

# CEYLON

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ISLAND

PHYSICAL, HISTORICAL, AND TOPOGRAPHICAL

WITH

NOTICES OF ITS NATURAL HISTORY, ANTIQUITIES AND PRODUCTIONS

BY

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ILLUSTRATED BY MAPS, PLANS, AND DRAWINGS

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respectful view of its attitudes; it is one of a numerous family of bugs, (some of them most attractive<sup>1</sup> in their colouring,) which are inoffensive if unmolested, but if touched or irritated, exhale an odour that, once perceived, is never after forgotten.

APHANIPTERA. *Fleas*.—Fleas are equally numerous, and may be seen in myriads in the dust of the streets or skipping in the sunbeams which fall on the clay floors of the cottages. The dogs, to escape them, select for their sleeping places spots where a wood fire has been previously kindled; and here prone on the white ashes, their stomachs close to the earth, and their hind legs extended behind, they repose in comparative coolness, and bid defiance to their persecutors.

DIPTERA. *Mosquitoes*.—But of all the insect pests that beset an unseasoned European the most provoking by far are the truculent mosquitoes.<sup>2</sup> Even in the midst of endurance from their onslaughts one cannot but be amused by the ingenuity of their movements; as if aware of the risk incident to an open assault, a favourite mode of attack is, when concealed by a table, to assail the ankles through the meshes of the stocking, or the knees which are ineffectually protected by a fold of Russian duck. When you are reading, a mosquito will rarely settle on that portion of your hand which is within range of your eyes, but cunningly stealing by the underside of the book fastens on the wrist or little finger, and noiselessly inserts his proboscis there. I have tested the classical expedient recorded by Herodotus, who states that the fishermen inhabiting the fens of Egypt cover their beds with their nets, knowing that the mosquitoes, although they bite through linen

<sup>1</sup> Such as *Cantuo ocellatus*, *Leptocelis Marginalis*, *Callidea Stockerius*, &c. &c. Of the aquatic species, the gigantic *Belostoma indicum* cannot escape notice, attaining a size of nearly three inches.

<sup>2</sup> *Culex laniger*? Wied. In Kandy Mr. Thwaites finds *C. fuscatus*, *C. circumvolens*, &c., and one with a most formidable hooked proboscis, to which he has assigned the appropriate name *C. regius*.

robes, will not venture through a net.<sup>1</sup> But, notwithstanding the opinion of Spence<sup>2</sup>, that nets with meshes an inch square will effectually exclude them, I have been satisfied by painful experience that (if the theory is not altogether fallacious,) at least the modern mosquitoes of Ceylon are uninfluenced by the same considerations which restrained those of the Nile under the successors of Cambyses.

### *List of Ceylon Insects.*

For the following list of the insects of the island, and the remarks prefixed to it, I am indebted to Mr. F. Walker, by whom it has been prepared after a careful inspection of the collections made by Dr. Templeton, Mr. E. L. Layard, and others; as well as those in the British Museum and in the Museum of the East India Company.

“A short notice of the aspect of the Island will afford the best means of accounting, in some degree, for its entomological Fauna: first, as it is an island, and has a mountainous central region, the tropical character of its productions, as in most other cases, rather diminishes, and somewhat approaches that of higher latitudes.

“The coast-region of Ceylon, and fully one-third of its northern part, have a much drier atmosphere than that of the rest of its surface; and their climate and vegetation are nearly similar to those of the Carnatic, with which this island may have been connected at no very remote period.<sup>3</sup> But if, on the contrary, the land in Ceylon is gradually rising, the difference of its Fauna from that of Central Hindostan is less remarkable. The peninsula of the Dekkan might then be conjectured to have been nearly or wholly separated from the central part of Hindostan, and confined to the range of mountains along the eastern coast; the insect-fauna of which is as

<sup>1</sup> HERODOTUS, *Enterpe*, xcv.

<sup>2</sup> KIRBY and SPENCE'S *Entomology*, letter iv.

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