

"The Riches of India"

The Present Truth March 9, 1893

E. J. Waggoner

India is a land of blooming flowers, beautiful trees, and costly gems.

In vegetable productions, India is said to surpass all other lands. "Groves of different kinds of palms spread their beautiful foliage over the regions along the coast, offering the native and traveller delicious fruits and nuts of great variety; and over the inland plains and highlands the shady mango shelters the soil, while the sacred fig, and the bread fruit tree combine beauty with luxury. Great forests of caoutchouo (India rubber trees) grow throughout the low and marshy bracts, and millions of bamboos cub from the great northern regions, are yearly floated down the Ganges, whence they are sent to the different markets of the world." Teak forests (the wood of which is used in making ships) are found in Central India, and the deodar tree in the northwest provinces. Besides these, there are the mulberry trees, the acacia, filled with rich, yellow blossoms, the fine-leaved tamarind, the graceful neem, the willowy shecsham, and the cotton tree, covered with bright red flowers as large as roses, flashing like a great mass of fire in the morning light. There is also the coral tree, filled with lovely blood-red flowers, shaped like coral, and the kachnar, whose long branches are loaded with fragrant, lilac-coloured blossoms.

Of grains, rice is the principal one grown on the plains. Here also is grown cotton, sugar cane, indigo, jute, and poppies. For miles and miles along the river Ganges, as far as the eye can reach, great fields of white and violet-coloured poppies may be seen at a certain time every year. They are not raised, however, for their bright flowers, but for the vile poison called opium, which is made from them, and yearly sold for millions of pounds. Although it brings so much money, it is a great curse, for it poisons and destroys those who get into the habit of eating and smoking it.

Maize, millet, peas, beans, wheat, barley, and other grains, grow on the higher grounds; tea in Assam, the Punjaub, and the Neilgheries; pepper in Malabar; and coffee among the hills of Southern India.

The fruit of temperate countries grow in the higher regions, and the fruits of hot countries grow in the lower portions of India.

Fine silks, shawls, and tapestries of beautiful make, and cotton fabrics, wool, oil, seeds, leather, hides, and ivory, are sent from India in large quantities.

The streams of India swarm with fish and crocodiles; the forests and plains teem with animals; and the air is alive with insects and the brightest coloured birds. But we shall tell you more about these at another time.

Coal, iron, and salt, are found more than any other mineral products. The greatest coal fields are found north-west of Calcutta, in the Dammoda Valley. Many thousands of tons are annually mined from this district alone; other places produce vast quantities, and new fields are all the time opening up. Iron is found in many places, and has been produced there for hundreds and hundreds of years. Salt is found in great quantity and purity in the salt range of the Punjaub. Lead is found in the ranges of the Himalayas, and copper in the high plateaus of Northern Bengal.

Besides all of these riches, gold is found in the gravel of the streams of many parts of the country. Diamonds are picked up in the Southern and Central regions, and rubies, the topaz, beryl, emeralds, came-Hans, garnets, pearls, and other precious gems, are freely found, and are sold for large sums of money.

Surely India is a rich country; but the best gem of all, the treasure of more value than all other treasures, is little known there, and by many has never yet been found. It is there in all its beauty and purity, an inexhaustible mine, free to all who earnestly search for it; but alas, thousands and thousands do not search, because they do not even know that it is there. Can you tell the name of that priceless gem?

"Hidden Treasures"

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Did you ever see a pearl? It is a yellowish or blueish white, hard, smooth, roundish, shining little thing, found inside the shells of pearl oysters and other mollusks.

Pearls are of different sizes. Those which are about the size of a pea, and of good colour and form, are thought the most of, except large ones; but large ones are not often found. There was one found, however, in America, that measured over an inch through. As even little ones are considered very precious, you may be sure that this large one was much prized. It was sold in Paris for more than four hundred pounds. The pearls in the earrings of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, were worth about eighty thousand pounds, and it is said that as much as eight thousand pounds have been paid for a single string of pearls. So you see, pearls are considered very, very precious.

If you will look at your map of India, you will see an island called Ceylon, about fifty or sixty miles from the Southern coast of India. You will also notice that the Eastern coast of India, just north of Ceylon, is called the Coromandel Coast. These two places, Ceylon and Coromandel, which are governed by the Queen of England, are said to be the greatest pearl fisheries in the world.

There are natives who spend their whole time in diving down in the ocean after the shells which contain these precious pearls. They take down a bag in which they place the oysters as they bear them from the rocks. It is very hard work; as they can remain in the water only a minute or a minute and a half at a time, they have to dive down very often. They generally go down forty or fifty times in one day.

The pearl merchant often comes to the men who own these pearls, to buy of them. When he has found a very fine one, one of great price, he will sometimes go and sell all that he has, that he may have money enough to pay for it, and then he will come and buy it. Do you not think he must want it very much?

It makes me think of the men who used to travel long distances to search for hidden treasures. It was supposed that rich treasures were buried in certain places where great cities had once stood. Men were so anxious to get rich that they were willing to leave their business and travel far and work long, if they thought they could get only a part of those wonderful treasures. If they found a little they would be almost beside themselves for joy, and would quickly hide it and go and sell all that they had, and buy that piece of land, so that they might own its hidden treasures. And when sometimes they were bitterly disappointed, and found that the mine which had promised such wonderful wealth, was soon empty and had been worth next to nothing.

But the worst of it was that they were like so many of the poor people of India,—although there was a mine of the most wonderful hidden riches right near them, they knew it not. The mine was so full, so overflowing of the most priceless treasures, that all the men in the world might have taken of them, and yet the mine would have been as rich as ever. Some of them were even told about it, and the way to reach it was pointed out to them, but very few

believed it enough to search for it. Those who did, found more than their vessels could hold; more than they had ever hoped for or dreamed of. They had not only enough to carry them through this life, but enough to last them to all eternity. How glad they were that they had believed the good news. They saw that their newly-found treasures were more precious than rubies, or coral, or pearls; of more worth than the precious onyx or the sapphire stone, and that gold, and silver, and crystals could not equal them, and that all the things that they had ever desired were not to be compared with them. The things which they had loved so much before they gladly gave up, and counted them as nothing, that they might win these priceless treasures. Would you like to have been there to find some of those precious things for yourself? Then listen while I whisper something in your ear: You-may-find-them-now! They-are-hid-in-Jesus. Your Bible says so. Seek Jesus with all your heart; search for Him as earnestly as does the merchant for the pearl [Matt 13:45-46], and the man for hidden treasure [Matt 13:44], and you will surely find Him. And when you have found Him, you have found the pearl of great price, and treasures that gold cannot buy, thief cannot steal, and moth and rust cannot destroy [Matt. 6:19, 20]. He is worth more to you than all the rubies and pearls of India, and all the gold and silver in the world. You cannot afford to let anything keep you away from Him. In Him you will find true wisdom, goodness, salvation, eternal life, and all things that you can ever need. Without Him you are poor, wretched, and lost, without any hope in this life or in the one to come. Then do not wait one moment, but "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,"—seek JESUS. [Matt. 6:33]