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Sir James Emerson Tennent (1804–69) combined the roles of traveller, politician and civil servant, publishing accounts of Greece during the war of independence, and several books on Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where he was civil secretary to the colonial government from 1845 to 1850. His other major achievement was as promoter of the Copyright of Designs Act of 1842, which secured the same protection for applied arts designs as existed for inventions and written works. This 1850 book describes the various missionary activities of the Portuguese, Dutch, British and Americans among the peoples of Ceylon since its first discovery by Europeans. The first Portuguese explorers observed that the inhabitants of the north of the island were Hindus, and those in the south were Buddhists, and the different approaches over time to these two belief groups form the core of this prejudiced but interesting book.
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Christianity in Ceylon

Its Introduction and Progress under the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British and American Missions with an Historical Sketch of the Brahmanical and Buddhist Superstitions

James Emerson Tennent
CHRISTIANITY IN CEYLON;

ITS INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESS UNDER THE PORTUGUESE, THE DUTCH, THE BRITISH, AND AMERICAN MISSIONS:

WITH AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE

BRAHMANICAL AND BUDDHIST SUPERSTITIONS.

BY

SIR JAMES EMERSON TENNENT,

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LONDON:
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TO

THE RIGHT REV. ROBERT KNOX, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF DOWN AND CONNOR, AND DROMORE,

This Narrative,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE INFLUENCE

OF

EDUCATION IN THE DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY,

IS DEDICATED,

WITH ESTEEM AND REGARD,

BY

THE AUTHOR.
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INTRODUCTION.

For some years past I have been engaged in the preparation of a work on Ceylon, its history, its topography, its capabilities, its productions, its government, its present condition, and its future prospects as a colony of the Crown.

It will account for much that might otherwise seem abrupt or obscure in the following chapters, to state that they were originally commenced as portions
INTRODUCTION.

of the plan which I had thus sketched for myself, and in which the religion of the people and the progress of Christianity necessarily occupied a prominent place. But as the inquiry proceeded, I found it so far exceeded in interest what I had at first anticipated, that the materials I had collected became at once too important to be omitted, and too extended to form a subsidiary portion of a more comprehensive work. Hence their appearance in the present form.

The sketch of the Buddhist superstition will be found to differ in many essential particulars from its aspect as described in other countries of the East, but my object has been to present the features of Buddhism as it exists in Ceylon; and for this purpose I have availed myself largely of the observation and experience of those Christian missionaries who have made the religion of the natives, and the sacred books in which it is embodied, an object of patient and profound investigation. I believe that the account which I have given will be found to be not only more copious, but more correct, than any similar notice which has hitherto been published of the popular superstitions of the Singhalese.

The same observations apply to the chapter which treats of the Brahmanical system as cultivated by the Tamils of Ceylon; though in its details it presents but few variations from the tenets and practice of Hindooism generally on the continent of India.

The narrative which I have compiled from
INTRODUCTION.

authentic sources as to the state and prospects of Christianity will, I trust, be read with interest by all who look on missionary labour not merely in its loftier capacity as the disseminator of immortal truth, but who regard it in its incidental influence as the great pioneer of civilization and the most powerful agent for the diffusion of intellectual and moral enlightenment.

Nor can I lay down my pen without an humble yet confident hope that this exposition of facts which have fallen under my own immediate notice as to the success of missionary toil, and the inroad which has been made, through its instrumentality, upon the ancestral and national idolatries of Ceylon, will operate as an encouragement to those by whom these exertions have been supported, as an assurance that their labours hitherto have not been in vain, and a demonstration of the fallacy which falsely proclaims that the religions of India are inaccessible to Gospel truth, and unassailable by its influences.
CHAPTER I.

THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE PORTUGUESE PERIOD.