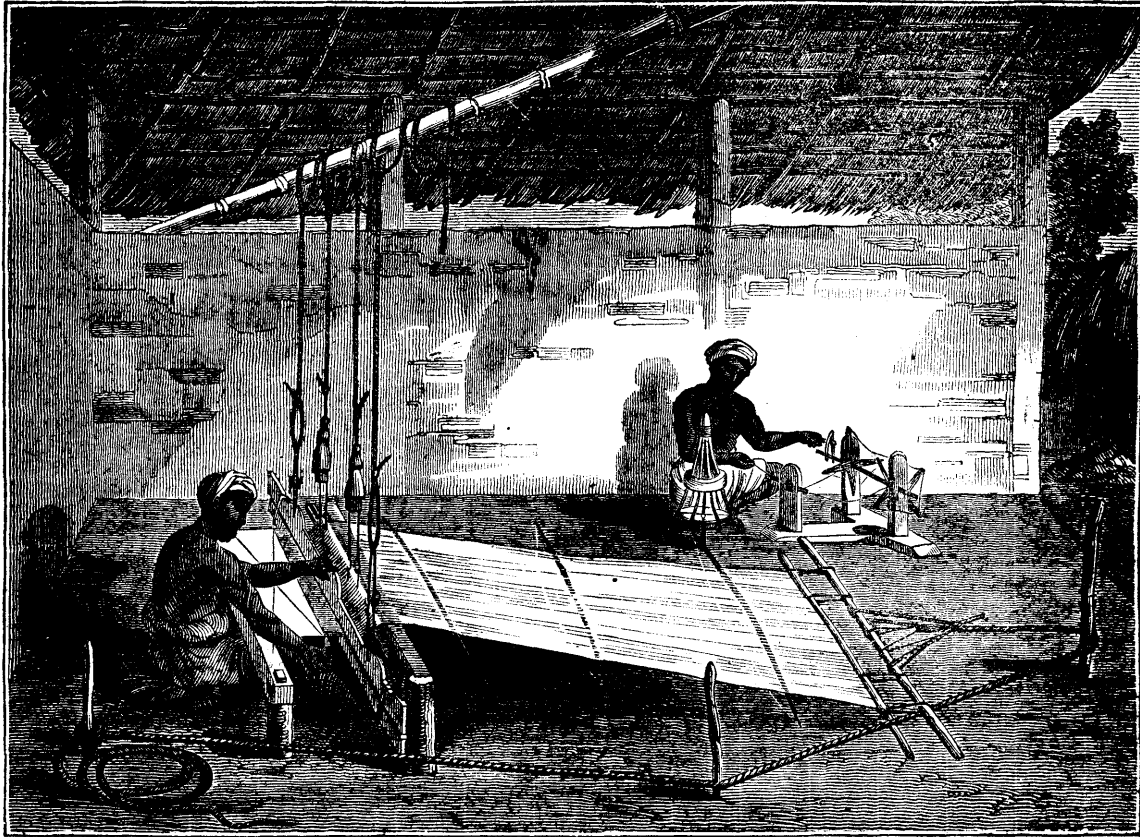


WEAVING IN CEYLON.



[Process of Weaving by the Cingalese.]

ONE of the most curious subjects for reflection is supplied by a comparison of the arts of nations of high antiquity, and of those whose civilization is of a more recent date. The various manufactures, for instance, of the Chinese and Hindoos are, as far as they demand manual skill and patience, equal, if not superior, to those of Europeans. But then, on the other hand, they appear incapable of improvement;—and not being assisted by machinery they are conducted with an expenditure of labour, that, if attempted amongst ourselves in the same way, would either compel the labourers to comparative starvation, or put the commonest article manufactured beyond the reach of any but the richer consumers. A yard of cotton cloth may now be bought in England for sixpence; but what would it cost if it were to be produced in the manner of the weavers of the East? The following narrative, describing weaving as now carried on in Ceylon, has been communicated to us by a gentleman who resided there:—

“On the 5th of January, 1821, two Kandyan weavers came to the general hospital with all their implements for weaving, for Mr. Marshall’s and my inspection. I showed them into a kind of open shed, with which they seemed pleased, and here they established their manufactory. They commenced their operations by driving four rude posts into the ground, left them about thirteen inches high; the one, as it turned out afterwards, for the support of the breast-beam, which was square; and the other supported a flat board for the purpose of raising the web a little behind the headles. The breast-beam had a groove cut into it for the purpose of fixing the end of the web in, but by filling it with water, it answered as a level. Their mode of levelling the two beams with each other, was by placing a slip of the rind of a plantain tree upon them, and, pouring water upon the centre, any inclination was ascertained with great accuracy. Between the four posts a hole was now dug, a little more than knee deep,

in which the weaver was to put his feet when working, sitting upon the edge of the hole.

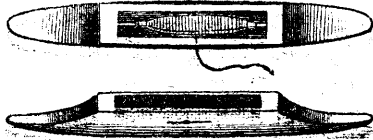
“Nothing could be more rude or simple than the different articles used: and some idea may be formed of them, when I state, that the loom, including everything employed in weaving, is purchased for something less than half-a-crown. The warp had been previously put into the headles and reed. No beam for the warp is used, but the whole reached within a few inches of the ground at once. From the extremity of the web a cord is extended round several stakes driven into the ground, and at last is fixed by a sailor’s knot (the clove hitch) to a post close to the weaver, who, by slacking off a little as occasion requires, by degrees draws the unwoven part of the web towards himself,—several rods (lease wands) are run through the warp for the purpose of steadying the threads and preserving the shade or lease, and are drawn out as the web advances. The headles had only two leaves instead of treadles; two cords descended into the hole with a piece of lead attached to each; and this was taken between the two first toes, and so worked. The lay is suspended by two coarse cords. It consists of two pieces of board with a groove in each for the reception of the reed, which is retained by a cord at each end. The shuttle resembles that used in Britain in weaving woollen. At seven o’clock, A.M., the loom was tied up, and at nine, A.M., he was weaving with great rapidity. The warp was very coarse but regular, and had been dressed before he came. Rice boiled in water is the substance used for this purpose, and it is applied to the yarn by means of a bit of rag. I detained the operator for several hours in taking sketches, yet he finished his work by 2 P.M. It might be three yards long, and the weaving cost nearly sixpence. The weaver seemed to possess a large share of vanity, and was much pleased to show that he could weave with his eyes shut. The weavers are of a very

low cast. On going in he used to fall flat, and there keep knocking his head upon the ground.

Another important personage remains to be mentioned: his duties were that of pirn-winder and assistant. He was a much younger man than the principal. His implements were, if possible, more rude than those already mentioned. The woof was brought in a leaf, and was wringing wet with thick cong-water (fluid paste). It was done in hanks or skeins of about eight inches in diameter. The machine, corresponding with the swifts, was formed by splitting a bamboo into six portions within three inches of one end; these splits were kept asunder, at the lower end, by means of a hoop. The bamboo was twenty inches in length. A thin rod was driven into the ground, and the bamboo rested upon and revolved round it.

The winder kept five or six pirns only a-head of the weaver, but whenever a thread of the web broke it was his duty to get up and tie it; and, indeed, he had to do everything out of the reach of the weaver, who could not get out of his hole, without unshipping the breast bone. Thus they went on very sociably together, always working, chewing betel, and conversing.

I understand their manner of warping is performed by fixing sticks in the ground at certain distances, and leading the yard round them, which had been put upon the split bamboo, as in filling the pirns and centre stick held in the hand. The yarn is spun by women with the distaff."



[Shuttle used by the Cingalese.]

DOMESTIC SERVANTS.