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## AMIRAN THE FAIR.

BY H. NEWMAN.

"Ohe, Galuru Sing," I bawled out as I lay before my camp fire, with my back to a tree, "come hither and tell me a tale."

Galuru Sing was my Ghurka sergeant, and I was after dacoits. Three years ago there used to be a little fun in Upper Burma, and Dacoit shooting had not yet closed, but the shooting was as a rule reserved for policemen like myself. On this night I remember we were on the tracks of a Boh something or other. Neither my men nor I knew the country, and we were belated—but this used to be a common thing with me in those days, and I was always provided with grub and bedding in the event of it happening.

It was a rather fine night, but I was tired of watching the stars, and speculating on my future. I had smoked one cigar, that was enough. An Inspector of Police cannot smoke Havannahe, he smokes Calcutta cigars at one eight a hundred. And they give beautiful smokes, that is, when they don't peel off into bits! Wherefore I called to Galuru Sing for a story.

Galuru Sing had led a very adventurous youth, or he had a very fine imagination. But what on earth does the truth of a story matter as long as one is amused?

Galuru Sing came out of the gloom into the fire-light and squatted down ten or twelve yards from me.

I waved one hand towards him. "Speak," I said.

Without any more ado he commenced. "Sahib," he said, "did I ever tell you why I left Nepal to eat the salt of the Sirkar. No, I will tell you now.

"My village is called Girandak. There was I born, and there too I would have died, but for one, a girl, called Amiran. Sahib, it is a true saying *Shaitan* is the father of a beautiful woman. Amiran was most fair to look upon, and without doubt *Shaitan* was he f th r

"She favoured beyond all others myself and one Bunbeer. We were to marry. But Amiran's father was headman of the village, and he would have none of us. He wanted his daughter to marry one Thappa, who was the owner of fifty cows. Thappa too was a man.

"Sahib, a woman can forgive many things in a man, save that he be a fool. Now Thappa was more foolish than a housed owl, wherefore Amiran hated and despised him. But that stubborn old wild boar, her father, was fully determined that she should marry none other. 'Stay thy weeping, foolish one,' he used to say in answer to her entreaties, 'for

though lovers be different, all husbands are alike, therefore it is better for thee to marry a man who can give thee milk instead of water.'

"One day it was given out in the village that the marriage of Amiran and Thappa would take place in a week, and the marriage festivities were to take place on the morrow.

"Sir, you can imagine the rage I was in. I made wild schemes of slaying her father, Ram Sing and Thappa, and of running away with her. While I was thinking how to carry out these plans, I received a message from Amiran by a little boy asking me to meet her at the apicot tree on the north side of the village at dusk.

"My heart leaped with joy.

"As the sun set I set off for the meeting place. She was there already, but by her side was my rival, that villain Bunbeer.

"'What!' I cried in arage, 'hast thou brought me here to see thee enjoy the caresses of a swine-herd?'

"'Soft words, O Galuru Sing,' said Bunbeer, 'soft words.'

"'Soft words,' I answered hotly, 'come from craven tongues,' and my *kookri* flashed forth from my waist band.

"Amiran rushed forward and caught hold of my hand. 'Shame on thee, and on thy braggart ways. Wouldst thou slay an unarmed man?' For Bunbeer did not have his *kookri* with him.

"'I would slay all who come between me and thee, unarmed or armed,' I answered sullenly.

"'Well, peace, peace,' she said sweetly. 'I have brought ye two here to discuss a way of escape for me from the arms of Thappa, the wise, the prudent.'

"'There is only one way of escape, run away with me down to the plains of Hindustan, the land of the Sirkar,' came from Bunbeer.

"'Nay, there is another way,' I broke in. 'Rather than that, I would slay thee myself. If thou runnest at all, run with me.'

"She looked from one to another dubiously. 'Ye are both handsome and brave, whom shall I choose?'

"'Choose the winner in a fair fight,' I said, 'Go Bunbeer and fetch thy weapons.'

"Bunbeer turned on his heel, and was walking off, when Amiran called him back.

"'Ye two shall fight but not in this vulgar way, slashing at each other till one dies; probably both of ye will die, and I shall have no lovers to rescue me from Thappa, the wise, the prudent,' and she laughed scornfully.

"'Look,' she continued pointing to the silver crescent of the moon, 'in an hour that will have sunk. It will then be dark, and then ye shall fight.'

"'Any time and any where,' I cried.

"'No, not anywhere, but there in that field of maize,' pointing to a large field that lay below us. The maize was nearly ripe, and the stalks were seven feet high.

"As soon as the moon sets," she said "ye two will leave your huts, and Bunbeer will enter from the south side, and Galuru from the north. And he, who first strikes the other in the midst of the field, will be the victor. He shall find me at the landing-place near the stream, and we will fly together. Now go," and she dismissed us both.

"I went off to my hut and waited for the moon to set. How long that hour seemed to me, as I sat patiently sharpening my *kookri*. I made all sorts of plans of how I was going to enjoy myself in Hindustan with Amiran. Strangely enough it never struck me that I might not come off victorious in the fight. As soon as the moon set I seized my *kookri* and bounded off to the field.

"I entered the field as had been agreed on the north side. It was pitch dark, and the maize grew very thick, so it was with difficulty I could make my way in at all. But I slashed about with my *kookri* cutting down the big stalks and so forcing my way through. I half smiled at the havoc I was committing, thinking of the owner's dismay in the morning, when he wake up to find his corn half destroyed.

"I cut and slashed about till I thought I was in the middle of the field. Then I sat down and listened for Bunbeer, but I could hear nothing save the gentle southing of the breeze on the top of the corn.

"I waited patiently for a few minutes, growing more and more disgusted at Bunbeer's cowardice, as I thought it, in not coming. Finally, I determined to cut my way through to the other end of the field. I might meet him. Perhaps something had delayed him.

"As I was about to start forward a slight noise in front of me caught my ear.

"I listened intently. Something was undoubtedly forcing its way towards me. I bounded forward with a loud shout, thrusting and pulling the maize out of my way.

"When I got within a few yards or so of Bunbeer, I waited. He came steadily on. When he was within striking distance—I judged by the noise that there were only a few maize stalks between me and him—I struck with all my might, and the man's red blood spouted up into my face.

"With a sort of grunt down he dropped. I was astonished at the noise, and stooped down to feel if my fallen enemy was dead.

"Sahib, I felt the head and horns of a cow.

"Mad with rage I rushed out, and towards Bunbeer's hut. The old crone, his mother, informed me he had been out the whole night.

"With a curse I stumbled off through the darkness towards the headman's house. There was a great noise, and lights were moving about. I discovered Amiran had disappeared. So I knew that I was more foolish than Thappa, and a woman hates a fool.

"The next day I left my village, and came to Hindustan. I shall find Bunbeer some day, and then—" the old Ghurka's face lighted up with a diabolical grin.

I dismissed him with a move of the hand, and composed myself to sleep.

## A DINNER AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MELBOURNE.

BY VAL ARCHER.

He was an unsophisticated rural member—decidedly a young man from the country—who had been sent down by the free selectors, settled around

Lake Woollymerino to represent their collective rights and privileges in the Legislative Assembly, and to maintain, to the best of his untutored ability, against a most perverse Government, their undoubted claims to a railway all for themselves, several large public works in their little one-horse township, a grant for the hospital, and a share in the annual prospecting vote. By nationality my friend Dan was a Cork man, and proud he was of his citizenship. He would talk by the hour in his convivial moments—and the same were not new—of the beauties of the famous city of butter and salt beef, the heavenly music of the bells of Shandon "that sound so grand on the pleasant waters of the River Lee," the super-excellence of Wire's whisky, the comparative merits of Beamish and Crawford's brown stout set against Guinness's Dublin porter, and the unrivalled glories of the scenery along the Lower Glanmire-road, with Blackrock Castle and Spike Island in the distance. Dan, in fact; was not deficient either in the lively intelligence or the mercurial temperament that mark his fellow-countrymen in the sunny south of the Green Isle. But of public life and its forms, or of the art of practical law-making, or of the habits and manners of high life in the South Yarra circles, he knew about as much as he did of the Sanscrit language. From the simple accident of our belonging to the same political party—with a famous and very able son of Tipperary for our chief—Dan and I sat side by side on the green benches of the House; and, as one having some experience of political life, he dutifully placed himself under my tuition. "Bedad, Val," he would say to me, when utterly puzzled by the complicated forms of procedure, "I can't get the rights of it, at all at all. What are they going into committee now for? Why does the Speaker leave the chair and allow another member to take it for him? What do they mane by their first readings, and second readings, and third readings, when there are no readings at all at all?" I did my level best to answer all these questions, and to "insinse him into it" (as Dan himself expressed it), but I think the explanations puzzled his poor head even more than the difficult forms themselves. At last Dan gave it up as a bad job—a hopeless conundrum—and just resolved to follow me in everything, and to do exactly what I told him. "Shure, Val," he would remark, "you're a knowledgeable man, and know all about these things. So I'll just do as you do." Which he did, textually. For Dan I was Erskine May, Alpheus Todd, Hatsell's *Precedents*, and the standing orders of the Assembly, all rolled into one.

In the usual course came round the official invitations to Government-house, to dine with His Excellency. The first occasion was a special one. The cards of invitation ("quarter acre allotments of pasteboard," as a witty friend of mine used to designate them) were stamped with the additional attraction, "to meet His Royal Highness the Duke of Glasgow." The members whose names bore an initial letter standing above M in the alphabet were all included in the first batch. Dan's full name I may mention here was Daniel Rouayne Dougharty, and the initials of his two Christian names, as he wrote them, looked very like Dr., the abbreviation of "Doctor." The receipt of the invitation put the good fellow into a bit of a flurry. He had never in all his life sat down to a grand banquet, and he was utterly at sea as to "the way they had of doing it." Again I undertook to pilot him through. "But can't a chap stay away altogether?" he asked. "I'd rather do that than, may be, make a fool of meself?" I explained to him that the Governor's invitation was in the nature of a command, and to refuse it would be

equivalent to an act of disloyalty to Her Majesty the Queen. "Then, bedad, I'll go," was his rejoinder; "but what am I to do with this? (holding up the card of invitation). Will they want me to send it back?" I wrote out for him the usual formal acceptance, and recommended him to send the imposing piece of paste-board to his friends in Cork, who would, of course, have it framed and glazed and hung up in the family parlour, as a visible evidence of how great a man "our Dan" had become in Australia—"a member of Parliament, no less, dining (my dear!) with all the grand gentry and titled nobility of the country, and sitting right-for-nest a real live Prince of the Blood into the bargain!" Dan, at the suggestion, grew visibly six inches taller.

When the evening of the grand event came round, six of us clubbed to hire a cab to take us out to Government house, wait for us, and bring us back. The cabman's fee for the job was to be nine shillings, which was just eighteenpence apiece. Amongst that half-dozen of diners-out were some very remarkable men. One of them was the most brilliant wit that Australia has ever known. Another was a goldfields member whose exulting constituents, when his victory was declared after a sharp contest, sent him to carry the news round the district on a swift pony shod with solid gold! Dan was in grand form and rattling good humour. Acting on my suggestion, and duly impressed with a sense of his personal dignity as the guest of a Governor (who was also an English nobleman) and the fellow-guest of the son of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen—to say nothing of his being knight of the shire for Woollymerino—he had arrayed himself in a new suit of faultless evening-dress, ordered from the tailor regardless of expense, as the play-bills express it. "Och bedad, Val," he remarked as we drove out; "shure I hardly know myself at all in this iligant suit (he pronounced the word "shoot"), and 'tis the first time in my life I ever was figged out in a pair of swallow-tails hanging at my back." I impressed on him carefully that he was to keep close to me all the evening, to sit beside me at dinner, to keep his eye on me, and do exactly as I did, and, above all, not to speak to any one but myself, nor cast his eyes across the table. All which Dan faithfully promised to observe.

The glories of the evening commenced with our arrival at the big house. As we entered the front door one by one, a tall footman, arrayed in gorgeous livery, took each man in charge, disposed of his hat and great-coat, and then conducted him to the door of the grand drawing-room, asked him for his card, opened the door, and announced him by name to His Excellency, who with the presence, stood at his full height on the hearth-rug. "Mr. Valentine Archer!" The gentleman so named entered the room, made a respectful bow to each of the distinguished personages, and then joined the crowd of guests already arrived. Next came Dan's turn. To my great delight and Dan's astonishment the tall footman introduced him as *Doctor Dougharty*, mispronouncing the good old Celtic name (he being an uninstructed Saxon) "Doggerty!" Dan made his bows, and then he joined me. "Did you hear that, Val?" he asked me in a whisper; "the villain called me out of my name, said I was a Doggerty, and told the Governor I was a doctor! Faix, 'tis a good beginning, and I wonder what they'd say in Blarney-lane if they cou'd see me now!"

"Your Excellency, dinner is served," announced a tall footman when the last of the guests had arrived. "Come along, gentlemen," said the affable Viscount, leading the way, the guests following in Indian file, and each taking the first vacant chair

towards the head of the table. As I took my seat followed by Dan, I observed that he was exactly *visavis* of the Prince, whilst my own opposite neighbour was the Governor himself. For a moment I had a tremor of anxiety, but as the thing could not be helped now, I could only accept the situation. Grace being said by one of the aides-de-camp, down we sat and fell to with vigour. Oysters on shell, turtle-soup, English salmon (brought out in ice) were each and all very speedily polished off. Then began the more serious eating, in the shape of half-a-dozen *entrées*, every one of them a triumph of cookery. I never eat made dishes myself, so stood quietly by for the roasts, trifling with a glass of *sauterne*. Conversation was now general, the band was playing in the gallery, and I could venture to whisper to my neighbour, "Dan, take only one thing of each course. Choose it from the *carte*, and take it when the footman offers it. Then wait for the next course." Dan took up the dainty bill of fare, scanned it carefully, but as it was all couched in that curious Kitchen-French English which epicures so delight in, he could make nothing of it. "Still and for all, I'll do what you say," he whispered back. But he construed my hint too literally; for mistaking each dish of *entremets* for a separate course, he loyally took a helping of each in succession, as it was offered to him, so that by the time the roast turkey, roast peacock, roast lamb, beef and mutton, together with boiled fowls, Yorkshire ham (boiled in champagne to give it a more exquisite flavour), and other trifling things of that sort were brought down, my Cork friend had already revelled in (what he counted as) no less than eight distinct courses. When his attention was solicited to these manifold solid dainties, he was quite taken aback. "Oh begorra, Val," he murmured in my best ear, "the real eating ("raal aitin" was what he said) is only beginning." My simple reply was a whisper, "Go ahead, Dan!" And, my word, he did go ahead, like a house a-fire. Plate after plate of flesh and fowl, washed down with copious libations of champagne, each disappeared in a twinkling. By the time the *rotis* were removed, Dan's eight distinct courses had risen to at least fourteen. And yet (in sporting phrase) Dan was as fit as a fiddle, and had never turned a hair. There was a pause of a few minutes before the next course came on. It was game, and Dan was speedily engaged in trying to dissect a roast quail on toast. I noted that his hand was unsteady, and when one of the tall footmen brought along the customary condiments for this particular dainty (sliced lemon and cayenne pepper) Dan mistook the lemons for potatoes and jobbed with his fork to catch one. "Allow me, sir, please," whispered the footman affably, and then applied the condiments in the proper manner. But Dan could make nothing of that little bird, and my fear was that in his desperate efforts to find the small joints, he would send it flying across the table, full into the lap of His Royal Highness opposite. A glance and a nod from me to one of the footmen as he passed cleared the difficulty, by the removal of Dan's plate in a quiet but firm manner. Sweets and dessert followed in due course; a single toast (the Queen) was proposed by His Excellency and loyally drunk in tumpers of champagne; conversation became loud, general, and hilarious. Dan was in a condition of what can only be described as complete glorification, and I kept him in talk, to prevent any glancing across the table.

Then the grand banquet ended; the Governor rose and returned to the drawing-room, the guests following as before. Black coffee with a *petit verre* was served to all who wished for it on silver trays

in the hall. The guests prepared to depart. Each in succession, as before, was announced at the drawing-room door, entered, bowed, bade "Good-night!" and backed out. I did all my best to keep Dan from committing any breach of the strict rules of etiquette. But he was now in rollicking humour, his Hibernian vivacity and good spirits were both overflowing all bounds; so when he was ushered into the presence of the distinguished personages, instead of bowing respectfully, he walked smilingly up, and grasping the Prince by the hand, gave his hearty "Good-night, your Royal Highness!" and the same to the Governor; and so retired, fairly beaming with honest delight and pride. Then came the crowning honour of the night. A tall footman took Dan in hand, adjusted his hat and great-coat, attended him to the hall-door, and called out into the night in the grandest footman style for *Doctor Doggerty's carriage!*

Of course our cab was in waiting (I had seen to that), and Dan was handed in superbly by the footman, as if he had been the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland!

Then we drove off townwards. Dan was in such a revelry of exulting spirits that, when we cleared the domain gate, he would insist on breaking out into snatches of Irish songs in a round manly voice—Dan could sing the sweet songs of his dear native land very takingly. So we had bits of "The Groves of Blarney," of "Och, the town of Passaga is nate and spacious," of "Molderoo the Fox," of "The Night Before Larry was Stretched," and the like delightful ditties, which kept us all in a simmer of merriment till we reached town. As we got out of the cab we, of course, went into a notable hostel to have a final quencher before breaking up. Dan, taking off his glass like a man, looked up at the clock. "Stop boys," was his remark, "shure the night's young yet. Come into the bar-parlour and we'll have a talk about things ingeneral." None of us were loth; not one of us cared about going home too early, the occasion being a strictly official one.

Dan was called on for a song, and he gave us "The Groves of Blarney" in fine style, with variations that have never yet been read in print. It would be out of all reason to expect a full programme of that jolly evening's proceedings. Let it suffice to say that Dan far and away excelled himself on this occasion. His songs, parodies, and stories were simply endless. I recollect a parody of one of Moore's most mournful melodies, one verse of which, in Dan's version runs thus:—

"Och, life is a waste of wairysome hours,  
Which seldom the rose of enjoyment adorns;  
And the toes that are swiftest to dance among-t flowers,  
Are ever the first to be troubled with corns."

There comes also to recollection a song sung by the old boatman of Scattery Island on the Shannon, the island on which Saint Senanas (after whom Ireland's greatest river is named) lived his hermit life for so many years. Moore tells us how the saint solemnly addressed a beautiful young lady who stole uninvited on his solitude, with doubtless a view of captivating the youthful hermit's earthly affections, in this finely poetical style:—

"Oh, lady, leave this sacred isle."

But the old Scattery boatman's version of the story, as given by Dan, differed materially from that of the Bard of Erin. It ran in this fashion:—

Allelu! The same man was a model of virtue,  
Let historians heretical write what they will.

"Come, be off ma'am," say he, "sure I'd nily desert you,  
Whin better thoughts happened my noddle to fill!"

I left Dan at an early hour in the morning crooning sadly, and in a quite tearful mood over the verses of "Let Erin Remember the Days of Ould." Then with a shake of the hands all round, I bade "Good-night!" and went home. Dan slept at the hostel that night—the landlady being an old Cork acquaintance of his—but turned up to his legislative duties the next afternoon as fresh as paint. Talking over with him the incidents of the previous evening, he spoke of that Government house dinner as the crowning event of his life. "Only to think, Val!" he remarked, "I was made a doctor, who keeps his carriage; I dined off silver plates on the richest things that money can buy; I had lashings and lavins (lashings and leavings) of champagne; I sat forment a raal live Prince of the Blood, with a Viscount Governor sitting beside him; I shook hands with both of them and wished them good-night; and thin a footman in splendid livery handed me into my carriage! Not to spake of my being a member of Parliament myself! What'll the ould people at home in the little shop in Barney-lane say about it whin I send them a full account of it? And all that honour and glory and grandeur and feasting and drinking only cost a fellow the small sum of eighteenpence!"—*Australasian.*

#### INFORMATION ANENT PRIVATE LANDS IN CEYLON AND MILITARY RESERVES.

No. 103.

Surveyor General Office,

Colombo, 22nd June 1868.

The Hon'ble the Colonial Secretary, &c., &c., &c

Sir,—In reply to your letter No. 54 of 27th ultimo, I have the honor to report for the information of His Excellency the Governor, 1st, That with the exception of the Salpi Korle, in the Western Province, 24 villages in the Siyane Korle, a few villages in the Alukur Korle, about 20,000 acres of Paddy Land for commutation purposes in the Batticaloa District, and the lands within a radius of about 10 miles of Kandy, no detailed Survey of the Island has yet been undertaken, the operations of the Survey Department, having with a few exceptions, been confined to the Survey of Crown Lands for Sale, and of encroachments and claims adjacent to such Crown Lands for investigation and settlement.

The early Surveys, not having been fixed Triangometrically or connected with features, the positions of which were determined are, in so far as a General Survey is concerned, of little or no value. It is however but just to one of my predecessors (Mr. Simms) to add that the absence of a proper system of Triangulation and the consequent want of connexion in the various old Surveys, was forcibly brought to the notice of Government in 1852, but in consequence of the depressed state of trade in the Island, and the reduced state of the Revenue, it is supposed that the Government were unable to grant funds to enable the work to be carried out. Although Mr. Simms, with the imperfect data at his disposal, succeeded in placing several of the lands sold for Coffee Estates in the Central Province in position on the General Map, it was not until after Captain

(now Lieut.-Colonel) Gosset, R. E., assumed charge of the Department, when the Revenue was in a more prosperous condition, and the Survey Department was increased, that the various Surveys made in other Provinces were connected Trigonometrically or by traverses with fixed points and known features. Since this system was commenced upwards of 1,734,000 acres of Old and New Surveys have been placed in position on the General 16 chain map, which is now regularly kept up, no Survey being allowed to leave the Office until its position has been inserted on it. The value of this Map, not alone to the Department and to Government but to the General Public is incalculable.

In estimating the time which it would take to complete within a given period the Survey of all private lands in the Colony, I may mention that the information before me with regard to the extent of private lands in each Province is of the vaguest nature, and in proof of the inaccuracy of the Returns in the Blue Book, I may mention that in one Province the number of acres actually surveyed exceeds the estimated extent of land under cultivation by 275,000 acres, in another Province the extent of surveyed land is in excess of the estimated area of cultivated land by 17,000 acres, and in a recent case, when I applied to the Government Agent of a Province for information to enable me to reply as accurately as possible to your letter under report, I was furnished with a Return of private lands in one District of the Province, which actually exceeded the area of the *whole District*, as estimated in the Returns furnished to Government by the same Officer, by 758,552 acres.

It will be observed that the information on which my Estimate must be framed is of a very imperfect nature, it may, however I think be assumed that upwards of 1,000,000 acres of private land yet remain to be surveyed. This extent would take the present force of the Department about 20 years to survey, but as the survey of Crown Lands for sale, of half valuation lots and surveys for special purposes must necessarily keep pace with the requirements of the Colony. I estimate that not more than one-fourth of the present Establishment could be detached for the Survey of private lands, and that it would consequently take 80 years to complete the Survey of private lands with my present force.

To complete the Survey of the whole of the private lands in the Island within 7 years, a force of 120 additional Surveyors would be required at an average salary of 7/ per diem each ... £15,330 per year

to which must be added Miscellaneous Transport and contingent expenses	... 15,000	..
Office Establishment for copying, reducing, and laying down Maps, supervision in the field and office and the general Triangulation	... 12,000	..

Total... £42,330

For the first year only, the sum of £3,600 will also be required for the purchase of Instruments, &c. The force should consist of Burghers and natives of the Island, who would be instructed by and work under the immediate supervision of the officers at present in the Department.

I regret that I cannot give an Estimate for the survey of private high lands as distinguished from paddy lands; as in the Surveys made previous to the last few years, the description of land is not recorded in the Maps, consequently the extent of each description of land remaining unsurveyed is unknown, but as the private high lands in the

Maritime Provinces are in most cases bounded by paddy fields, it follows that the exterior boundaries of the latter must necessarily be surveyed, and as it would cost comparatively but a small amount to define the subdivisions, I do not think it would be judicious to leave the paddy land unsurveyed.

I think it right to mention that irrespective of the question of levying an acreable land tax, and remote as the prospect of a Registration of lands based on a proper Survey may be, experience has proved that in places where Surveys of private lands have been made in the Western and Eastern Provinces, numerous applications have been made for Title plans, the fees for which pay the expenses of the Survey.

I have, &c.,  
(Signed) A. B. FYERS,  
Capt. R. E.

MRS. SCHRADER OF JAFFNA.

[Extract from the work entitled "The Land of the Veda: India briefly described in some of its aspects: Physical, Social, Intellectual and Moral." By the Rev. P. Percival, 1854.]

"Among the descendants of Europeans there were some bright examples of religious consistency. I know a devoted old lady of the name of Schrader, who for many years, in a large town in the northern province, was the sole instructress of a considerable community. She was in the habit of assembling the people in her own house for divine worship, where she read the Scriptures and conducted divine service in the Portuguese language. She translated several religious books from Dutch into Tamul and Portuguese, and circulated them in manuscript, written in her own hand. She also composed a metrical history of the chief parts of the Bible, in the Portuguese language. After the age of 55, she acquired English and translated a volume of hymns out of that language into Portuguese. She died about 4 years ago, at the advanced age of 85. Highly intellectual, elegant in manners and eminently distinguished for sweetness of disposition, this pious and devoted woman was one of the most influential persons in her neighbourhood. For many years she conducted a school and was well qualified to teach Dutch, Portuguese and Tamul. Doubtless this sainted matron secured the commendation of that Saviour, of whose love she was wont to discourse with so much sweetness. There was a dignity in her manner, a solemnity and cheerfulness, that combined to make her a most remarkable person. Her form, her expression of countenance, her faltering accents of religious wonder and delight have often cheered my mind; and she lives in my memory as a monument of the singular providence of God in the peculiar and bereaved circumstances of a small community who were in her provided with a light that shone in a dark place, until the day of enlarged and more diffusive light dawned, under the increased and multiplied means of instruction eventually provided."

SAVAGE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

(To the Editor of the "Literary Register.")

SIR,—The marriage customs of the inhabitants of the world vary in every possible form, according to the state of society in which they live. But in all our experience we were never

prepared to hear of the very strange and barbarous customs of the savages of New South Wales as they existed some fifty years ago. There, (says Collins in his *Account of New South Wales*, p 559) the prelude to love is violence, and that of the most brutal nature. The savage selects his intended wife from the women of a different tribe, generally one at enmity with his own. He steals upon her in the absence of her protectors, and having first stupefied her with blows of a club, or wooden sword, on the head, back and shoulders, every one of which is followed by a stream of blood, he drags her through the woods by one arm, regardless of the stones and broken pieces of trees that may be in his route, and anxious only to convey his prize, in safety to his own party. The woman thus treated becomes his wife, is incorporated into the tribe to which he belongs, and but seldom quits it for another. The outrage is not resented by the relations of the female, who only retaliate by a similar outrage when it is in their power.

What would ladies now-a-days say to this strange and barbarous mode of courtship?

[Ladies now-a-days, if well read, know that although blows on the head are dispensed with, the going off of the young couple to spend the honeymoon on retirement, is a survival of the savage custom of hiding from pursuit when a bride had been captured. In the case of some modern marriages the blows come after the hiding.—Ed. L.R.]

Yours faithfully,

ANTIQUARIAN.

### THE GREAT TANKS OF CEYLON.

"No monuments of antiquity in the Island are calculated to impress the traveller with such a conception of the former power and civilization of Ceylon, as the gigantic ruins of the tanks and reservoirs, in which the water during the rains was collected and preserved for the irrigation of their rice lands.

The number of these structures, throughout vast districts, now comparatively solitary, is quite incredible, and their individual extent far surpasses any works of the kind with which I am acquainted elsewhere. Some of these enormous reservoirs, constructed across the gorges of valleys in order to throw back the streams that thence issue from the hills, cover an area equal to fifteen miles long by four or five in breadth; and there are hundreds of minor constructions.

These are almost universally in ruins: and some idea of their magnitude and importance may be derived from the following extract from my diary, of a visit made to one of them in the year 1848.

The tank to which I rode was that of Pathavicolom, in the Wanny, about seventy miles to the north of Trincomalie, and about twenty-five miles distant from the sea.

"After a rest of a few days at Trincomalie, to recruit our foot runners and coolies, we resumed our course towards the north. My design was to keep the line of the sea-coast as far as Lake Kokelai, and thence to turn westward into the great central forest of the Wanny, in order to reach the ruins of the tank at Pathavie—the largest as well as most perfect of these gigantic works in Ceylon.

"The Lake of Kokelai is a very remarkable spot. It is about twenty miles in circumference, and believed to have been at one time a rich and fertile plain, on which the cultivation of rice was carried on by the means of the enormous reservoir of Pathavie, some twenty miles inland; but by a calamity of frequent occurrence in Ceylon, the sluices of the great tank, became decayed, the embankments gave way, and the overcharged channels suddenly inundated the plains

below, whence the collected waters burst their way into the sea, which, once admitted to enter, has never since been excluded, but now ebbs and flows with every variation of the tide, the bottom of the lake being never wholly dry, but its deepest spots never much exceeding six or seven feet. In fact, it is so shallow at all times, that in the S. W. monsoon, when the rains are light and the waters low, the surf forms a bar of sand across the entrance, and it ceases for a time to communicate with the sea. Were advantage taken of this peculiarity, it might be permanently and effectually excluded; but unfortunately with the change of the monsoon, the bar disappears, the pent up waters of the lake again force a passage, and the salt water returns to renew and perpetuate its barrenness.

"We came out of the forest upon the southern extremity of the lake, at the little village of Amara-vayal, and rode eastward along the shore to the opening which admits the waters of the sea. It was a sultry day, and on the exhalation from the salt encrusted over the sand, we witnessed one of the most beautiful instances of the Fata Morgana which I had seen in Ceylon. The water appeared in the distance to cover the direction by which we were to pass; and right before us in the midst of this we saw a fairy island, covered with the most graceful vegetation, and the shadows of its trees reflected in the surrounding waves of the imaginary lake. A ride of a quarter of an hour, however, dispelled the beautiful deception; without entirely disappearing, lines and features became fainter as we approached, till they melted into air, but not without leaving a doubt whether a scene so perfect in all its parts could really be an illusion.

"The Tamil village of Kokelai is close by the junction of the lake with the sea; and in the vast pastures around it, which are enriched by the proximity of the water, numerous herds of cattle were grazing—the finest and most numerous I have seen in the province. At Kokotodowey, we came up with the Government Agent of the Northern Province, Mr. Dyke, whom we found encamped with five tents and a large suit of followers, beside a salt lake close to the village, and with him we resumed the following morning our tour around the lake, completing the circuit at Amara-vayal, whence we had started two days before. In order to do this we had to cross the river by which the lake is formed, after flowing out of the great tank of Pathavie. The dimensions of the latter may be inferred from the fact, that the stream that issued from its ruins was between 200 and 300 feet broad, and so deep and impetuous, that it was with the utmost difficulty our horses got over it in safety. The country along the bank of the river is rich, and would be fertile but it is so neglected, that herds of wild buffaloes were rolling in the marshes, and elephants so abundant, that the water was still running into the foot marks which they had left a moment before in the sand, where they had crossed a branch of the river on our approach.

"As the immediate vicinity of the tank is so infested with malaria, from the escape of the water, as to render it dangerous to pass the night close by it, we took up our quarters at a Tamil village, about ten miles to the south-west of it, called Liendehitt-hammelawa: and having a long day's journey before us to get to Koolancoliam, another village eighteen miles beyond the tank, after having inspected it in the forenoon, we were on horseback by torchlight, some hours before the sun. It was tedious work, the path under the trees being only used by the natives on foot; the branches, thorns, and climbing plants closed overhead, so low, that it was impossible to ride in the gloom, and we were obliged to get down from our horses and have them led for a great part of the way. The direction of the pathway had never been chosen with a view to the convenience of horsemen, and it ran along the embankments of neglected tanks, and over great rocks of gneiss, which occasionally diversify the monotonous level of the forest, and on the sloping sides of which it was difficult to keep a secure footing. So little is the country known or frequented by Europeans, that the Odear, or native headman, who acted as our guide to the great tank, told me I was

the third white man who had visited it in thirty years.

"Owing to the richness of the soil, and the abundance of water, the trees were of extraordinary growth, especially the varieties of *Strichnos*, which rose into vast mounds of verdure covered profusely with their rich orange fruit. The Palu—by far the most valuable timber-tree of the north—attains here gigantic dimensions, and its topmost branches are the favourite resort of the Buceras, the Indian Toucan.

"Before day-break we entered on the bed of the tank at its south-eastern angle, and proceeded to cross it diagonally to the centre of the main embankment a ride which occupied us nearly two hours. The tank itself occupies the basin of a broad and shallow valley, formed by the approach of two low lines of hills, which gradually sink into the plain as they stretch towards the sea. The extreme breadth of the enclosed space may be ten miles, narrowing to six or seven at the spot where the retaining bund has been constructed across the valley; and when this was in effectual repair, and the reservoir filled by the rains, the water must have been thrown back along the basin of the valley for at least twelve or fifteen miles. It is difficult now to determine the precise distances, as the recent overgrowth of wood and jungle has obliterated all lines left by the original level at its junction with the forest. Even now the space we rode over from the extremity of the tank to its centre, a distance of five miles, is deeply submerged during the monsoons; so that notwithstanding the partial escape of the water, it must still cover an area of ten miles in diameter. Its depth, too must be very considerable; for high on the branches of the trees which grow in the area of the tank, the last flood had left quantities of drift wood and withered grass, and the rocks and highest banks were coated with the yeasty foam which remains after the subsidence of an agitated flood.

"The bed of the tank was difficult to ride over being soft and treacherous, although covered everywhere with tall and waving grass; and in every direction it was poached into deep holes by innumerable elephants who congregate to roll in the soft mud, to bathe in the collected water, and luxuriate in the rich herbage and under the cool shade of the trees. The ground, too was thrown up into hummocks like great mole hills, which natives told us were formed by a huge earthworm, which is common in Ceylon, nearly two feet in length, and as thick as a small snake. Through these inequalities the water was still running off in small natural drains towards the great channel in the centre which conducts it to the broken sluice; and across these we sometimes found it difficult to find a safe footing for our horses.

"In a lonely spot, towards the very centre of the tank, we came unexpectedly upon a very extraordinary scene. A sheet of still water, two or three hundred yards broad, and about half a mile long, was surrounded by a line of tall forest trees, whose branches stretched over it. The sun had not yet risen, when we perceived some white objects seated in large numbers on the tops of the forests; and as we came nearer, we discovered it to be a colony of pelicans, who had formed their settlement and breeding place in this solitary retreat. They covered the trees literally in hundreds; and their heavy nests, like those of the swan, constructed of large sticks, formed great platforms, which rested across the horizontal branches. In each nest there were three eggs, rather larger than those of a goose, and the male birds stood patiently beside the female as she sat upon them.

"Nor was this all; along with the pelicans a prodigious numbers of other large water birds had selected this for their dwelling-place, and in thousands they covered the trees, standing on the topmost branches, tall flamingoes and cranes of every variety, ibises, egrets, and many other descriptions of waders. We had come upon them thus early, and before their habitual hour for betaking themselves to their usual fishing fields. By degrees, as the light increased, we saw them beginning to move upon the trees: they looked around them on every side, stretched out

their awkward legs, extended their broad wings, rose slowly in groups, and soared away in the direction of the sea shore.

"The pelicans were apparently later in their movements; they allowed us to approach as near them as the swampy nature of the soil, would admit, and even when the gun was discharged amongst them, those only moved off whom the particles of shot had disturbed. They were in such numbers at this favourite place, that the water over which they had taken up their residence was swarming with alligators, attracted by the frequent falling of the young birds; and the natives refused, from fear of them; to wade in for one of the larger pelicans which had fallen, struck by a rifle ball. It was altogether a very remarkable sight.

"About seven o'clock we reached the point of our destination, near the great breach in the embankment, having first with difficulty effected a passage over the wide stream which was flowing towards it from the basin of the tank. The huge bank itself was concealed from us by the trees with which it is overgrown, till we suddenly found ourselves at its foot. It is a prodigious work, nearly seven miles in length, at least three hundred feet broad at the base, upwards of sixty feet high, and faced throughout its whole extent by layers of square stone. The whole aspect of the place, its magnitude, its loneliness, its gigantic strength even in its decay, reminded me forcibly of ruins of a similar class described by recent travellers at Uxmal and Palenke, in the solitudes of Yucatan and Mexico.

"The fatal breach through which the waters escape, is an ugly chasm in the bank about two hundred feet broad and half as many deep, with the river running slowly away below. This breach affords a good idea of the immense magnitude of the work, as it presents a perfect section of the embankment from summit to base. As we stood upon the verge of it above, we looked down upon the tops of the highest trees, and a pelican's nest, with three young birds, was resting on a branch a considerable way below us.

"We walked about two miles along the embankment to see one of the sluices, which remains so far entire as to permit its original construction to be clearly understood, with the exception that the principal courses of stones have sunk lower towards the centre. From its relative position, I am of opinion, that the breach through which the water now escapes was originally the other sluice, which has been carried away by the pressure at some remote period. The existing sluice is a very remarkable work, not merely from its dimensions, but from its ingenuity and excellent workmanship. It is built of layers of hewn stones varying from six to twelve feet in length, and still exhibiting a sharp edge and every mark of the chisel. These rise into a ponderous wall immediately above the vents which regulated the escape of the water; and each layer of the work is kept in its place by the frequent insertion endways of long plinths of stone, whose extremities project from the surface with a flange to prevent the several courses from being forced out of their places. The ends of these retaining stones are carved with elephants' heads and other devices, like the extremities of Gothic corbels; and numbers of similarly sculptured blocks are lying about in all directions, though the precise nature of the original ornaments is no longer apparent.

"About the centre of the great embankment, advantage has been taken of a rock about 200 feet high, which has been built in, to give strength to the work. We climbed to the top of it; the sun was now high and the heat intense; for in addition to the warmth of the day, the rock itself was still glowing from the accumulated heat of many previous days. It was covered with vegetation, which sprung vigorously from every handful of earth that had lodged in the interstices of the stone; and amongst a variety of curious plants we found the screwed Euphorbia, (*Euphorbia tortilis*) the only place in which I have seen it in the island. But the view from this height was something very wonderful—it was in fact one of the most memorable scenes I remember in

Ceylon. Towards the west the mountains near Anarajapoora were dimly visible in the extremest distance, but between us and the sea, and for miles on all sides, there was scarcely a single eminence, and none half so high as the rock on which we stood. To the farthest verge of the horizon there extended one vast unbroken ocean of verdure, varied only by the tints of the forest, and with no object for the eye to rest on except here and there a tree a little loftier than the rest, which served to undulate the otherwise unbroken surface.

"Turning to the side next the tank, its prodigious area lay stretched below us, broken into frequent reservoirs of water and diversified with scattered groups of trees. About half a mile from where we stood, a herd of wild buffaloes were lumbering through the long grass and rolling in the fresh mud. These, and a deer which came to drink from the watercourse, were the only living animals to be seen in any direction.

"As to human habitation, the nearest was the village where we had passed the preceding night; but we were told that a troop of unsettled Veddahs had lately sown some rice on the verge of the reservoir, and taken their departure after securing their little crop. And this is now the only use to which this gigantic undertaking is subservient—it feeds a few wandering outcasts, and yet such are its prodigious capabilities, that it might be made to fertilize a district equal in extent to an English county.

"And who are the constructors of this mighty monument? It is said, that some one of the sacred books of Ceylon records the name of the king who built it; but it has perished from the living memory of man. On the top of the great embankment itself, and close by the breach, there stands a tall sculptured stone with two engraved compartments, that no doubt record its history; but the Olear informed us that the characters were Nagari and the language Pali, or some unknown tongue which no one now can read.

"What, too, must have been the advancement of engineering power at the time when this immense work was undertaken? It is true that it exhibits no traces of science or superior ingenuity, and in fact the absence of these is one of the causes to which the destruction of the tanks of Ceylon has been very reasonably ascribed, as there had been no arrangement for regulating their own contents, and no provision for allowing the superfluous water to escape during violent inundations. But irrespective of this what must have been the command of labour at the time when such a construction was achieved? The Government engineer calculates that taking the length of the bank at 6 miles, its height at 60 feet, and its breadth 200 at the base, tapering to 20 at the top, it would contain 7,744,000 cubic yards and at 1s. 6d. per yard, with the addition of one half of that sum for facing it with stone and constructing the sluices and other works, it would cost 870,000l. sterling to construct the front embankment alone.

"But enquiry does not terminate here. What must have been the numbers of the population employed upon a work of such surprising magnitude and what the population to be fed, and for whose use not only this gigantic reservoir was designed, but some thirty others of nearly similar magnitude which are still in existence, but more or less in ruin, throughout a district 150 miles in length from north to south, and about 90 from sea to sea? Another mysterious question is still behind and unanswered. What was the calamity or series of calamities which succeeded in exterminating this multitude? which reduced their noble monuments to ruin, which silenced their peaceful industry, and converted their beautiful and fertile region into an unproductive wilderness, tenanted by the buffalo and the elephant, and only now and then visited by the unclad savage who raises a little rice in its deserted solitudes, or disturbs its silent jungles to chase the deer, or rob the wild bee of its honey?

"These are all unsatisfied speculations; nor do even the few inquiries I have suggested serve to open up the full extent of interest which attaches to this

singular district. I have mentioned the existence of numerous other tanks as large as that of Pahale; some are of even greater dimensions, and one, known as the Giant's Tank, the main embankment of which is 15 miles in length, was calculated to enclose an expanse of water equal in extent to the Lake of Geneva. It was to have been supplied by directing into it the largest river which now flows into the Gulf of Manaar; and the causeway commenced for this stupendous purpose, composed of blocks of stone of almost Cyclopean measurement, has been completed for a great portion of the way; but from some unknown cause the work appears to have been suddenly abandoned, and never resumed. The vast area of the Giant's Tank is now the site of some thirty prosperous villages, each with a smaller tank sufficient for its own rice-ground, and all enclosed within the boundary of the original tank.

"Nor is this all; for in addition to these immense constructions, some thirty in number, there are from 500 to 700 smaller tanks scattered over the whole face of the country, the majority in ruins, but many still serviceable, and all susceptible of effectual restoration.—From Sir Emerson Tennent's "Christianity in Ceylon."

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