

AN UNPUBLISHED FRENCH BOOK
ON CEYLON DATED 1801

BY

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COUNT D' HERVILLY'S LOCK
OF HAIR

AN INCIDENT IN THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION

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At the India Office Library, now under the control of the Commonwealth Relations Office at King Charles Street, Whitehall, London, I had the good fortune to discover during my visit there in 1956 three volumes of interesting original manuscripts relating to Ceylon. They were numbered Mss Eur E80, E81, and E82. They form a complete book written in French titled, Quelques Notions sur L'Isle de Ceylon by Eudelin de Jonville. These manuscripts appear to have been made ready for the printer, but for some reason or other they were never published. A note on Volume One of this book states "Recd. per Tellicherry 3rd November 1801. Presented by the author". The author who subscribes himself as Eudelin de Jonville is none other than the Jonville who served in the Public Service in Ceylon under the Honourable Frederic North, first British Civil Governor of Ceylon.

Some confusion exists over the spelling of Jonville. Bishop Edmund Peiris, Emerson Tennent, J.R. Toussaint, Father S.G. Perera and Governor North (when he submitted Jonville's famous article, On The Religion and Manners Of The People of Ceylon to the Secretary of the Society of Asiatic Researches at Calcutta in 1801 for subsequent publication in its Journal) have spelt Jonville with two "I's" in the name as Joinville, in line with (as Bishop Pieris has expressly stated in his article² on Joinville's Translation Of The Kokila Sandesaya in The Ceylon Historical Journal) the historical, and I believe the popular contemporary, French spelling. Dr. Paul Pieris, L.J.B. Turner, T. Petch and J.P. Lewis have however preferred to spell the name as Jonville, which we should agree is the correct form, now that we have found confirmation of it in Jonville's own book.

These manuscripts were catalogued by the India Office Library as far back as 1937 in their Catalogue of Mss in European Languages³ but strange to say, nobody in Ceylon seems to have taken any notice of it until now. So much so that Dr. Paul Pieris's two interesting articles (hereafter referred to as his first article and second article) about Jonville in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Ceylon⁴ published in 1947 and 1948 respectively, suffer somewhat from the author being unaware of the existence and contents of these manuscripts. Dr. Paul Pieris had based his second article, and the concluding paragraphs.

1. Asiatic Researches Vol. vii, pp.

2. Ceylon Historical Journal 1954 Vol. 3 Nos 3 and 4, pp. 256-267.

3. Vol. ii Part 1 Section 1.

4. Vol. xxxvii Part 4, Digitized by eGangotri Foundation, Vol. xxxviii, Part 1, pp. 1-21.

of his first article on the Mss transmitted to him in 1947 by Mr. Martin Russell of Mottisfont Abbey, Remsey, Hampshire. These covered forty pages and included pen-and-ink sketches on scraps of paper.

The Martin Russell Collection had at one time belonged to "the library of Mr. Bois", "who retired to settle in London about thirty years ago"⁵. The allusion here is either to Henry Bois who retired from Ceylon in 1905 or F.W. Bois who retired in 1912, both of whom were at various times partners in the mercantile firm in Colombo bearing that name. Dr. Paul Pieris had stated in his second article that the Martin Russell Collection of Jonville Mss appear "to have been cursorily glanced at by Sir James Emerson Tennent".

The Mss at the India Office Library are definitely anterior to all other known Jonville Mss. The absence of any mention by Tennent in his books (except for a single brief reference in his book on the Natural History of Ceylon to Jonville's notes on Nycterubia, parasite of bats) to the impressive contribution made by Jonville to the natural history of Ceylon, of which anyone who cares to read Jonville's book would hardly fail to take notice, clearly excludes Tennent from having had any acquaintance with the Mss now lying at the India Office Library.

Jonville's book is dated February 1801. Had the book been printed, it would have been the first book on Ceylon published after the British occupation, if we do not take into account Hugh Boyd's "Miscellaneous Works" published in 1800, which was really not a general book on Ceylon. Captain Robert Percival's book on Ceylon, which must be conceded this distinction, came out in its first edition in 1803. The other book on Ceylon that followed Percival was Rev. James Cordiner's published in 1807. Percival and Cordiner were familiar with the part played by Jonville in early British times, and their books show much evidence of this.

Volume One of the manuscripts contains the whole of the text of this book.

5. Jcbras Vol. xxxvii Part 1, p.1.

6. T.L.Villiers Mercantile Life in Ceylon.
Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aayanaham.org

7. Emerson Tennent Natural History of Ceylon. p.

Volumes Two and Three consist solely of drawings, Vol. Two of botanical and Three of zoological.

A considerable number of the drawings are in colour. There is no denying the fact that Jonville was an artist of some skill, in addition to being a Portuguese and French Interpreter, Naturalist, Draughtsman, Philologist, Student of Comparative Religions etc., etc. Cordiner, himself an artist, whose book contains some illustrations done by Jonville, had acknowledged Jonville's competence in this field when he wrote, "The part of the snare where the elephants are taken out, and the garden where they are tied up form, each, subjects of many paintings. Some of these have been ably executed by the pencil of Joseph Jonville"⁸

Dr. Paul Pieris, however, draws a line in his first article between a Portrait Artist and a mere Draughtsman, a Cartographer and an amateur Map-Maker, and quite rightly too. He has raised a doubt in our minds (having duly considered Tennent's reference to a "characteristic" sketch "of the Ambassador and the Adigar") that the famous drawing of General Macdowall and Pilame Talawe, which as far as we know, was first published in Tennent's Ceylon" could not have been drawn by Jonville, and that it was probably drawn by Captain Vilant of the 19th Regiment.

Dr. Paul Pieris had not seen the copy of this sketch that forms part of the illustrations in the unpublished book of Jonville. Was this sketch in Jonville's book the original one, and by whom was it drawn? There are two other candidates for the honour of being the original artist of this picture. Grace VanDort had staked a claim (since rejected⁹ by Dr. Paul Pieris in his first article) that her grandfather Johannes VanDort of the Public Works Department, father of the famous Ceylon artist J.L.K. VanDort, drew the sketch. The other candidate for the honour is the Chevalier Charles Moreau of the Regiment de Meuron who too was known to be good at drawing.

According to J.P. Lewis¹⁰ Moreau was a member of the company that proceeded to Kandy with General Macdowall's Embassy in 1800. In his article on General Hay Macdowall, Lewis referring

8. James Cordiner A Description of Ceylon Vol. 1, pp. 232 and 233.

9. Jcbras Vol. xxxvii Part 4, p. 232

10. J. Penry Lewis Tombstones and Monuments in Ceylon, Colombo 1913,

11. The Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register 1920 Vol. vi p. 381.
part 1, p. 5.

to this picture states, "The original was made probably by Jonville himself or Lieutenant Charles Moreau". Jonville too, in his Narrative of Macdowall's Embassy¹² states, "M. de Moreau, Lieutenant in the de Meuron Regiment travelling for pleasure " Could Moreau have drawn the picture?

Of all these four artists viz. Vilant, VanDort, Moreau and Jonville, the presumption obviously is in favour of Jonville. A final confirmation whether Jonville had drawn this historic picture or not could perhaps be sought from a practised artist or an expert on graphic art after he had critically examined the reputed Jonville sketches, a considerable number in view of the fact that there are about two hundred and seventy-five sketches, maps, and drawings in Jonville's book alone all presumed to have been drawn by the author himself.

Volume One of Jonville's book consists of four hundred and ninety four pages, size 37 x 23 cm. In his preface (pp 3 to 5) Jonville states that he proposes to continue his researches, and that he had a great deal of further material ready for later publication. Alas, these "further material" have almost all disappeared, but who knows, some persevering researcher in this direction might still meet with his reward, and thus enrich our fund of historical treasures?

Pages 7 to 40 of Volume One of this book relate to "Religion et coutumes de Ceylon". Pages 41 to 44 are entitled "Abrege de l'histoire des Chalias par Adrian Ragia Pakse chef de cette Caste". Both these articles evidently formed the original of Jonville's contribution in English to the Transactions of the Society of Asiatic Researches printed in the first instance at Calcutta, and afterwards reprinted in London in 1803.¹³ They were forwarded to the Secretary of the Society along with a letter from Governor North dated Colombo 27th September 1801.

The contemporary English rendering of the titles of this article was "On the Religion and Manners of the People of Ceylon" by M. Joinville" and "Abridgment of the History of the Chalias by Adrian Ragia Pakse, a chief of that Cast". Jonville in his "On the Religion and Manners of the People of Ceylon" covers a variety of subjects, sub-titled (1) Antiquity of the

12. Jebbras, Vol. xxxviii Part 1, p.7.

13. Asiatic Researches Vol vii, pp.

Religion of Boudhou (2) Cosmogony (3) Theogony (4) The Hells
(5) Chronology (6) Kings: Succession to the Throne (7) Council
of the King: Decrees (8) Temples (9) Priests (10) Marriages
(11) Divorce (12) Dress (13) Castes (14) Deaths and (15) Music.

Adrian Ragia Pakse is ofcourse Mudaliyar Adrian Rajapakse, the picturesque and important Sinhalese chief of the Mahabadda (the Great Rent or the Great Trade or the Great Industry, viz, the Cinnamon trade). Cinnamon was to the Portuguese, Dutch and early British rulers what Tea and Rubber were to the British in our times. Adrian Rajapakse was an enlightened feudal chieftain. Not only Jonville but also Sir Alexander Johnston (Advocate-Fiscal of Ceylon, who later became one of our great Chief Justices) made good use of Rajapakse's services, his knowledge, and his undoubted influence among his countrymen, particularly among the members of the Salagama community.

In the early efforts made by the British towards the social and cultural advancement of the people of Ceylon, objects which engrossed the attention of able and benevolently disposed men such as Jonville and Sir Alexander Johnston, Rajapakse played an important part. Along with some others, most of whom were exalted into office and positions of honour because of their readiness to co-operate with their new British masters, and also because of their acquiring - be it even a smattering - of the English tongue, Rajapakse acted as a liaison between the Government and the people as an interpreter, in the larger sense, of one to the other.

To a great extent Rajapakse was responsible for the unanimous response of the Sinhalese owners of domestic slaves in Ceylon agreeing to the appeal made to them by Sir Alexander Johnston in 1816 to free from slavery all children of their slaves born after 12th August 1816, this date being fixed for the historic event, because it was the birthday of the reigning Prince Regent (later George IV). Rajapakse is given prominence in the picture by Stephanoff, based on a sketch by an unknown Ceylonese juror, commemorating the introduction of Trial by Jury and the abolition of domestic slavery in Ceylon, a coloured lithographed copy of which picture is hanging at the Law Library, Colombo.

Pages 45 to 72 of Volume One of Jonville's book are entitled "Journal d'un Voyage a Kandy fait a l'occasion de l'embassade du Majr Gl Macdowall en 1800", rendered into English as a "Narrative of a Journey to Kandy made on the occasion of the Embassy of Major General Macdowall in 1800". This account has since been translated into English, "apparently by S.M.W", initials which have still to be probed into in order to establish his or her identity. S.M.W's translation, which formed part of the Jonville Mss in the Martin Russell Collection were published "substantially corrected, mainly where defective local knowledge had led the translator astray," by Dr. Paul Pieris in his second article in 1948. In his first article in 1947¹⁴ Doctor Paul Pieris refers to the account in French of the Embassy to Kandy among the Martin Russell Collection as "the original Mss of Jonville's account of the Embassy". This evidently is incorrect; the earliest account, and most probably the original one, is among the Mss of Jonville's unpublished book, dated February 1801.

Pages 73 to 131 consist of five separate chapters, all of interest to students and scholars. Among these is an account of a visit by Jonville to the Galle and Matara districts. He was in these districts with Governor North in 1800.¹⁵ He parted company from North when the latter proceeded by sea to Batticaloa on the 30th August 1800 at Tangalle and took the land route with Willian Orr, "through the province of Mahagampattoo for the purpose of making observations on the decayed tanks, natural salt pans, and general state of the country".¹⁶ A Report by William Orr of this tour dated 25th September 1800, was delivered to Governor North at Trincomalee on that date, but there is no mention of Jonville by name in this report.¹⁷

There is also an account in Jonville's book of his three days' excursion from Trincomalee to Kantalai Tank with Lieutenant Cotgrave to inspect and report upon the irrigation functions of this tank. This would certainly be the first report on the "Le Lac de Kandelay", after the British occupation. The "earliest report of the Kantalai Tank" according to R.L. Brohier whose volumes on the "Ancient Irrigation works in Ceylon" are invaluable as source books of Ceylon history, was dated 1793. It was a report by Tornbauer (? Major Fornbauer), an Engineer under the Dutch Governor Jacob William van de Graff.¹⁸ Brohier does not record Jonville's excursion to Kantalai.

14. p.233
 15. Cordiner A Description of Ceylon Vol. 1, p.249. Cf. R. Raven Hart
 16. ibid Travels in Ceylon, pp.73 to 90.
 17. ibid, Vol.11, pp. Digitized by Noolaham Foundation. noolaham.org laavanaham.org
 18. R.L. Brohier Ancient Irrigation Works in Ceylon. Colombo 1934/1935 Part 1, p.17.

Jonville's companion Lieutenant Cotgrave was Lieutenant Richard John Cotgrave of the Madras Engineers who was appointed, according to Governor North's letter to the Court of Directors of the East India Company dated 20th September 1800 (quoted by L.J.B. Turner in his "Collected Papers on the History of the Maritime Provinces"¹⁹ Civil Architect and Engineer and Superintendent of the Public Works at about this time, viz. September 1800 to remedy the state of decay into which all the public buildings, the wharfs and warehouses, the dykes and canals have fallen". P.M. Bingham who published the official History of the Public Works Department (Colombo 1921) does not mention this appointment which was really the genesis of the Public Works Department.

Pages 97 to 116 are entitled "Aperçu géologique de L'Isle de Ceylon" Jonville was an enthusiastic student of the various branches of science. There are, I believe, some papers in the Public Record Office, London where Jonville challenges the accuracy of Lloyd's Charts. Pages 117 to 120 contain a copy of a letter written by Jonville to "His Excellency the Governor of Ceylon, the Honourable Frederic North" on the subject of the Religion of the Burmans. This is a sequel to a present given him by the Governor of a publication entitled "Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava by Major Symes" published in 1800. Jonville had also read Dr. Francis Buchanan's article on the Religion and Literature of the Burmas which was first published in Calcutta in Volume Six of the Asiatic Researches and subsequently reprinted in London in 1801. He makes a comparison of the religious practices of Burma and Ceylon.

Pages 121 to 131 are entitled Alphabet Cingulois. These characters of the Sinhalese alphabet are stated to have been written by Adrian Ragia Pakse, Chief of the Chalias. Jonville was a pioneer Sinhalese philologist. He was a member of a Committee to prepare a Sinhalese-English Dictionary, the first of its kind which was "far advanced towards its conclusion", according to North in his letter to the Court of Directors of the East India Company dated 15th December 1801 (quoted by Turner in his "Collected Papers on the History of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon".²⁰ Where are these Mss of the Sinhalese-English Dictionary? Were these used by Samuel Tolfrey, and finally by Rev. Benjamin Clough for the latter's dictionary. The Sinhalese

19. p. 150

20. ibid 264n

characters reproduced in his book were perhaps made for casting types, another of those subjects in which Jonville was greatly interested. Jonville's translation of extracts from the Kokila Sandesaya was described by Governor North as "the first translations from that language (Sinhalese) to our own". It was further described as an English translation of a mythological poem written in Sinhalese in the thirteenth century.

Governor North had forwarded a copy of this translation consisting of twentysix pages to the Secretary of State as annexure No.26 accompanying his letter dated 24th November 1802. I have seen this copy at the Public Record Office, London. I believe it is the only one extant, there being no contemporary copy at the Government Archives, Nuwara Eliya. Fortunately J.H.O. Paulusz the former Government Archivist, had secured a photostat copy of this historic document for the Archives. Bishop Picris had suitably edited and published this in the Ceylon Historical Journal in an article to which I have already referred. Jonville's notes to this translation comprising of twelve pages are valuable and interesting. Bishop Picris queries a word in Jonville's notes termed "Seleetee".²¹ Could it stand for "Salsette"? An illustration of a "Dageb de Salceta" and another of a "Dageb de Ceylon" appear in Jonville's book.

The most valuable piece of information, for my purpose, that I was able to obtain was from an obscure part of a footnote in Bishop Peiris's article in the Ceylon Historical Journal²² where the Bishop had reproduced from the original without comment the following notes of Jonville. "..... a chank with its mouth to the right side is a most precious thing in India; it is one of the jewels of the Crown of Candy and is used at the King's marriage to throw water over the joined thumbs of the King and his bride. I have described this ceremony in another place: See notions on Ceylon transmitted to the Court of Directors of the East India Company" (italics added) The fascinating story of Jonville's book is instantly brought to our notice by this tiny clue which refers to "Notions on Ceylon" as having been transmitted to the Court of Directors of the East India Company. "Notions on Ceylon" is ofcourse Quelques Notions Sur l'Isle de Ceylon by Eudelin de Jonville. The note on Volume One of Jonville's book "Recd per Tellicherry 3rd November 1801. Presented by the author" now becomes intelligible and revealing.

21. p.264 n.

22. ibid, p.259.

Tellicherry was a little British seaport town on the west coast of India between the French settlement of Mahe and Cannanore. Tellicherry was a site of one of the East India Company's factories. Somehow or other this French book of Jonville presented to the Court of Directors of the East India Company had taken a circuitous route finally reaching the India Office Library through Tellicherry.

Since I saw these Jonville Mss at the India Office Library in 1956 I have come across some references to Jonville in Mildred Archer's Natural Drawings in the India Office Library published in London in 1962. An article on the Jonville Mss written by me and published in the Ceylon Daily News on the 25th June 1957 was forwarded to the India Office Library shortly after it appeared here. Following this the Mss were forwarded to the Director of the Colombo Museum on loan. They have since been returned to the India Office Library. The Ceylon Government Archives have microfilmed the Mss, and Harris de Silva, the Assistant Archivist, has contributed an article to a Sinhalese journal on the subject. Mildred Archer makes no mention of my article in her book although in many instances she covers the same ground and employs almost identical expressions and observations as I had done in 1957.

The India Office Library, it would appear, was founded in 1801 at Leadenhall Street, London. A record cited by Mildred Archer and dated 2nd June 1802 in a Day Book of the Library throws some light on these Mss. "Three Chests", it is recorded, "containing a Collection of Insects, Shells, Minerals and other objects of Natural History, made at Ceylon by M. Jonville, accompanied by a Memoir in French and Sundry Drawings. Recd from the Baggage Warehouse. It is understood the above was sent as a Present to the Honble Company (*italics added*).

Apparently the book has not been put to much (or any) use. The sudden substitution, effective from the 1st January 1802, of direct control of Ceylon by the Crown, hitherto exercised through the East India Company, perhaps explains the unhappy fate that had overtaken Jonville's book. The book which has a Title Page with an inscription "Colombo Fevrier 1801" was evidently retained at the India Office at the time of the transition and soon forgotten.

Has the book ever been referred to by Governor North in his communications to the Secretary of State? Why was it not printed and published? Did Tennont have recourse to it? Did E.F.Kelart, the most famous of early Ceylonese naturalists, or any of the other writers on Ceylon's natural history have access to it? I ask these questions because pages 159 to 494, consisting of three hundred and thirtyfive of the fourhundred and ninety four pages, which form Volume One of Jonville's book contain a most elaborate and detailed study of the Flora and Fauna of Ceylon. It would be a pity to discover that all the extensive and laborious pioneer research done by Jonville in the field of Ceylon's natural history had been traversed once again by Jonville's successors because they were unaware of his work in the same direction.

Of the pages 159 to 494 of Jonville's book confined to natural history, he has devoted pages 159 to 182 to Plants, pages 291 to 300 to Quadrupeds, pages 307 to 308 to Birds, pages 363 to 494 to Insects. The illustrations given in Volume One appear on pages 133 to 153. They consist of pen-and-ink sketches and maps. It is among this lot that we find the Macdowall picture entitled "Group of Sinhalese with Major General Macdowall in the centre". There are also three maps of Ceylon, two relating to the Geology of Ceylon and one, a large scale map of the eastern coast, north and south of Batticaloa. There are also a sketch of Kantalai Tank, several pictures of Musicians, a picture of a Kandian courtier, another of a Kandyan country woman etc. Copies of some of these pictures were found in the Martin Russell Collection of Jonville's Mss. These were published by Dr. Paul Picris.²³

Volume Two of Jonville's book consists of drawings only, 184 folios, size 39 x 28 cm, slightly larger than the sheets in Volume One comprising 184 plates of coloured drawings of plants.

Volume Three also consists solely of drawings, 76 folios (of the same size as the folios in Volume Two) 39 x 28 cm. The coloured zoological drawings are as follows: Folios 1 and 2 of Quadrupeds, folios 3 to 27 of Birds, folios 28 to 35 of Snakes, folios 36 to 69 of Insects, and folios 70 to 76 of Miscellaneous drawings. Thus ends the three volumes of Jonville's remarkable book on Ceylon.

There is no doubt that the basis of the chapters on Natural History in Jonville's book is his Report on the Natural History of Ceylon dated 29th January 1800, which was Annexure No.3. attached to Governor North's letter dated 30th January 1800 to the Court of Directors of the East India Company. This was one of the letters of Governor North on which Sylvester Douglas, now identified as Lord Glenborvie,²⁴ wrote his notes and comments for Henry Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, President of the Board of Control for India. These notes were published as The Douglas Papers edited by Father S.G.Perera (Colombo 1933). Jonville's Report was not reproduced by Father Perera in The Douglas Papers.

A copy of this Report on Natural History is found in the volume of miscellaneous papers entitled Mss of Ceylon Correspondence of Governor North 1798/1799; which was one of four volumes (the other three being the Mss of the Douglas Papers subsequently edited by Father Perera) that were acquired by the Colombo Museum Library and now kept there. As far as I know this Report on the Natural History of Ceylon was never published. Two other reports known to have been written by Jonville have also still not been published. These are his Report on Cinnamon dated 18th November 1799 referred to by Father Perera²⁵ in The Douglas Papers, and his Report on the "The Pearl Fisheries in time of the Dutch and of the British", dated April 1801 mentioned by J.P.Lewis in Spolia Zeylanica²⁶

Eudelin de Jonville, to give him the name by which he had chosen to introduce himself in his book, was known in Ceylon as Joseph Jonville. A certificate dated 20th (?) July 1805 granted by Jonville to Mudaliyar Adrian Rajapakse begins with "I, Joseph Jonville....." (Rajapakse's Memoirs²⁷, Colombo 1912). During the whole of the time Jonville was in Ceylon, the name Eudelin de Jonville never appears to have been used. Eudelin is said to be an uncommon aristocratic French name. Perhaps the sound of this name had a ring of superior exclusiveness to the ears of the genteel eighteenth century French society of counts and commoners. As a Frenchman

24. See James T.Rutnam's article on Who wrote the Douglas Papers? in the Ceylon Daily News of 5th June 1957.

25. p.33n. Cf Ceylon Records 11 at the India Office Library.

26. Vol.IX p.41. Cf Ceylon Records 6 at the India Office Library.

27. p.83

writing in French to French readers, Jonville probably gave himself a pat on his back before his compatriots by sporting the distinction he carried in his name.

Jonville had travelled to Ceylon with Governor North. He remained with North in Bombay for some time, and probably arrived in Ceylon along with the Governor by the cruiser Intrepid on the 12th October 1798. Thomas Maitland succeeded North on the 19th July 1805. I have not seen any records which would indicate that Jonville stayed in Ceylon after the departure of North. Jonville was a personal friend of North and owed his appointment directly to North. He began his career in Ceylon with the introduction given him by North viz. "a very learned naturalist". This has ever since been repeatedly quoted by scholars. There is no doubt about Jonville's great learning and accomplishments. Lord Valentia when he visited Ceylon in 1803 was impressed by him; so he has recorded in his book.²⁸

Jonville was the first Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens in Ceylon. This is confirmed by reference to his letter of appointment copy of which is reproduced on page 1 of the Mss of Ceylon Correspondence of Governor North 1789/1799 preserved at the Colombo Museum Library. T. Petch in his article²⁹ on the Early History of the Botanical Gardens in Ceylon was then seeking without success some written printed record of this very appointment. Jonville was also the first Surveyor General of Ceylon, and undoubtedly a great naturalist. In his stride he carried with him several other distinctions. In varying degrees of competence he was an artist, a cartographer, a philologist, a geologist, a mineralogist, a geographer, a marine biologist, a botanist, a zoologist, a sociologist, an agriculturist, a surveyor, a philosopher, an interpreter, a diplomat, a courtier, and a keen student of comparative religions, in sum, a very remarkable man.

Sad to relate we know nothing about his life and career before he came to, or after he left, this country. We do not know when and where he was born, and when and where he died. Probably Jonville came from Corsica like his colleague Anthony Bertolacci having come to know the future Governor of Ceylon

28. Voyages and Travels Vol 1, p 271.

29. The Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register 1920, Vol v,

Frederic North during the latter's brief sojourn there as Secretary to the British Administrator Sir Gilbert Elliot when Corsica came under British rule thanks to Pasquale Paoli from 1794 to 1796. This would explain the "curious" point raised by Raven-Hart that Jonville had twice compared "Ceylon with Italy but never with England or France".³⁰

• We have no picture of him, this man who drew so many pictures. He has faded out of the picture unfortunately and undeservedly. We know that the plants which he had collected at Kandy during Macdowall's Embassy "found a place at the British Museum"³¹ whether these plants were kept inside or outside the Museum, we are not told. Jonville surely must have had a valuable collection of notes and Mss of interest and importance to Ceylon. Where are these? Have these perished and left no trace behind?

I am very grateful to the Librarian, S.C. Sutton, and some of the other members of the staff of the India Office Library at the Commonwealth Relations Office, London for the assistance and facilities afforded me, with such cheerful courtesy and willingness, to examine the unique and invaluable Mss of Jonville's book. The catalogue of European Manuscripts of the India Office Library which gives in detail a description of the Jonville Mss, served as a useful guide to me, who dared to read a French book with only a nodding acquaintance of the language. It was a great help when I turned over the pages of Jonville's book which, for over one hundred and fifty years, could not have received such excited and affectionate attention.

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30. R. Raven-Hart Travels in Ceylon 1700-1800, p. 73.

31. Ceylon Manual 1909, p. 211.

COUNT d'HERVILLY'S LOCK OF HAIR

AN INCIDENT
IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

By
JAMES T. RUTNAM

(TEXT OF A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE

ALLIANCE FRANCAISE

17, ALFRED PLACE, COLOMBO.

ON TUESDAY, 2ND APRIL, 1963 AT 6 P.M.)

COUNT d'HERVILLY'S LOCK OF HAIR
AN INCIDENT IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Some years ago I delved into a collection of manuscripts and papers that once belonged to a former Chief Justice of Ceylon, Sir Alexander Johnston. To my astonishment I discovered among this dusty and decaying assortment of the raw material of history, a lock of human hair.

It was delicately woven into a plait about six inches long and a quarter of an inch thick, and encased in a little envelope (two x three inches in size) with a daintily decorated border. The hair had evidently remained secure in this envelope for over one hundred and sixty years.

This lock of hair was a minute human fragment of the historic forces that met in mortal combat on that fateful day, 10th August 1792, at the Tuileries in Paris around the person of the hapless King Louis XVI, at the height of the French Revolution.

In passing, it may be observed here that Louis XVI was the King of France when Kirti Sri Raja Sinha was ruling the kingdom of Kandy in Ceylon. Some years ago an interesting document was discovered at the French Archives in Pondichery. It was a grant dated 15th February 1777 made by Kirti Sri Raja Singha to Louis XVI "in consideration of the friendship existing between us and in order that the same friendship may continue always from generation to generation" By this, King Kirti Sri Raja Singha granted the district of Batticaloa to King Louis XVI of France. The document was written in Tamil and signed by the King also in Tamil.

Coming back to the events of the 10th of August 1792, Clery, the King's valet-de-chambre, in his Journal of the Terror describes the day as "that dreadful day, on which a small

number of men overturned a throne that had been established fourteen centuries, threw their king into fetters, and precipitated France into an abyss of calamity" (p 1).

The hair came from the head of no less a person than the Cavalry Commander of the King's own Guards, the Count d'Hervilly, a brave and intrepid Royalist who stood close to the King until, finally, Louis and his family were compelled to leave the Tuileries for the "sanctuary" of the Assembly that was convened at the riding-school facing the garden of the Tuileries.

The attack on the Tuileries was a decisive event of the French Revolution. Following the success of this swift and sanguinary struggle, the authority of the French Legislative Assembly was destroyed and the monarchical constitution overthrown. The medal struck by the French Commune on this celebrated occasion bore the legend, "In memory of the glorious combat of the French people against Tyranny at the Tuileries".

The engagement at the Tuileries demonstrated only too clearly the weakness and vacillation of the King, fatal defects, as it transpired, for they eventually cost the King his own life and, also, alas, the lives of so many others who had followed him from a sense of personal loyalty and duty.

The Swiss Guards, for instance, fought valiantly but died in vain for the King. They were a set of mercenaries recruited in the French and German cantons of Switzerland. Nine hundred of them, who had offered their valour for a fee, stood guard with others that day. But out of the nine hundred, only a bare three hundred lived to tell the tale.

The following eye-witness accounts of the events describe the atmosphere in which the drama unfolded itself :

"At seven o'clock, the distress was increased by the cowardice of several battalions that success-

ively deserted the Tuileries.

"About four or five hundred of the National Guards remained at their post, and displayed equal fidelity and courage: they were placed indiscriminately with the Swiss Guards within the Palace, at the different staircases, and at all the entrances.

"These troops having spent the night without taking any refreshment, I eagerly engaged with others of the King's servants in providing them with bread and wine, and encouraging them not to desert the Royal Family.

"It was at this time that the King gave the command, within the Palace, to the Marechal de Mailly, the Due du Chatelet, the Comte de Puysegur, the Baron de Viomenil, the Comte d'Hervilly, the Marquis du Pujet, and other faithful officers.

"The persons of the Court and the servants were distributed in the different halls, having first sworn to defend the King to the last drop of their blood. We were about three or four hundred strong, but our only arms were swords or pistols" (pp 4 and 5).

"I was", wrote Madame Campan, "with my companions in the billiard room. We were seated on the elevated benches along the sides of the room, when I saw M. d'Hervilly order the huissier to open the door for the passage of the French nobility" (Journal Vol 1 p 162).

The imminent departure of the King and his family that morning gave cause to more indecision and desertions. The faint-hearted were leaving. "Sorrow", Clery records in his Journal of Terror, "was visible on the countenances of most of them, and several were heard to say: 'We swore this morning to defend the King, and in the moment of his greatest danger we are deserting

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"Others, in the interest of the conspirators, were abusing and threatening their fellow soldiers whom they forced away. Thus did the well-disposed suffer themselves to be over-awed by the seditious, and that culpable weakness, which had all along been productive of the evils of the Revolution, gave birth to the calamities of this day" (p 4).

But despite these desertions a gallant section remained to hold the collapsing fort, and defend what had eventually become the empty shell of Bourbon Majesty. The Swiss stood fast, in the words of Carlyle, "peaceable and yet immovable; red granite pier in that waste-flashing sea of steel" (vide French Revolution by Carlyle Vol 2 p 391).

Nobody knows for certain who fired the first shot. For there was noticeable fraternisation at the beginning when the people encountered some of the National Guards at the Tuileries. But suddenly the deed was done. The fateful shot was fired. Hell was let loose. "What a volley", exclaims Carlyle, "reverberating doomful to the four corners of Paris like the clang of Bellona's thongs" (Carlyle ibid). The Swiss defiantly stood their ground, and soon the opposing hordes found themselves being overpowered.

Carlyle records that a strange "patriot onlooker", watching that memorable scene, was pondering at the time that the Swiss, had they a Commander, would have beaten their enemy. The "patriot onlooker" was none other than Napoleon Bonaparte on the threshold of his career.

While this fierce battle raged on, an order came from the King for the "Swiss to lay down their arms at once and retire to their barracks". The officer who carried this order to the Swiss was d'Hervilly. "The incident has often been described as the last act of the absolute Monarchy" (Vide

History Today, March 1963 p 192). The original order can still be seen at the Musee Carnevaley in Paris. This ill-fated command brought despair, and made confusion worse confounded among the ranks of the stout-hearted remnants of the King's defenders. Soon they became an easy prey to the fury of the Revolution.

Six hundred of the Swiss Guards, as observed earlier, perished, some the same day, victims of confusion, misdirection and a chaotic stampede; some the day following, driven defenceless (having earlier laid down their arms on the orders of the King), and massacred in cold blood.

"I went this morning" wrote Dr John Moore of Glasgow in his Journal during a Residence in France, "to see the places where the action of yesterday happened. The naked bodies of the Swiss.....lay exposed on the ground.....Of about 800 or 1000 of these.....I am told there are not 200 left alive" (quoted in Introduction to Journal of Terror, Folio Society edition 1955 p vii).

d'Hervilly too - now wounded in the thigh by a stroke of a pike - might have shared the gruesome fate of the butchered Swiss had not a Scotsman by the name of Samuel Johnston (or it may be his wife) intervened and rescued him "by a kind of miracle". Thereby hangs the fascinating tale of this lock of hair.

Samuel Johnston was the father of Sir Alexander Johnston. On the inside of the envelope that enclosed the hair, Mrs Samuel Johnston had inscribed in French, "The hairs of the best of my friends, the unfortunate and amiable Comte d'Hervilly - H(ester) M(aria) Johnston".

We do not know whether the lock of hair was gifted to the Johnstons by its owner, or whether it was acquired by them on the death of d'Hervilly in England some time after the Quiberon misadventure of the French Emigres in June 1795.

Samuel Johnston hailed from Carnsalloch in Dumfriesshire in Scotland. Incidentally we have another link here with the Revolution. For Robert Burns also hailed from Dumfriesshire. Burns was a contemporary of the Johnstons. Peter Johnston, Member of Parliament for Kirkcudbright, a brother of Samuel, was one of the original subscribers to the first edition of Burns "Collected Works". Burns was the poet who hailed the birth of the French Revolution in the following hopeful lines :

"It's coming yet for a' that
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that"

Samuel Johnston sailed for India in the East Indiaman Essex in 1781, in a convoy which also took Lord Macartney to assume the Governorship of Madras. They had an exciting voyage having been engaged by the French fleet under Suffren at Porto Praya off the Cape de Verde Islands.

For a time Samuel Johnston served most successfully as Paymaster of the Forces at Madura and Trichinopoly, but while serving at the latter station fell foul of the East India Company, and in 1791, was suspended from the Service. He had, however, done well in India having befriended the Nabob of Arcot.

In 1792, Samuel Johnston, by then a little nabob himself, was on his way back home. He was accompanied by his wife Hester Maria, only daughter of the fifth Lord Napier of Merchiston. A contemporary biography of Sir Alexander Johnston (vide, biography in Digitized by Noolaham Foundation) had remarked,
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"In 1792 his father and mother returned, and again carried their son with them to France where he was a witness to many of the deplorable scenes which disgraced Paris in July, August and September of that year".

As Alexander Johnston, who was born in 1775, was known for certain to be studying in Winchester in July 1791, we cannot assume that the son travelled with his parents all the way from India. It is more probable that Alexander met his parents in the Continent in 1792, on their way back by the overland route from India. Alexander was known to have been a student at Gottingen about this time.

The Scotsman published a letter from Edinburgh by one JWBP in its columns on the 2nd January 1952, where it was stated that "the carriage in which Johnston of Carnsalloch came home across Europe.... in 1792 was lying in a joiner's yard in Kirkmahoe, Dumfriesshire, where I saw it a few years ago".

In any case the Johnstons were returning from India in 1792. Sir Alexander Johnston had himself written, "My father and mother returned to Europe in 1792, and being in France when the revolutionary government required all persons to give up their plate, and gold and silver ornaments, my mother entrusted the silver urn, with Montrose's heart, to an Englishwoman of the name of Knowles, at Boulogne, who promised to secrete it until it could be sent safely to England.

"This person having died shortly afterwards, neither my father or mother in their lifetime, nor I myself since their death, have ever been able to trace the urn, although every exertion has been made by me for the purpose; and although within the last few years, I have received from the French Government the value of the plate and jewels which my father and mother had been compelled to give up to the municipality

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of Calais in 1792.

"To the last hour of her life my mother deeply regretted this loss, and in July 1819, a few days before her death, expressed to me her wishes with regard to the urn, if it should ever be recovered by me" (vide Sir Alexander Johnston's Letter to his Daughters, 1st July 1836).

The reference to Montrose's heart is interesting. The late Dr. Andreas Nell delivered a fascinating lecture on this subject at Colombo some years ago to the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. This heart, which was embalmed and preserved in an urn, had had an adventurous career since it was removed from James Graham, Marquis of Montrose, after his execution in 1649. The Napiers treasured it, and the last of the Napiers who came into possession of the heart was the fifth Lord Napier from whom it passed on to his only daughter Hester Maria Johnston, mother of Sir Alexander.

How did the Johnstons come to the aid of the Count d'Hervilly? The full details of this gallant deed are not available to us at present. A contemporary journal (Morning Post ?) published in London sometime between 1792 and 1795, when d'Hervilly was an emigré there, had reported the news of the promotion of d'Hervilly to the rank of Major-General by the Empress of Russia, Catherine the Great, in the following words: "The Camp-Marshal Count d'Hervilly, who has just been promoted to the rank of Major-General by the Empress of Russia, is much distinguished by his bravery and intrepidity, of which he gave numerous proofs at the age of 17, while serving under the command of M. le Comte de Jancour.

"He distinguished himself at Rennes, in Brittany, at the head of his Regiment, at the beginning of the Revolution. When surrounded by

epaulets, and taken hold of his sword to force it from him, he threw it away, and covering himself (his head) with his cloak, he called out to them, presenting his bosom, 'Strike here - I shall not know who has done it'. These desperadoes, such is the power that Heroism sometimes has over the most ferocious, there-upon left him.

"His zeal and fidelity to Louis XVI, who had appointed him to command his Guards, and near whose person he continued till the time when that unfortunate Monarch was conducted to the Temple, had exposed him as a mark to all the rage of the Patriots.

"Wounded in the thigh by the stroke of a pike on the 10th of August, and having been exposed to a shower of musketry, he has escaped by a kind of miracle from all the attempts that have been made to apprehend him.

"He owes his safety to his intrepidity, and to the generosity of an English family, whom prudent motives forbid us to name. But when the misfortunes of France shall be over, the trouble it (the English family) has taken, and the dangers to which it has exposed itself, to save him and some other persons from the perils they were in from their own countrymen, cannot be sufficiently extolled".

Now it can be told. The "English family" referred to was of course the Johnstons. But we are still in the dark, for although those "misfortunes of France" are over, and a De Gaulle firmly rules where a Louis XVI weakly reigned, still we do not know the full circumstances of this memorable incident where an "English family" had plunged itself into the flaming fire of the French Revolution and snatched the Commander of the King's Guards away to safety. We only know from the notes left behind and a few letters of d'Hervilly that d'Hervilly

had eventually become an intimate friend of the Johnstons, and that he was beholden to them for spiriting him away from certain death in France. "Can I ever forget", wrote d'Hervilly to Mrs Johnston in one of his letters, "that I owe you my departure from France?"

d'Hervilly was a member of the ill-fated Quiberon expedition of French emigrés in June 1795. Indeed it was d'Hervilly who led this disastrous expedition which was half-heartedly and belatedly supported by England. For he was appointed to the Supreme Command by Provence, who had by then become Louis XVIII on the death of the Dauphin - King Louis XVII, who died in captivity in the Temple. The Count de Puisaye had already been appointed for this post by Provence's brother Artois on the recommendation of Pitt, the English Prime Minister. But the discord between the two brothers of Louis XVI was so bitter that Provence, being King, had his way by countermanding the order of his brother Artois and appointing d'Hervilly to the post.

Puisaye, it would appear, agreed to serve under d'Hervilly who with "2500 emigrés landed at Quiberon on June 27th and captured Fort Penthièvre, but his victory was short-lived since on July 20 the fort was recaptured, and all who could not escape by sea were massacred" (vide Cambridge Modern History Vol VIII 1934 edition, p 472). d'Hervilly and Puisaye were among those who escaped.

One cannot help comparing this abortive attempt at Quiberon in 1795 with a modern parallel, the Cuban invasion in 1961 by emigrés from Florida. Only the human toll at the latter fiasco was less, thanks to Castro, for Cuba chose to return her prisoners alive for a price rather than maul them down with musketry as the French revolutionaries had done at Quiberon.

52



* AN UNPUBLISHED FRENCH BOOK *
* ON CEYLON DATED 1801 *

BY
JAMES T. RUTNAM

TEXT OF A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE
54, WARD PLACE, COLOMBO 7.
ON THURSDAY, 9TH MAY, 1968 AT 6 P.M.

d'Hervilly (Louis-Charles, le Comte d'Hervilly to give his full name) returned to London wounded at the battle at Quiberon, and died from his wounds four months later. He was 39 years old when he died, having been born in Paris in 1756. The sad news of his death was conveyed to Mrs Johnston in the following letter : "Madam, The Viscount de Balleroy, his uncle, and the Count de Moustier, his father, have the honour to let you know that the Count d'Hervilly passed away Saturday, the 14th of the present month". That was in November 1795. Samuel Johnston died in 1801, his wife 1819. The lock of hair remains, not only to bear testimony to a tender human association, but also to illuminate a forgotten incident in the French Revolution.

Alexander Pope, long before the French Revolution, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, wrote a delightful poem on another lock of hair entitled "The Rape of the Lock". May I be permitted to conclude by borrowing the Muse's lines and slightly modifying them for the nonce as follows -

"For after all the murders

When after millions slain

When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,

And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,

This lock, we shall consecrate to fame".

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