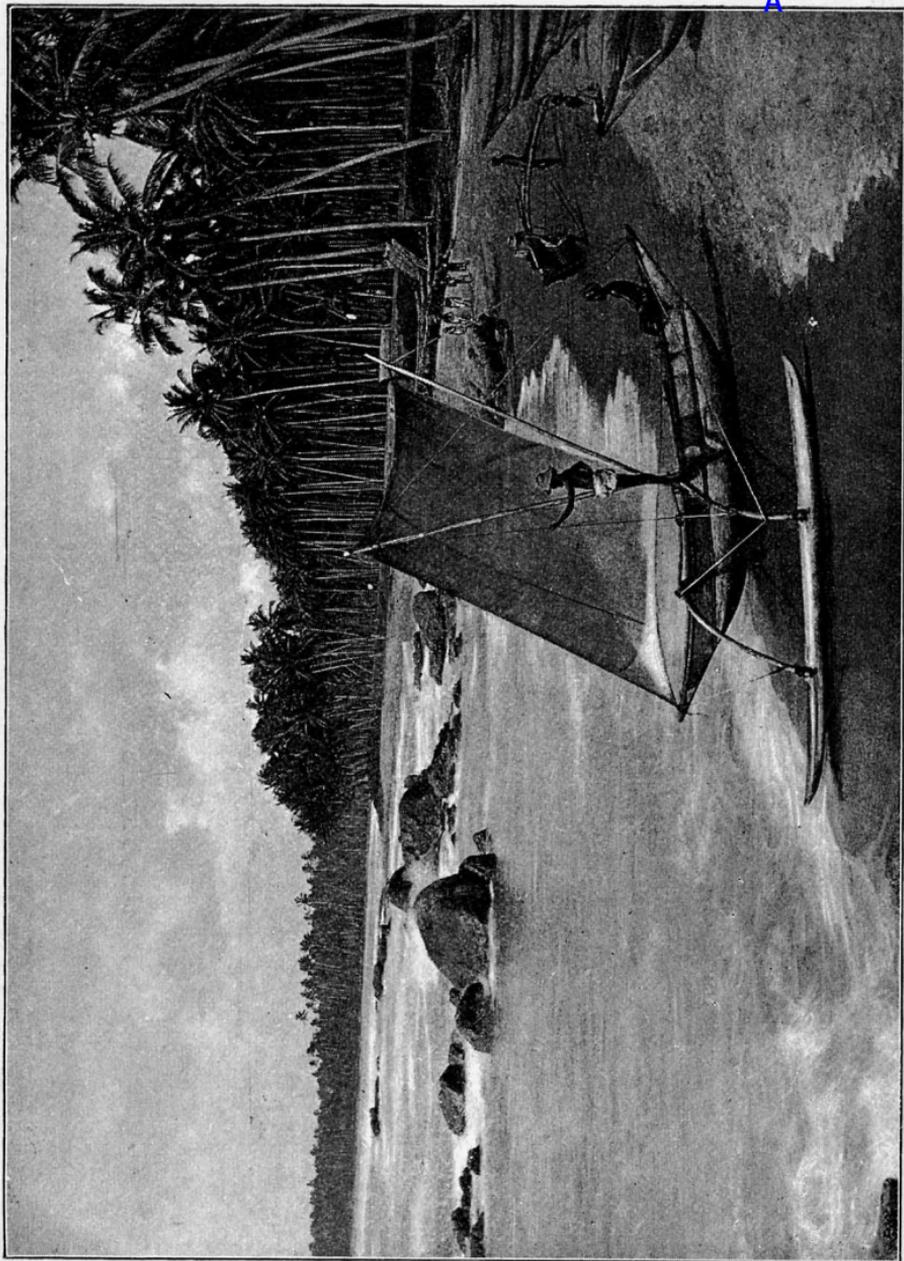


FROM ADAM'S PEAK
TO ELEPHANTA

SKETCHES IN CEYLON AND INDIA



SEASHORE, NEAR COLOMBO
(Outrigger canoe in foreground)

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op 1-7
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BY

EDWARD CARPENTER

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P R E F A C E

IF asked to write a book about his own country and people a man might well give up the task as hopeless—yet to do the same about a distant land in which he has only spent a few months is a thing which the average traveler quite cheerfully undertakes. I suppose this may be looked upon as another illustration of the great fact that the less one knows of a matter the easier it is to write or talk about it. But there is, it is sometimes said, a certain merit of their own in first impressions; and I trust that this may appear in the present case. Certainly, though there are many things that are missed in a first glance, there are some things that stand out clearer than later.

In the following pages I have tried to keep as far as possible to the relation of things actually seen and heard, and not to be betrayed into doubtful generalisations. It is so easy in the case of a land like India, which is as large as Europe (without Russia) and at least as multifarious in its peoples, languages, creeds, customs, and manners, to make the serious mistake of supposing that what is true of one locality necessarily applies to the whole vast demesne, that I must specially warn the reader not only against falling into this error himself, but against the possibility of my having fallen into it in places.

As far as actual experience of life in Ceylon and India is concerned I have perhaps been fortunate; not only in being introduced (through the kindness of local friends) into circles of traditional teaching which are often closed against the English, and in so getting to know something of the esoteric religious lore of South India; but also in obtaining some interesting glimpses behind the scenes of the Hindu ceremonial. I have too had the good luck to find friends and familiar

acquaintances among all classes of native society, down almost to the lowest ; and I must say that the sectional view I have thus obtained of the mass-people in this part of the world has made me feel with renewed assurance the essential oneness of humanity everywhere, notwithstanding the very marked local and superficial differences that undoubtedly exist.

The spectacle of the social changes now taking place in India is one that is full of interest to anyone who has studied and taken part in the Socialistic movement at home ; and the interest of it is likely to increase. For though the movement in India is not the same as that at home, it forms a curious counterpart to the latter ; and being backed by economic changes which will probably persist for years to come is not likely to die out very soon.

For the rest the book must rely on the description of scenes of nature and of ordinary human life, whose unexpected vividness forced me to portray them—though to begin with I had no intention of doing so. The illustrations are many of them taken from the excellent photographs of Messrs Scowen of Colombo, Messrs Bourn of Bombay, and Messrs Frith of Reigate.

E. C.

Nov. 1892.