that time, if they are cut, there is found within them an exceeding good sap, which may be reduced to meal, and made up in cakes, that have the taste of white bread. This is also another resource for the inhabitants when the rice harvest happens to turn out indifferently.

The second of these trees is the Kitula, which grows as strait as the cocoa, but not so tall, and by many degrees slenderer. Its principal singularity consists in its yielding a kind of liquor which is called Tellegie, very sweet, wholesome, and agreeable, but without any strength. The liquor they collect twice a-day, and from some of the best trees three times; the quantity of the whole frequently amounting to six quarts in a day. They boil it up till it acquires the consistence and appearance of dark powder sugar; and this the inhabitants call Jaggory. With very little more trouble they might render

it as white as sugar, to which, in every other respect, it is no way inferior in goodness. The manner of getting this liquor is as follows:

When the tree comes to its maturity it puts forth, towards its extremities, a little button, which changes into a round fruit, and is, properly speaking, the seed. This button they open, putting into it various ingredients, such as salt, pepper, citron, garlic, and various kinds of leaves, which prevent it from ripening so soon as it would otherwise do. Every day, at certain times, they cut off a little piece towards the end of this, from which place the liquor flows out in abundance. As this button ripens and withers, others grow lower and lower every year, till they at length reach the bottom of the branches; but when this comes to be the case, which is in about eight or ten years, the tree ceases to bear, and presently after dies.

Its leaves resemble those of the cocoa-palm, and are covered with a kind of bark extremely hard and full of filaments, which are employed in the making of ropes: they fall during the whole time that the tree is growing; but when it has arrived at its full dimensions, they remain on it for many years, and when they do fall, are never supplied by any others.

The wood, which is seldom above three inches thick, serves as a velopement to a very thick pith; it is extremely hard and

heavy, but very apt to split of itself. The colour of it is black, and looks as if it was composed of inlaid work. The Ceylonese make pestles of it to beat the rice withal.

The third extraordinary tree, and indeed what renders this island so extremely valuable to the Dutch, is that which bears the cinnamon: it is called in the language of the country Corundagouhah. It grows in the woods indiscriminately with other trees, and, what is somewhat extraordinary, the Ceylonese set no extraordinary value upon it. This tree is of a middling bulk, its bark is the cinnamon, which appears white when on the trunk, but which they take off, and dry it in the sun. The islanders gather this only from the smaller trees, although the bark of the larger ones smell as sweet, and have as strong a taste. The wood has no smell; it is white, and about the hardness of deal, and is used for all kinds of purposes. Its leaf is not unlike that of the laurel, but when it first begins to put forth is of a bright scarlet, and rubbed between the hands has more the smell of a clove gillyflower than that of the cinnamon. The fruit, which usually ripens about September, is like an acorn, but smaller, and has less both of smell and taste than the bark. They boil them in water, in order to extract an oil from them, which swims at the top, and, when congealed, becomes as hard and as white as tallow, and of a very agreeable smell. The inhabitants anoint their bodies with it, and also burn it in their lamps, but no candles are made of it, but for the King.

With respect to animals, the island of Ceylon produces a great variety; viz. cows, buffaloes, swine, goats, deer, hares, dogs, jackalls, apes, tygers, bears, wild bears, elephants, lions, horses, and asses; but no sheep. Amongst the fallow beasts they have one called the Memima, which is no bigger than a hare, but much resembles a deer; its colour is grey, spotted with white, and its flesh is excellent. The Ganvera is a kind of wild buck, which has a very sharp chine, its four feet white, and half the legs of the same colour. Knox gives an account of his having seen one, which was kept in the king's magazine, together with a black tyger, a white deer, and a spotted elephant.

The apes are not only in prodigious abundance in the woods, but also of many various kinds, whereof there are some very different from any that are to be found in other countries. Some of them are as large as our spaniels, with grey hair and black faces, and long white beards, reaching from ear to ear, which give them greatly the appearance of old men. There are others of the same size, but differing in colour, their bodies, faces, and beards, being all of a bright white. But as this difference of colour does not seem to form any specific difference in the animal, they are both alike named Wanderous: they do but little mischief, keeping constantly in the woods, where they feed entirely on leaves and buds.

There is another sort, called Killowan, which are beardless,

but have a white face, and long hair on their heads, which descend and divide like those of the human species: this kind are extremely mischievous, from the continual ravage they commit amongst the grain. The Ceylonese are extremely fond of the flesh of all their kinds of apes, as well as of that of their squirrels, whereof they have also several different species.

The variety of ants in the island of Ceylon is no less admirable than their abundance. That which they call Coumbias, and Tale-Coumbias, are very much like ours in size, with this difference, that the first are reddish, and the others, which are black, are only to be found in rotten trees, and have a very disagreeable smell.

There is a third kind, called Dimbios, which are large and red, and make their nests on the branches of large trees, in leaves which they amass together, to the bulk of a man's head. Several nests are sometimes found on one tree, and the fear of a thousand dangerous things will then prevent any person from attempting to climb up it.

The Coura [...]atches are a fourth kind of ants; they are large and black, live under ground, and form holes there, nearly of the shape of rabbit-burrows, and the fields are so full of these holes, that the cattle are in perpetual danger from them of breaking their legs.

A fifth sort are the Codd as: they are of a very fine black, much about the size of the former, and live also in the earth; but they frequently make excursions in very numerous parties, without any one knowing the peculiar period of their expedition. They bite cruelly if hurt or put out of their way, but otherwise, if unmolested, they are very harmless and inoffensive.

But the most numerous, and at the same time the most extraordinary of all the kinds of ants is, that which they call the Vacos. The ground is covered with them: they are of a middling size, have a white body, and red head, and devour every thing that comes in their way. They eat cloth, wood, the straw wherewith the houses are thatched, and, in short, every thing but iron and stone. No one dares to leave any thing in an uninhabited house; they get up along the walls, making a rhind of earth as they go along, which they continue through the whole extent of their way, to what height soever they arrive. If this arcade happens to break, they all immediately return back again, to repair their building, and continue their march as soon as they have completed the work. The inhabitants easily perceive their approach by the sight of these little vaults, and are obliged to use continual precaution to destroy or drive them away. In places which are without houses, they raise up little mountains of earth, of four, five, or six feet in height, and so strong, that it is not easy to destroy them, even with a spade.

These little huts, which are called Humbosses, are composed of vaults or arcades, and built of very fine earth, which the people make use of for the fabrication of their idols.

The Vacos multiply prodigiously, but they also die by myriads, for when they acquire their wings, they take their flight in such inconceivable numbers towards the west, that they almost obscure the sky, and rising to so great a height as to be quite lost to the view, they cease not their flight till they drop down dead, exhausted with fatigue; they then become a prey to birds of many kinds, and chickens in particular will feed on them more readily than on even the rice.

[To be continued.]